

# GLOUCESTERSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN NEWS BULLETIN

## Learning Lessons from Serious Case Reviews: Road Shows

Have you come across these yet? Whenever a child dies and there is a suspicion of abuse or neglect, or if there is an apparent breakdown of multi agency working, the GSCB has to carry out a Serious Case Review (see- [www.gscb.org.uk/procedures](http://www.gscb.org.uk/procedures)). The purpose is to enable us to learn any lessons from the work that was carried out, in order to improve practice in the future. There have been two reviews completed in Gloucestershire recently; the Executive Summaries can be accessed on the GSCB website. There have also been lessons learnt through single agency reviews completed in recent months.

The Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board are organising three important seminars around the County in April 2007. The purpose is to aid learning lessons from recent Serious Case Reviews and to explore the implications for the way we work with children and families and between agencies. The aim is to ensure that we continue to learn lessons from past experience and that we improve safeguarding practice throughout Gloucestershire.

The event is open to first line managers and supervisors who support front line staff working with children and families from the GSCB Partner Agencies such as

LA Children's Services Team (and Deputy Team) Managers,  
Designated Teachers, Gloucestershire Police,  
The Probation Service, CAF/CASS, Connexions,  
School Support Services, Home Educators,  
Community Paediatricians, A & E Department etc.

For more details or book a place on the seminar of your choice please contact the SCS or e-mail us at [mail@gscb.org.uk](mailto:mail@gscb.org.uk) with the subject heading SCR Road Shows. Read on for an article on the lessons learnt.

### New NHS guidance to support victims of abuse

NHS staff will be better equipped to identify and support victims of domestic and sexual violence and abuse, thanks to guidance being developed by a cross-Government programme. The Victims of Violence and Abuse Prevention Programme (VVAPP) - part of the Department of Health's contribution to the RESPECT agenda - has been established jointly with the Home Office to improve outcomes and quality of life for people affected by domestic and sexual violence and abuse.

Gloucestershire



Safeguarding Children Board

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This Newsletter is available online:  
[www.gscb.org.uk/newsletter.htm](http://www.gscb.org.uk/newsletter.htm)

## Serious Case Reviews: Ways in which practice could be improved

The reviews all highlighted some good practice by all agencies and at no point were there any grounds to suggest that responsibility for the incident under investigation lay with poor practice of any agency, team or individual. However the reviews did suggest ways in which practice could be improved.

### Strategy Discussions

The reviews have highlighted that on occasions [a strategy discussion should have been held](#) by social work teams and that this would have improved the work carried out with the families (please see article below). As a consequence concerns were raised about issues such as:

- Establishing clarity about what puts a case into the child protection arena
- Sharing information between and involving all relevant agencies in assessment and decision making
- Ensuring clarity about decision making and the recording of decisions made
- Ensuring enough importance is put on the lessons from the history of working with families
- Establishing chronologies
- Seeing children on their own.

These concerns could have been resolved through the convening of a strategy discussion.

### Lead Professionals

Some of the cases were very complex, involving large numbers of professionals from different agencies working on different aspects of the care and support of the children and their families. The reviews stressed the importance of [establishing a 'lead professional'](#) who stayed with vulnerable children and who could take an overview of the services provided. Thus giving an opportunity to co-ordinate services and look at the wider pictures of how services impacted on the family and the children. For more information: <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/leadprofessional/>

### Logging child welfare concerns

The reviews highlighted the [importance of all staff working with children and families logging child welfare concerns](#) with the Safeguarding Children Service. (Please see [www.gscb.org.uk/procedures](http://www.gscb.org.uk/procedures) page 75) The use of this procedure may have alerted agencies to the concerns of others earlier.

### Good recording of all contacts

In some instances there were [concerns about the quality of recording of information](#) gained and decisions taken after conversations between staff and with children and their families.

### Engaging hard to reach families

Some of the reviews involved trying to work with families that were 'hard to reach', that were either hostile to the support services, were reluctant to take on board advice, or were seen as having different approaches to conventional child care. These were things that were identified as getting in the way of the assessment and the planning and delivery of service to the children and families. The lesson derived from this is to [ensure staff see things from the child's perspective](#); if there is aggression in the family, how does the child feel in that environment; what was the impact of the parents' beliefs on the child and how the child fits in to his or her world were two points to illustrate this concern.

