



SUMMARY:

This family had contact with a number of services over an extended period of time in connection with the health needs of mother and indications of emotional, physical and sexual abuse of children within the household. Although concerns were raised on several occasions professionals involved with the family were unable to fully identify or understand the risks to the children. Following disclosures by the children of abuse in 2013 child protection medicals were undertaken showing signs of sexual abuse. A joint investigation followed and this led to an adult male being convicted of sexual offences.

KEY LEARNING:

1. 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. However, if this is not possible the NSCB Resolving Professional Differences (Escalation) Procedure should be used to involve Line Managers in achieving an agreed approach to safeguard the child.
2. Professionals working with adults and children in the same family need to communicate effectively and coordinate their actions. Information should be shared to provide a full understanding of the family and any risk of harm.
3. The on-call Consultant Paediatrician for child protection must be involved in strategy discussions to consider whether a paediatric assessment is required.
4. Written agreements with parents/carers are a useful tool for professionals working to safeguard children. Care should be taken not to over rely on such agreements and importantly there needs to be effective contingency planning in place and a robust approach to non-compliance.

IMPROVING PRACTICE

Here are some suggestions for improving practice:-

- Share this bulletin in team meetings and during supervision.
- Familiarise yourself with the NSCB [Resolving Professional Differences \(Escalation Procedure\)](#) and be clear about when and how you would use it.
- The [Child Protection Enquiries](#) chapter of the inter agency procedures provides detailed guidance on strategy discussions and meetings and how to arrange a medical assessment.
- The NSCB provides a range of training opportunities which are relevant to this review and can be booked via the [NSCB website](#)

The full report regarding this Serious Case Review is available in the [Learning from Practice](#) section of the NSCB website. The online [NSCB inter agency safeguarding procedures](#) provide detailed guidance across the range of safeguarding issues.