



Cheshire East Safeguarding
Children's Partnership

LCSPR Child L

7 point review summary

1. The review

Was commissioned to consider learning about how professionals work together to keep children safe where there are concerns about child sexual exploitation (CSE) and intra-familial harm (harm within the home by a parent or carer) and what happens when children make disclosures of harm.

Of significance was the long-standing family history and behaviours associated with domestic abuse, adult substance misuse, adult violence, and criminality.

The review included direct contact with the young person and with professionals involved at the time.

2. The young person

Was known as Child L, was female aged 13 at the time of the significant incident. She was subject to an Interim Supervision Order and Child Protection Plan. The incident that triggered the review was a disclosure of Rape, the perpetrator was a known Sex Offender.

Child L made two disclosures of physical harm by her mother's partner in the home.

Child L made three allegations of rape and one of sexual assault outside of the home.

For Child L there were reports of missing, involvement in anti-social behaviours including fire setting, cannabis, and alcohol use. There were also worries and instances of self-harm.

3. Agency involvement

Child L was visible and known to a wide range of services who were involved with her and the family. There was a multi-agency Child Protection Plan in place for over two years. A range of single-agency and specialist practitioners tried hard to engage with Child L and the family and included interventions from statutory, universal, specialist and voluntary services.

4. Practice themes

The review reflected on four key areas that helped the Partnership understand what had happened and what this meant for Child L.

This means for practice that:

- There must be a full appreciation of the **child's lived experience** that understands vulnerability, harm, and trauma and how they can make children more susceptible to grooming, abuse and exploitation.
- The **multi-agency response to disclosures of harm** must attend to possible underlying trauma and how it can impact behaviours and mental health.
- The **co-existence of adult issues** in the family home such as domestic abuse, violence, and problematic drug use significantly increases the risk of abuse and requires robust information sharing and a collaborative whole-family response to keep victims safe.
- There must be a **stronger multi-agency understanding of the vulnerabilities and risks associated with CSE**, identifying the early signs of CSE including grooming, missing, extra-familial harm and abuse. Victim-blaming language was a barrier to understanding needs.



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5. Key learning

- 1 The importance of appreciating the child's lived experience and the cumulative impact of adversity, harm, and trauma.
- 2 Children and young people who make disclosures of abuse and harm must be listened to with the intent to do something and consider other behavioural responses to harm. Children should not be blamed for their own exploitation.
- 3 The significance of sharing information through a multi-agency lens. The importance of critical reflection and challenge.
- 4 Develop systems and practice that are domestic abuse aware, and trauma-informed.
- 5 The importance of identifying a trusted adult with vulnerable young people and building relationships. Recognising the safety that school can provide for children experiencing intra and extra-familial harm.
- 6 Increased awareness of the signs of child sexual exploitation and the processes to access specialist guidance/support.
- 7 Ensuring disclosures of harm have a statutory multi-agency response and include consideration of health and wellbeing needs.
- 8 Developing a whole family /think family response to support understanding of risk where there are complex adult issues.
- 9 Recognising the importance of critical thinking through good reflective supervision.

6. Recommendations for the Partnership include

- 1 Strengthening practitioner skills to listen and respond to verbal and non-verbal disclosures of abuse.
- 2 Consider Child Protection medicals in multi-agency Strategy meetings to ensure a child's health and well-being needs are fully considered.
- 3 To work closely with the Safer Cheshire East Partnership, who are reviewing the 2022 National CSPR Panel's practice briefing on safeguarding children where there is domestic abuse, to ensure the learning from this review is included.
- 4 Ensure practitioners and managers have a developed understanding of child sexual exploitation and extra-familial harm.
- 5 Recognise the role of education as a key protective factor where there is a risk of exclusion through the use of advocacy and professional challenge.
- 6 To provide clear leadership and challenge about victim-blaming language.
- 7 Ensure changes to service provision support the continuity of relationships.

7. Access to the report

To view the full report a request should be made to Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership. There is a **Learning Briefing Child Sexual Exploitation Responding to Disclosures of abuse and harm** associated with this review and can be found here: [Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews](#)