

PRACTICE AND LEARNING BULLETIN

October 2021



Welcome to Octobers edition of the Practice and Learning Bulletin.



Hidden Men is the area of practice that is our focus of the month; workshops are available throughout October to look at why this remains an issue in our work locally but also nationally. Men not being included in our assessments and interventions has been a recurring theme and features in serious case reviews. These workshops are for all service areas.



October is **Black History** month; this year's theme is "**proud to be**" – this is a great opportunity to explore Black history month with our children and young people and help them to get involved.



Fabricated and Induced Illness is a highly complex issue that is visited in our 3rd focus article. National Guidance has recently been issued which as a practice issue we need to be aware of.



As usual there are lots of **training opportunities** coming up – please book a place and record your Continual Professional Development and discuss in your supervision.

If there is anything you would like to see included in the bulletin or wish to contribute, please contact me at Traci.taylor@bradford.gov.uk

Best wishes Traci

Principal Social worker/Service Manager





ON PRACTICE

HIDDEN MEN

bulletin but this continues to be something that comes up as a theme for learning in all the I am revisiting the theme of **Hidden Men**; I did a feature on this subject in an earlier edition of the auditing that we are doing. The mandatory workshop for this month will look at how it is important to remember that men play a significant role and influence in children's lives that they care for. However, they are often ignored in our assessments and interventions and the focus is solely on the quality of the care given by the female parent of carer.

In NSPCC research into this subject they found that there are two main categories of 'hidden men'

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- Men who posed a risk to the child which resulted in them suffering harm
- Men, for example estranged fathers, who were capable of protecting and nurturing the child but were overlooked by professionals.

Learning From Serious Case Reviews

Risk Factors for Hidden Men in Case Reviews:

Lack of information sharing between adults' and children's services: Professionals involved with men who are fathers (such as substance misuse workers and probation officers) do not tend to share information about potential risks with other professionals supporting the children and partners of those men. This may be because they are unaware the men have contact with their children. Consequently, practitioners depend entirely on parents to share this information, which they may or may not do.

Relying too much on mothers for essential information: Professionals sometimes rely too much on mothers to tell them about men involved in their children's lives. If mothers are putting their own needs first, they may not be honest about the risk these men pose to their children. Professionals do not always talk enough to other people involved in a child's life, such as the mother's estranged partner(s), siblings, extended family and friends. This can result in them missing crucial information and failing to spot inconsistencies in the mother's account.

Not wishing to appear judgmental about parents' personal relationships: Professionals can be reluctant to judge the decisions parents make about their personal and sexual relationships. However, this may mean that we ignore the risks that might be posed to children by men who are in short-term, casual relationships with the mothers.

Overlooking the ability of estranged fathers to provide safe care for their children: Failing to identify and / or engage with fathers ignores their fundamental importance in a child's emotional and psychological development. When a vulnerable child's needs are not being met by



their mother, an estranged father may be able to provide the protection and stability that the child needs.



Learning for improving practice

Identifying the men in the child's life

- During pregnancy and after birth, make active enquiries about the child's father, the mother's relationships and any adults in contact with the child.
- Record these details.
- Identify and carry out checks on any new adults who have significant contact with vulnerable children. Always clarify who the members of a household are each time you visit a family.
- Be aware that some individuals will have a number of aliases. Try to find out what these are and carry out checks accordingly. You might also receive names which are incorrectly spelt. Make sure you carry out checks which allow for different spellings of a surname.
- In an assessment, always put the child's needs before those of an adult.
- It can be difficult to get mothers to open up and discuss their partners' involvement in their children's lives. Supervisors should support practitioners to find ways to engage with mothers and build trust.
- Supervisors also need to offer guidance and training on working with fathers / male carers, monitor fathers' engagement with services and evaluate how effective direct work with them is.

