

Background

John (aged 15) lived with his family in Slough. He had recently been arrested for possession of a bladed article and had been the victim of a violent assault, in addition to a previous hospital ED attendance for reported accidental injuries. He had moved schools due to deterioration in his behaviour and had become a subject of multi agency discussions as a young person at risk of criminal exploitation. He was subject to a Child in Need plan. He was fatally stabbed by a youth who was regarded as a friend.

An independent author was commissioned to lead the SPR.

Key Lines of enquiry

1. *Did Professionals consider the underlying causes of John's behaviour and did they ensure he and his parents were listened to?*

Schools and agencies were aware of the possible causes of his behaviour and were concerned about possible criminal exploitation and drug usage. Many attempts were made to listen to John. When the parents asked for specific support which was outside the remit of the professionals, creative solutions were not considered.

2. *Did professionals identify any barriers to engagement with John or his family and were opportunities provided for John and family to express their views/concerns?*

Barriers were identified. John would not accept support for the contextual safeguarding concerns. His parents although extremely concerned also declined support for him until he was later arrested

3. *Were practitioners aware of and appropriately sharing the risks to, or posed by John*

All practitioners were fully aware of the current risks to John and those he posed to others. Risk assessments were of a good standard, but were viewed through different lenses with potential for professionals to display more professional curiosity and consider earlier sharing of information.

Key Lines of enquiry (cont)

4. *Were there lessons to learn regarding multi agency support and engagement of services after the first serious incidents i.e. found to be carrying a knife and assaulted.*

It took too long to provide services to John after the first serious incident, due in part to him going abroad for a holiday. There was also a delay in promoting awareness of work being conducted to reassure the public, especially parents, of actions being taken to reduce the incidence of these types of crime

Findings

Understanding and promoting Contextual Safeguarding including development of a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for youth Violence and Knife Crime

There needs to be a defined pathway and strategy developed by the Safeguarding Partnership (SSP) to tackle youth violence and knife crime and contextual safeguarding including a facility for a SPOC.

Recommendation

A clear pathway and SPOC is developed for all cases of contextual safeguarding including a toolkit to support practitioners.

Increase Awareness of Violence Task Force (VTF) and TVP Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and develop a Media Strategy

Despite ongoing work, professional awareness of the VTF or the VRU was extremely limited.

Recommendation

The SSP should ensure the work of the VTF and VRU is communicated to all agencies and the local community using a balanced media strategy.

Membership of these groups should be reviewed to ensure appropriate professionals can support this work
SBC website should include updated information regarding this work

Clarification of Individual agencies assessment of risk

Different agencies identified different levels of risk.

Findings (cont)

Recommendations

Agencies should establish the level of risk grading for their own organisation and explain the rationale to partners

Implementation of learning from commissioned reviews

Recommendations from previous commissioned bespoke reviews into gang related concerns are yet to be implemented.

Recommendations

All reviews making recommendations should be monitored through an action plan and governance should be established if not a standard process such as a SPR.

Working with Young People and the community

Engagement with young people (yp) and the community is necessary to tackle knife crime and to establish any cultural concerns.

Recommendations

Trained Practitioners should conduct workshops with yp to understand their perspective of criminality and violence on the streets including exploitation, gang affiliation and the culture of carrying a knife amongst other concerns.

Views of Community Leaders and the public should be sought to encourage whole community response.

Regular updates should be openly shared

Identify key professional to mentor and relate to yp and family to capture voice of all relevant family

John was reluctant to open up about his risky behaviour. Key professionals to be identified to develop a supportive relationship with both the yp/family

Recommendations

Ensure the right professional is identified as the key worker to best relate to and mentor the yp and their family, accepting this may be 2 different people.

All relevant family members must be spoken to in order to capture the voice of the family and safeguard the young person.

SPECIFIC LEARNING POINTS

Develop a clear pathway, toolkit and SPOC for all potential contextual safeguarding cases

The Safeguarding Children Exploitation Group has been developing this since the start of this SPR. The work includes a clear pathway and guidance for a Risk Management meeting (RMM).

All partners should disseminate this new pathway once agreed and prioritise attendance at training for this.

When conducting the RMM, practitioners must consider all the history of potential contextual safeguarding concerns

All staff should be aware of the strong links between potential county lines drug usage/dealing with gang affiliation and knife carrying

Improve awareness of the work of the VTF and VRU

The work of both of these initiatives is largely unknown amongst local professionals

Membership of these groups should be reviewed to ensure optimum awareness, support and dissemination of the work being conducted

A balanced and co-ordinated media strategy should be developed by both groups in conjunction with the SCEG group.

The media strategy should include regular updates to young people and the community regarding the initiatives to tackle knife crime, ensuring openness and transparency to develop a community together approach.

The SBC website should be kept up to date with information regarding the work of the Violence Task force and links with the VRU

Identify key professional to mentor and relate to young people and the family.

John was reluctant to open up about his risky behaviour despite many attempts but he was developing a good relationship with a professional in his school provision. His parents twice asked for support through asking professionals for help to drug test John.

Young people (yp) need the right professional to engage with them and mentor them – this person should be established at the earliest opportunity and at the latest at the first Risk Management meeting. Professionals should show professional curiosity regarding yp's accounts due to potential fear due to external pressures. Support should then be provided expediently and without being accepting of delays to ensure reachable moments are not missed.

Parents and other family members should also have a key professional identified to communicate effectively and to ensure their concerns are acted upon. This ensuring reachable moments are not missed and creative solutions can be considered when parents express concern and ask for support outside of the usual remit of organisations.

All relevant family members must be spoken to capture the voice of the family and safeguard the young person.

Professionals should be alert to all potential reachable moments with both the young person or their family and all agencies should provide training on identifying reachable moments

The Full SPR and action plan can be accessed via this [Link](#)

Ensure learning from commissioned reviews is implemented

Recommendations from 2 previous reviews into gang related concerns are yet to be implemented.

All reviews relating to knife crime and gang concerns should have clear governance and be monitored through an action plan and reported to the SLG.

Improve consistency of Individual agencies assessment of risk

Agencies identified different levels of risk whilst some agencies relied on the risk grading of other agencies

Agencies should establish the level of risk grading for their own organisation and explain the rationale to partners in multi-agency meetings.

Schools should be made aware of risks for their pupils regarding contextual safeguarding concerns

Engage Young People and the community to tackle knife crime and violence on the streets

Engagement with young people (yp) and the community is necessary to tackle knife crime and to establish any cultural concerns.

Trained practitioners need to be identified and trained to conduct workshops with children and young people to understand their perspective of criminality and violence on the streets. This must include exploitation, gang affiliation, drugs, cyber bullying, the culture of carrying a knife for self protection as a lifestyle choice and social media intimidation

Trained practitioners need to be able to reach out and obtain the views of Community Leaders and the general public and identify ways to work together with professionals to make Slough a safer place to live.