

Statement in relation to the Independent Case Review for Family X

Cheshire West and Chester Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP) and the Local Safeguarding Adult Board (LSAB) has today, 24th May 2021, published the independent review for Family X, which involved two children and an adult with care and support needs, who were chronically neglected. The children were taken into care and the adult moved into supported accommodation in July 2019 after calls from concerned neighbours to Social Care.

Gill Frame, Independent Chair of the Cheshire West and Chester Safeguarding Children Partnership said:

“The circumstances in which these two children were living met the criteria for a Safeguarding Practice Review. The Children had been electively home educated for several years and effectively became hidden from view. There is learning at a local and national level arising from this review and Cheshire West and Chester SCP fully accepts its findings and recommendations.

“At a time when many children are returning to education or re-engaging with services that have been so severely disrupted as a result of the pandemic, there is a collective responsibility on practitioners and managers at all levels to keep in focus those children who may remain out of sight. We must take every opportunity to identify these young people, understand their experiences and take action to ensure they are safe and well.

Ian Cardwell, Independent Chair of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Safeguarding Adult Board said:

“The LSAB recognised that there was learning to be derived from this adult’s experiences and a Practice Learning Review was agreed. I am pleased that the Children and Adult’s Boards agreed that it would be beneficial to commission a joint review using the principles of ‘Think Family’ and the LSAB fully accepts the reviews findings and recommendations.

The review findings fall within the following areas:

- Assessing vulnerabilities and risks in complex families
- Families who avoid services
- Multi-Agency working and communication – particularly in relation to ‘Was Not Brought Policies’ when appointments are continuously re-arranged.
- Safeguarding Children who are Home Educated
- Obesity as an indicator of neglect

The review was commissioned in September 2019 and began in December 2019; the Independent author of the review is Maureen Noble.

Early Implementation of Learning from the Review

The SCP and LSAB has worked closely with the case review panel to ensure that early adoption and implementation of learning from the review takes place.

‘Unhealthy Weight Safeguarding Guidance’ is in draft and has been contributed to by multi-agency partners to enable professionals to take preventative action at the earliest opportunity

and to alert them to potential early indicators of neglect. Arrangements in relation to the electively home educated children at a local level have been strengthened and we have written to the Children's Commissioner and DfE to bring to their attention findings from this review. We were also pleased to be engaged with the recent DfE Roundtable in respect of Electively Home-Educated Children to share learning from this review at a national level.

A series of learning events have taken place, and will continue to do so regularly, in relation to areas for practice improvement identified within the report.

Other areas of learning will continue to be progressed via the action plan generated by the case review panel and endorsed by the respective children and adult partnerships.

The following agencies had involvement with Family X during the period under review:

- Children's Social Care
- Adult's Social Care
- Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust - School Nursing Services, Community Learning Disability Service
- Safeguarding Unit – Elective Home Education Team
- General Practitioner
- Local Authority Regulatory Services

Contact Details

If you have any questions about this Case Review please contact Phillip Green, Media and Communication Manager at Philip.Green@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk and Stephanie Anderson, Communication Lead at stephanie.anderson@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Support Services

If you have been affected by issues within the report; or you are a Parent/Carer concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child or adult there are services available in Cheshire West and Chester to assist you.

Concerned about a child – please ring 0300 123 7047

Concerned about an adult – please ring 0300 123 7034