

## 7 Minute Briefing: Child Multi-Agency Audit - Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)



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### What can you do now?

- Ensure you are contributing to assessments and development of the child's plan.
- Ensure plans developed are sufficiently 'SMART', clear and concrete to the needs and concerns, or developed with the family in a manner that makes sense to them.
- When a plan comes to an end be sure you know what to expect and what the next steps for the child and family are.
- Familiarise yourself with the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership **CSA strategy**.
- Look out for our CSA training offer, more details to be shared via our weekly key messages and on the **WSP Website**.

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### Case Selection and Grade

The sample of cases was randomly selected and comprised of five children who were on a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan under the category of sexual abuse.

Overall, the multi-agency team determined that the practice for four of the audits was **good** and for one audit was **requires improvement**.

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### Areas for Development

- Assessments were still largely undertaken as a single agency activity with limited input from the professional network involved.
- Child Protection and Child in Need Plans were not clear or concrete enough and tended to assign actions to individual agencies, with collaboration in developing a shared plan between agencies and family.
- There is limited support and resources for working with children and young people with learning needs and difficulties.
- Plans to step-down from CSC to partner agencies should be coordinated and planned so that professionals/family are clear about the plan and conversations can be held about how to sustain positive changes.
- Audits continue to identify that Health Visitors and School Nurses are not always aware of children who are on Child Protection or Child in Need Plans, and so the potential for them to support these plans is not explored.

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### Good Practice

- Individual agencies and practitioners in the audits had a good understanding of the child's needs and what life was like for them and showed skill and tenacity in working with the families.
- There was strong communication and positive multi-agency working between professionals, especially between specific agencies at different points where they were involved in safeguarding and supporting a child.
- There were examples of really good direct work completed by professionals from a range of agencies with children, young people and parents.
- Risks and the impact of child sexual abuse was well understood, and decision-making and professional responses was generally effective in addressing these risks.
- There was clear joint work and investigation responses between the Police and Children's Social Care.

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### Background

As part of the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership multi-agency audit calendar for 2021-2022 an audit on child sexual abuse in the family environment took place Oct – Dec 2021 to support the development of the refreshed Walsall CSA Strategy and the panel met to analyse the findings on 9 December 2021. Children were known to the following agencies: Walsall Children's Social Care (CSC), Walsall Early Help, Walsall Healthcare Trust (Health Visiting/ School Nursing), West Midlands Police, Black Country Healthcare Foundation Trust and GPs.

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### Aim of the audit

This audit reviewed how effective the multi-agency partnership is in addressing the needs and safeguarding concerns for children who have experienced or at risk of sexual abuse by exploring the following questions:

- Were early indicators of sexual abuse recognised and acted upon at the earliest opportunities?
- Is risk identified, understood and prioritised by agencies? Were specialist tools utilised?
- Does the child appear to be safe as a result of intervention?
- Have full investigations taken place where children subject to or at risk of sexual abuse in the family environment?
- Has overall decision making by the multi-agency group resulted in keeping the child safe from further sexual harm?

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### Summary

Risks were appropriately recognised with timely responses coordinated between agencies. The harm experienced and risk of harm to the child was considered and understood, decisions were made appropriately, demonstrating effective safeguarding and the right courses of action being taken for children's assessments seemed to focus on work completed by single agency plans did not have enough multi-agency input. However, there were examples of good work being done by professionals to work with children and family members and multi-agency working had made a difference for children.