### Other issues from the reviews

- Involving adult services
- Registering with GPs
- Being child focused in our work (as opposed to being too sympathetic to parents)
- [Sharing information](#) across borders
- Sharing concerns about children being educated at home
- Looking at child protection concerns that arise from unauthorised absences from school
- Staff [training](#) in child protection

## Children involved in prostitution

The Gloucestershire Child Protection Procedures state that children involved in prostitution should be regarded as victims of child abuse and neglect. Barnardo's have completed a two-year evaluation on support for sexually exploited young people. Over the past decade they have achieved considerable success in raising public, political and professional awareness of sexual exploitation, and in redefining the issue as one of child abuse rather than juvenile prostitution

[Reducing the risk: Barnardo's support for sexually exploited young people: A two-year evaluation](#)

## IN DEPTH

### Strategy Discussions: Coming to you soon

The GSCB has identified weakness' in the way we carry out strategy discussions in Gloucestershire, namely that we are not holding enough and we are not making them a truly multi agency decision making body. This came to light from work carried out by the Board earlier in the year to try and explain the disparity in child protection registration rates between social work teams.

The Forest of Dean Team has a consistently higher child protection registration rate compared to the other teams; where as teams like Tewkesbury, Cheltenham and the Cotswolds have a much lower rate of registration. It has proven very difficult to identify demographic or other factors that might account for these differences, except that there are differences in the way teams manage child protection cases and in they way teams view the use of child protection conferences. Some teams appear more reluctant than others to 'put a family through a child protection conference'. It also became clear that an important part or our child protection procedures is being under used. It is the view of the Board that full use of the strategy discussion will bring greater consistency of response between the teams.

'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006', Government guidance on how child protection cases are handled, say:

*"Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, there should be a strategy discussion..."*  
WT Para 5.45

Effectively this means there should be a strategy discussion on **all** new referrals to the CYPD where there are child protection concerns and on **all** cases open to a social work team when new child protection concerns are raised.

The purpose of the strategy discussion is to decide, on a multi agency basis, whether a child protection enquiry should be held (under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 – through a core assessment), whether emergency action to protect a child is necessary and whether a child protection conference is required.

Strategy discussions will be convened by the social work team manager (or deputy team manager) and will include representatives from the police, other agencies who are working with the family as appropriate (including children centres/schools and health) and in particular the referring agency. It is recognised that there may well need to be more than one strategy discussion to agree what is required to appropriately support a family and that strategy discussions can be meetings (in more serious or complex cases – and practitioners who have been consulted about this issue have said meetings are likely to be more effective and preferable) or discussions held on the telephone (perhaps to confirm the outcome in more straightforward cases).

**Its successful implementation will mean a change in culture** – both for the social work teams, who will have to hold more strategy discussions and will have to give up some of their traditional decision-making role; and for staff from the other agencies who will have to attend more discussions and take more responsibility for decisions made.

The GSCB will be putting on multi agency training to ease the implementation of the use of the strategy discussion and will be monitoring its success. If you have any concerns about the use of the strategy discussion, either that it is still being under used, or if it is not, in your view being used appropriately, please discuss your concerns with the relevant social work team manager and, if necessary, let us know through the Safeguarding Children Service office.

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### The Common Assessment Framework

DfES has published an evaluation on the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Lead Professional (LP) guidance implementation. The evaluation shows that there is considerable enthusiasm from practitioners and managers to make CAF and LP work, and evidence that they can be successful to provide early intervention through universal services. There is early evidence of improved outcomes for children and families, who are positive about the processes.

For more information on the Common Assessment Framework:  
[www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/caf](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/caf)

## Allegations Management

This is a new phrase that we will come across increasingly from now on. It relates to the way we manage allegations against staff working with children and young people that may indicate that the alleged perpetrator is unsuitable to work with children. There are significant changes underway.

The first and most important change is that the new procedures apply to all staff working with children and young people, whether working for a large statutory agency such as the health or the local authority, or whether working for a voluntary or community group. The procedures apply in all cases where allegations are made that staff have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child; or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

The procedures incorporate three strands of consideration when allegations are made;

- the need for a police investigation of a possible criminal offence
- enquiries and assessment by children's social care about whether a child is in need of protection or in need of services; and
- consideration of an employer of disciplinary action in respect of the individual.

### The Local Authority

The second change is that the GSCB has new responsibilities to support and monitor the application of the procedures and learn lessons from investigations about safeguarding children and young people against the inappropriate behaviour of staff working with them. The Board has nominated Jane Bee (Safeguarding Children Development Officer (education)) to be the local authority designated officer (LADO) and her responsibility is to be:

- involved in the management and oversight of individual cases
- providing advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations
- liaising with police and other agencies; and
- monitoring the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process.

