Physical abuse multi- agency audit- learning outcomes

The audit process had three stages: The first was the completion of the audit tool by auditors on each case. The methodology was a '*deep dive*' i.e. an in-depth analysis of practice.

The second stage of the audit was facilitated conversations with all agencies auditors to share their analyses of single safeguarding practice and reach a consensus on the effectiveness of multi-agency work in each of the specific themes.

The report was stage three of the process. The report was shared with audit leads from the statutory agencies involved in this audit process, and their comments and amendments have been included.

The main conclusion of the audit is that practice was too variable to assure the partnership that the safeguarding response is totally effective. Some cases were good, and others evidenced a need to improve. The quantitative average score of 2.3 (requires improvement) - whilst based upon the professional judgements of the auditors appear to have been borne out by their analysis.

Key learning points

Key risk factors

- Key practitioners should be familiar with signs of physical abuse and confident in when to request a CPME
- That multi-agency training is a vital tool in developing the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding response, especially around s47 investigation of possible abuse.
- That practitioners should always consider the possibility of other risk factors arising from parental behaviours in the child's life apart from the evidence of physical harm and understand that harm within a wider context of historical risk and vulnerability within the family.

Thresholds / referrals

- To ensure that there is adequate **and timely** referral information regarding the subject child and any siblings, using the information in the threshold document.
- To consider other information including previous history of risk and concerns reported.
- To always consider the immediate nature of risk, considering the vulnerability, severity, and likelihood of harm to a child when taking action to refer. Some cases should be referred immediately by telephone.

Understanding the child's lived experience

- All children subject to enquiries regarding possible physical abuse should be seen in all homes where the child may go and spend time with significant adults in the family, as well as in schools or other settings to promote gathering best evidence
- Direct work should take place in a range of settings and be directly linked to the child's plan
- Practitioners should be mindful of the work they do in terms of the consequences and impact upon the family.

Quality of assessment, planning and intervention

- That good practice and planning in safeguarding takes in to account the cultural beliefs and practice of families when bringing about change
- Appropriate use of skilled interpreters is vital to child protection practice
- That safeguarding and child protection practice can be beneficial but also oppressive if the basics across all these themes are not done well

Information-sharing, recording and communication within and between agencies

- Get basic details about families right and review them regularly with colleagues from all agencies involved e.g. family contact numbers household composition, schools attended.
- Ensure that the history of the family in terms of previous risk and vulnerability is used when making the assessment of current risk to a child.
- Ensure that a range of information from various sources are sought.
- Not assume that information processes and systems are complete or run smoothly

Roles and responsibilities and participation in multi-agency CP practice

- Practitioners can make practice more effective through being clear about their own role and that of others when working with families
- That all practitioners are reminded regularly of escalation and challenges as part of everyday practice.

Engagement with family

- Think family – ensure that all family members are considered in assessment and interventions across all agencies.

For further guidance and tools to support practice development you can do this by accessing the Safeguarding Enfield website.