

01. BACKGROUND

“Fred” is an older teenager who who was found unconscious in the street after what is believed to be an accidental overdose. Fred lived with Mother and Stepfather. Until 6 months before this Fred had been living with Paternal Grandparents under a Special Guardianship Order due to longstanding concerns about neglect. The relationship between Fred and his grandparents had become strained, which prompted him to move to his Mother’s.

02. WHAT DID WE LOOK AT?

We looked at four areas;

1. Responding to mental ill-health, domestic abuse and substance misuse
2. Engaging, safeguarding and supporting teenagers
3. How practitioners and agencies worked together; referrals, assessments and plans
4. Assessing the role of extended family members

03. WHAT ARE THE MAIN THINGS WE FOUND: CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE

1. It is helpful for practitioners to be aware of research findings about the main barriers to children making disclosures: emotional discomfort; worry about the family knowing; underestimating the seriousness of the concern; threats; fear of not being believed and fear of loss of control over decisions.
2. Both the individual and cumulative impacts of incidents of domestic abuse and/or adult substance misuse or overdoses on children of all ages should always be considered especially when a child is directly affected.

07. WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?

Think about the learning from this review and the children and families you work with. In particular:

1. Use evidence-based tools to identify who is important to children and young people; relatives, friends and professionals
2. Reflect on and explore any contradictions between the child’s expressed wishes and their lived experience.
3. Continue to be persistent and creative in making trusting relationships with children.
4. Find out more about legal implications of Special Guardianship Orders.

06. WHAT WILL WE DO NOW?

1. Ensure any plan to safeguard a child starts from their perspective on what being safe physically and emotionally means to them
2. Promote the use of evidenced based tools to help practitioners better understand family dynamics and support for children
3. Raise awareness about the legal implications of Special Guardianship Orders; parental responsibility and potential eligibility for support services
4. Ensure information about parent figures is obtained from GP records at all stages of the child’s journey.
5. Ensure that local response to neglect adequately focuses on the needs of adolescents



04. WHAT ARE THE MAIN THINGS WE FOUND: PROFESSIONALS

1. Professionals sought and responded to Fred’s expressed views including when these changed
2. Emotional abuse and neglect of adolescents tends to be less readily recognised by professionals than that of younger children
3. When children subject to Special Guardianship Orders return to the care of their parents, consideration should be

05. WHAT ARE THE MAIN THINGS WE FOUND: FAMILIES

1. Children and extended family members may each need advice, support and encouragement to repair relationships; this should be given early consideration and kept in mind where the relationship is a significant one.
2. It is important to obtain information from GP records about all adults involved in children’s care; when undertaking S47 enquiries, preparing for Initial Child Protection Conferences or conducting assessments (when consent maybe needed).