



## Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel: Webinars June 2022

Between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022, the independent Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel hosted five webinars to cascade the learning from its national review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson. This short paper sets out to capture the key themes and answer some frequently asked questions in that were posed in the anonymous forum accompanying each session.

### Multi-Agency Child Protection Units

*Q: Will the proposed units replace the MASH (where they exist) or exist within the MASH?*

- It is important to emphasise that this recognition will necessarily require further work on the details of implementation. Our recommendation about Child Protection Units are now being considered, along with other national review recommendations, government. The proposals build on and extend some of the best practice across the country.
- The Multi-Agency Child Protection Unit model we are proposing would be separate to, but closely connected to the MASH (where they exist). The proposed unit's function would include responsibility for child protection strategy meetings, section 47 enquiries, and oversight of children on child protection plans. They would be able to provide specialist advice to local managers and practitioners, include local authority children's social care teams (including MASH) and other agencies.
- Whilst having a distinctly different function to that of MASHs, the proposed units would need to work closely with MASHs or other types of 'front doors'. It will also be important to learn from the MASH approach to multi agency working. What is also clear is that success will inevitably be depending on the quality of the implementation, including in terms of resourcing, shared leadership and having a common vision.
- The national review report was also very clear about the need for early adopter /pathfinders to enable this new approach to be tried, tested and developed.

*Q: What agencies will be part of the new multi-disciplinary teams? Will sharing mechanisms be strengthened to pull in information from outside the teams?*

- The new units would be comprised of professionals across children's social care, health and policing in a single co-located team led by someone with a specialist child protection social work background. We have deliberately not specified the exact practitioner make-up to allow for flexibility in implementation. However, we believe that there should be a role for schools, adult mental health, domestic abuse specialists.

*Q: How will these new units be resourced (workforce and finance)?*

- It will be important to take into account the workforce pressures already facing the multi-agency child protection system, and recognise that implementing new ways of working requires additional resource. We hope that Government will look



to provide start-up funding to support the development of the new model, whilst recognising that ongoing operation will need to be funded locally.

*Q: Is the sole purpose of the units to conduct S47 enquiries?*

- We recommend that the unit's functions would include:
  - providing specialist child protection advice and consultancy across the local multi-agency system;
  - convening and leading child protection Strategy discussions;
  - undertaking section 47 enquiries;
  - organising/ undertaking Child Protection Medicals;
  - undertaking Achieving Best Evidence interviews;
  - chairing child protection conferences;
  - overseeing child protection planning and review;
  - supporting the implementation of child protection plans;
  - advising other multi-agency and local authority children's social care teams (including MASH/ front door, Children in Need, more specialist teams such as disabled children's teams, children in care services) on whether a child and family should be on a Child Protection pathway;
  - recommending applications to court for removal and providing expert multidisciplinary evidence to court where necessary.

## **Peer Support and National standards**

*Q: Does the Panel endorse the idea of accredited training for partnership leads who sit in LSCPs?*

- While the Panel is not proposing accredited training, we have recommended that a national peer support capability for Safeguarding Partners is developed.
- We know that peer support is highly valued by those that have used it and it can be powerful in providing support and challenge. For example, through the local authority sector-led improvement programme, a genuine partnership between local and central government has brought together the best practitioners and leaders in children's social care to improve the system leading to a greater understanding of the conditions needed for excellent practice to flourish. The College of Policing facilitates similar organisational support from peers to help understand issues, solve problems and try new initiatives. The support is inclusive, promotes diversity of thinking and is founded on the key principles of respect, shared responsibility and mutual agreement of what is helpful.
- The operation of this model needs to be worked through with partners but we believe that Panel could play a vital role in helping to identify good practice and common challenges faced by Safeguarding Partners across the country, and facilitating peer to peer support between Safeguarding Partners.

*Q: Is there any indication that Govt will accept the principle of establishing national practice standards? If yes, how soon will these be developed?*

- A letter from the Education Secretary to Annie Hudson with an initial response to the review has been [published on gov.uk](#), which outlines that a more detailed response on each of the recommendations is forthcoming.



## Strategic Leadership and Sharing Learning

*Q: What opportunities will there be for those involved in projects relating with MASH to share their learning locally and nationally to feed into developing the new standards?*

- The Panel has recommended that Central Government should sponsor a cross-Departmental programme to design, develop and implement the new model, working in partnership with local areas. However, we would welcome all those with learning to share to send an email to the Panel Mailbox ([Mailbox.NationalReviewPanel@education.gov.uk](mailto:Mailbox.NationalReviewPanel@education.gov.uk)) and we will ensure it is sent onto the relevant officials.

