



**East Sussex
Safeguarding
Children
Partnership**

Child F

Learning from serious safeguarding
incidents in East Sussex

May 2026

Process for deciding a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR)

ESSCP Case Review Group

- CRG notified of a 'serious incident'
- A 'rapid review' is collated within 15 days
- CRG review information, which may result in recommendation to conduct LCSPR

ESSCP Delegated Safeguarding Leads

- Agrees if meets LCSPR threshold (based on CRG recommendation)
- Rapid review and decision is shared with National Panel

National Panel

- National panel provide response to decision to LCSPR
- National Panel provide advice if local or national review

Local LCSPR Panel

- Agree model for LCSPR
- Commission Independent Author (or agree how 'independence' achieved)
- Agree process and timetable



Child F



Background

- In January 2024 Child F's father was admitted to A&E following a suicide attempt at home, where Child was present.
- Following this Child F told professionals of significant ongoing sexual abuse perpetrated by her father since June 2023.
- At the time of the serious incident, Child F lived with her father and half-sibling and was being supported by agencies through a Child in Need (CIN) plan.
- This decision to support Child F via a CIN plan had been made at an Initial Child Protection Conference meeting seven months prior.
- Child F had previously been the subject of four Child in Need plans, that were in place for significant periods of her life, due to unpredictable and neglectful parenting. She had witnessed domestic abuse and some of the adults who cared for her had a history of vulnerable mental health issues and alcohol misuse.



“I didn't want to get my mum or dad in trouble. I think that's a big... pressure for children, where they speak to [professionals].. because in their eyes... If it's bad, they're going to lose their family. So what are they meant to do? I lied...Kept secrets... hid the truth”



“I think we as children should know the repercussions of what we're going to say or what would happen, even if you, if you guys are suspecting something's going on. Yeah, you should maybe even just come out with it. Say it, and then the child will be more inclined to turn around and go. Yeah, that is what's going on. ... because I think that's what was scary for me, not knowing what the repercussions would be for what I say.”



1. Effective multi-agency child protection conference processes

- The importance of multi-agency attendance at Child Protection Conference meetings cannot be underestimated. Full agency attendance helps to ensure that decisions are based on full and accurate understanding of the child's situation, leading to better protection and support for the child involved.
- Professionals should be supported, and encouraged by senior leaders, to speak up if they feel that decisions, practices or actions do not effectively ensure the safety or wellbeing of the child.
- Child Protection Conference Chairs should highlight the formal dissent process if an agency disagrees with the decision made at a Child Protection Conference.

“It has lots of impacts on children when they don't know what's going on. It causes them so much stress, it causes them self harm....Yeah, it causes the parents stress. Yeah, because they end up drinking more...Mum was drinking a bit more to cope. Yeah. So if there's drugs or anything like that going on, the impact of children's services will put stress on the parent that's providing if they're still with them, which will eventually make the neglect worse.

Because of the pressure of children's services and if they're using substances, then neglect will worsen because of the pressure... and that is a lot...to, well, think about and live with.”



Responding to the mental health of young people who 'fall in the gap' between services

- Plans to address mental health and emotional wellbeing should be considered within all safeguarding plans and should be clear about what would constitute a decline in their mental health or an escalation of risk in their behaviour. This is particularly important for children where there are safeguarding concerns but who are not receiving specialist support for mental health needs.



Professional response and safeguarding approach to sexualised behaviour

- As highlighted in other local safeguarding practice reviews, there should be consideration of convening a strategy discussion meeting, in line with the CSA pathway document, and where there is an escalation of concerns about a child.



“No, just mention it, mention it and then when you go home, when they go home, they'll be thinking about that....

putting it out there to, to breathe. Yeah. Because once a child hears that....

Keep just keep asking, keep bringing it up.”



“So important, so important, because I've been neglected when I was at home. Do you know what I mean? Like school, shouldn't, you shouldn't [be educated at home]. If social services are involved. If anything's going on like, you shouldn't, they just shouldn't be with them [at home]. They shouldn't be with them, that parent.”



Not relying on children to tell

- Practitioners working with children need to understand that they can and should talk proactively to children when they have concerns that a child is being sexually abused.



Maintaining a robust line of sight on potential child sexual abuse

- Where there are concerns of sexual risk these should be named in the safeguarding plan and there should be clear actions in place to monitor and address these risks.



“yeah, well, when they're more focused on the adults.... like so like my dad he's bipolar and that.... [professionals were] more focused on their mental health rather than the effects on the child...But that is, I suppose that is the cause, isn't it? Of neglect and things like that.”



Identifying and responding to risks that impact on parenting capacity

- Professional curiosity is a fundamental aspect of working together to keep children safe, especially where there are concerns about the capacity of parents to safeguard their children.



Learning for practice

1. **Prioritise attendance** and feel empowered to challenge decisions at child protection conferences - use the formal dissent process when needed.
2. **Ensure mental health needs are embedded in all safeguarding plans** – describe risk indicators and triggers for escalation.
3. **Respond robustly to harmful sexualised behaviour** – be aware of the [Sexualised Behaviour screening resource](#) and follow the CSA pathway to ensure risk is properly identified and managed.
4. **Do not rely on children to tell** – create proactive, safe opportunities to talk. Practitioners must initiate age-appropriate conversations, revisit concerns gently, and understand that children often hide the truth due to fear of consequences.
5. **Ensure safeguarding plans explicitly highlight sexual risks** and actions to increase safety
6. **Be curious** – especially when adult risks affect parenting capacity. Professionals must remain curious about what life is like for the child.

