

1

Background

Child A and their sibling were placed with emergency foster carers in November 2019 following the identification of concerns which led to a breakdown in their adoptive placement. The Local Authority obtained shared parental responsibility via care proceedings, and the children were placed with a newly registered long-term foster carer, with frequent respite placements required. In February 2020, the siblings had their first and only respite care stay with respite foster carers R. At the same time, Adult V, who was under a When I'm Ready arrangement, was placed in the same respite placement. In May 2020, Child A disclosed that Adult V had sexually abused them.



CYSUR 4 2020

Extended Child Practice Review



2

The Hybrid Review

It was felt that there was learning to be obtained from exploring the support agencies provided to both Child A and Adult V. Both Child A and the vulnerable young adult were reliant on the Local Authority for their care and wellbeing. As a result, both a Child Practice Review and an Adult Practice Review have been conducted, under the umbrella of a hybrid model permitting the lived experiences of both Child A and Adult V to be explored in their own right. A Practice Review Report and 7 Minute Briefing have both been produced in respect of Adult V, and these are hyperlinked for convenience. Adult V's review is titled "CWMPAS 2 2020".

7

Improving Systems and Practice

- Health professionals should be reminded to document the time and dates when health assessments are undertaken.
- New foster care placements should be furnished with information about children's health background to allow them better insights into health needs that have been previously raised by other carers.
- Local Authority to give assurances that childcare teams are fully consulted and central in decision making for respite provision and matching - and policies are being followed.
- Clarify if the regional Resolution of Professional Differences protocol can be used for internal disputes.

3

Key Themes: Placement Shortage/Complex Needs

Significant challenges were highlighted via this review in respect of shortage of foster and respite placements. Within a context of increasing complexity of need being seen in respect of children and young adults, this creates a complex challenge in terms of identifying suitable, needs-led placements for children and young adults.

Within this review, it was considered that had there not been a shortage of experienced foster carers, Child A and their sibling may not have needed respite care at that point in time. Additionally, respite provision for an adult under When I'm Ready should not have been needed within a foster placement.

6

Improving Systems and Practice

- Reinforce via supervision, training, and communication to staff the importance of escalating concerns and the whistleblowing process when there are concerns about decisions being made concerning risk and safeguarding.
- Clarify the decision-making process for deciding respite care where needs of children and foster carers conflict.
- Ensure social work staff in the foster care service fully understand risk management and safeguarding of vulnerable children to ensure matching decisions are made with full knowledge of children's history.
- Clinicians should follow up promptly when they do not have access to a complete medical history.

5

Identified Good Practice

- The multi-agency response to Child A's disclosure was swift and robust, and a timely conviction achieved
- Practice was child-focused and included joint visits
- Child A and their sibling were able to continue being placed together
- The children's school provided excellent support to the children, and they were able to remain within the same school
- The social worker supported and advocated for Child A and their sibling
- The children's voice was heard during care proceedings
- Health reports reflect that the person who brought Child A to appointments was documented, an in-person health assessment was completed in full, and Child A was regularly reviewed

4

Key Themes: Matching and Placement Decisions

The social workers supporting Child A and Adult V, as well as foster carers, had been concerned about the risks present in relation to the agreed placements and in particular Adult V's history of harmful sexual behaviour. While policies and procedures were in place to facilitate risk-informed matching, these policies were not followed in respect of Child A and Adult V.

Informal processes developed within the fostering service were not compliant with policy, and inappropriate pressure was applied to respite carers to agree a placement they had concerns about and the risks posed. Furthermore, insufficient levels of information about children's needs and associated risk was shared.