Involving fathers

- From the very beginning, emphasise to parents how crucial the father's role is to the child's wellbeing.
- Encourage fathers to attend ante-natal appointments and classes. Make appointments for times convenient to them (such as evenings).
- Involve fathers and male carers in assessments. Ask them directly about risky behaviours such as drug and alcohol use and offer them services based on their needs.
- Make sure fathers and male carers (including those who are not directly involved in mothers' and children's lives) know about concerns relating to their child. Consult them about plans, invite them to child protection conferences and include them on core groups

Men as protectors

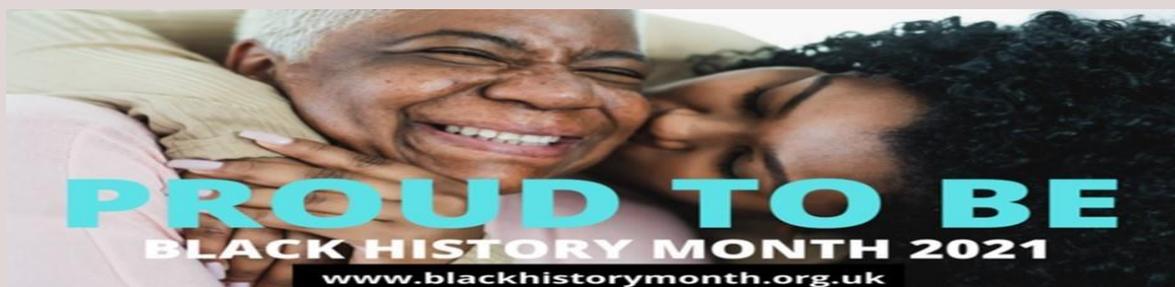
- Estranged fathers / ex-partners may be able to give crucial information about a mother and her children. Likewise, the siblings of an at-risk child can give insights into family dynamics and important people in their lives.
- Explore the potential of estranged fathers to offer protective care and stability

The Research Document '**The Myth of Invisible Men**' published in September 2021 will be referenced in the mandatory workshop.



Black History month takes place every October; in the UK the theme for 2021 is '**Proud to Be**' and invites Black and Brown people to share what they are proud of. For example, **Proud to be Black, Proud to be Brown, Proud to be Black and LGBTQ, Proud to be Me.** This theme has been inspired by the Black Lives Matter campaign.

Black History month has been celebrated for the last 34 years and celebrates the achievements the contributions of Black people throughout history; while the ethos remains the same this is also an opportunity to focus on how everyone is making history all the time in their own way.



The Proud To Be Campaign will also focus on encouraging children and young people to share what they are Proud To Be. In our roles we should be encouraging our children and young people to take part in this as this is a positive activity for identity and feelings of self-worth.

Black History month UK has created a new resource pack for schools to integrate Black history across the whole curriculum all year round; as corporate parents we should be speaking to schools to ensure that they have their pack and to ask what the school is doing to celebrate Black History month and how the curriculum has been developed so that children and young people have the opportunity to talk about and understand issues of race and equality in a post 2020 world and whether they are encouraging students to complete "Proud To Be".

We also have the opportunity when we are working with children and young people to do this celebratory work with them and promote their culture, identity, race, alongside sexuality, gender etc.

What will you be doing to celebrate Black History Month?



Fabricated and Induced Illness

- **What is it?**
- **What do we need to know to influence our practice?**

Fabricated and Induced Illness (FII) is a medical situation in which the child is, or is very likely to be, harmed due to parent(s) behaviour and action, carried out in order to convince doctors that the child's state of physical and/or mental health and neurodevelopment is impaired (or more impaired than is actually the case). FII results in physical and emotional abuse and neglect, as a result of parental actions, behaviours or beliefs and from doctors' responses to these.

FII is based on the parent's underlying need for their child to be recognised and treated as ill or more unwell/more disabled than the child actually is.

Research has shown that the parent does not necessarily intend to deceive, and their motivations may not be initially evident. There are two possible, and very different, motivations underpinning the parent's need: the parent experiencing a gain and the parent's mistaken beliefs. It is also recognised that a parent themselves may not be conscious of the motivation behind their behaviour. Both motivations may be present although usually one predominates.

Research also shows, that it is the mother that is usually the instigator of FII, at times this is unbeknown to the father although their involvement in FII is variable.

