

Early Help Learning Lessons Briefing

Dudley Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) has a duty to evaluate multi-agency working through case file audits which involves professionals from across the children's workforce, and in turn, share the learning regarding the quality of practice and lessons for improvements.

A multi-agency case file audit (MACFA) took place on the 3rd October 2017 which focused on Dudley's approach and response to Early Help (EH) support

This briefing paper is to inform how changes can be made to professional practice across the agencies workforce to ensure Dudley's response and support to children and families are effective, robust and consistent.

Emerging Themes for Early Help

- ✓ 100% had previous Social Care concerns / intervention
- ✓ 100% had neglectful parenting as a concern
- ✓ 100% had parental mental health identified as a concern
- ✓ 100% indicated disguised compliance
- ✓ 75% had concerns about parental substance misuse
- ✓ 75% had utilised GCP as an assessment tool
- ✓ 25% parents have Learning Disabilities
- ✓ 25% History of Domestic Abuse

Key messages for inter-agency learning

- ✓ **Promote** the Early Help Strategy
- ✓ **Maintain** good recording
- ✓ **Ensure** Information Sharing
- ✓ **Embed** a shared use and understanding of the graded care profile
- ✓ **Share** learning from local audit and reviews, including serious case reviews
- ✓ **Contribute** to EH support plans
- ✓ **Escalate** concerns

Key points for Managers

- ✓ **Supervision:** Ensure that staff are receiving quality supervision and cases are reviewed. Staff must also be supported when working with difficult and intensive children and families
- ✓ **Reflective Practice and Challenge:** Ensure during supervision that staff and managers are reflecting on specific cases and practice around those and children and families. Be confident to challenge practitioner's opinions and decisions to ensure options are explored and good practice is followed
- ✓ **Good Practice:** Ensure that practitioners are using all available tools and resources, especially the GCP2 screening tool, and are making use of the training available from DSCB and partners
- ✓ **Consider partners in decision making:** Early Help staff have a wealth of information about the lives of children that they work with, their observations and knowledge should be given considerable weight when considering risk
- ✓ **Consider all emerging issues:** The step up process must take into account the cumulative impact on children of multiple issues within a family, one case required significant persistence to access appropriate services for a family
- ✓ **Act on Concerns:** There was limited evidence of the escalation process being applied where persisting concerns were not responded to

Learning points

- ✓ **Understanding and awareness** of the importance for children of access to the right service at the right time
- ✓ **Think** about the child's daily experiences
- ✓ **Information** from different agencies should always be shared appropriately and taken seriously
- ✓ **Professionals** should be aware of the impact on children of multiple issues within the home
- ✓ **Contact information** for all agencies involved with a child/family should be kept up to date, or recorded in the right sections of files.
- ✓ **Details of new partners/frequent visitors** to households should be obtained.
- ✓ **Ensure** effective information sharing with all agencies involved supporting the children and family
- ✓ **Information** about significant events should be accurately communicated.

Key learning points for practitioners

- ✓ **Understand thresholds** so that the right service can be offered without delay
- ✓ **Understand the referral process** to the relevant support services available in Dudley, If you make a referral for support or intervention for a child or family, follow it up and ensure it is taken forward
- ✓ **Be curious** - Ensure you look 'beyond' the child/young person's behaviour, to find out the reasons behind it and the possible explanations
- ✓ **Listen** to the child/young person and understand what they are trying to communicate to you. Make sure that their voice is heard in assessments and support plans
- ✓ **Support** the young person and their parent/s throughout the time that they receive support and intervention, contribute to joint plans and contingency plans, and seek their views
- ✓ **Be aware** of disguised compliance, think why a situation may be 'stuck'
- ✓ **Share key information** across the relevant agencies and professionals working with the child/young person. Information you may think is irrelevant or not important could form an important part of the bigger picture of that family
- ✓ **Expect** agencies to respond to new information, if you have concerns escalate them
- ✓ **Seek advice** from designated safeguarding leads and specialist professionals, and share this knowledge with colleagues to support the child/young person

Reminder to practitioners

- ✓ **Dudley Early Help Strategy** - Be aware of the principles underpinning the approach, know the referral process. You can access the documents here <http://safeguarding.dudley.gov.uk/child/work-with-children-young-people/dudley-early-help-strategy>
- ✓ **Neglect Strategy** this aims to improve the quality of the multi agency response to children and families living with neglect <http://safeguarding.dudley.gov.uk/child/work-with-children-young-people/dudley-early-help-strategy>
- ✓ **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Procedures** – DCSB operate in partnership with the West Midlands LSCB network for its multi-agency procedures, this cover a wide variety of situations you may encounter. You can access them at: <http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/>
- ✓ **Neglect was a feature in all cases audited, the Partner of DCSB has adopted the Graded Care Profile Training 2 (GCP2) assessment** and is offering a one day training programme to enable practitioners to use effectively use the tool. To find out more, or book a place on a course, please follow the link: <http://safeguarding.dudley.gov.uk/child/work-with-children-young-people/training/training-directory/graded-care-profile-2-gcp2-licensed-training-programme/>