



## Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

16 January 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

### **NOTIFICATION OF A NEW REVIEW BY THE CHILD SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEW PANEL**

I am writing to you on behalf of the independent Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel to advise you that we will shortly be announcing a third national child safeguarding practice review. The statutory framework requires the Panel to notify you of these reviews.

#### **Thematic review into non-accidental injury in children under one**

We have been notified of a significant number of serious child safeguarding cases which raise issues which are complex and of national importance in relation to non-accidental injury or death of infants under the age of one. Since the Panel's inception we have seen 137 cases (out of a total of over 500 cases) about babies harmed or killed in this way, and more than half of those appear to have involved weak risk assessment and poor decision making. Year after year the data shows that of all our children the youngest are the most vulnerable to serious harm and we have to challenge ourselves on whether we are doing enough to understand what lies behind these cases.

We are planning to look at non accidental injury through more than one lens because it is such a complex and prevalent issue. In the first instance we want to explore the role of men as perpetrators in these cases and how the safeguarding system can work more effectively with men. This will be the theme of the review we intend to announce in the coming weeks, to commence in spring 2020. The draft terms of reference are attached. We are also considering a further review, linked to this one, focused on cases involving care leavers or other young, vulnerable parents whose children have suffered harm or have died from non accidental injury. Our plan is to commission a literature review now which can encompass both reviews. We will write again in due course setting out the timing and terms of reference for this second stage review

We will be recruiting expert reviewers from our national pool to assist the Panel members assigned to both reviews. I will be leading this review working with Karen Manners, another Panel member who has substantial, senior experience in the

Police. We, and Isabelle Trowler, (who is a member of the Panel by virtue of her role as Chief Social Worker for Children and Families), will work closely with the reviewers, offering advice and support as required.

I am copying this letter to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.



Mark Gurrey

**Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel**

## **NAI Review: Terms of Reference**

**Review Question:** Looking at cases of non-accidental injury (NAI) in infants under the age of 1 how well does the safeguarding system understand the role of the father/male carer. How can the safeguarding system be more effective at engaging, assessing and planning for and with men in the protection of children (or those for whom they have a parenting responsibility)?

### **Lines of Enquiry**

- What can we say about any link between childhood experiences and future abusive behaviour?
- There appears to be a relationship between domestic abuse and coercive control and abuse of children. What is the supporting evidence for that and what can be learnt about the possible linkages?
- Is poor impulse control the root of such abuse and if so is that in any way predictable or knowable prior to any abuse occurring?
- Is there any discernible difference between one-off events and sustained abuse?
- Some perpetrators have had a criminal history. Are the Police, the judicial system and NPS fully aware of how that history might impact on their ability to be safe carers and is the working relationships with children's safeguarding services robust enough? Is information about risk properly identified and communicated?
- Typically, SCRs and other reviews report on men not being included in assessments and plans. Where they are referenced, they are often seen in a completely binary way - either good, supportive, caring and therefore to be engaged with and supported or bad, violent, threatening, a risk and to be avoided. How can the system move to a more balanced and sophisticated understanding of and involvement with men?
- What gets in the way of practitioners working with fathers, what are the barriers and what could be done more effectively

### **What the Review will not cover**

The review will not focus on cases of sexual abuse. There already exists a substantial body of work in this area. There is a greater understanding of paedophilia, about the psychology of why men abuse children and more is available in academia from psychiatrists and others - and some treatment programmes have been constructed and delivered on the back of that research