



Bristol Safeguarding  
Children Board

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## Bristol Safeguarding Children Board Response to 'Child H' Serious Case Review Findings

### Introduction

In 2018 a Serious Case Review (SCR) was commissioned by Bristol Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) to review the circumstances which led to a disabled child suffering life-threatening injuries in a dog attack. The SCR was undertaken by an independent author, Dr John Fox supported by a review team of senior Bristol representatives. Both Child H's mother and Child H's mother's partner have pled guilty to offences under the Dangerous Dog Act 1991 in relation to the attack.

The BSCB have made the decision not to publish this SCR in full. This decision was made having balanced the public interest and the BSCB's duty of care to the child. The BSCB have shared the findings of the SCR in full and un-redacted in this response.

There were no findings that professionals could have taken actions which would have avoided the injuries sustained by Child H. Even so, the BSCB recognises that this SCR provides important learning for agencies and opportunities for improvements to be made. The BSCB accepts and agrees with the findings and learning that have been made and are set out in the independently authored report.

### Findings

#### Recommendation 1

The review saw evidence of good practice from agencies working with Child H whereby professionals had developed attuned approaches to understanding her needs and feelings despite the barriers to communication. The BSCB should consider how this practice could be shared and developed so that voices and lived day to day experiences of the children with severe disabilities and/or limited communication abilities can be represented and heard particularly at times when significant decisions are made about them.

### BSCB Response

Since this incident, the BSCB has published new multi-agency guidance on working with children and young people with disabilities. This includes content on best practice at communicating with disabled children. In 2018-19 the BSCB launched a new training programme on Safeguarding Children with Disabilities. This is available to all professionals



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across the city through BSCB training team. In March 2019 the BSCB held a multi-agency learning event in March 2019 developing the learning from this case on working effectively with children with disabilities.

### **Recommendation 2**

The BSCB should promote the good practice whereby, as a matter of routine Practitioners proactively ask parents whether there are pets in the households they visit. To facilitate this standardised, up to date, and evidence based information on keeping safe around dogs, should be made available and delivered by such Practitioners, in line with current RSPCA guidance for operational Practitioners in universal services.

### **BSCB Response**

This summer the BSCB will recommend the use of a universal information resource on children's safety around animals. This will be adopted by midwifery and health visiting universal health services and, the specialist services for children with disabilities. It will be hosted on the BSCB website and available from July. The BSCB will circulate the learning from this review widely to professionals highlighting the need for awareness in this area of practice and assessment.

### **Recommendation 3**

Safeguarding Practitioners are likely to encounter feigned compliance, resistance and on occasions deceit from parents and carers due to the personal and systemic challenges that affect their ability to make changes to situations of abuse and neglect. The BSCB should require all partner agencies to review their training to ensure that Practitioners are effectively trained and supported in assessing parenting capacity to change and working with behaviours of feigned compliance, resistance and deceit in this context.

### **BSCB Response**

The BSCB offer of specialist training in this area of practice has been extended. Complementing this work the BSCB intends to undertake a study into the barriers for practitioners working effectively with this group of parents. The findings of this study will inform whether further strategic changes are needed to affect change.