



## **Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership**

### **Response to the Recommendations from the Serious Case Review of Child J**

The case was referred to the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board's Learning from Cases Committee in October 2019. A Rapid Review was undertaken which resulted in a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) being agreed. The PSCP commissioned this review to examine issues concerning the welfare of Child J and the lessons to be learnt to improve experiences for children in similar circumstances in the future. This included the degree to which decisions were child focused and the effectiveness of working arrangements across agencies and services.

The full findings of the Safeguarding Practice Review are set out in the Learning Report that has been published in full alongside this response.

This document provides the response from the Partnership to the findings made in the Child J report. It outlines the recommendations made to address the review's findings; outlines the action which has already been taken; and comments upon what more will be done. All of this work has been and will continue to be monitored by the PSCP Monitoring Evaluation and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Committee. Recommendations have been identified for the Partnership, or for specific partner agencies as identified below.

### **Recommendations related to learning from Child J**

#### **Recommendation 1**

The PSCP should highlight this case to strategic leaders within Children's Social Care to ensure that in similar cases where the looked after child has no family or home connection with them, and is placed at a significant distance, a suitable service is commissioned to support with the LA responsibilities.

#### **Action Taken:**

Key learning from this review has been shared with managers within Children and Families Service.

Where appropriate services are commissioned for children placed at a distance from Portsmouth. In such cases the allocated social worker continues as the lead professional and appropriate visiting and reviewing arrangements are in place in line with statutory regulations.

The commissioning of appropriate placements for children placed out of area is a focus for the service. A tracking process to review placement stability and the success of placements is currently being developed and will be in place from Q3 of 2021/22. This will provide additional senior leadership scrutiny of all children in our care, considering the status of their placement alongside education, health and offending indicators.

#### **Recommendation 2**

The PSCP should share this review report with the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership for them to consider if there is any learning that they would wish to consider actioning within their area.

#### **Action Taken:**

North Yorkshire have been involved throughout this process throughout the review process, including contributions to the scoping and attendance at the multiagency workshop. We have also ensured that we are linked in with their communications team to ensure a joined up approach when it comes to publishing.

The North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Manager was a panel member for this review and has therefore had access to themes and learning as it has emerged. The full report will be free to share widely once published on the Portsmouth Partnership website.

### **Recommendation 3**

a) The PSCP should ensure that learning is provided that highlights to professionals the importance of identifying and acting on a 'reachable moment' for a child at risk of CCE. In this case Portsmouth knew when the 'reachable moment' happened for Child J but due to other system delays were not able to act on it successfully. The PSCP should be assured that processes are in place for effective escalation and action where barriers such as these have been identified.

b) The PSCP Independent Chair should write to the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Defence in order to share the learning from this report with him. Highlighting the 'reachable moment' when Child J wanted to join the army, but criminal justice delays prevented this from happening. It would be helpful to know from the MOD whether or not senior escalation by Children's Services might have allowed Child J's case to be reviewed individually so that his application could be considered notwithstanding the outstanding criminal charges against him.

#### **Action Taken:**

The PSCP Training team have ensured that the recommendations from the 'It Was Hard to Escape' report are incorporated in to their training. There is a specific focus on reachable/critical moments and early identification. Escalation is also included in child protection and supervision PSCP training courses and has been added to the exploitation training contents. Participants are able to discuss potential barriers, internal service or multiagency escalation. They also learn about using the HIPS escalation procedure and the newly launched 'Re-think' model.

The Chair of the Partnership has written to the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Defence to share the learning from this report. Their response will be shared with the Executive Committee and actioned further if necessary.

### **Recommendation 4**

The PSCP should combine with the work that Hampshire Constabulary are already carrying out which is developing professional's knowledge and understanding of the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and for professionals to provide a trauma informed response.

#### **Action Taken:**

There is currently an ACEs training offer in place through the PSCP training programme which is open to all partner agencies. Further work is underway with Police and other relevant partner agencies to ensure that key messages in ACE and trauma informed practice training is aligned across the city.

The OPCC have received funding for trauma informed work which is being split into 4 areas;

1. A trauma informed conference
2. A video involving local people with lived experience
3. More frontline training opportunities
4. Trauma informed practitioners to be embedded into 3 police response teams (Portsmouth are part of the pilot). These workers will work alongside frontline officers for 6 months coaching the teams to become more trauma informed.

This is the first project of its kind nationally and will benefit the Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton (HIPS) partnerships.

### **Recommendation 5**

a) For children placed outside of Portsmouth, the PSCP should seek assurance that those Local Authorities are appropriately notified and briefed. The PSCP should also seek

assurance on lead professional arrangements (including commissioned services) for children placed at a distance from Portsmouth.

b) The Portsmouth Local Authority should continue with their campaigns to increase local foster carers, with the added emphasis of the learning from the life of Child J and his various placements.

c) This issue should be highlighted to the National CSPR panel and the Safeguarding and Child Protection division at the Department for Education and should feature in Portsmouth's response to the National Care Review.

**Action Taken:**

Portsmouth City Council currently has 40 (10% of all children in care) children placed outside of the city (more than 20 miles away). 27 of these placements are not bordered with Hampshire.

A priority is to ensure that our children remain close to the home community as is reasonably safe to plan for, depending on the child's circumstances. Work is being undertaken with the Children in Care Council as to what we can learn in regards to the benefits of staying local and what extra support can be offered when this is not possible.