### Agencies and Organisations

All agencies/organisations working with children and young people are asked to identify a senior officer who has overall responsibility for ensuring procedures are adhered to; and that all allegations are discussed with the LADO and an agreement about how to proceed is achieved. The LADO will advise on whether a 'strategy meeting' involving the police and social care is required, or whether the issue can be resolved internally by the agency/organisation through disciplinary or supervisory procedures. Record will be kept of all consultations.

### Voluntary and Community Groups

All voluntary and community groups that work with children and young people, should operate a procedure for handling allegations against staff or volunteers that are in line with the guidance.

### Care of Staff

The new guidance gives advice about how staff should be treated throughout the course of an investigation throughout and asks for the adherence of strict time scales to resolve difficulties at the earliest possible opportunity. It is the hope of the Board that the new guidelines will provide consistency throughout the county that ensures staff subjected to allegations are dealt with at an appropriate level, by providing help and support to employers in making decisions about how individual cases should be managed.

### Your first steps

If you are an employer or are part of a management committee of a voluntary or community group and an allegation is made against a member of your staff, or a person who is employed by another agency but is used by your organisation, or a volunteer, your first steps are:

- to ensure the children in your care are protected
- that the police are called if a serious criminal offence has been committed, and
- contact the Safeguarding Children Service on 01452 426994 or 01452 42583638.

## Bullying

GSCB are prioritising Bullying within their business plan as it is a priority that has been identified in the Gloucestershire Children and Young People's Plan. GSCB plans to respond by ensuring that agencies have anti-bullying policies and are actively working to address bullying in their work with groups of children.

DfES anti-bullying pack for schools and an Action on Bullying article is available through these links.

Bullying is a big issue for schools and other organisations working with groups of children and young people. We are all aware of the misery and the occasional tragedy that comes from young people being bullied by their peers. Thus the first phase that the GSCB will be currently involved in is asking staff who work with children, young people and their families to complete a Questionnaire, which can be found on the GSCB Website:

<http://www.gscb.org.uk/newsletter/bullying.htm>

The GSCB is particularly interested in establishing how far community and voluntary groups and District Councils have come in addressing the issue of bullying in a formal way throughout Gloucestershire.

## Standards for Anti-bullying policies for organisations working with groups of children

Every agency that works with groups of children and young people should have an anti-bullying policy that aids the agency in dealing with incidences of bullying.

The policy should be reviewed on a regular basis and its effectiveness evaluated.

The policy should include means by which awareness is raised for all those affected by the policy.

The policy should clearly explain how to respond to bullying.

The policy should include a strategy to tackle bullying once it is identified.

## Key Stats

- ★ As at 30 November 2006 there were **218 children** and young people on the Gloucestershire Child Protection Register.
- ★ In November 2006 the Safeguarding Children Service logged **467 child welfare concerns**.
- ★ By the end of 2006, the GSCB website had received over **96,000 hits**.

## Record Keeping

It is understood that poor record-keeping and confusion over some checking arrangements undermines procedures for safeguarding children in schools. Earlier this month, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) published Safeguarding children: an evaluation of procedures for checking staff appointed by schools.

In brief the guidance states that:

### Schools and, where appropriate, colleges should:

- establish and be secure in the identity of staff; or assure themselves that others who employ or supply staff have done so;
- verify the authenticity of the qualifications of staff;
- establish which staff require checking against List 99 and with the CRB, then do so, or secure that others have done so;
- maintain an up-to-date record of staff which displays evidence that the three tasks above have been carried out, and when.

### Local authorities, where they are the employer of staff, should:

- carry out all the above tasks and maintain matching records for staff they employ;
- check that schools are secure in their procedures and record-keeping: they should insist on seeing evidence of these records regularly, not accept assertion that they exist.

### The DfES should:

- provide clear guidance, (defining "regular contact", with examples) as to who should be checked, against which lists, at what level, and how frequently;
- make a clear and specific statement about checks on school governors;
- provide clearer guidance, regarding schools' responsibilities when employing staff from abroad, or through supply agencies;
- provide guidance on suitable employment practices (if employed at all) for those who are not checked, or are awaiting checks;
- speed up the handling of cases of misconduct that are reported to them.

## Police system for national intelligence sharing

The Bichard Recommendations highlight how children can be better protected nationally by various agencies. The Home Office in partnership with various other organisations established the IMPACT Programme. This programme was designed to improve the ability of the Police Service to manage and share operational information to prevent and detect crime, and make communities safer. In simple terms it has the ability to search and match names held in various police databases in the constabularies within the UK.

The IMPACT programme is charged with addressing Bichard recommendations 1, 2 and 4.

**Recommendation 1:** a national IT system for England and Wales should be introduced as a matter of urgency to support police intelligence.

