

NO-F76 and NO-F77 Children's Social Care Reflective Learning Meeting  
Report for NSCB Standing Serious Case Review Panel  
3 April 2013

Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to update the Panel about the findings of the learning meeting regarding NO-F76 and NO-F77. The meeting took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2013 and was facilitated by Dawn Godfrey, Group Manager, Social Work Services.

Background information

NO-F76 and NO-F77 were approved as foster carers in 1988 and have had in excess of 34 children in their care including short term, bridging and long term placements. Initially, they fostered children under five years old but the ages of the children placed gradually increased.

In May 2012 it was alleged that NO-F77 exposed himself to a five year old girl NO-A274 who was visiting the house. The girl was herself a foster child, being fostered by Name Redacted. Name Redacted Irrelevant. The incident was apparently witnessed by Name Redacted who together with his wife has been a foster carer for Nottinghamshire for approximately 30 years.

A joint investigation between Police and Children's Social Care has been completed, resulting in NO-F77 being charged with indecent assaults against 4 children:

- a) NO-A274 – 1 charge of abuse of position of trust and sexual activity in the presence of a child (aged 6 when assaulted).
- b) NO-A201 – age 21 (aged 10 when assaulted). 3 charges of indecent assault with a boy under the age of 14.
- c) NO-A202 – age 10 (aged 5 when assaulted) .3 charges of engaging in non-penetrative sexual activity with a child aged under 13.
- d) NO-A200 – age 23 (aged 12 when assaulted). 3 charges of indecent assault with a boy under the age of 14.

NO-F77 is pleading not guilty to all of these offences.

## Action undertaken

In August 2012 the Service Director (Children's Social Care) commissioned an independent review to identify whether any risks posed by NO-F77 could/should have been identified earlier and to identify any lessons to be learned by children's social care (CSC) which would promote the safeguarding of looked after children. A series of recommendations were made and action plan drawn up to address. All actions have since been completed.

Further to the above independent review, a reflective learning meeting was held which involved the Fostering Service, Fieldwork Social Work Services and the Independent Chair Service. The purpose of this meeting was to specifically look at the process of investigation and to identify good practice but also lessons learned and actions arising from these.

## Context

In 2011 a Serious Case Review (DN11) was undertaken. The circumstances of this case have some similarities with the case of NO-F76 and NO-F77. As with NO-F76 and NO-F77 the carers fostered for the Mansfield District of Nottinghamshire County Council and became foster carers in the 1980s. The action plan arising from this has been fully implemented and all professionals taking in part in this reflective learning meeting were fully aware of the issues and actions taken in relation to DN11.

## Key learning – Practice

Discussion in the meeting confirmed that putting in place a dedicated investigation team comprising of Child Abuse Unit Officers and social workers/team manager assisted greatly in terms of communication, joint working and timeliness of investigation.

Areas for learning however were identified:

1. The importance of involving the fostering service effectively in child protection investigation processes.

This was prompted by discussion that fostering had felt sidelined during the investigation and didn't feel able to contribute. This was exacerbated by a feeling of mistrust between the Fostering Service and Investigation Team following an email by a fostering social worker which appeared to be supportive of the foster carers. Although this was dealt with swiftly and appropriately by the Fostering Service, trust was difficult to regain.

- o **Action: Role of fostering and their contribution in these investigations to be emphasised to Police and Social Work Services – to be raised at next joint meeting with CAIU/Children's Social Care**

2. The need for strategy meetings to be clear about role and focus particularly when a complex investigation.

This was prompted by a shared view that the strategy meetings were not clear and did not result in clear actions with timescales. No dates were set for follow on meetings either. There was also a missed focus on the children of the extended family who needed to be part of the investigation as the emphasis was on those children looked after.

- **Action: Aide memoire to be drawn up for use by Child Protection Chairs re. agenda for complex investigation strategy meetings. This will also be used to clarify purpose of strategy meetings for attending professionals.**
- **Aide memoire to emphasise need to identify all children within extended family who potentially might be subject of the investigation.**

3. The need for clarity about the remit of any meetings held outside strategy meeting process e.g. investigation planning meetings.

This related to the confusion for some between the strategy meetings and investigation planning meetings. There was a clear need to hold minimum fortnightly planning meetings due to the scale and complexity of the investigation, however this did cause some confusion in terms of role and remit.

- **Action: Need to keep child protection chair fully informed of any meetings being held outside of formal strategy meeting to ensure there is no duplication of remit. Link with action above.**

4. The importance of building in a mid way 'reflection' point when involved in complex and lengthy investigations to allow for learning at earlier stage.

- **Action: This has been discussed at Social Work Managers Meeting and highlighted as good practice.**

### Conclusion

The reflective learning meeting was a productive process which allowed key internal professionals the space and time to reflect and analyse their role and actions in this investigation.

Recognition of the learning in DN11 was particularly relevant in this case and assisted the process of reflection.

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