

# Child Safeguarding Practice Review Child G –Learning Brief

*Children and young people suffer the consequences of domestic abuse in terms of their development and emotional wellbeing: they do not just witness it they 'live it'.*

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## Background

Nursery and early years staff describe Child G as a bubbly little boy who was a regular in their classroom, he would potter around as his older sibling settled into the day. Child G would either sit happily in his pushchair or wander around saying hello to staff and goodbye to his sibling.

On 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020 Child G, died in hospital from head injuries sustained within his own home in a community within Doncaster local authority area. He was 2 years and 3 days old. At the time of his death, he was living with his mother (Adult GF), her new partner (Adult HM) and his two siblings aged 10 and 7 years.

Following his death, a criminal investigation was launched by South Yorkshire Police and the Statutory Safeguarding Partners for Doncaster commenced a Rapid Review of the circumstances and partnership involvement with the family and key individuals.

The police investigation subsequently led to the conviction of Adult HM for the murder of Child G as well as assaulting, ill-treating, neglecting, or abandoning a child or young person to cause unnecessary suffering or injury. Child G's mother (Adult GF) was acquitted of his murder but convicted of causing or allowing the death of a child or vulnerable person.

Adult GF and her children were not at any point in contact with the statutory service of children's social care and not known to any other statutory safeguarding agency other than for routine health appointments. In contrast, Adult HM was well known to all statutory safeguarding services with a lifetime of involvement as a child through the child protection system and then as a young offending adolescent and adult.

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## Key Findings

The review considered multi-agency working across Doncaster Safeguarding Partnership and found both good practice as well as clear opportunities for greater collaboration and understanding. The review found;

- that the partnership does routinely and successfully safeguard and promote the welfare of children but highlights learning in relation to how the multi-agency partnership is effective in their use of information and intelligence to identify need, harm and risk as early as possible and to focus on the offending and behaviours of prolific domestic abuse offenders
- learning which will provide opportunities for stronger multi agency understanding of multiple risk assessment outcomes from different partners to achieve stronger cross partnership working to support any organisation who is attempting to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- areas of particular learning which can be grouped within three core themes: Domestic Abuse and Violence, Assessments and Risk Assessments and Partnership working.

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## What we have learned for Probation Services;

- Timeliness, constant management oversight and quality assurance of risk assessment is essential. Risk assessment should attempt to recognise the voices of those around the individual, adults and children, and include the widest partnership knowledge.
- Professionals need to be curious and courageous in their management of offenders, utilising all available information to inform holistic assessments of need, harm and risk. To establish a broader understanding of behaviours, risks and context on which to assess risk and make decisions concerning supervision, management and case direction. A more curious approach to information sharing and analysis ensuring focus is not directed to the immediate concerns around an individual nor only on the immediate and obvious family context.
- Management / professional supervision should be frequent, impactful, and well recorded. It should support the professional and provide unbiased, experienced, clear insight into the management of the individual. Staff and managers should be aware that any key event or concerning issue within a case should trigger the insight of management oversight and supervision.
- Management needs to be understanding of individual casework through oversight, supervision and audit to the point where they will intervene to ensure compliance, dynamic practice improvement and interventionist support to protect staff. Management oversight, supervision and case audit should be considered core practice.
- Children need to be identified, considered and their lived experience understood when assessing risks posed by violent offenders within personal relationships. Professionals need to recognise all children in their risk assessments and make clear what interventions need to be in place to reduce the harm posed by offenders.
- When considering risks to children it should be recognised they experience serious significant harm visible and not, through Domestic Abuse therefore risks to them need to be acknowledged as potential victims. There needs to be a recognition that children/young people suffer the consequences in terms of their development and emotional wellbeing, they do not just witness it they 'live it'.
- Tensions arising from differing risk assessments should cause professional concern and discussion, which should trigger management oversight. Case notes are not only descriptive of events but provide considered analysis of information to provide an accurate understanding of a case. They should include reasons for key decisions and enquiries made to triangulate and challenge information.
- Professionals must review case notes over time to establish patterns of risky behaviour and review risk assessment and management plans as required. This is particularly pertinent during episodes of case transfer between professionals when experiential knowledge of an individual may be lost.
- Professionals / managers should ensure routine oversight and assessment of achievement against Community Orders and Licence conditions, to ensure impact is captured and revisions put in place to further manage risk and promote desistance from offending behaviour.
- Professionals need to consider information concerning an individual in a wider sense looking to establish the broadest understanding of the behaviours, risks and context upon which to assess risk and make decisions

