



7 MINUTE BRIEFING

LCSPR: CHILD A

This case study focuses on the death of a 3-year-old child. The child's remains were recovered from an address where the family lived before moving to another county. This briefing aims to share important learning about race and culture in child safeguarding.

April 2026

Safeguarding Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage children

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About Child A

Child A's family are of Black British heritage, with strong religious beliefs and an alternative lifestyle described as living 'off-grid', avoiding engagement with any universal services.

Child A was thought to be between three and four-years-old when he died. His parents did not report the death and his remains were recovered from a previous family address after they moved.

Although the cause of death was undetermined, it was clear that Child A was severely malnourished and severe dental decay, in the period up to his death when there was no professional contact. Both parents were found guilty of causing or allowing the death of a child, as well as perverting the course of justice.

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Background

Child A's father grew up in the UK but had spent some time in Nigeria. Whilst at University, he became a Christian. Later, he became interested in his Igbo roots and began to adopt aspects of the culture. He then followed a specific religion which included strict dietary requirements.

Child A's mother is of Caribbean heritage. She grew up in the UK and studied at university. She was raised as Christian.

Around two years after Child A's death, the parents had another child, Sibling B. His birth was not registered. When professionals first became aware of him at three-months-old, the family were living in a caravan. There were significant welfare concerns and lack of parental engagement with services. A Child Assessment Order was sought from the Court for Sibling B to have a medical review.

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Patterns and practice

- Child A had very limited contact with professionals, and records reflect minimal insight into his existence, health or welfare.
- Professionals lacked sufficient knowledge and assessment of the parents' belief systems, resulting in an insufficient understanding of the impact of such beliefs on the care for Child A.
- Parental behaviour, including a reluctance to engage with advice, support or services, often distracted or diverted professional attention away from a focus on the safety and welfare of Child A.



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Acknowledging good

During the Court process for Sibling B, the curiosity and relationship-based work of the Social Worker led the parents to disclose that an older child (Child A) had died and been buried in their garden.

This uncovered the existence of Child A and triggered a criminal investigation, resulting in convictions.



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Key learning

- Practitioners need to be mindful of the limitations of their own knowledge regarding race, culture, faith, religion and beliefs. The use of tools, such as a cultural genogram, may assist with assessments when coupled with cultural humility and critical social awareness.
- A focus on children's needs can become lost when parents/ caregivers hold strong beliefs. Awareness of a child's lived experience is important to ensure support focuses on the needs, safety and welfare of the child.
- Practitioners being confident to ask questions about different cultures and belief systems, without fear of being perceived as discriminatory, is essential to keeping children safe.
- Cultural practices, outside of those we might be more familiar and comfortable with, may lead to the formation of biases.



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Reflective questions

- How confident are you in using tools such as cultural genograms to support difficult conversations with parents when assessing risk to a child?
- What support is available to you if you are finding engagement with parents difficult, and this is limiting your ability to stay focused on the child's safety and welfare?
- How do you keep the child's needs central and guard against potential bias - particularly regarding the intersection between race, culture, religion, faith and beliefs – when assessing, planning and making decisions?



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Useful resources

Find more information about safeguarding children from Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage backgrounds on the Panel's new learning hub:

www.childsafeguarding.independent-panel.uk

You can access videos, webinars, podcasts and other content, including the report: "[It's Silent: Race, racism and safeguarding children](#)".

Read the full Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review: "[You lost sight of me](#)", Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership