

Supplementary Witness Statement

Risk Assessment Forms

- 1.1 Risk assessment forms were introduced, prior to the CSCI Inspection in 2004, as an additional safeguarding measure within the placement making activity. When a child presented as being in need of a foster home, the risk assessment form would be completed to identify the child's needs and the skill set required of a foster carer to meet these needs.
- 1.2 Where it was known or suspected that a child had been abused and/or had abused other children, this information would be recorded on the risk assessment form and would determine the type of foster household sought. It was the responsibility of the child's social worker to complete a risk assessment form.
- 1.3 My view is that the risk assessment forms were effective, as a safeguarding tool, in the placement making activity. Whilst the quality of the analysis varied, commensurate with the variance in the quality of social work practice, the focus on risk supported safer placement making.
- 1.4 Prior to the introduction of the risk assessment forms there was consideration of risks posed and/or presented within the placement request processes at that time.

Centrally Collated Management System

2.1 A centrally collated system, for managing the number and outcomes of allegations made against adults who worked with children, was introduced post implementation of the Children Act 2004 and the creation of the position of Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). When an allegation or significant concern was made against a foster carer, the fostering social worker or the fostering team manager had to report the allegation to the LADO.

2.2 The role of the LADO included providing advice and guidance, about the manner in which the allegation/significant concern was to be addressed and monitoring the progress of such cases to ensure expediency and efficiency. It was the responsibility of the LADO to maintain a management information system. From this centrally based management information system, the LADO produced an annual report to identify numbers, outcomes and learning needs for the local authority, the fostering service and the foster carer community.

2.3 All forms of alleged abuse were referred to the LADO. At an operational level, one form of abuse was not given any different attention than any other type of abuse. However, the number of sexual abuse allegations, against foster carers in the Mansfield district, did attract particular attention and scrutiny through internal management review, internal audit and serious case review. The number of sexual abuse allegations in the Mansfield district was significantly higher when compared to other districts within Nottinghamshire County Council. There needed to be reflection and learning to strengthen social work practice and to seek the prevention of similar circumstances arising in the future.

2.3 My view is the centrally collated system, for managing the number and outcomes of allegations made against foster carers, was effective. All the information was in one place. A consistent approach, to managing allegations, was more achievable. Themes and patterns were easier to identify. Learning and improvement needs were easier to identify. I had a good working relationship with the LADO. The two of us worked together on the production, and subsequent revisions, of a policy and procedure for managing allegations, complaints and concerns against foster carers. The LADO attended the occasional fostering management meeting and provided

training input to fostering staff. There was a shared commitment to learning and continuous improvement. In my view, the centrally collated system had a positive impact upon striving to ensure safe foster care for children and safe social work practice.

Statement of Truth

I declare that the contents of this statement are accurate and true to the best of my knowledge and recall.

DPA

Jayne Austin
12 August 2018