



Dudley Safeguarding  
People Partnership

# Child Safeguarding Practice Review Practitioner Briefing

## Risk of intra-familial sexual abuse

### WHO SHOULD READ THE BRIEFING?

Any practitioner and manager whose work brings them into contact with children, young people and their families. For further information on our safeguarding review visit the Dudley safeguarding website.

### HOW WE DID THE REVIEW

Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership considered a case where there were known sex offenders in the wider family, whilst no disclosure of sexual abuse had been made it was recognised that lessons could be learned from reviewing this case.

An independent reviewer was commissioned to work alongside local professionals to review the case and identify single and multi-agency learning.

### OVERVIEW OF LEARNING

Learning has been identified in the following areas:

1. Information sharing about risky adults with all those working with or responsible for the children, including the children's parent/s.

When there are adults in a family who may pose a sexual risk to children, it is essential that all the professionals working with the children in the family are aware of this. It is also important to ensure that those with parental responsibility are aware of, and understand the risk.

2. Awareness of the likelihood that the children, family members and professionals may have been groomed.

When assessing the ability of a parent to protect their children from a risky adult in the wider family, there needs to be an understanding of the relationship, contact and whether the adults, as well as the children, have been groomed.

3. If there is no conviction for offences against children, there is a need to seek, share and consider other available evidence of sexual abuse. There can still be a risk to children from an individual of concern
4. When the procedure for organised and complex abuse should be used, to include mapping in large and complex families.

Child protection procedures need to be used when information is shared that a person of concern is having contact with children. If a large family across several households appear to be at risk, consideration should be given to using the procedure for organised and complex abuse

5. The need for curiosity about a child's behaviour which includes the consideration of sexual abuse.

It can be difficult to safeguard children when they do not make explicit allegations of sexual abuse. Professionals need to be curious about a child's behaviour and robustly consider other indicators that they may be a victim of sexual abuse.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Partnership to seek assurance about the use of the complex and organised abuse procedures in cases where there is a risk of child sexual abuse in the wider family from a dangerous adult/s
2. The Partnership to ask the national CSPR panel to consult with the government regarding whether the risk to children in care of technology being used to locate and contact them can be included for consideration in the Online Harm Bill currently going through parliament. In the meantime, the Partnership needs to ask local agencies to consider how they can ensure that the relevant professionals and carers of children in care are aware of this risk
3. The partnership to request that agencies consider how they can improve professional awareness and practice in respect of:
  - how perpetrators may conceal their abuse
  - how a non-abusing parent/carer may be complicit or unaware of abuse
  - how to work with children when they do not disclose abuse but are likely to have been exposed to child sex abuse
4. That the learning from this review is shared with the West Midlands MAPPA coordinator and the West Midlands Probation Head of Public Protection. A request should be made that information about risky adults in families such as this is shared widely via the MAPPA process, and for assurance to be provided that this will now happen

## MORE INFORMATION

The extent of child sex abuse in our society means that all professionals should have an open mind about whether sexual abuse could be an issue in any family they work with. They must understand that sexual abuse can happen to very young children, to boys as well as girls, to disabled children, to children from all ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, and that it is often perpetrated by close family members. All partner agencies need to encourage reflective practice and supervision that encourages professionals to think about sexual abuse. The opportunity should also be taken to ensure that information about the extent and signs of intrafamilial sexual abuse is widely shared across professional networks.

Regional Child Protection Procedures for West Midlands:

- [Procedure for Organised and Complex Abuse](#)
- [Persons posing a risk to children](#)
- [Children exposed to abuse through digital media](#)

Dudley's Community Safety Partnership's Safe and Sound website includes information and links relating to [Online Safety](#)

Further information for practitioners relating to learning from reviews is available via the DSPP [Learning Zone](#)