



Serious Case Review Child K

Learning Point 1: When offenders are known to have been domestically violent to adults and or children full assessments must be made of their accommodation arrangements following their release from prison to ensure that these do not pose a risk to previous or new partners or children.

The possible risk to Mr. C's sister's children was not fully assessed and proper arrangements made to ensure that Mr. C did not have unsupervised access to the children. Given that Mr. C was deemed to be a high risk, would Approved Premises (AP) have been a better option despite previous difficulties with this?

Learning Point 2: When an offender is released on licence from prison and breaches his licence conditions, consideration should be given to enforcement action, including recall to custody. This decision should be agreed at a senior level.

The National Probation Service were aware that Mr. C was having a relationship with Ms. A and he had given his probation officer her name and K's name. It was thought that he was living with them. This was in breach of his licence conditions. An ultimatum should have been given to Mr. C to provide full details of Ms. A and K and to re-iterate that it was not an approved address and so he should have been directed not to stay there. If this ultimatum was not complied with it would have been sufficient to recall him to prison.

Learning Point 3: An assessment of any future risk of known violent offenders to possible identifiable victims should be a multi-agency process. In summary, risk assessment and the management of an offender's risk in relation to adult female victims of domestic abuse and children should be robust, and good links forged with relevant partner agencies, to ensure that safeguarding women or children who may be vulnerable is seen to be a high priority. MAPPA is the multi-agency system to manage this process for high risk offenders. This also applies to non-custodial sentences.

Learning Point 4: The Prison Rules on letters and visits do not contain a duty to establish the identity of people, or consider the welfare and protection of people, who have contact with or visit prisoners who are known to be domestically violent. This raises a challenge about how prospective partners can be identified and risk assessments could be done to protect those who are not aware of an offender's violent history.

Learning Point 5: The Brandon 2011 research raises the question of whether multi-agency strategy discussions are taking place appropriately nationally.

This SCR raises the question about Lambeth over this period and whether there was clarity amongst professionals about the purpose and effectiveness of multi-agency strategy discussions and information sharing, including key agencies that know the

child and family. It may be helpful to undertake an audit to test this out.

Learning Point 6: The absence of specific bail conditions pertaining to contact with children can engender a false re-assurance that such contact does not pose a risk. An assessment of risk, led by CSC, should be completed wherever possible, and take into account the wishes and feelings of the individual child.

Learning Point 7: When a child has been safeguarded by removal from a parent by the 'protective' parent it should not be assumed that the child is safe to have contact with or care by that parent until a proper assessment has been completed, even if there was no previous evidence of direct harm to the child. The assessment should include risk of emotional abuse, including witnessing parental violent behaviour, as well as physical abuse.

Learning Point 8: Women and children who have no recourse to public funds and who are at risk of domestic violence face more barriers in funding refuge provision. However, CSC have the power to make such payments from the section 17 Child in Need budget and should consider doing so.

Women who do not have residence rights may be at greater risk of ongoing domestic abuse for fear of revealing their immigration status. Financial circumstances or childcare worries may push them to continue or renew abusive relationships.

Learning Point 9: When a person has been the subject of domestic violence consideration should be given to how they can be supported to understand the dynamics of abusive and controlling relationships to better equip them in the future. See also Section 5.12 on the **Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme**

Learning Point 10: Research and previous SCRs have shown the importance of multi-agency information sharing when there are concerns about the welfare and safety of children. Clearly there are issues of consent where a case does not appear to meet a child protection threshold. However, without appropriate sharing of information through multi-agency strategy discussions, multi-agency child in need discussions, MARAC or MAPPA there is a risk that single agencies will not have sufficient information to make a decision about thresholds for intervention.

Learning Point 11: It is important that consideration is given to when to share confidential information about known offenders of domestic violence with partners or potential victims, including those entering into new relationships, without consent.

There is a question about how knowledgeable frontline practitioners are about the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, and its possible benefits and drawbacks (such as false-reassurance or increased risk), and when to advise women about its availability.

When it is assessed that an offender poses a risk of violence to (future) partners, steps must be taken to ensure that whether and how to disclose are considered through the MAPPA or DVDS arrangements.

Learning Point 12: Practitioners and their supervisors need to maintain professional curiosity, not taking things at face value, but taking an inquisitive stance, seeking corroborating evidence and challenging where appropriate.