In FII, parents' needs are primarily fulfilled by the involvement of doctors and other health professionals. The parent's actions and behaviours are intended to convince health professionals, particularly paediatricians, about the child's state of health. It is important to note that, as is common in child neglect, the parent is not usually ill-intentioned towards their child per se. Nonetheless, they may cause their child direct harm, unintentionally or in order to have their assertions reinforced and believed. Parents engage health professionals, in the following ways:

- The most common form is by presenting and mistakenly reporting the child's symptoms, history, results of investigations, medical opinions, interventions and diagnoses. There may be exaggeration, distortion, misconstruing of innocent phenomena in the child, or invention and deception. In their reports, the parents may not be actually intending to deceive, such as when they hold incorrect beliefs and are over-anxious, to the child's detriment.
- A less common way of engaging health professionals is by the parent's physical actions. These actions nearly always include an element of deception. They range from falsifying documents, through interfering with investigations and specimens such as putting sugar or blood in the child's urine specimen, interfering with lines and drainage bags, withholding food or medication from the child and, at the extreme end, illness induction in the child. All of these are carried out in order to convince health professionals, especially paediatricians, about the child's poor state of health or illness.

FII is a very complex issue to work with and National Guidance has been issued; it is really important that you understand the basics of what FII means and how this is managed.

The clarity of whether a situation is FII is made from a health perspective and health partners lead through co-ordination and reviewing the concerns.

The National Guidance introduces a new 'Health and Education Rehabilitation Plan' that partners complete, review and analyse where FII is suspected.



As always, there are lots of learning and development opportunities for you to access. Please see some of the ones on offer below.

Practice Focus: Working with Hidden Men and Fathers. All available to book on Evolve.

- Monday 11/10/21 (1 – 2.30pm)
- Wed 13/10/21 (9.30 – 11am)
- Monday 18/10/21 (10 -11:30am)
- Thurs 21/10/21 (1 - 2:30pm)
- Fri 22/10/21 (9 -10:30am)
- Tues 26/10/21 (9 -10:30am)
- Tues 26/10/21 (1 - 2:30pm)
- Wed 27/10/21 (9:30 -11:00am)

Private Law Masterclass: Ask your PS for the link

7th October 9.00 - 10.00am.

Little Minds Matter: Infant Mental Health Training. Available to book on Evolve.

19th October 9.30 – 4.30

Adoption Law and Practice 2-day training.

19th and 20th October 9.30 – 3.30

Care Proceedings/ Permanency Planning. Available to book on Evolve.

This skills session is for social workers, practice supervisors and managers who work with families in care proceedings. It aims to help us to develop a shared understanding of what good looks like when multi track planning for children within the court arena. It aims to give an understanding of the circumstances under which we issue care proceedings; an overview of the process from beginning to end; understanding your role and the role of others; effective working together and effective multitrack planning to avoid delay in planning for children.

| Day and Date | Time | Delivered by |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--|
| Friday 22 nd Oct | 9.30 – 11am | Sarah Kay, Court Consultant and Saba Gul, Legal services |
| Friday 29 th Oct | 9.30 – 11am | Sarah Kay, Court Consultant and Saba Gul, Legal services |

Care Plans. Available to book on Evolve.

This skills session is for social workers, practice supervisors and managers who work with families in care proceedings. It aims to help us to develop a shared understanding of what good looks like when writing and submitting care plans for court, to help us to prepare high quality plans for care proceedings. The session has a particular emphasis on understanding the purpose of the care plan, the court's requirements and planning for family time.

| Day/ Date | Time | Delivered by |
|----------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Tuesday 5 th October | 10am -11.30am | Lauren Thompson, Court Consultant and Robina Ahmed- Siddique, Legal Services |
| Tuesday 19 th October | 2pm – 3.30pm | Lauren Thompson, Court Consultant and Robina Ahmed- Siddique, Legal Services |



Balance Sheets. Available to book on Evolve.

This skills session is for social workers, practice supervisors and managers who work with children in care proceedings. This session focuses on writing a Balance Sheet, which is required as part of the Local Authority's final evidence in care proceedings. The session covers what a Balance Sheet is, why they are important and how to write one.

| Day/ date | time | Delivered by |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Wed 6 th October | 3.30pm – 5pm | Martha Price, Court Consultant, Mark Stout, Legal Services |
| Monday 11 th October | 3.30pm – 5pm | Martha Price, Court Consultant, Mark Stout, Legal Services |
| Monday 25 th October | 3.30pm – 5pm | Martha Price, Court Consultant, Mark Stout, Legal Services |

Assessment planning in Care Proceedings. Available to book on Evolve.

