

Statement from Dr David Jones, outgoing Independent Chair of the Leicester Safeguarding Children Board

The Leicester City Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is today (June 13) publishing two serious case reviews.

Serious case reviews are carried out when a child dies or is seriously harmed, and abuse or neglect are believed to be the cause.

They examine in detail how organisations and professionals worked together to safeguard a child, to look at whether lessons can be learnt for the future.

The reviews are written in a way that protects the identity of the families concerned, and the children are therefore not named. The reviews we are publishing today relate to children we are referring to as Child B1, and Child C1.

The cases are not linked, but as both reviews were carried out over the same period of time we are publishing them together.

The reviews, which were each carried out by an independent author, look in great detail at the role of the various agencies that were connected with both families.

The review into the experiences of Child B1 tells a distressing story of neglect, which has saddened all those involved. Child B1 is now profoundly disabled following a food-choking incident.

The report published today highlights a number of areas of concern and concludes that harm to the child could have been predicted, and the removal of the child from the parents' care would have prevented it.

The review found that at times the working relationship between agencies was close, and efforts were made to help the mother care better for the child, but these were generally ineffective and failed to protect Child B1.

Better sharing of information is one of the many recommendations made by the author, and significant work has been done across all agencies to achieve this.

The story of Child C1 is also one that involves neglect. Child C1 suffered a fractured skull, but I am pleased to say is now thriving.

The review into Child C1 could not find any clear evidence that what happened could have been definitely avoided.

It is clear that the chaotic lifestyle of the child's mother made it difficult for agencies to keep track of the family, but some support was provided and there is praise from the author for some of the professionals involved.

However there were also many missed opportunities to intervene, in ways that would have improved the child's life and welfare, and that is something we must all learn from.

In both cases, the voices and experiences of the children were not given the attention they required.

Both the city and county safeguarding children's boards and all of the agencies concerned have fully accepted the recommendations made by the two report authors, and all have taken the necessary actions to implement them.

Key actions taken include:

- A new framework has been developed to ensure better information sharing about safeguarding matters which has been signed up to by 27 agencies across the city, county and Rutland;
- Guidance around neglect has been reviewed and strengthened taking into account recommendations made by the serious case reviews. This has also been done with the involvement of all agencies;
- The LSCB has worked closely with the young advisors' service to make sure listening to the child is a key priority. As a result of this a shadow board made up of young people has been created. Chairs of child protection meetings have had training given to ensure children's voices are heard and acted upon.

All of the agencies working with children and young people in the city have been working together to strengthen arrangements for protecting children in Leicester and practice is improving as a result of these serious case reviews and other ongoing work.

Child protection is a challenging task. Professionals face complex situations every day, and have to make difficult judgement calls on them. It is vital that we continually review our actions to make sure the right tools and policies are in place to help them to do that. All of the partner agencies in the LSCB are committed to making the city a safer place for children and young people.

The reports are available on the LSCB website at www.lcitylscb.org

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The Leicester Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) brings together all of the main organisations who work with children and families in Leicester, with the aim of ensuring they work together effectively to keep children and young people safe.

These include Leicester City Council, Leicestershire Police, Leicester City Clinical Commissioning Group, University Hospitals Leicester, and Leicester Partnership Trust.

David Jones' second, three-year term as chair of the LSCB ended in May this year. The new chair is Jenny Myers, who is also chair of Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board. More information about the LSCB is available at www.lcitylscb.org