

SCSP Spotlight Review

SR3 LEARNING BRIEFING



In 2022, two children's cases were referred for a Spotlight Review.

In the first case, the child was placed into foster care and mother was sectioned. In the second, the children were bereaved by the suicide of their parent.

Although both involved very different circumstances, both cases were characterised by impact on the children from poor parental mental health. This included inappropriate supervision, poor home conditions and the children's physical and emotional needs not being met.

There were also links to other vulnerabilities such as domestic abuse and substance misuse. One of the families spoke English as a second language and had moved to the area having fled domestic abuse elsewhere in England.

In one of the cases, there was a significant history of involvement with statutory services and the children had recently been placed on a CIN plan having de-escalated from Child Protection.

What were the key issues?

- In cases of domestic abuse, be wary of placing onus on the victim to make changes which may place them/the children at greater risk
- A robust multi agency response is needed when a parent with known mental health issues is not engaging with specialist services
- Children and families who move area due to domestic abuse are particularly isolated and vulnerable, as are families who speak English as an additional language
- Plans at the point of step down need to be clear including actions to take if further concerns arise

What do good systems and practice look like?

- Consider a child and family's support network and how they can help in cases of poor parental mental health
- Identify ways of providing practical support for parents to attend appointments/arrange childcare
- Explore support options for the child of parents with poor mental health, e.g. therapy offered through school or specialist support, Young Carers referral
- Investigate and corroborate statements made by parents and do not accept these at face value e.g. when there is an abusive partner/regarding appointment attendance
- At the point of step down, agree who will continue to support the family and have a clear plan with action owners to follow in the event of concerns resurfacing

What can practitioners do?

- Look after your own emotional wellbeing – seek support within your own agency or externally if you need to
 - Familiarise yourself with the SR2 Learning Briefing regarding effective ways to work with families who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL)
 - Always consider the 'so what?' factor and the potential short and long term implications on a child's health and wellbeing if things do not change for them
 - Work closely with other agencies to corroborate parents' accounts of events and circumstances
- For further information, including learning briefings and partnership activities, visit:

<https://www.sandwellcsp.org.uk/key-safeguarding-issues/>