

# 7 POINT BRIEFING

## 1

### SUMMARY

Wakefield Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) undertook a Multi-Agency Learning Circle concerning three siblings who had experienced a number of adverse childhood experiences, most notably, but not exclusive to, significant incidents of domestic abuse. The areas the learning circle considered included the following:

1. Understanding the lived experience of children living with domestic abuse
2. Impacts of parental mental ill-health and alcohol use on children
3. Quality of joint working between services
4. Parental separation as a protective factor from domestic abuse

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### WHO ARE THE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILY?

All three siblings, who are of secondary school age, live with their dad. The siblings' mum tragically died of an apparent suicide.

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### SUMMARY OF THE INCIDENT

The children experienced a range of adverse childhood experiences for a sustained period which included being victims of domestic abuse between their parents, parental mental-ill health, parental alcohol use, witnessing parental self-harm and experiencing the death of a parent through apparent suicide. The children and family were known to a range of services at the time of mum's death, however engagement with all services was sporadic throughout. In relation to domestic abuse, in the five years prior to mum's death, there were nine known domestic abuse incidents – three high risk, five medium risk and one standard risk, along with two respective referrals to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).

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### KEY POINTS AND ANALYSIS FROM THE REVIEW

- Services reflected on the recurring pattern of parents not consenting or withdrawing consent and engagement for support for the children and family. It was not clear within records as to how services recognised this pattern, reassessed the risk to the children when non-statutory support was declined, or sought to be creative in working with initial resistance with a view to supporting the family in accessing services. Although there was no housing needs identified, utilising the relationship Wakefield District Housing (WDH) had with mum may have provided an opportunity for additional support from partner services to have been explored further through these means
- It was recognised the children's lived experience and needs could have been better understood. There was a high level of contact during some periods with services and although domestic abuse was captured within assessments, it appears more so as an analysis rather than something which could have been reflected to parents, as to what the children were being exposed to. The Domestic Abuse Stalking and Honour Based Abuse (DASH) assessments when viewed collectively, captured the cumulative risks for the children
- When parents reported they were separated, records suggested this was viewed as a protective factor in respect of the risk of domestic abuse reducing. Due to the history of the parent's relationship having periods of separation followed by reconciliation and having three children whether they were stating they were still in a relationship or not bared little relevance to the risk of domestic abuse, given dad continued to be a prominent factor in their lives. In addition, findings from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) and other domestic abuse research evidences separation as an aspect which can heighten and not reduce the risk
- There appeared to be absences of professional curiosity and challenge from services during the instances when offers of support were declined by parents and triangulating what was being self-reported from the family with partner services
- Information sharing between services was mixed with some records highlighting good examples and others where there was a reflection this could have been improved. At the time of mum's death, the children, dad and mum were all registered at different GPs. Within the children's and dad's GP records it was unknown that the children's mum and dad's wife had died. SWYPFT reflected on the ongoing work in ensuring that adult mental health services have a think family approach when assessing the potential impact on children, when a parent who is accessing and wishes to stop treatment

- Both schools had positive relationships with the children, with primary school capturing direct quotes as to how the domestic abuse was impacting them. It was unclear as to how these statements were used by partner services to inform assessments and decisions about what the most appropriate support was required
- Assessments captured there was a wider family support network in place. On reflection services recognised the use of formalising the support of wider family and utilising this network more clearly within safety planning at the initial stages of intervention would have further enhanced this
- Support from Turning Point's Hidden Harm, which provides support for children who are being impacted by parental mental-ill health and substance use, was positive with the worker forming good relationships with the children

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### WHAT WILL WSCP DO WITH THESE FINDINGS?

- The review generated individual, group and system recommendations which are being overseen and implemented by WSCP multi-agency subgroups which are represented by services who work or volunteer with children and families
- WSCP will share the findings of the learning circle via a 7-Point Briefing and ask all services to share this with workforces as appropriate

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### NEXT STPES

The findings of the learning circle has been approved by WSCP and work is underway in implementing the learning.

## 7

### RESOURCES

There are a range of national and local resources, guidance, and training in relation to safeguarding children on the [WSCP website](#).

