

1. What happened

Child H was 5 years old when she disclosed that she was being sexually abused by her step-father. She had previously been on a Child in Need plan and on a child protection plan for 10 months due to on-going domestic abuse between her mother and step-father.

Child H's step-father is a registered sex offender due to historic sexual abuse offences. In hindsight it has been considered that the abuse was occurring during the time that Child H was on a child protection plan.

2. Assessing risk

Where there are historic offences of sexual abuse against a child a thorough [assessment of the risk](#) of sexual abuse should be undertaken and the outcome shared with agencies involved.

Do not assume that because there is an historic offence it no longer presents a risk.

All expectant and new mothers should be screened for domestic abuse at midwifery appointments.

3. Pre-birth assessment

No [pre-birth assessment](#) took place for Child H's sibling when there were known concerns of domestic abuse and it had been recommended through child protection planning that an assessment of sexual abuse risk should take place.

Pre-birth assessments should always be undertaken when it is known that siblings are on a child protection plan.

8. Take away messages

- Ensure robust assessment of risk takes place
- Share information to safeguard the child/ren
- Be professionally curious
- Don't be afraid to effectively challenge decisions if you are not clear about them or disagree with them



4. Information sharing

The review found that not all relevant information about the family was shared. Practitioners who are working with children who are on a child protection plan and their families need to **engage in the [child protection planning process](#)**. If invited to a child protection conference or requested to provide a report then practitioners should attend and **share [all relevant information](#)** to enable a full understanding of levels and types of risk.

7. Professional curiosity

Group think is a situation that occurs when a **group reaches an agreement without a critical analysis of all of the information from all of the participants**. This appears to be the case with the practitioners involved with Child H.

Practitioners should **exercise [professional curiosity](#)** and effectively challenge any outstanding actions or issues in child protection planning **to assure themselves** that the appropriate multi-agency action is being taken to safeguard the child/ren.

6. Effective challenge

It was assumed by practitioners involved in the core group that there was no on-going risk of sexual abuse as it was not discussed further following the recommendation to undertake an assessment.

The assessment focussed on domestic abuse and the risk of sexual abuse was never robustly assessed. Practitioners seemingly accepted this and **did not challenge the lack of assessment of the risk of sexual abuse**.

Be prepared to constructively challenge in meetings.

5. Child Protection Conference and Core Group working

There appeared to be a lack of a shared understanding amongst agencies of their **individual and collective responsibilities** in the child protection process. If you are unsure of your responsibilities then ask the Chair.

Effective supervision should ensure that staff are aware of and are fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities.

CHILD H

Practitioner Learning Briefing

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