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## Key Findings

- Adult HM was found by the review to be a long-standing prolific violent offender within multiple relationships.
- He was actively managed and supervised by Probation Services who sought information from children's services and the police, the partnership as a whole did not create a fulsome assessment of him or understand the true risks he posed to women and children.
- Children were present within the families where domestic abuse was perpetrated by Adult HM on his partners and on occasions, it is known he directly abused and assaulted children.
- Risk assessment - Adult HM was never graded higher than medium risk of him causing serious harm to a child or young person.
- In August 2019 when Police attended an incident, an opportunity existed for them to potentially identify that Adult HM was living with Adult GF and her children. This awareness did not materialise
- Health professionals involved with Child G and his family had no concerns in respect of their health and wellbeing.
- Despite evidence of multiple injuries Child G is believed never to have been taken to hospital, a doctor or received any medical assessment for any of his injuries.

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## What we have learned for Police

- Where domestic abuse or violence is reported, or suspected police officers and staff need to always be professionally curious to satisfy themselves (or not) that any potential Domestic abuse victim is safe both at the time and when their contact with that person or their dependents finishes. This MUST include all children and young people. Children and young people should be engaged so that officers can satisfy themselves that they are safe and well.
- When attending reports of domestic abuse police officers must make best efforts to identify all those involved both victims and perpetrators, including those who may have left the scene and ensure all information is shared in line with local safeguarding policies.
- Police officers should be professionally curious and prepared to challenge. They should be aware of the potential for unseen levels of coercive control within the family unit.
- Police officers should be knowledgeable and confident in their use of powers of entry to premises to ensure the safety of victims, children and young people where domestic abuse is a factor.

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## What we have learned for Children's Social Work Services

- The analysis and assessment of the need, harm and risk to children needs to be based on the full information picture available of all those involved.
- Information sharing when required between social work services and other safeguarding partners needs to be fulsome, effective, efficient, and supported by professional curiosity.
- Perpetrators of abuse must be readily identifiable within children's records and their current risk to children visible. Children's social work must consider and be responsive to the true impact of violence and domestic abuse on a child's lived experience, being professionally conscious of bias when an adults needs are potentially significant and overwhelming.
- Caution needs to be applied when relying on the DASH to understand the child's lived experience of Domestic Abuse. Other tools such as the Barnados Rim Ram may be more effective.
- A reduction in funding for the Domestic Abuse Navigator service impacted on the ability to deliver services
- Children should be furnished with proportionate psychological first aid as soon as is right for them. Services must be robust in their planning so court proceedings do not prevent good mental health when children experience trauma.

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## What we have learned for the Partnership.....

- Processes and practice across the Doncaster Safeguarding Partnership should facilitate effective and efficient information sharing across the whole partnership in multiple directions in harmony with legislation and best practice guidance.
- Safeguarding partners should look for new opportunities to enable multi agency discussions regarding the range of different risk assessment tools in use across the partnership to understand what each is identifying.
- Consideration by the Partnership of the outcomes of multiple risk assessment tools as an integral part of the response to domestic abuse provides the opportunity to add significant value to understanding true risk posed by offenders of domestic abuse and support safety planning for adult victims and children.
- The multi-agency partnership should recognise the strength in working together in an integrated manner to manage offenders who pose a significant risk of harm to others, they must understand that the Probation Services cannot do this alone. The Probation Service and its partners need to recognise the benefits in the wider use of the categories and levels of the MAPPA guidance.
- Decisions as to where an individual should be managed within MAPPA should be based on a full history of offending and behaviours and kept constantly under review through professional practice, management oversight and supervision. Key contextual and behavioural changes should prompt re-evaluation.
- The importance of strong, relentlessly focussed partnership governance and leadership is essential in the delivery of a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Strategy. This leadership is necessary to ensure the delivery of the strategy, an understanding of the profile and details of harm caused by Domestic Abuse, the delivery of a quality assurance and performance framework and to ensure provision of appropriate services to meet the needs of children impacted and affected by domestic abuse.
- Opportunities exist within the partnership for The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme 2016 (Clare's Law) to be used in a more preventative way focussing on the 'Right to Know' by 'partners'.

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## What we have learned for schools, health services and Early Help...

- Doncaster's schools, health services and Early Help are ideally positioned to enhance family-based knowledge concerning children's paternity. Professional curiosity should be applied to identify other significant adults in a child's life and to understand who else maybe in the family home.