Learning Point 13: Previous SCRs have raised questions about the over-reliance on Police welfare checks without further multi-agency enquiries when there are

questions about a child's safety.

Is there confusion within Lambeth CSC and the police about the status of police welfare checks and the need for a Social Worker to undertake an assessment of the situation? These assessments must include speaking to the child, alone where possible, and liaison with other services to ensure that the welfare of the child is paramount.

Learning Point 14: Anonymous referrals should be considered as legitimate expressions of concern and multi-disciplinary assessments should consider whether there is substance in the concerns raised.

Consideration should be given to going back to the referrer, if they become known, to seek more evidence to support the allegations or ascertain if they are malicious or misguided, if required.

Learning Point 15: The missing voice of the child regularly occurs as an issue in SCRs.

It is not clear what direct work was done with K, given his age and understanding, as part of the assessments into his welfare. How are the views of younger children considered as part of domestic violence assessments? Is this an area which Lambeth SCB should review?

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The National Probation Service, London should audit a sample of licence cases to ascertain whether the guidance is followed or whether non-compliance with guidance is a wider systemic issue or was unique to this case. The audit should include compliance with the need to undertake full assessments of the suitability of the accommodation and any risk to adults or children living in the household when the offenders' circumstances change. This audit should involve liaison with appropriate local agencies.

It is understood that the Community Rehabilitation Company also supervises offenders on licence. They should also be asked to respond to this recommendation.

Outcome: This will give assurance to the National Probation Service and its Partners that Offenders who may pose a risk of violence and who do not adhere to their licence conditions are properly assessed and managed and will provide assurance to the Probation Service and its Partners that Offenders who pose a risk of violence and who do not adhere to their licence conditions are properly imposed and managed.

Recommendation 2: Her Majesty's Prison & Probation Service should be asked review the Prison Rules relating to visits with and letters to and from domestic violence offenders and offenders convicted of offences against children to consider how potential victims of grooming or coercive control can be protected, including potential new victims; and to assess whether the guidance on exchange of information about such contacts with relevant safeguarding agencies is sufficient. There should be liaison with the local (Brixton) prison with regard to these findings.

Outcome: This action will enable consideration to be given to any risk, including risk of grooming or coercive control conducted through contacts with known domestically violent prisoners.

Her Majesty's Prison & Probation Service should inform the Lambeth Safeguarding Children Board of the response and actions taken as a result of this review and the

recommendations made.

Recommendation 3: The Lambeth Safeguarding Children Board should seek reassurance from its partners that relevant frontline staff and their managers involved in the assessment and management of cases where there is domestic abuse are aware of the arrangements for sharing information about offenders through the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme and the MAPPA arrangements (as set out in the London Child Protection procedures Section B3/28).

Outcome: Information about a history of violence will be properly considered and shared by the partner agencies, to improve the quality of assessments and interventions.

Recommendation 4: The Lambeth Safeguarding Children Board should review how families which are supported by the NRTPF team that are experiencing domestic abuse are helped and supported. Lambeth Children's Services should assure the Lambeth Safeguarding Children Board that relevant staff are aware that when families that are victims of domestic abuse have no recourse to public funds and need the support of a Refuge that consideration will be given to accessing funds to secure such a placement.

Outcome: These actions will provide assurance that a mother and child/ren can be considered for a place in a Refuge where they have no access to benefits, and where that is considered the appropriate means of support.

Recommendation 5 The Lambeth Safeguarding Children Board should seek assurance from its partner agencies that when assessing incidents of alleged domestic abuse, the risks to children, including emotional abuse, are fully assessed as set out in section B3/28 of the London Child Protection Procedures. 'Safeguarding children affected by domestic abuse and violence'. Advice should be provided to staff about the importance of thinking about the welfare of children when considering the application of bail conditions relating to adults in cases of domestic abuse. Advice should also be provided to staff about considering the emotional impact of witnessing domestic abuse and good practice intervention. The Lambeth LSCB should undertake a multi-agency audit of domestic abuse cases, including of families supported by the NRTPF team.

Outcome: This action will provide assurance that children in domestically abusive situations are fully assessed and their needs are taken into account, as well as the safety of adults who are the victims of domestic abuse.