

7 Minute Briefing: Sexual Health, Children Looked After, and Safe Placements

Background: Learning from Local Safeguarding Children Practice Review

At the time of the review Child R was under 16 years old. She had been placed in foster care out of Islington and had a history of trauma which has led to her being a child looked after (CLA) including domestic abuse, poor parental mental health and sexual abuse.

A review was commissioned by the ISCP in response to serious incident of sexual assault including rape. The foster carer was convicted. This was in no small way due to the courage of Child R who was able to give a full and frank account of the abuse.

The review explored issues of sex, sexuality, and contraception and how these are managed for CLA when the LA is their corporate parent. How are agencies making decisions/judgements and assessments about Fraser competence¹ for teenagers and the prescribing of contraception when the child is LA and out of borough. An executive summary was published in 2022.

Who is this briefing for?

Whilst this 7-minute briefing is aimed at primary care professionals, it is applicable to the whole Islington Partnership workforce who have contact with children and young people, and those that work with families, particularly Children Looked After (CLA) and their carers.

Why it matters

It is essential that we all use evidence-based advice and trauma informed practice for all our children and young people.

Every contact with a professional is an opportunity for a Children and Young People (C/YP) to disclose and for the professional to assure themselves that the C/YP is safe.

Many professionals have a responsibility to act as corporate parents for Children and Young People (C/YP) Looked after. This means understanding the risks for C/YP who are Looked After and ensuring that decisions made, are the same as we would want for our own children.

Asking the right questions, listening to the C/YPs voice and sharing information are key to making sure C/YP are kept safe.

Key Messages for all Professionals

- Contact Children's Services Contact team should safeguarding concerns be identified: 0207 527 7400
- All professionals to be aware of Safer Care Agreement (SCA) and information to be shared to any changes or deviations from the SCA.
- Information sharing between professionals is essential: When a child is placed out of Local authority area information must follow them to local health professionals.
- It is essential that all professionals working with young people give them the opportunity to be seen alone.
- Training is required for SWs, Personal Advisor's, Health colleagues inc. GP's and Foster Carers around sexual health services and discussions (from feedback with YP).

Going forward: Recommendations for Islington Corporate Parenting Board (ICPB)

A multi-agency task and finish group reviewed how sexual health is incorporated into CLA care and pathway planning for CLA pre and post 16 years of age. This has become part of ICPB strategy. Clarity was required around the care planning and decisions related to contraception for CLA who are victims of sexual abuse or at risk of CSE

- The framework used to assess?
- Who is informed?
- Who does the decision making involve?
- When should this trigger a review of the multi-agency risk assessment and safety planning?

Identified areas for additional consideration

- CLA who are placed outside of the borough
- Assessments and decisions made about CLA physical and mental health when out of borough
- Matching processes for children with complex needs including where there has been CSE/ grooming and missing episodes
- Understand LADO thresholds
- The management of sex, sexuality and contraception by corporate parent.
- Fraser Competence for teens in sexual relationships and prescribing of contraception when child is out of borough.
- C19 scheme out of borough

Learning for Professionals

Please read in conjunction with London Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures – PG37. Sexual Exploitation, PG38. Sexually Active Children and, Spotting the Signs Tool & Training – Brook

- ❖ Children Looked After are extremely vulnerable.
- ❖ CLA Social Workers as the lead professional needs to be advised if medication is prescribed, including contraception – exceptions to this are ONLY if the health professional can assure themselves that there are no safety issues.
- ❖ Professionals **must** be familiar with Fraser guidelines, especially for teenagers in relation to sexual health conversations and prescribing.
- ❖ Ensure every child and YP attending for contraceptive advice is seen alone, even if only regarding menstruation.
- ❖ Advise them about confidentiality and the need to share information if you feel they are at risk or unsafe.
- ❖ Have some simple questions ready and ask them when you pick up that the child and YP is ready to engage.
 - Are you safe?
 - Is anyone touching you or doing things that you don't agree to or don't want?
 - Are you having sex? Do you feel you have to have sex when you don't want to?
 - How old is the person you are having sex with?
 - Who can you tell if you don't feel safe or think something bad is happening?

