

1

2

3

4

5

7

6

**7 MINUTE
BRIEFING****Neglect
Case Study 3****1****About the children**

Four White British siblings aged between 11 and 17, were removed from the family home following concerns about the severe and inhumane conditions of the home.

One child was found by police wandering in public, not fully dressed.

A shared bedroom was described as having mess everywhere, no bed linen and the bed clearly infested with bed bugs and blood splatters on the walls.

One child slept on the floor on a mattress hidden underneath mess covering the floor.

Two siblings experienced periods of being home educated.

On visiting the family home, police described the home conditions as appalling and immediately removed the children.

2**Background**

The family's involvement with services included:

- early help assessments
- CAMHs referrals
- the commencement of a school attendance order

One year earlier, children's services were informed about the treatment of the children, including that they appeared malnourished and did not attend school.

3**Practice issues and gaps**

Evidence of the children's neglect had come to light on a number of occasions but had not been triangulated.

Practitioners had not recognised repeated behaviours such as taking food as symptoms of neglect.

Evidence of limited multi-agency information sharing where professionals did not exchange information or seek missing information.

Whilst the children were seen by professionals, they were not always seen alone.

Professionals did not "see" what the children were telling them through their behaviours, physical appearance or interrogate inconsistencies in the parents' narrative.

Neglect

Case Study 3

4

Acknowledging good

Immediate protection of the children once concerns were visible.

Appropriate attendance action by schools and the Local Authority.

Positive practice engagement during missing from home episode.

Effective pastoral support from schools.

5

Key learning

The importance of exploring the reasons for children's behaviours – there were missed indicators of neglect, hunger, and punitive treatment at home.

Where there are issues of concern, a need to challenge the parental narrative rather than accept it.

Ensuring that children are seen and spoken to directly: children's voices were not triangulated with other evidence.

The need to be curious about family history and previous concerns: early safeguarding episodes or patterns of disguised compliance were not revisited.

Ensuring that concerns raised by schools are appropriately considered in assessments.

6

Reflective questions – practitioners

- Am I confident that my understanding of the situation is based on the child's lived experience, not the parent's interpretation?
- What might the child be telling me through their behaviour, not just their words?
- Have I challenged language or descriptions that are negative, blaming, or labelling the child?
- Have I shared all relevant information with other agencies who need to know?
- Am I looking at patterns over time, not isolated incidents?

7

Reflective questions – leaders

- Do practitioners feel confident to challenge parental narrative and do leaders reinforce the expectation that they should?
- How do we ensure repeated "low-level" concerns (e.g. hunger, toileting, poor hygiene) are not normalised?
- How do leaders reassure themselves that children are consistently seen, spoken to alone, and listened to?
- Are professionals clear about when and how to escalate concerns across agencies?