

A thematic review examining the quality of child protection investigations in Bristol

Commissioned by
KBSP

Contributors: the local authority (Bristol & South Gloucestershire), Avon & Somerset police, probation and health services



Understanding continuum of need
Working arrangements
Training staff & workforce capacity
Quality information & timely sharing

Key themes

1. Planning the investigation well at the beginning - outcomes are improved and engagement with children is strong.
2. Our workforce would benefit from more specialist training together about how to do s47 investigations.
3. Systemic tools would strengthen the quality of planning e.g. genograms and chronologies.

Increased number of Strategy discussions from 903 in 2019, to 1623 in 2022
38% increase in investigative demands for Avon & Somerset Police 'Operation Ruby'
28% increase in child protection medical examinations

Key statistics



There was a clear desire and commitment to strengthen arrangements where-ever possible.

Learning identified:

What you need to know as a manager chairing Strategy meetings

- If a s47 investigation is required, the strategy is an opportunity to agree with partners about how you will gather the evidence to assess the significant harm you suspect a child is experiencing. This should be at the centre of plans.
- 'Think Family' - invites schools who work with siblings or specialist agencies to the Strategy meeting e.g., IDVAs, to support safety planning.
- Improvements should include more joint visiting and collaborative work between agencies – if you are being asked to lead as a single agency, is this most appropriate to the situation?
- Bristol's standard agenda and template should be used for Strategy discussions.
- Use genograms and structured decision-making tools to support you in structuring your meetings.
- Make sure plans are specific to the developmental age and needs of each child in the family.
- Minutes should have clarity about roles, responsibilities, timings and agreed mechanisms for feedback to relevant partners, for both immediate safety and medium-term investigation, through clear, next steps.

What you need to know as a Child Protection practitioner:

- Ask yourself whether the approach you are taking is effective at helping you understand the type and degree of harm a child is experiencing.
- Plan your communication and observation approach before you go out to see a child or parents.
- Significant changes in safety plans should be clearly communicated between professionals.
- Developing a joint timeline of events, highlighting areas where information is unclear or outstanding, can support you to focus your enquiries.
- You should observe ABEs of children allocated to you so you can hear their evidence and suggest questions or approaches.

Independent Reviewer:
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Multi-agency group supervision

Multi-agency scrutiny panels

IT systems - bookings

* Have you read the new threshold document [here](#)?

Recommendations:

- Review and embed threshold guidance to reflect a continuum of need, to support professionals' understanding of the different levels of intervention. **NB: this has been completed.** *
- Police and BCC Senior Leaders to consider co-location of the joint child protection teams.
 - Improve multi-agency information and data to support regular reviews of the quality and standard of child protection investigations.
 - KBSP to develop a workforce training strategy for professionals involved in child protection work.
 - BCC to develop new booking systems for multi-agency Strategy discussions.
 - BCC to compile a selection of analysis tools to support practitioners and managers achieve stronger analysis, for use from the point of Strategy discussions onwards; ensure use of genograms as a minimum standard.
 - BCC to devise a standard agenda and template to steer Strategy discussions.
 - KBSP to develop and disseminate a resource, which easily represents and explains the different agency roles, responsibilities & expectations.
 - KBSP to explore development of a sustainable model of multi-agency group supervision to support stronger working relationships.