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## Appendix 1 - Agency responses to the learning identified:

### Probation Services:

- The new Probation Service Yorkshire and the Humber (PS YaTH) has been launched and is now part of operational practice. This will reinforce the need to review assessments at key points when significant events occur in a person on probations journey through their sentence
- The new operating model for the Probation Service as part of the national changes to probation has developed tool kits for practitioners to utilise with people on probation that have been reviewed by the national effective interventions panel. Embedding their use over the coming 12-18 months will be a priority for the new organisation.
- A practice development forum has been created to support with the ongoing embedding of tool kits across Doncaster Probation. These tool kits will form an important element of the new organisations practice. They will be monitored through ongoing quality assurance and via the practice forum.
- A polygraph pilot has commenced in Doncaster for use with individual convicted of offences linked to Domestic Abuse. The pilot is going through evaluation with findings due out in 2022
- Further workshops and learning will be delivered across Probation Service this business year looking at professional curiosity for both practitioners and front line managers.
- The draft HMPPS Child Safeguarding Policy Framework is out for consultation until 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021. It includes a section on multi agency working through MARAC, MASH and MAPPA. The Probation Service Child Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse Forums will monitor compliance with the framework and will support Quality Assurance activity undertaken by our Performance & Quality Team.
- Under the unified Probation Service, all staff will be line managed within HMPPS Line Management, Supervision and Appraisal Framework, which sets out required levels of supervision, appraisal and practice observations. Governance arrangements are in place to monitor levels of and quality of supervision. All managers will be undertaking SEEDs training and will conduct supervision and appraisal in line with this model.
- Alongside this framework, the Touch Point model provides further opportunity for management oversight and professional supervision. At certain points in a cases journey practitioners are required to discuss with line managers regarding risks and needs of cases. Doncaster Probation Delivery Units local delivery plan has an action to continue with the launch of this framework as part of mobilising the new service.
- As part of unification a new learning and development plan has been created to support all practitioners with the target operating model.
- Within this plan is a focus on the nature and harm caused by Domestic Abuse from an all-family perspective and taking on-board the new legislation form the Domestic Abuse Bill 2021. This training will be delivered to all front-line staff through 2021-2022 as Probation Service embeds the new operating model. Alongside the Probation Service has 16 days of action focusing on the violence against women and girls, which has a strong emphasis on domestic violence. The right to know and Domestic Abuse legislation updates are included in this event.
- Public protection delivery plans are now in place for each Probation Delivery Unit. The development of regional quality assurance frameworks post unification is ongoing and will form part of business as usual practice in 2022.
- Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA) training is now available online for all practitioners and a Learning and Development dashboard has been produced to support delivery units ensure compliance with the training across the workforce.
- There is now a revised process in place for the sharing of information between the Probation Service and Children's Services and the Probation Service and South Yorkshire Police. Staff briefings have taken place across Probation to enhance understanding and practice; this will be regularly reviewed to ensure consistency and quality of practice moving forward.
- Professional curiosity training is available to all Probation staff and will be mandatory training for all practitioners under the unified Probation Service.
- The HMPPS Policy Framework for the management of MAPPA level 1 cases is due to be published in the Autumn. This framework supports the screening of all MAPPA cases to support with decision making regarding which level of management is appropriate. This will be formally launched with a series of staff briefings.
- The need for all agencies across the partnership to share information and fully engage with information sharing and the MAPPA process will be discussed at MAPPA Strategic Management Board on 12.06.21 and will be added to the MAPPA SMB Business plan.
- MAPPA training is available to all partners on a quarterly basis. All partners should engage with this training in order to enhance knowledge across the partnership. A better understanding of MAPPA should lead to wider range of referrals from across the partnership. In addition, the National MAPPA team are updating the chapter on Domestic Abuse in the MAPPA guidance.
- As a new region of the Probation Service will be required to deliver on new national standards and quality/performance measures. Included in these measures is the requirement for each area to ensure that the effectiveness of interventions is monitored and completion rates meet target levels. Embedding these new measures will be a priority for the Probation Service and regular monitoring and assurance activity will support areas to achieve these measures.