**Recommendation 2:** the PLX system which flags up the intelligence held about somebody by particular forces should be introduced by 2005.

**Recommendation 4:** the investment should be made by the government to secure the Police National Computer's medium and long term future, given its importance to intelligence-led policing and to the Criminal Justice System as a whole.

### Purpose of the IMPACT programme is:

" To deliver an effective integrated national, regional and local information-sharing and intelligence capability, which will improve the ability of the police and partner agencies to proactively use information for intelligence purposes to prevent crime, bring offenders to justice, safeguard children and vulnerable people and further professionalise the investigation process."

Detective Inspector, David Wasley from Gloucestershire Constabulary has kindly provided us with information with regards to the first system to be delivered by the IMPACT programme:

The "Impact Nominal Index" – the INI system as it is called was set up by the Home office in order to create a national police intelligence system by linking information held at a wide variety of UK police systems.

The INI will deliver the capability to identify the existence of information held against a person in six business areas across the 43 police forces of England and Wales, namely intelligence, Crime Custody, Domestic Violence, Child Protection and Firearms (Licensing Refusals and Revocations).

The INI is a database tool that will provide police staff with the capability to identify forces holding information against a particular person. The linking of information by one or more forces with the names of offenders and suspects in another will better inform decisions on corroboration, risk assessment, operational priorities and action. The index is of people who are known to police and the information is available for policing purposes. It has initially been made available to child abuse investigations units throughout the country and will be subsequently rolled out to other operational areas.

Within Gloucestershire a number of Child Protection police staff have access to the INI system and already additional intelligence has been identified that would not necessarily have been available before the introduction of this system. This system also raises the importance of Information Sharing within and across agencies.

The INI went live at the end of 2005 and is an interim solution that only flags up the fact another police force has information on a person. The full Impact intelligence system will not be available until 2010.

## Safeguarding Children Forums

The GSCB are holding a series of seminars, called the Safeguarding Children Forums throughout the second half of January and early February. They are aimed at community and voluntary groups working with children and young people and any organisations not represented on the GSCB. The Forum will be an opportunity for us to meet with these groups and assist them in ensuring they are in a position to safeguard and promote the needs of children and young people and to hear first hand their priority issues for their organisations.

For more detail and information about how to book please click on [www.gscb.org.uk/sf](http://www.gscb.org.uk/sf)

## ISA Update

This is an e-bulletin designed to keep you in touch with Government developments on the Information Sharing and Assessment agenda within the wider Every Child Matters: Change for Children Programme.

To subscribe email: [mailbox.isadivision@dfes.gov.uk](mailto:mailbox.isadivision@dfes.gov.uk), putting 'Update Distribution List' in the Subject box.

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## Domestic Abuse

This is one of the GSCB priorities. The GSCB is keen to replace the term Domestic Violence with Domestic Abuse, homing in on the notion that Domestic abuse is not just about physical violence.

In June 2006, Gloucestershire County Council published their Domestic Abuse policy which includes procedures to ensure that domestic violence issues are given priority and staff are making considered and appropriate responses whenever they become aware of indications that any service user or family member, or member of staff, is being subjected to domestic violence.

The GSCB are represented on the new Gloucestershire Domestic Violence Forum.

The GSCB Monitoring and Performance Sub-committee regularly analyse Child Protection statistics. Domestic Abuse continues to be the largest single parental issue for Child Protection Conferences held.

Domestic Violence Abuse Policy

GSCB Domestic Abuse Training

Gloucestershire Countywide Domestic Abuse Strategy

## Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill

New legislation will establish a centralised vetting system for people working with children and vulnerable adults. The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill, published last year, will make it an offence for employers to take on people they know are barred from working with children. Sanctions will range from fines of up to £5,000, to jail sentences for the most serious cases.

The new vetting system will combine the current List 99 (for teachers) and the Protection of Children Act lists (for childcare setting staff). Employers will be able to make an instant check on a prospective employee's barred status through secure online access. Domestic employers will be able to check if private tutors, nannies, music teachers and care workers are barred.

For more information go to:

[www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200506/ldbills/079/2006079.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200506/ldbills/079/2006079.htm)

## Interesting BBC Radio Links

[Understanding Child Abuse.](#)

[Historical Abuse](#)

[Children who abuse other children](#)

[Informing mothers about sexual abuse](#)

[Alarming degree of personal abuse among homeless](#)

[Change sought over law on abuse](#)

[Domestic violence and cycles of abuse](#)

[Abusers themselves are calling Stop it now](#)

## How well do we respond to issues that might be child protection?

The GSCB has a responsibility to ensure all staff working with children, young people and families are equipped with the knowledge and tools to recognise and respond appropriately to child welfare concerns as they arise through their work. The Local Authority has the responsibility to ensure that the Board is effective in delivering on its responsibilities. The County Councillors, who are the corporate parents to the children of Gloucestershire, have responsibility to ensure the Local Authority is doing its job effectively; and in Gloucestershire our politicians are taking this role very seriously indeed.

