



LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT BULLETIN – Learning Review

SUMMARY:

This Learning Review was commissioned by NSCB following concerns about the way agencies had worked together to protect a child following the death of his sibling. The death of the sibling was subject of a Serious Case Review, JN15, which was published on 26th October 2015. Following this death, the child's mother was detained under Section 3 of the Mental Health Act having suffered a severe psychotic illness. The Learning Review examined the effectiveness of multi-agency working as the medical interventions to treat mother, the requirement to safeguard the child and the Police investigation into the death continued in parallel.

Communication difficulties were exacerbated by an early decision not to proceed to a Child Protection Conference (CPC). The child's mother became well much sooner than was expected by all professionals involved, other than the mental health professionals who were treating her. This had implications in relation to her detention under the Mental Health Act. Mothers contact with sibling required management based on a multi-agency risk assessment. Once a CPC was held communication and planning was more effective.

KEY LEARNING

1. If a decision is made not to proceed to Initial Child Protection Conference within 15 days of the decision to start a S47 investigation, the rationale for this should be clearly recorded and communicated to other agencies involved.
2. Communication is vital to positive child protection practice. Professionals should remember the following: ***If there are questions – ask them. If there are reasons – explain them.***
3. Where disagreements exist between agencies about the appropriate response to concerns of abuse or neglect these need to be resolved. Those working with the family should make every effort to reach agreement about what to do. If this is not possible professionals need to be aware of their own agencies escalation policy and the NSCB [Resolving Professional Differences \(Escalation Procedure\)](#) should be used to involve Line Managers in achieving an agreed approach to safeguard the child.
4. If you are required to attend a Child Protection Conference you should you should familiarise yourself with the [Child Protection Conferences](#) chapter of the inter agency procedures to ensure you have sufficient understanding of the purpose of the meeting, and your role and responsibilities.
5. Written agreements and recordings about plans for contact need to be explicit about when they are to be reviewed and by whom.
6. All professionals should ensure that any legal implications of the actions of their agency are explicit and communicated to other agencies as necessary so that appropriate risk assessments can be undertaken.