

7 Minute Practice Briefing: Learning Circle

Background

A learning circle took place in Dorset in October 2022 in relation to a young person. This young person is now an adult; however, it was identified that there was key learning for agencies that worked with this young person as a child. This learning review centered the impact of chronic child neglect and the issues related to hoarding.

This practice briefing aims to support professionals working with children and families across all statutory and voluntary agencies with the key learning from this learning circle, as well as identifying what has already and is being done by the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership to address this learning.



Learning point 10: Young people's school attendance – it is right to look at a young person's poor attendance as an indicator for concern. However, professionals should not assume that a near 100% attendance means that there are no concerns. There may be young people who linger at the end of a school day who do not want to go home.

What is being done by the PDSCP to address this?

The safeguarding quality assurance team for schools are raising this with the DSL's.

Learning point 11: Engagement and seeking consent from all involved parents/carers, particularly fathers and step-fathers – professionals should be reminded to ensure that they engage fathers and stepfathers and ask for consent from them when working at an early help level.

What is being done by the PDSCP to address this?

PDSCP to promote The Myth of Invisible Men across agencies using the existing presentation developed by the Principal Social Worker, DC

Learning point 8: Impact of Covid-19 on young people who are particularly vulnerable already.

What is being done by the PDSCP to address this?

A strategy is being developed that will address the long-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on children and young people.

Learning point 9: Seeing beyond compliance/engagement – professionals should not take engagement from parents and young people as read that there are no further concerns.

What is being done by the PDSCP to address this?

Reassurance is being sought by the PDSCP that agencies consider this in their supervision with professionals.

Learning point 7: Professional bias – there may be an unconscious bias in the following ways: * parents who are also professionals * believing and accepting mother's versions of events and not checking with the father * perceptions around home ownership versus belonging to a housing association. The learning is that there could be professional bias or assumptions here. This could link to professionals looking more for protective factors and not recognizing the parents' own vulnerabilities. There may have also been different perceptions of levels of concern around dad having a car accident due to health episode rather than drink driving for example. Professionals are reminded to explore the possibility of self-neglect. [Neglect Assessment Toolkit - Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership \(pdscp.co.uk\)](#)

What is being done by the PDSCP to address this?

Reassurance is being sought from the PDSCP that professional bias training is offered by agencies and the PDSCP training team.

Learning point 5: Where potential hoarding has been identified, consideration of using the neglect tool which will include the clutter scale to better understand the extent of hoarding and the potential impact on children of all ages.

What is being done by the PDSCP to address this?

PDSCP training team to provide further free training on neglect to all agencies.

Learning point 6: Changes from paper to electronic systems may have presented a risk to the young person, but upon reflection we can see that this was not the case. We continue to recognize that excellent record keeping in all agencies is paramount in safeguarding children.

What is being done by the PDSCP to address this?

Reassurance is being sought from the PDSCP in relation to agencies' record keeping.

Learning Point 1: Voice of the child and their lived experience – professionals to be tenacious and curious in terms of speaking to everyone they need to and capturing the young person(s) lived experience.

What is being done by the PDSCP to address this?

All partners are to provide reassurance to the Partnership that children's lived experiences are effectively captured in the records and considered in practice. This could be achieved through dip sampling and audit. This might include evidence that children are seen alone or evidence of curious questioning.

Learning point 2: Professionals should be clear about what further information is required to inform their decision making and this should be evidenced in the case records.

What is being done by the PDSCP to address this?

Agencies to consider how this can be encouraged and evidenced within their case management system – this could be achieved through audit.

Learning point 3: It is important for professionals to consider when significant change happens what this may mean for the child or young person in relation to loss of established relationships and feelings of safety which could lead to increased vulnerability.

Professionals should be mindful of the key transition points for young people which could leave them more vulnerable.

Learning point 4: When considering referrals to Dorset Council Children's Services there should be recognition that an individual is still a child until 18 years of age and not before.

What is being done by the PDSCP to address this?

The Children's Advice and Duty (ChaD) service are holding reflective sessions with staff to remind them that all referrals to them for a child under the age of 18 should be duly considered and assessed.