When a child in our care is placed outside of the city, the relevant local authority and agencies are notified in line with the Care Planning Regulations. Where services are commissioned, the allocated social worker continues as the lead professional and appropriate visiting arrangements are in place. An audit will be undertaken to better understand compliance with this expectation.

Any placement out of area is approved by Children's Social Care Senior Management Team.

There is a high number of children in care placed with in-house foster carers and there is a proactive recruitment campaign in place. It is of note that 80% of children in foster care are placed with in-house carers.

The service works with experienced carers who support with recruitment information sessions with potential new foster carers. There is a formal mentoring scheme in place with experienced carers mentoring newly approved carers who are caring for older children and/or going through a particularly challenging time with children who have increased vulnerability.

The Chair of the PSCP has written to the National Review Panel and the Department for Education to highlight the difficulties when acting as lead professional for a child who has been placed a long distance away from Portsmouth and has no links to the city. Any response received will be reviewed by the Partnership's Executive Committee and actioned further as necessary.

**Recommendations generic to all Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) cases.**

**Recommendation 6**

a) The PSCP should seek assurance from Children's Social Care in relation to the completion of missing return home interviews. This is particularly important for looked after children placed outside of Portsmouth.

b) The PSCP should seek assurance on whether prevention interviews are being carried out by police in all cases of children reported missing. This also needs to apply in line with national procedures for those placed out of Portsmouth, and what the process is to share

information disclosed about the child with other agencies.

**Action Taken:**

Return Home Interviews are undertaken for all children who are reported missing including those who live in the city and children who are looked after and placed outside Portsmouth; where the missing incident is reported by the police force of the area the child is placed in. This activity is monitored regularly by the Children's Social Care Senior Management Team (exception reporting on individual cases is provided when necessary). The PSCP is reassured that in the majority of missing incidents a return home interview is completed within the expected timeframe (72 hours).

**Recommendation 7**

a) The PSCP should seek assurance from their partners working in education that the use of permanent exclusion from mainstream education is kept to a minimum this includes those looked after children placed outside of Portsmouth. (Some of this assurance has been already provided; with Portsmouth already having a low level of permanent exclusions.)

b) The PSCP should enquire on what approaches their schools are taking, to deal with behaviours from children adversely affected by childhood trauma.

**Action Taken:**

Portsmouth Education Service is consistently below the national and statistical neighbours average for permanent exclusions. This has been achieved through a number of processes that have been put in place to ensure that such action is rare. There is a locally agreed financial penalty and there are good processes to manage moves of children between school or access alternative provision. Schools should therefore not see any need to permanently exclude a child other than in the most exceptional circumstances.

The PSCP Training team have ensured that the recommendations from the 'It Was Hard to Escape' report are incorporated in to their training, including a specific focus on exclusion from mainstream school which is seen as a trigger point for serious harm.

The virtual school work to support looked after children who are educated outside the city and pre-empt any educational placement breakdown. Therefore permanent exclusions remain rare within that cohort.

Schools in Portsmouth have received the following offer in the last year:

**ACEs training** offer in place through PSCP training programme open to all schools.

**Restorative Practice:** Training delivered by PSCP and/ or whole staff training delivered by Portsmouth Mediation Service.

**PACE/ PACE +:** This consists of 6 x 1.5 hour webinars which focus on the four cornerstones of a trauma-informed approach.

**Attachment Awareness** bespoke support and training has been funded by The Virtual School for all schools (and one college) in Portsmouth over the last 5 years, delivered by Educational Psychologists.

**Louise Bomber Webinars:** three webinars were commissioned during June 2020, focusing on Collective Trauma Recovery Plan during COVID 19. The links to these webinars were shared widely for staff to access. These were watched live by 258 staff with over 70 views of the recordings, some by whole staff teams.

**Recommendation 8**

The PSCP should seek assurance that there is a shared strategic response to CCE reflected in key Partnership Board meetings in Portsmouth. E.g. Portsmouth Youth Offending Board, Criminal Justice Board and Health and Wellbeing Board.

**Action Taken:**

The Chair of the PSCP will write to the Chairs of the Boards named above, in order to share the learning from this review and to suggest that joint ways of working are considered and acted on effectively. This work will be overseen by the PSCP Monitoring and Evaluation Scrutiny Group through the recommendations tracking process.

**Recommendation 9**

The PSCP should ensure that the use and implications of the National Referral Mechanism is understood by professionals who work in the area of keeping children safe from CCE, and appropriately used in safeguarding plans.

**Action Taken:**

The PSCP training team have identified this as a training need as professional understanding was limited. The team offer regular NRM awareness training sessions which are 2 hour masterclasses. These are co-developed and delivered by PSCP and Barnardo's Trafficking Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTG) Services. Within the training, participants hear from a young person about their journey. This training is for managers and professionals and will be ongoing.

Oversight of the NRM process is supported by management reports (Children's Social Care).

**Recommendation 10**

The PSCP should seek to ensure that the HIPS Child Exploitation Strategy is well known and understood by all professionals and agencies that work in Portsmouth. The strategy needs a strong delivery plan and there needs to be good collaboration and shared learning across all partners. This strategy should also include the work of the Violence Reduction Unit.

**Action Taken:**

There is a multiagency Exploitation Strategy Delivery Group that is responsible for monitoring the progression of the HIPS Child Exploitation Strategy through the local delivery plan.

The PSCP will carry out a practitioner's survey in order to fully understand the current professional knowledge level and awareness of the Child Exploitation Strategy. This will help us to inform future action taken and will be overseen by the Delivery Group.