

Safeguarding children who are not in school

THE CHILD SAFEGUARDING
PRACTICE REVIEW PANEL

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7 MINUTE
BRIEFING

LCSPR: SARA

This case study is about a girl who was murdered by her father and stepmother while being electively home educated.

June 2026

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About the family

Sara was born in the UK and was of dual Polish and Pakistani heritage.

She was described by her mother as a beautiful little girl with a lovely smile and a loud laugh, who was full of personality.

Sara was her parents' second child. She had an older sibling and an older half sibling.

She was 10-years old when she was found dead at the family home in August 2023.

She was not open to children's social care or early help at that time.

Her father and stepmother were convicted of her murder in December 2024. Her uncle, who was living with her family at the time, was convicted of causing or allowing her death.

2

Background

At the time of Sara's birth, her siblings were subject to child protection plans and Sara was placed on one before she was born.

After Sara's birth the local authority sought an interim care order, with a care plan for separation. This concluded in a 12-month supervision order for Sara, her half sibling and her sibling. They remained in the care of the mother and father.

In October 2019, a child arrangement order confirmed Sara should live with Father and Stepmother in private proceedings.

Sara's parents withdrew her from school for elective home education (EHE) shortly before her death.

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Patterns and practice

- Sara's father had a history of abusing women and was known to be manipulative. Her mother fled the family home due to domestic abuse.
- Public Law outcomes twice fell short of protective plans originally sought by practitioners and contingency planning was not robust. The overall process of the Private Law proceedings did not maintain a sufficient focus on safeguarding.
- Intelligence existed across police, courts, health, and prior local authorities, but was not consistently integrated into a single working chronology. Risk decisions were sometimes made without full historic context.

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Acknowledging good

- The referral that the school made in 2023 showed positive use of the process.
- Initial child protection conferences correctly placed Sara and siblings on child protection plans when domestic abuse was identified.
- The LCSPR was detailed and included thorough analysis of the key phases of Sara's life and interaction with services.
- Over 40 practitioners contributed to the full review, showing strong engagement across agencies.

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Key learning

- Elective home education – sight of the child needs to be maintained and children should be seen alone.
- Working with perpetrators of domestic abuse – there needs to be more work on understanding the manipulative nature of perpetrators.
- The role of Family Justice – the overall process of the Private Law proceedings did not maintain a sufficient focus on safeguarding.
- Race, Culture, Religion and Ethnicity – experts should be consulted for advice on situations rather than accepting explanations from parents due to fear of causing offence.

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Reflective questions

- When a child is withdrawn from school for EHE, do you consider the timing and wider context?
- How do you ensure that required referrals/ notifications are made and followed up?
- Where there is a history of domestic abuse, what is the pattern of the perpetrator's behaviour over time? How can I assess the impact on the family and child?
- Do you ensure the child's voice, views and daily lived experience are actively sought, recorded and considered, especially when parental accounts are contradictory or minimising?

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Useful resources

Find more information about safeguarding children who are not in school on the Panel's new learning hub:
<https://childsafeguarding.independent-panel.uk/>

Read the full Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review:
[Sara, Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

[Sara-7-minute-briefing-FINAL.pdf](#)

Further guidance:

- [Elective home education: departmental guidance for local authorities](#)
- [Safeguarding children in elective home education](#)