### South Yorkshire Police:

- The Domestic Abuse matters training was launched force wide on the force intranet on 14th October 2020. Training was initially delayed due to COVID. However, this is now underway and expected to be completed by November 2021.
- To identify a number of 'force champions' who will provide additional advice and guidance to officers/staff responsible for dealing with Child abuse/neglect.
- All staff employed within the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA) Department to receive training, specifically in relation to the DASH assessment and CCB1.
- The training will be measured by the number of officers/staff receiving the training, collated using computerised recording method/training records.
- The DARA Manager continues to review the training needs of the department. New employees (including officers) continue to receive Domestic Abuse input as part of their initial police training.
- All DARA staff have received Dr Laura Richards DASH training. The DARA Manager is an accredited trainer so can provide input to new staff. The DARA staff have also received additional training covering the dynamics of domestic abuse, specifically around the use of CCB, stalking and harassment, and included the feature of such behaviours with domestic homicides. This allows staff to identify CCB regardless of risk level.
- Domestic Abuse remains a priority for SYP and comprehensive training is delivered on appointment and through officers and staff service.

<sup>1</sup> Coercive, Controlling Behaviour

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- Officers/staff, including DARA have received training in relation to domestic abuse and CCB. The DARA Manager regularly reviews the training needs of staff, particularly new members and addresses this on their commencement of employment within that department.
- Coercive Control is discussed and explored during the Domestic Abuse matters training. The training is a mixture of facilitator run group discussions and true scenarios. The training is ongoing until November 2021
- A direction to staff to be published on the force intranet and backed up in the weekly 'Operational Updates' sent to all supervisors. Further communication to be included in the monthly DASH failure email circulated by PVP Governance.
- Monthly DASH failure figures will track the progress and identify improvements or failures in DASH submissions. Whilst an ongoing the communication and initial measurement of success to be completed within three months.
- All officers receive comprehensive training in the completion of DASH risk assessments and should submit in ALL instances of reported Domestic Abuse.
- 18/12/2020 - An intranet article was published advising officers/staff members of the support services available to victims in the South Yorkshire Area.
- 16/02/2021 - An Intranet article was published providing details of the 'Bright Sky' app and encouraging Officers/Staff to consider the use of this when working with victims.
- 25/03/2021 - An intranet article was published reminding officers/staff to fully complete DASH risk assessments, including that the victim consents to support (should they do so), in order that relevant referrals
- 10/06/2021 - Published guidance on the SYP Intranet page to remind Officers/Staff to complete DASH risk assessments face-to-face with victims (in response to the COVID pandemic) and encouraging officers/staff to make themselves familiar with the domestic abuse procedural instruction. The procedural instruction states, "A Pronto Investigation and DASH submission must be made as soon as practicable and in any event before going off duty." The procedural instruction also informs officers/staff of the process of referrals to various victim services, including IDVA, MARAC and Victim Support etc. Officers/staff are instructed to consider the ongoing safeguarding of victims, their children/families or any other person deemed at risk.

## Doncaster Children's Services Trust:

- Work continues to embed the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub. The key next step to address in these developments is co-location and we are nearing a resolution in relation to this. Reports re the MASH and front door are provided to the Improvement Board and, moving forward, will be provided to the DSCP
- A multiagency audit re the response to child exploitation is currently underway. We are contributing to this. The outcome of the audit will be reported to the Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- A rolling programme of multi-agency audits has been established. This is complemented internally in the Trust by a rolling programme of audit activity and regular themed dip sampling.
- The Partnership domestic Abuse strategy is overseen by COSOG. It is in the final draft
- The Quality Assurance Framework has been finalised and implemented. It was reviewed and revised in November 2021. Work is underway to finalise the Domestic Abuse Navigator quality assurance processes. We expect this to be finalised in December 2021.
- The process was revised and communicated however further communication is required regarding the use of markers in MOSAIC, this will be completed by December 2021
- Children's Social Care attend the MARAC and have done consistently since this issue was raised
- We have created a Service Manager to lead on our preventative work in order to ensure that there is coordination across the range of projects and processes we have in place. They started in post in August 2021

