



# Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children's Board

## SERIOUS CASE REVIEW RESPONSE PLAN

Final Version - October 2014

**“Abigail” “Bobbie”, “Charlie” and “Daisy”.**

Abigail, Bobby, Charlie and Daisy were neglected by their parents. The children were removed from their parents and are thriving. Their parents were sentenced to a term of imprisonment. The following Response Plan learns from the findings of the Serious Case Review commissioned by the GSCB in March 2013, which found that the protective action that was taken should have happened earlier.

### A) Lessons Learnt

The GSCB has reflected on the lessons arising from the Serious Case Review and will use its' authority and statutory role to make sure these are shared throughout all organisations working with children and young people in Gloucestershire. This work has already started through Serious Case Review briefing sessions. It will continue through a) extensive circulation of the poster included overleaf, b) the GSCB Road Show 2014 (a series of 7 events that takes place every year across the County) and c) implementation of the actions set out in this Response Plan.

### B) Recommendations

The GSCB Executive and Full Board have reflected on and debated the Serious Case Review recommendations, for each considering the following:

**Do nothing?** *(it is being addressed already; or it is a risk to hold and manage)*

**Do something specific?** *(the recommendation triggers views or links to knowledge about strategies that we need to put in place as a response)*

**Do the thinking required in order to inform our response plan?** *(some issues may need further work to inform decisions about action)*

## **The GSCB has agreed the recommendations in full:**

1. The GSCB will undertake an audit of assessments and of child in need and child protection plans to ensure that the child's voice has been heard and is taken into account in the conclusion of the assessment and throughout the plan.
2. The GSCB will support a framework of meetings which allow professionals involved in particular cases to meet and reflect on professional dynamics and disagreements without the presence of children and families.
3. The GSCB will review its model of reflective supervision, to ensure that it is fit for purpose in assisting professionals to gain confidence in working with parents who are manipulative and show disguised compliance. Consideration will be given to using this model with more complex Child in Need cases, as well as those subject to a Child Protection plan.
4. The GSCB will ensure that the new Levels of Intervention model includes a clear link to the professional challenge policy, and is clear that requests for explanations of why decision have been made should be sought as applicable.
5. The GSCB will review its neglect training to ensure that it has improved the shared understanding of neglect across agencies. This review will include a request that all agencies review professional training and qualification courses locally to ensure they include training on child development and the impact of neglect.

These recommendations have all been picked up in the GSCB Response Plan. In addition, the GSCB will hold each agency involved in the case to account for agency specific actions.

## **C) Challenge Questions**

The GSCB particularly welcomes the "Challenge Questions" suggested by practitioners, recognising the way this can support learning and improvement, and has incorporated these into the thinking behind their Response Plan:

- a. *Should further training be developed for professionals to enable them to remain focused on the purpose of a home visit and take the lead in the conversation rather than following the lead of the parents or carers?*
- b. *Is there sufficient understanding of the concept of 'professional splitting' across partners?*
- c. *Are professionals across the child protection system able to recognise when systemic paralysis may be occurring?*
- d. *Should training be made available to assist professionals to recognise the symptoms of professional splitting and systemic paralysis?*
- e. *Is the importance of the role of housing recognised in child protection work locally?*
- f. *How do we ensure there is a better understanding of 'right of access' in respect of the condition of homes owned by LAs or social landlords?*

- g. How do we enhance the understanding of housing professionals on the impact of housing conditions on families e.g. on a child's education?*
- h. How can we progress collaborative working with Housing professionals and should the model of basing family support staff within Housing agencies operating within Families First be replicated?*
- i. Should the GSCB provide more information and training on how to deal with families who employ disguised compliance?*
- j. Peaks and troughs were observed in this case, a better understanding of the long term impact of neglect demands a long term perspective in understanding whether families are able to make sustained improvements. The GSCB should consider how to promote good planning and clear milestones.*
- k. Are professionals now better able to balance conflicting needs within families so that parents needs do not take priority over the needs of the children?*
- l. Are we confident that practitioners respect each other's views regarding thresholds and avoid unintentionally colluding with challenging families?*

## **D) What the GSCB has already done**

The GSCB has not waited for the outcome of the Serious Case Review before initiating action. It has:

- Contacted all partners involved in supporting children with a child protection plan or identified as a child in need to see if they have any ongoing concerns about their care
- Raised awareness of neglect amongst professionals who work with children and increasing their understanding about the impact that neglect can have through a series of neglect workshops
- Re-launched the Escalation Policy to give professionals the confidence to challenge if they disagree with the action being taken to help vulnerable children
- Reviewed when partners should intervene to keep children safe, and launched the revised and updated Levels of Intervention Guidance
- Taken every opportunity to remind professionals that their focus must always be on the needs of the children, even more so when the parents have many demands and difficulties.

