

Child Safeguarding Practice Review Children B & C – Learning Brief

Children B&C's Story

Children B&C's parents previously lived in another local authority area (LA1). During this time, four of their children were removed due to severe neglect. Both parents served prison sentences for the neglect, physical abuse and injuries caused to their 4th child. After they were released from prison, they concealed the birth of a fifth child, who was also subsequently removed when a family member disclosed having seen them with a child. In 2017 the parents moved to Blackpool where Children B and C were born. Mother hid her medical and pregnancy history, falsely claiming that she had only given birth to one previous child and omitting to share with professionals that she had had five children removed from her and the father's care. Child B was cared for by a childminder from April 2020. Concerns about Child B's development and behaviour led to referral to Children's Services in March 2023. That same month, Child C was reported to have been seen unsupervised and inappropriately clothed in the street, prompting a Police referral to Children's Services. In May 2023 the family accepted Section 17 Child in Need support. In June 2023, Blackpool requested the children's social care records from the previous Local Authority.

Male A, a registered sex offender, was released from prison in April 2022 after a custodial sentence. Male A lived in another authority supervised by probation before moving to Blackpool. Mum says she met Male A through her employment. From September 2023, Child B started school and Child C attended nursery at the same setting. Concerns arose about the family's home conditions, bruising to Child C's ear, and Child C's behaviour. It was subsequently identified that Male A was caring for both children in the family home when parents were not present. Child B later disclosed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the setting that Male A made him do 'exercises' involving hip thrusting. Male A was identified and arrested following this disclosure. When questioned, the parents said they had no knowledge of Male A's history regarding sexual offences. Both children were removed from their parent's care through Police Powers of Protection, and a strategy meeting took place. After significant delay the full history of care proceedings undertaken by LA1 was shared with Blackpool Children's Services, indicating the family history of children experiencing neglect.

[Read the full report here](#)

What we have learned

How well did the safeguarding system support the understanding of the children's needs and the parents' capacity to meet them?

Safeguarding support was limited by reliance on information provided by the parents. During Child B's pregnancy, midwives and GPs were unaware of previous children being removed because records were not checked or transferred in a timely way. This gap highlighted a risk that historical safeguarding concerns may not be known, limiting understanding of the children's needs and parents' capacity.

There was differing understanding of thresholds for intervention. The initial police referral regarding Child C being found alone was high risk, noting previous involvement in LA1, but the family were offered Child in Need support, which they declined. After a further domestic abuse referral, a Children & Family Assessment was undertaken, and

records were requested from LA1. The family was supported via a Child in Need Plan, but no Strategy Meeting was considered once historical records were received.

Male A's risk level was downgraded to medium due to compliance with his order. Medium-risk management did not include regular polygraph testing. While regularly seen by probation and MOSOVO, Male A denied any sexual attraction to children, despite having unsupervised contact with the two children over a 12-month period.

Good practice was noted in capturing the children's voices. The DSL from the school acted on Child C's disclosure, and the school demonstrated professional curiosity, helping partners understand the children's lived experiences and who they were spending time with.

What do I need to do?

Learning for Multi-Agency Professionals

1. Working with children and families through a trauma informed lens

- Be aware of how past trauma may affect family behaviour and relationships with professionals.
- Consider how trauma may influence a family's reluctance to share information.
- Observe and record any changes in household dynamics.
- Share relevant information, especially about high-risk individuals promptly and appropriately.
- Always consider the child's voice and behaviour as indicators of their lived experience.

2. Be professionally curious and questioning

- Ask open-ended questions to explore family circumstances.
- Be aware of and reflect on inconsistencies in what you see and hear.
- Don't accept information at face value, always discuss concerns with colleagues and partner agencies.
- Be curious about what might be hidden or not shared
- Respectful uncertainty - hold an open, questioning mindset without outright mistrust - actively consider whether the information provided may be partial, misleading, or influenced by hidden motives

3. Identify and Respond to Disguised Compliance

- Look beyond surface level engagement when parents and caregivers appear to cooperate but do not genuinely address concerns
- Cross-check information from different sources (e.g. children and family, education and care settings, health, police).
- Document and double check discrepancies
- Remember - disguised compliance can divert attention from children's needs and lead to case drift or escalating harm

4. Ensure Effective Transfer Information of geographical boundaries and between agencies

- When families move between areas, request full histories from previous services (medical, maternity, social care)
- Document when and how records were requested and expected timescales.
- Escalate delays in receiving records to managers or safeguarding leads.
- If there is a history of children having previous support from Children's services, managers should assess whether a Strategy Meeting is needed and record the decision.

5. Hear and Act on the Child's Voice

- Observe and interpret children's behaviour - what might they be telling us?

6. Risks from Hidden or unknown males

- Be alert to new individuals in the immediate or wider household. Ask: Who are they? What role do they play?
- Consider the “hidden male” in safeguarding assessments, as highlighted in [The Myth of Invisible Men guidance](#).

Keep in Touch

Further learning and resources can be found on the [Blackpool Safeguarding Partnerships Website](#)

The [NW Multi Agency Safeguarding Learning and Support Hub](#) has developed multi agency training and webinars following the [National Review of Child Sexual Abuse](#)

NSPCC Guidance [Disguised compliance’: learning from case reviews NSPCC 2025](#) March 2025

[Child Safeguarding Review Panel The Myth of Invisible Men](#) September 2021

For queries or feedback please contact the MASA Partnership Business Unit MASA@blackpool.gov.uk