*Q: Have we reviewed where children have been safeguarded well and what led to that?*

- The Panel's focus on the most serious incidents of abuse and neglect means that it has a very specific perspective examining situations where something has gone drastically, and sometimes fatally, wrong for children.
- Though we ground our work in the serious incidents we see, we consulted several stakeholders on the national review and commissioned additional behavioural insights work in order to look at child protection practice more widely, including some of the very good and strong practice taking place everyday. Appendix C in the review includes a bibliography of academic work that includes examples of good practice.

*Q: Will there be a link to nursery managers as well as schools? Nurseries often have safeguarding concerns that need to be taken seriously.*

- Schools, colleges and other educational settings, including nurseries, have a pivotal role to play in protecting children. At present, Working Together (2018) expects Safeguarding Partners to name schools, colleges and other educational settings as 'relevant agencies'. However, it is then for safeguarding partners to determine how they engage and involve educational settings overall, and individual institutions specifically, in their local arrangements.
- The Panel believes the involvement of schools, colleges and other education providers, including nurseries, needs to be reconsidered and there must be full involvement of schools and education services at both the strategic and operational level.

## Conducting the review and criminal proceedings

*Q: The national review had the benefit of starting post-conviction therefore family and practitioner interviews could take place as people were no longer witnesses. Would you have managed the 6-month timescale if the court case had not concluded?*

- We acknowledge that the national review benefitted from the criminal proceedings having concluded, as that allowed us to utilise evidence from the court case and speak with witnesses. However, we would still endorse the six-month timescale for LCSPRs and feel it is particularly important as it allows learning to get into the system quickly.



- The CPS have published protocol for Liaison and Information Exchange when criminal proceedings coincide with Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews in England, which we would urge people to refer to: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/protocol-liaison-and-information-exchange-when-criminal-proceedings-coincide-child>
- Additionally, we recommend seeing up a meeting with the SIO of any case as early as possible and planning together from the start. The Panel's current [national review into children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings](#) is being undertaken at the same time as a significant criminal investigation. We plan to share our learning from this process, particularly how we are working with the police, so areas can benefit from this when undertaking LCSPRs.

*Q: Both these cases are based on physical abuse, do you think this has biased the solutions you propose?*

- The Panel has a unique perspective on the quality and effectiveness of safeguarding and child protection practice in England; its evidence base of over 1,500 reviews of serious incidents since its inception in 2018, alongside a range of thematic reviews that it has commissioned, positions it well to discern and analyse patterns in practice involving both intra and extra-familial harm to children. We have grounded our recommendations against all the cases we see, including other forms of abuse and neglect.
- We also pick up emerging themes for further analysis and understanding. For example, the Panel is committed to understanding and addressing better the impact of the intersection of a range of issues relating to diversity, culture, gender and ethnicity on practice with children and families.
- We envisage that the new multi-agency child protection unit's functions would include all section 47 enquiries relating to both intra-familial and extra-familial harm, physical and non-physical abuse.

*Q: Does your review fully explore the impact of COVID-19. I was surprised not to see recommendations of what to do if lockdowns occur in future?*

- The Panel has previously published a [practice briefing](#) on the effect of COVID-19, which highlighted its impact in our [Annual Report 2020](#).

## **Domestic Abuse**

*Q: How will children as victims of domestic abuse under the new DA Act be safeguarded in a different way? Under the new definition both Arthur and Star would have been classed as victims.*

- The Panel will shortly publish a practice briefing on domestic abuse, which has a significant section on the new Domestic Abuse Act and recommendations for safeguarding partners and practitioners. The briefing has been prepared in consultation with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and contains several examples of good practice in working with child victims of domestic abuse.

## **Bruising**



*Q: Children often make disclosures of injuries but because no bruising is visible it's assumed that no injury has been sustained. How do we challenge this? Should we be asking to see the child alone or to complete a child protection medical? What does this mean for visual indicators of bruising on black and Asian children?*

- The Panel will shortly publish a practice briefing on bruising in non-mobile infants, which includes the latest guidance and research, as well as recommendations for safeguarding partners and practitioners.

### **Malicious referrals**

*Q: What due diligence should be done to ensure calls from extended family and friends aren't deemed malicious? Is there any good practice or research to share in this area?*

- It is the Panel's view that referrals should not be deemed malicious without a full and thorough multi-agency assessment, including talking with the referrer, and agreement with the appropriate manager. Indeed, the Panel believes that the use of such language has many attendant risks and would therefore discourage its usage as a professional conclusion.