## **E) Further Action**

The table in this Response Plan sets out further actions that will be taken forward.

Progress will be overseen by the GSCB Executive Group and regularly monitored by the GSCB Serious Case Review Sub Group.

The Serious Case Review report and this Response Plan will also be examined as part of the unannounced inspection of arrangements to protect children that takes place in all Local Authorities.

# Serious Case Review 2014 - 'Abigail' (0113)

## 'Sharing the Lessons and Reducing the Risk' when working with children in Gloucestershire



Safeguarding Children



**Always keep a clear focus on the experiences of the child.** This can be difficult when having to negotiate the many demands and difficulties of the parents, especially those who can be manipulative and may disguise compliance.



**Communication across and between agencies needs to be open and transparent.** Information sharing between agencies should not be seen as a barrier.



**The impact of neglect** on a child's safety, wellbeing and development is significant. Professionals should focus on building a shared understanding of the child's history through a chronology of significant events across all agencies involved.



**It is the robustness of the plan that will keep the child safe.** Plans must have the child's needs at the heart, include the involvement of all agencies and the family and a contingency plan



**Reflection on Safeguarding Practice** is essential for all staff, especially when dealing with complex abuse and neglect cases.



**Healthy challenge** is an important part of working with families and other professionals. Be persistent, have an inquiring mind and keep asking questions. Professional disagreement is a positive sign of a healthy safeguarding system

**For more information please contact  
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What GSCB Will Do	Why	How	Reference	By When
<b>1) Hold all partners to account for making sure that the child's voice is considered in any assessment or plan.</b>	To ensure that the child can tell their own story and present their views first hand, so that their experience is at the heart of all plans. In doing so, to ensure we learn from the advice of experienced young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Multi Agency Quality Assurance (MAQuA) sub group to carry out a minimum of 3 <i>multi agency</i> audits during 2014/15, which will include checking whether the child's voice is being taken into account</li> <li>• Through the Section 11 audit process, seek evidenced assurance from relevant partners that a routine part of their <i>single agency</i> audit methods is the child's voice</li> <li>• Ask a number of our 10 Ambassadors for Vulnerable Children and Young People, who are experienced service users, to co-lead presentation and workshop at GSCB Road Show in 2014, drawing on their own experiences and the training they are already involved in.</li> </ul>	Recommendation 1 Challenge Question k	During 2014/15 February 2015 December 2014
<b>2) Remind professionals of the circumstances where they can and should meet as professionals, to reflect on professional dynamics and disagreements without the presence of children and families.</b>	To encourage and enable frank discussion, reduce incidences of one agency being played off against each other, and ensure all pertinent information is drawn together in order to ensure a complete picture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include guidance workshops on 'professional splitting' and circumstances where different forms of professionals meetings are appropriate, via the GSCB Roadshow 2014; GSCB Multi Agency Training Level 3; and GSCB website</li> <li>• GSCB Business Unit to publicise anonymised case examples to support discussion between managers and staff as part of a suite of creative tools</li> <li>• Test how professionals meetings are being used, and their impact on practice, through Multi Agency Audit and the Multi Agency Child Protection Focus Group that takes place 6 times per year across the County.</li> </ul>	Recommendation 2 Challenge Questions b, c, d, l,	December 2014 December 2014 During 2014/15
<b>3) Test the level of senior oversight of reflective practice in decision making, including in complex child in need cases.</b>	To enhance effectiveness of decision making, to promote early intervention, and to make sure that when children are supported as 'children in need' this does not leave confusion over what	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The GSCB Business Unit to analyse responses in the annual Section 11 self assessment that all partner agencies undertake, to the questions about Safeguarding Practice Reflection (SPR)</li> <li>• The Policy and Procedures sub group to review the GSCB standards for SPR through a workshop style session, informed by the above analysis</li> <li>• Consult practitioners at GSCB Road Show about the level of reflective supervision that is available across organisations and how this can be strengthened</li> <li>• Raise awareness about SPR through re-launch of standards via the Policy &amp;</li> </ul>	Recommendation 3 Challenge Questions a, b, c, d, i, j, k, l	September 2014 October 2014 December 2014 January 2015

