

**Quality, Standards and Performance**

**Children’s Services**

**Quality Assurance Learning Event - 25 May 2021**

**Introduction**

Familial or Intrafamilial sexual abuse refers to sexual abuse that occurs within the family. In this form of abuse, a family member involves a child in (or exposes a child to) sexual behaviours or activities. The ‘family member’ may not be a blood relative, but could be someone who is considered ‘part of the family,’ such as a godparent or very close friend.

The Crown Prosecution Service Guidelines (2013) on the Sexual Offences Act 2003, state: ‘These offences reflect the modern family unit and takes account of situations where someone is living within the same household as a child and assuming a position of trust or authority over that child, as well as relationships defined by blood ties, adoption, fostering, marriage or living together as partners.’

A learning event was organised to discuss practice issues arising from child A who is open to the Help and Protection team and subject to a Child Protection Plan. Child A is 1 year and 7 months old and lives with his mother aged 19. Child A’s father is a care leaver and is open to the Leaving Care team. Child A’s father has a historical conviction of sexually assaulting an 8 year old girl, and a current allegation of a sexual assault against a 17 year old girl.

A central theme in this case is sexual abuse. The aim of the event was to examine Buckinghamshire Children’s Services approach and response to Child Sexual Abuse using a current case as an example, and apply the learning to other cases where there are worries about Child Sexual Abuse.

All the practitioners across the children’s system in the local authority took part in this learning event as follows:

* Managers in Help and Protection and Leaving Care teams
* Child Protection Advisor service
* Social workers and personal advisors involved in the case
* The quality assurance service
* Auditor
* Principal social worker

**Purpose**

The outcomes agreed for this learning event were as follows:

* To develop further understanding of Familial Child Sexual Abuse
* To explore and consider how risks of the offenders are assessed and managed
* To explore and consider how non offenders are assessed as the protective factor
* To consider how this is evidenced in practice and records
* To consider whether we have sufficient tools, resources and training for our staff.

In preparation for the learning event practitioners were asked to think about the following:

* Can a child sex offender ever be considered a safe parent?
* Can a family member be protective if they don’t believe the risk?
* Can a partner be protective if they stay in a relationship with a child sex offender?
* Does the child voice always count? i.e. they want unsupervised contact so we should allow it?
* Do bail conditions or Licence conditions keep children safe?

**Key areas of exploration**

* Consideration of the lived experience and history of each parent in the context of the current worries was not holistic.
* Social worker and personal advisor in regular discussion about the case but there is a not a shared understanding of the risks.
* Father’s assessment by YOS in a previous Local Authority assessed him as very high sexual harm risk if he moved to Buckinghamshire. Father moved to Buckinghamshire despite this.
* Although father is not on the sex offender register, he completed the Sexual Behaviour programme, how effective was this considering there is a further allegation from another female?
* Did we do enough to explore the recent allegation in respect of the 17 year female victim – no strategy discussion took place. Police have not been challenged in relation to sharing information about the investigation.
* Based on the pattern of the parents’ relationship and both being young, will they re-unite and how will we assess that mother can be protective? Mother does not believe the allegation against father.
* Maternal grandparent is minimising the risks father poses and is supervising contact, had we considered whether this was a safe option?
* Records indicate that father’s support network was mother and her family. How does that impact on the parental relationship and safety planning for Child A?
* Mother has worked well with the Family Partnership Nurse around relationships, does this make her a safe parent?
* Mother has completed the Freedom Programme online. How have we evidenced her understanding of the impact of domestic abuse on her and how will she keep Child A safe now and in the future?
* Mother is showing some insight into the worries, however, can she sustain this view and how will we will assess/evidence this?
* What is the likely long term impact of father’s contact with his son given the risks.
* Safety plan needs to reflect the worries and is specific.
* No real assessment of the sexual risk from father towards his child undertaken.
* Father’s presents as compliant, is that because he is a care leaver and aware of how and what he needs to say?
* An audit of the case was completed in April 2021 as part of the monthly audit programme was not challenging enough.
* The chronology is out of date.
* Can the child protection conference framework provide a safety net and highlighting practice issues where required?

