



MESSAGES FOR PRACTICE – SEWSCB 2 / 2017

This historic Child Practice Review relates to a family with 4 children who were subject to neglect, physical abuse & sexual abuse. The review covers 3 years, the children were aged between 4 & 11 years old at the start of the review period. One child has a learning disability, & another required additional educational support. They lived with their parents with significant parental input from a paternal aunt and her husband. The parents required additional support & they had learning difficulties. Below are some key learning points from the review. The full report can be accessed using the following link: [Historical Child Practice Review - SEWSCB 2 / 2017 \(gwentsafeguarding.org.uk\)](http://gwentsafeguarding.org.uk)

Learning Disabilities, Difficulties and Needs

Records refer to parents as having 'special needs' / 'learning difficulties', but no formal assessment of their parenting was undertaken or clear determination of what their learning 'difficulties' or 'special needs' actually were.

Learning difficulties, disabilities and 'special needs' can all have an impact on an individual's ability to parent and the support they are then subsequently offered should be tailored to their individual learning needs. The terms are often used interchangeably but we need to be clear what they mean in the context of parental functioning and the support provided should therefore be reflective of this.



Decision Making

The responsibility for seeking medical interventions for the children was placed on the parents which resulted in appropriate action not being taken.

A delay in undertaking Child Protection Medicals can put children at risk of further abuse.

Professionals must follow The Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019).
http://www.myguideapps.com/projects/wales_safeguarding_procedures/default/

Paediatrician involvement in the decision making at strategy discussions was not always considered despite this being a procedural requirement.

Decision-making regarding returning the children to the family home took place pre-conference and was not multi-agency.

Parenting Capacity Assessments

Assessing parental capacity, capability, willingness to engage and the support networks around the family must be the foundation from which risk assessments and care plans are built upon. Without a clear understanding of these plans and future interventions may be delayed, restricted, misinterpreted and unrealistic.

Parenting assessments must:

- understand and document the parent's capacity to change, capability and willingness to engage
- have meaning for the parents and the children
- provide an opportunity for professionals to be curious and consider disguised compliance
- consider a parent's limitations
- understand and analyse the family dynamics

Appropriate services and interventions can then be provided.

Information Sharing

Taking time to pull together historical concerns, to link previous referrals and chronological events is critical to identifying patterns of behaviour and providing a panoramic view (not a microscopic one) of the case and family.

Voice of the Child

- Regardless of age, development or disability, children should be spoken to using appropriate methods and tools.
 - Achieving Best Evidence techniques must be used to listen to and hear from children.
- Where professionals consider this is not happening then they should appropriately challenge colleagues as part of their practice both within and outside their agencies.