

Learning from Audits Series

7 Minute Briefings

Title: (2) Learning from last repeat child protection plans within 2 years (June 2018)

1

We have looked at how many child protection plans have been made a second or subsequent time within the increase in child protection numbers. From March 2016 to January 2017, 25 children had become subject to child protection plans for a second or subsequent time. However, from March 2017 to January 2018, this figure has increased significantly to 53 repeat child protection plans, an increase of 112%.

2

The audit was of 12 ICPCs (21 children) where there has been a second or subsequent period of child protection registration. In 3 cases, this was the third period of child protection planning. The audit looked at; reasons for the first and second child protection plan; the period of time between the first child protection plan ending and second plan starting; what work was completed between last child protection plan ending and second period of registration; what alternative options to second time of child protection planning were considered and whether the previous IRO was involved.

3

Findings indicated practitioners are identifying children at risk of harm and neglect which trigger safeguarding processes with a strategy discussion or meeting and section 47 investigation. Audits indicate that social work reports also identify concerns about recurrent themes such as domestic abuse, drug or alcohol misuse and/or neglect and highlight concerns about previous positive changes under a child protection plan not being sustained to a good enough level resulting in negative impacts outcomes for children.

4

In 11 of the 12 families audited, a decision was being made to return to a child protection conference which had already been a previous intervention where improvements had not been sustained. Most cases could have been more appropriately supported under some form of legal framework rather than repeating child protection registration and many moved to PLO or legal proceedings soon after a second plan was made.

5

This audit flagged very short periods (average 14 months) between first and second or second and third periods of child protection registration. Most cases had started to show evidence of difficulties emerging very soon after the first child protection plan was ended and support continuing on a child in need basis, stepping down to early help or being closed within a short period of 3-6 months. Where cases stepped down, poor or non engagement with early help was frequently noted later at the later point of further safeguarding concerns reducing the opportunity to prevent recurrence of difficulties.

6

Lack of continuity of worker appears to have impacted upon the understanding of emerging difficulties, with evidence of the same interventions “starting again” in some cases and chances to review progress on the child in need plan being missed. Further scrutiny is needed for those children on Supervision Orders measuring the outcomes being achieved for the child and progress of the plan in place. Audits indicate recommendations to progress to a legal meeting or consider PLO at earlier stages were at times not progressed, more notable where there have been a number of staff changes.

7

To develop further we need to ensure close regular supervision of cases stepped down from child protection to child in need; formal reviews of the impact of any services continuing on a CIN basis; a formal closure/step down meeting clear about a contingency in the event of disengagement & the same difficulties emerging. Where a repeat ICPC is being proposed, discussion is needed with the Team Manager, Senior Manager, IRO and legal representative before a further ICPC is held to ensure that interventions will result in effective sustained change rather than applying the same actions again to ensure timely changes are made with the most appropriate framework.