What GSCB Will Do	Why	How	Reference	By When
	information can be shared between agencies.	Procedures sub group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scope the potential of holding joint Safeguarding Practice Reflection sessions across agencies, via the Workforce Development Sub Group.</li> </ul>		February 2015
<b>4) Make sure that escalation of unresolved concerns is an integral part of the safeguarding system in Gloucestershire.</b>	To strengthen proper use of the existing escalation policy and promote shared understanding, so that professionals do not remain in a state of frustration at lack of response to growing concerns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Guidance:</b> include a clear link to the Escalation Policy in all documentation and training on the Levels of Intervention guidance</li> <li><b>Awareness Raising:</b> GSCB Alert, GSCB Website, GSCB Roadshow 2014</li> <li><b>Culture:</b> GSCB and Sub Group members to visibly model to staff how they apply healthy challenge with each other, through a Positive Leadership approach. To include examples of best practice and improved outcomes through use of the escalation policy, in training.</li> <li><b>Scrutiny:</b> a) Analyse responses to question about Escalation Policy built into the S11 self assessment b) monitor the number of escalations that the GSCB Business Manager is made aware of and the level of resolution in order to highlight how well the policy is being implemented across agencies c) include a question about the effective use of escalation policy in all MAQuA audits</li> </ul> <div style="background-color: #92d050; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>Do the Thinking:</b> Are professionals across the child protection system able to recognise when systemic paralysis may be occurring?</p> </div>	Recommendation 4  Challenge Questions b , c, l	During 2014/15
<b>5) Ensure professionals understand and take account of the impact of chronic neglect in their information sharing and decision making.</b>	To make sure neglect is treated as seriously as other forms of abuse, and to promote a shared understanding of the impact of long-term neglect so that it is not underestimated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the content of the GSCB multi agency workshops on neglect</li> <li>Roll out further GSCB workshops on neglect</li> <li>The Workforce Development sub group to undertake an impact evaluation on the 2014 neglect workshops – what difference has it made to practice</li> <li>Send a communication to all GSCB Board partners asking for confirmation that safeguarding training includes neglect, so that the Board can assure itself that staff awareness of the impact of neglect is not solely reliant on GSCB multi-agency neglect workshops</li> <li>Include a workshop on the GSCB Roadshow 2014 (7 events) that raises awareness about the role of housing officers in neglect cases, whether child</li> </ul>	Recommendation 5  Challenge Questions a, e,f, g, h, j, k	November 2014  October 2014  October 2014  December

What GSCB Will Do	Why	How	Reference	By When
	To ensure clarity about sharing information on families when they are not identified as a child protection case.	<p>in need or child protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reissue the 'Lessons Learnt from Serious Case Reviews' poster circulated in June 2014, via GSCB alert system</li> <li>• Policy and Procedure Sub Group to produce and share Multi-agency guidance on the use of chronologies to ensure the importance of taking into account historical information is understood by all professionals working with children and families</li> <li>• Policy and Procedure Sub Group to scope whether a neglect toolkit should be introduced in Gloucestershire, and make a recommendation to the GSCB.</li> </ul> <div style="background-color: #c6e0b4; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Do the Thinking:</b> How can GSCB promote good assessment, planning and clear milestones, in cases where peaks and troughs are observed in the case, and a long term perspective is needed in understanding whether the family is able to make sustained improvements?</p> </div>		<p>2014 October 2014</p> <p>February 2015</p> <p>March 2015</p>

What GSCB Will Do	Why	How	Reference	By When
<p><b>6) Ensure professionals have the knowledge, tools and confidence to tackle disguised compliance and challenging families.</b></p>	<p>To raise confidence across the workforce on recognising and tackling disguised compliance, as this is a recurring theme in SCRs, to reduce incidents where parents conceal the neglect the children are suffering.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope the best and most appropriate method and content of training about working with disguised compliance, via the GSCB Workforce Development Sub Group</li> <li>• Workforce Development Sub Group to develop a creative toolkit for professionals to help increase their confidence in having difficult conversations with families and other organisations</li> </ul> <p><b>Do the thinking:</b> Should further training be developed for professionals to enable them to remain focused on the purpose of a home visit and take the lead in the conversation rather than following the lead of the parents or carers?</p> <p><b>Do the thinking:</b> Are professionals now better able to balance conflicting needs within families so that parents needs do not take priority over the needs of the children?</p> <p><b>Do the thinking:</b> Are we confident that practitioners respect each other's views regarding thresholds and avoid unintentionally colluding with challenging families?</p>	<p>Challenge Question a, k, l</p>	<p>March 2015</p> <p>March 2015</p>