

## Learning Brief - MA Multi Agency Learning Review Published 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017

Welcome to this Learning Briefing published by Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board.

### **Background**

This was a review regarding the systems within children's residential homes and the systems surrounding children looked after. The review was initiated following sexual abuse of three children living in the same residential home. The perpetrator of the abuse was also a child and a resident within the same home. The abuse had been over a number of years for two of the victims and for a few months for the other child. The abuser had groomed the children and staff in the home by a number of means and was a skilled manipulator.

There were a number of findings, although there had been high levels of staff compliance with policies and systems these had not worked well in the case to protect the children.

### **Broadly the issues identified were:**

#### **Working with young people who exhibit sexualised behaviour:**

The multi-agency staff who worked with the children had limited knowledge of normative sexual development as well as problematic sexualised behaviours in children. This meant that they were not always concerned enough about a number of sexualised behaviours. There was the assumption that some of the behaviours were normal among the young people of today, whereas research is clear that this is not the case.

Also staff lacked appropriate knowledge or failed to appreciate the impact of controlling and grooming behaviours and how these can be used by children to manipulate both staff and the children.

***Practice questions:** Am I sure that what I am observing is normal behaviour? How do I know? Is there a pattern of behaviour here?*

#### **No-one having an overview of all the issues happening in the children's home:**

Placing authorities and workers only knew the events relating to the child they had placed, and had limited knowledge of the total day to day environment within which the child was living. This was totally due to process.

In a review of all the behaviours which might be seen as expressions of stress in the children, there were patterns which were not appreciated and acted upon because no-one agency had an overview or access to the history.

***Practice questions:** Do I know what a day in the life of the child is like? Do I know the history (remember! If you know the history, you do not need a crystal ball) and the environment the child is living in?*

#### **The children did not know how to keep safe online:**

The children were very active online, and the abuser was using social media to gain compliance from the victims. Whilst the children were seen to be 'streetwise', they knew very little about their own online safety.

***Practice questions:** Do we routinely ask about what children/parents do online? Are we clear how to assess online behaviour?*

#### **Issues between authorities when children from outside Lancashire were placed within the boundary:**

There were inconsistencies between local authorities and other statutory agencies within the management of allegations and situations occurring within the home. As a result neither the host authority nor any other statutory agency were able to maintain an overview of the situations within the home.

***Practice questions:** Who has an overview of the child and their environment? How do I get help to take a step back and get an overview?*

For further information please refer to the [LSCB safeguarding procedures](#).