

### Mia Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Practitioner Briefing



This CSPR was triggered by Mia's tragic death at the age of 8 months, following a drowning incident. At the time, Mia lived with her older sister and parents, both parents had older children from earlier relationships who either lived or were regularly in the household. At the time of the incident Mia, together with her sister and two half-siblings, were being assessed by children's social care following allegations that her half-sibling had been abused by a registered sex offender.

The review was completed by a panel of senior managers from the agencies who worked with Mia and her family. This panel carefully considered whether the exposure of the children to a risk of sexual harm through the parents' association with a known sex offender was of relevance to the drowning incident, which was effectively one of neglect. The panel concluded that both were examples of forms of neglect, and symptomatic of a household in which life did not revolve around the needs of the children. In contrast, the parents' own needs were accorded greater importance than those of the children and they consequently failed to protect the children from a range of different types of harm.

### Blended Families

As previously noted, Mia was part of a blended family that consisted of her sister, a half-brother from mum's previous relationship and two half-brothers from dad's previous relationship. Unsurprisingly, a considerable number of agencies and professionals worked with the five children and two parents. It was clear at the practitioner learning event that the majority of professionals working with the family had an incomplete picture of both the family structure and circumstances.

This comes down to two issues. Firstly, professional curiosity. That is making sure that we understand the daily lived experience of the child (or parent), who they have contact with and who is important to them. Secondly, information gathering and recording. Ensuring that when we start to work with a child that we ask for details of all family members and record them in a way that others can easily access, this may be through a genogram.

### Coercive and controlling behaviour

A good deal of multi-agency involvement with Mia's family arose from concerns about domestic abuse in dad's previous relationship and subsequent family court involvement in setting contact arrangements with his children. Having listened to the experiences of his ex-partner and reviewed agency records of the time, the review concluded that dad's behaviour as he sought to arrange and manage contact arrangements was controlling—the important point being that coercive and controlling behaviour can continue after a relationship has ended.

Coercive and controlling behaviour is a criminal offence and recognises that domestic abuse isn't always physical but can cover threats, humiliation and intimidation that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim. More resources on spotting and working with coercive control are available [here](#).

### Good Practice

The review identified a number of areas of good practice:

- ⇒ Children's Psychological Services recognised dad's controlling behaviour and did not allow both parents to attend appointments together
- ⇒ Both a GP's initial referral and police reports to child protection conferences were seen to be thorough and supported effective decisions
- ⇒ Police and probation sex offender management was effective and linked in to multiple children's social cares.

### Sex offender contacts

It was apparent from an early stage in this review that the registered sex offender who had come into contact with Mia's family was known to be the father of, or involved with, children open to other local authority children's services. However, there was little evidence that this information had been pieced together, or questions asked about how this impacted on work with the families.

Registered sex offenders are managed under [Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements \(MAPPA\)](#) and will have an offender manager from either the police or probation service. They should be contacted with any concerns and will act to ensure that links are made and information is shared about children (and adults) that registered sex offenders are in contact with.

Read the full Mia CSPR report [here](#).