Cllrs Stephen McMillan and Brian Thornton, both members of the County Council Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee (responsible therefore for standards in service delivery for children and families) have agreement and support from the Board to carry out a survey of staff in different work settings to see how confident they feel in dealing with issues of a child protection nature.

Over the next few months the Councillors will be visiting work places and interviewing staff, asking them where they get training, support and advice from to deal with issues as they arise and whether they can access child protection procedures. They could well be visiting a work place near you very soon, whether in a school, social work team, the police or health setting. You will recognise them by their stoop of the burden of responsibility (they understand the safeguarding buck stops with them), treat them kindly and feed them well.

I am confident those of you reading this through the GSCB website will have no problem demonstrating they are fully equipped to deal with any child protection issues. I am not so certain about the rest of you.

## Handbook Launched for Designated Teachers

The Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board handbook for Designated Safeguarding (Child Protection) Officers in Educational Settings will be launched in the next couple of weeks.

[www.gscb.org.uk/handbook](http://www.gscb.org.uk/handbook)

## Bullet Section

- o Gloucestershire's Safeguarding Children Board (GSCB) has issued Version 3 of the Child Protection Procedures. These are dated September 2006, and supersede the previous version, dated January 2006. This includes guidance on responding to under-age sexual activity and sharing information about violent clients. Significant changes are due in the next few weeks [www.gscb.org.uk/procedures](http://www.gscb.org.uk/procedures).
- o Remember to sign up to the GSCB website updates mailing list. Please send an e-mail to [updates@gscb.org.uk](mailto:updates@gscb.org.uk) with the subject heading of "subscribe".
- o The GSCB Business Planning Day will be held on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007, when members will meet to review the progress of 2006/07 and agree priorities for 2007/08. (See [GSCB Business Plan](#))
- o The Safeguarding Children Office has several hard copies of "Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2006" – please contact [mail@gscb.org.uk](mailto:mail@gscb.org.uk) with your details and the number of copies you require.
- o For more information about the GSCB, please read the [Welcome Pack](#)
- o During the May GSCB, Kate Robertson, Head of Service Delivery, Connexions was nominated as the GSCB Deputy Chair.
- o From January next year, Gloucester Centre for Voluntary Services (GCVS) will be known as Gloucester Association for Voluntary and Community Action (GAVCA).
- o On 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006, Gloucestershire's three Primary Care Trusts merged to become Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust (PCT).
- o The [Gloucestershire Joint Area Review](#) is due to take place during 15<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2007.

### GSCB and its links with MAPPP

Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) involves the supervision and management of sexual and violent offenders who pose the highest risk of serious harm through Risk Assessments and Risk Management to minimize the risk to the public, children, other known adults, staff, self-harm or to prisoners.

The management of risk is through different levels of meetings. Membership of these meetings overlaps with GSCB membership thus creating a strong link between the two.

Approximately 50% of cases involve children known to social care services or where a referral to CYPD becomes necessary. Thus the GSCB have also decided to include MAPPA updates at each Executive Meeting in order to keep members up to date and ensure that agencies are working together effectively.

### The Concept of Significant Harm in Working Together Guidance:

*1.23 ... The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children, and gives LAs a duty to make enquiries to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child who is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.*

*1.25 Consideration of the severity of ill-treatment may include the degree and the extent of physical harm, the duration and frequency of abuse and neglect, the extent of premeditation, and the presence or degree of threat, coercion, sadism and bizarre or unusual elements. ... Sometimes, a single traumatic event may constitute significant harm, e.g. a violent assault, suffocation or poisoning. More often, significant harm is a compilation of significant events, both acute and long-standing, which interrupt, change or damage the child's physical and psychological development. ...*

*1.26 To understand and identify significant harm, it is necessary to consider:*

- o *the nature of harm, in terms of maltreatment or failure to provide adequate care*
- o *the impact on the child's health and development*
- o *the child's development within the context of their family and wider environment*
- o *any special needs, such as a medical condition, communication impairment or disability, that may affect the child's development and care within the family*
- o *the capacity of parents to meet adequately the child's needs*
- o *the wider and environmental family context.*

*1.27 The child's reactions, his or her perceptions, and wishes and feelings should be ascertained and taken account of according to the child's age and understanding.*