This skills session is for social workers, practice supervisors and managers who work with children and families in care proceedings. It aims to help us to develop a shared understanding of what a parenting assessment is, what it should include and the importance of assessment planning within care proceedings. This session will also touch upon what you need to consider when undertaking assessments of parents with additional learning needs and where expert and sibling assessments are required within the care proceedings.

| Day/ Date | time | Delivered by |
|----------------------------------|----------------|---|
| Monday 11 th October | 10am – 11.30am | Kelly Davison Court Consultant and Claire Sheldon, Legal Services |
| Tuesday 19 th October | 10am – 11.30am | Kelly Davison Court Consultant and Claire Sheldon, Legal Services |

Statements. Available to book on Evolve.

This skills session is for social workers, practice supervisors and managers who work with families in care proceedings. It aims to help us to develop a shared understanding of what good looks like when writing and submitting SWET statements for care proceedings. There is particular emphasis on child impact and analysis of the decision the local authority is making. The training covers initial and final SWET statements including the welfare and adoption checklist.

| Day/ Date | Time | Delivered by |
|------------------------------------|----------------|---|
| Wednesday 20 th October | 10am – 11.30am | Alice Rodgers Court Consultant & Mary Smith, Legal Services |
| Tuesday 26 th October | 10am – 11.30am | Alice Rodgers Court Consultant & Mary Smith, Legal Service |



Rachel Curtis, Service Manager has shared some learning opportunities for us this month.

The first is a podcast about a birth mother who talks about saying goodbye to her children who were adopted, getting on with life, letterbox, child making contact as an adult.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000zdtf>

The second is by advice now and is aimed at explaining to Roma families why we are Involved with their families. <https://www.advicenow.org.uk/guides/survival-guide-child-protection-roma-parents-1>



Learning from Evolve

This is the new feature looking at some suggestions for additional learning opportunities which are available on Evolve.

Child Criminal Exploitation - A Master Class in Protecting Children from Criminal Exploitation and Abuse.

Offered by Bradford Partnership following the recently published Thematic Review into CSE.

About the course: Child Criminal Exploitation is one of Bradford's greatest priorities to address. No child should ever be exploited, abused or harmed.

This 3-hour master class lead by Sarah Henry and Kev Robinson who both have extensive professional knowledge in this area will equip participants with a greater understanding of what CCE is and how we must respond to it in Bradford.

Participants will fully understand their role by the end of the session in preventing and responding to such harm to children. There will be a choice of 6 multi-agency sessions which will be delivered in line with public health guidelines and in a socially distanced way.

- Understand and define 'CCE' Child Criminal Exploitation
- A practical reflection on the Bradford Multi Agency Child Exploitation Protocol and how it should be used.
- Explore which children are more likely to be targeted, tested and trapped in criminal and/or sexual exploitation.

- Consider the landscape of County Lines and its impact locally in West Yorkshire
- Understand how to use the tools available in Bradford to identify and support children who are affected by CCE and the importance of early intervention.
- Understand the importance of Working Together 2018 when supporting children who are vulnerable to CCE with consideration for organisations currently engaging with children i.e. Barnardos.
- Know exactly how to respond and safeguard these vulnerable children.
- Increase your confidence in using the Bradford Child Exploitation Risk Assessment.
- Understand the learning from the thematic review in Bradford and the devastating consequence of CCE – what can we all learn to stop this from happening again?



If you have not already done so please set up your learning accounts with the following; both are excellent sources of information, resources and webinars. There is training that you can book on also.

Research in Practice: www.researchinpractice.org.uk

Children's Social Work Matters: www.childrensocialworkmatters.org

For Qualified Social Workers the window to update your registration on Social Work England has been open for over a month now and closes in November. To re-register you need to update your continued professional development. This should not be difficult to evidence due to the amount of learning and development opportunities available to you.

There are still 2 workshop sessions left with Iona Roberts our regional SWE engagement lead; The workshop is entitled: **Renewal & CPD Workshop with Social Work England**

Iona's presentation will cover; the renewal of Social Work registration, the requirement for CPD, the uploading of CPD.

There will be an opportunity to ask questions about the types of CPD you can upload, and any queries about the renewal process as a whole.



**WE APPRECIATE
YOUR FEEDBACK
THANK YOU!**

As a learning organisation feedback is really important to us to make sure that we are getting things right. Please have your say about the training and development being offered via your evaluation forms as we are using this feedback to adapt our workshops.

Thank you to everyone who has sent responses, feedback and suggestions for this Practice and Learning Bulletin and the bite size learning events and emails sent.