**The following actions were agreed on this specific case:**

1. Convene further strategy meeting
2. Gather details of 17 year old who is alleged victim (is she a Bucks child?) to open referral if confirmed otherwise refer to relevant local authority
3. Review contact arrangements
4. Review safety plan
5. Add clear management oversight with evidence of impact on Child A with supervision to follow which includes reflection on permanency planning
6. Chronology and case summary to be updated
7. Risk Assessment of offender
8. Ability to protect assessment to be undertaken
9. Review history for both parents and current risks for Child A
10. Clarity on information from out of county YOS about their risk assessment
11. Explore father’s views on engaging with services and impact on his son
12. To use curiosity to gather information about parents’ relationship -push/pull factors
13. To find out why father has moved back to Buckinghamshire.

**Learning**

* A risk assessment should be undertaken of offenders
* Ability to protect assessments are required of the protector(s)
* Evidence that professional curiosity is applied in all cases
* Thinking the unthinkable is applied in all cases
* Name it… and record it… Clear rational… As a manager ensure oversight and grip is present
* Consider risk posed to all children that alleged perpetrator could have contact with, locally, nationally and internationally.
* Over optimism should be checked
* Self-reporting by adults is not believed without a curious and open mind.
* History is considered i.e domestic abuse between offender and protector

**Learning and Development to support practitioners**

To support and assist practitioners information, guidance and tools were provide and these can be accessed in the [Local Resources folder in Tri.x](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proceduresonline.com%2Fbuckinghamshire%2Fchservices%2Flocal_resources.html&data=04%7C01%7Cchhaya.tailor%40buckinghamshire.gov.uk%7Cce40ad6032434981aa1b08d921e0851f%7C7fb976b99e2848e180861ddabecf82a0%7C0%7C0%7C637578070890084577%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=RDkNTLOSXtLMy2sHFDT8yPbC%2BLom5MsPoKZx8QK%2FliU%3D&reserved=0) and include:

* A [support booklet](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fproceduresonline.com%2Ftrixcms%2Fmedia%2F6647%2Fonline-abuse-family-pack.pdf&data=04%7C01%7Cchhaya.tailor%40buckinghamshire.gov.uk%7Cce40ad6032434981aa1b08d921e0851f%7C7fb976b99e2848e180861ddabecf82a0%7C0%7C0%7C637578070890094571%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=HBc8Q9n3KU1iPEdGSosm1PWkq4Yo5xFTa8%2B2losFu78%3D&reserved=0) that we can share with families where familial sexual abuse has been identified as a risk.
* A [crib sheet](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fproceduresonline.com%2Ftrixcms%2Fmedia%2F6648%2Finternet-sexual-offending-crib-sheet.docx&data=04%7C01%7Cchhaya.tailor%40buckinghamshire.gov.uk%7Cce40ad6032434981aa1b08d921e0851f%7C7fb976b99e2848e180861ddabecf82a0%7C0%7C0%7C637578070890094571%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=hv%2BFfFMfddGK8tywEyfP6zvyk5%2BNTtq9HbmBdgU9rIs%3D&reserved=0) about internet sexual offending to use with families. This is particularly relevant for the MASH when dealing with new referrals.
* A [template](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fproceduresonline.com%2Ftrixcms%2Fmedia%2F6646%2Ftemplate-for-ability-to-protect-assessments.docx&data=04%7C01%7Cchhaya.tailor%40buckinghamshire.gov.uk%7Cce40ad6032434981aa1b08d921e0851f%7C7fb976b99e2848e180861ddabecf82a0%7C0%7C0%7C637578070890104570%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=RZ1%2B%2BwqbwbV%2BMUq5qaFzP2LPJhRBDADsGvXeea1CpJA%3D&reserved=0) (with guidance included) on undertaking assessments on non-abusing parents/carers to assess their ability to protect.
* Training on Child Sexual Abuse has been commissioned and practitioners wishing to attend can book via SAP.