## Doncaster Council - Localities and Early Intervention:

- Trauma informed training has been completed with staff within the Early Intervention and localities service including, Early Help, Family Hubs and Early Years teams.
- The Early Years Safeguarding team have worked with DCST to ensure that there are evening sessions available of the 'Signs of Safety' Training to ensure childminders and nursery providers can attend and have the most up to date information regarding a curiosity approach to working with families
- The trauma informed approach has been included in all safeguarding training and our Speech, Language and Communication Needs training. The curiosity approach is also emphasised within Early Years safeguarding training.
- In addition this will be integrated across all early help practitioners by:
- Level 1 Trauma Informed Training is available on Buy Doncaster funding from the South Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit.
- A Senior EH pathway Lead has recently achieved L5 Trauma informed Practice qualification from Trauma Informed Schools Up.
- This is being used to develop skills for working trauma with in service staff (Family Lead Practitioners) and will be included in the L3 Early Intervention Qualification and embedded throughout current early help training.
- The senior EH Pathway Lead is also part of the wider Doncaster Council training pool to delivery Trauma Informed Practice across schools and council services.
- The L3 Early Intervention Qualification is underpinned by knowledge and theory to support professional curiosity
- In addition staff have:
  - Completed domestic abuse training
  - Knows what support services are available and how to refer to them
  - Has domestic abuse information leaflets to provide to victims and people who are abusive
- Early help policies, procedures and practice has been strengthened, they include: Practitioners in the family hubs now actively seek father's details, where the details are not forthcoming record clearly state why the father is not known
- Practitioners actively follow up with families where attendance at the family hub starts to drop off and a record is made of the outcome
- The 'Injury to child proforma' has been further developed and managers now provide oversight to identify themes or trends
- Training is being developed for Family Hub teams to develop staff's professional curiosity further within group work programs: supporting staff to focus on any changes to behaviour, appearance and attendance of both carers and children, the training will be implemented in spring 2021.
- The Family Hub Service Manager now attends the newly formed Domestic Abuse theme groups on vulnerable children alongside the Multi-Agency Tasking and Co-ordination (MATAC) meetings, to understand risk in the locality, and flag prolific perpetrators who may move from one relationship to another. Attendance also enables a better understanding of need in each locality area and an opportunity to tailor responsive services within the family hubs accordingly.
- Family Lead Practitioners are now co-located within Family Hubs and undertake visits to children and families at home

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## Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Trust:

- Health Visiting Service adheres to Doncaster Safeguarding Partnership policies and guidance around professional curiosity in Safeguarding Children training. From May 2021, training around professional curiosity and paternity will be included in the Health Visiting Services yearly training updates for staff. This will be quality assured by a yearly dip sample audit and the findings will be fed back to the staff team and will inform the upcoming training updates. Safeguarding training compliance is monitored monthly and remains above Trust target.
- The service has updated practice during initial visits to include a consistent more in-depth level of professional curiosity to include exploration of paternity and parental responsibility at all Health Visiting contacts. (Updated in March 2021).
- Fathers are encouraged to attend and participate in both groups and home face-to-face contacts with the Health Visiting Service where all aspects of parenting are discussed and specific research based tools are used to encourage and promote engagement. We now open fathers/partners records for any significant others that are present during contact, following this training. The team have been reminded to update groups, relationships, and parental responsibility on the electronic patient record. All staff will have completed this training by the end of June 2021
- Male records are opened for fathers and partners who are present at all contacts and give consent. Updating groups and relationships and adding parental responsibility training has been completed.
- Learning from Serious Case review training including professional curiosity was delivered to staff on 28th 29th September.

## Domestic Abuse Services:

- An application is being developed by Doncaster Children's Service Trust, Early Help and Doncaster Council Domestic Abuse services for the September 2021 round of the Youth Endowment Fund. The aim is to secure funding for trauma informed therapeutic intervention with children and families affected by domestic abuse. The application to the YEF is currently being developed ready for submission by 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021
- Presentation given about the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme at the launch of the DA Strategy on 29<sup>th</sup> October. Information contained on the initiatives page of the DA website. Further campaign work needed.
- Refresh the domestic abuse protocol and re-launch (this contains all the information about DA, referral pathways and services and already contains information about this project).
- Ensure that all MARAC/MATAC Chairs are aware and consider Clare's Law applications.
- Ensure that Domestic Abuse Hub Advisors consider a Right to Know application for all victims of serial perpetrators referred to them. A new Hub manager is in post now and this will be picked up as part of her role.
- Develop a robust process for managing serial perpetrators with Clare's Law used as part of the safety plan for that family. Following the serial perpetrator work by Doncaster Council, Probation, DCST and SYP a report has been produced about the options for managing serial perpetrators. The report is going to the SSDP in November.
- Some domestic abuse training already includes awareness of Clare's Law but all training to be reviewed to ensure awareness of Clare's Law is

## Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership;

- Will continue to monitor progress of agency responses and action plans through its Case Review Group seeking assurance and evidence where appropriate
- Will cascade the learning from this Child Safeguarding Practice Review across the partnership and wider where relevant
- Embed the learning with multi-agency training where appropriate