



SAFEGUARDING BOARD

ISLE OF MAN

Learning Summary – Child N

Introduction:

The Isle of Man Safeguarding Board has a statutory responsibility to undertake a Serious Case Management Review (SCMR) when serious harm has occurred to a child or young person and there may be concerns about the way the different agencies have worked together to safeguard the child in question.

Background:

A review has been commissioned into a case that has provided an insight into local systems and practice when a child is born to young parents with their own significant vulnerabilities, which may indicate a child could be at risk. Indicators of neglect also emerged and there was a need for professionals to focus on the needs of the baby/young child, which proved challenging.

Key learning

The following identified key learning needs to be considered by all agencies and professionals working on the Island:

- Where there are known or knowable parental vulnerabilities, such as mental health issues, a history of abuse or neglect, care experience, substance misuse, concerns about anger management and violence, or learning difficulties, there needs to be information seeking and sharing pre-birth, robust consideration of the impact on a baby, and a focus on that child, including pre-birth, alongside the offer of support.
- Practitioners, their managers, and agencies need to ensure that they are aware of and

promote the legislation and expectations regarding information sharing where a child may be at risk. Professionals need to be clear about what is required, even if there is a lack of parental consent. Any disputes or concerns in this area need to be discussed with a manager. Isle of Man procedures clearly state that 'effective sharing of information between professionals and local agencies is essential for effective identification, assessment and service provision' and that 'fears about sharing information should not stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children'.

- The Isle of Man is a relatively small place, and many professionals are often working with families where there is a personal connection, and this can potentially lead to a conflict of interest. Agencies and professionals must be transparent about this issue, be honest with families and other professionals, and use supervision or management consultations to both explore and resolve this complex issue.
- There is a need to seek, share and consider information about a baby's father and their role in a family, and to include them in assessments and plans in respect of their child. Those working with adults need to ensure that they consider what is known about the father (or mother's partner) and share this with professionals responsible for the child if there is anything that may indicate a risk. They should always Think Family.
- There must always be a robust understanding about a parent's mental health and any medication they are taking, and consideration of the impact on any child/ren. Information sharing about a parent by and with CAMHS/ adult mental health professionals, and GPs

should include a specific focus on the impact on the baby/child.

- Professionals need to effectively consider the information available to them to fully understand a child's actual and likely future lived experience, including utilising multi-agency meetings to share information and consider the child.
 - Professionals need to challenge themselves and others if practice is parent focused. This is particularly a risk when a parent is young and has significant vulnerabilities of their own, including childhood abuse and trauma.
 - When attending a statutory meeting, such as a child protection strategy meeting or conference, each agency must be sure that there is rigorous consideration of all the referrals made in respect of a child, both historically and in respect of the incident leading to the meeting.
 - Issues such as parental mental health or domestic abuse, or incidents of child neglect, tend to reoccur, so an incident lead approach should be avoided, with consideration given to the impact of the issues on a child over time.
 - If the plan for members of the wider family to support a parent or provide care for a child, assumptions should not be made about what this will involve, the care they will provide, or the level of safeguarding available. This should include consideration of the care and protection provided to the child's parent when they were children.
 - Professionals need to be effective in identifying and responding to child neglect.
 - Inconsistent or poor engagement with professionals by a parent needs to be considered, including seeking to understand the impact on a child of a lack of meaningful engagement and what might be stopping full engagement - which may include pressure from others because of domestic abuse, or fear of a child being taken into care.
 - When a child is seen at hospital and abuse may be indicated, a timely referral to Children and Families and/or the police is required.
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Questions to consider

These questions can be used in supervision or when considering a family, individually or by groups of professionals working with the family:

- Am I absolutely clear about the legislation and expectations about information sharing when I have concerns about a child?
 - Am I conscious of the potential impact of having a personal association with a family/parent when I am responsible for a child? Do I always explore this issue with my manager, with the other professionals involved, and potentially with the family?
 - When there are concerns about a child or a need for support, do I always transparently and thoroughly consider the father of a child and / or the non-birthing partner, and do I seek and share information about them and with them?
 - Do I make sure I know enough about a parent's history when I am working with a family and making decisions about a child?
 - Do I consider what I know about a parent's vulnerabilities and issues through the eyes of their child, and consider the impact both at the time and over time?
 - Am I aware of the indicators of child neglect and do I have enough knowledge about the impact of neglect on children and their global development?
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Recommendations

The review recommends that the Isle of Man Safeguarding Board:

- Considers how it can ensure that there is a change of culture on the Island regarding the need to always share available information that could mean a child is at risk, regardless of parental consent.
- Considers transparently and proactively what needs to happen to ensure that professionals are supported to work in an environment where their professional and personal knowledge and relationships may overlap.
- should work with its partner agencies to develop and implement a neglect strategy and

associated tool kit to help staff better understand the lived experience of the child.

- Considers adding Working Effectively with Fathers and Non-Birthing Partners as a thematic focus area in its business plan, which should lead to a review of practice, procedures, and policies.
- Asks all agencies to consider how they can ensure that professionals identify the need for a referral for a pre-birth social work assessment and how they will ensure that there is an improvement in the quality of written referrals that identify the parental vulnerabilities which may pose a risk to a baby.
- All the agencies working with adults, including those in the criminal justice system, to provide assurance that they will 'think family' when required.

These recommendations have been agreed by the Isle of Man Safeguarding Board

Further information:

www.safeguardingboard.im

Children and Families (01624) 686179
Isle of Man Police (01624) 631212 or 999 in an emergency

[The Myth of Invisible Men](#)

[Think Family](#)

[Pre-Birth procedure](#)

[Pre-birth flowchart](#)