

## Terms of reference: National Review by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel into Child Sexual Abuse Within the Family Environment

### Review Question

What specific challenges feature in the identification, assessment, and response to child sexual abuse within the family environment and how can multi-agency local and national safeguarding practice change to better reflect evidence about how to protect children from this type of abuse?

### The key lines of enquiry are

**Strand A:** Early identification of risks, risk assessment and strategies to mitigate those risks.

- How can safeguarding partners and multi-agency bodies (including the probation services) work together to identify offenders in or entering a child's family and thus allowing practitioners to assess the impact and risk they can have on a child (including identification of new people in the lives of children at risk)?
- How can the multi-agency collaboration better improve the management of ongoing risks posed by known offenders?
- What changes in practice needs to occur to enable practitioners and those working with children and families to:
  - Identify and address hidden abuse by family, including through coercive control, or deception?
  - Assess situations based on evidence (including the children's voice and changes in behaviour) rather than assuming too much from non-abusing parent, about their ability to keep the child safe?

**Strand B:** Robust responses to allegations or suspicions of child sexual abuse within the family environment to protect children from ongoing or recurrent harm.

- What challenges and barriers exist that prevent or disempower multi-agency and practitioner led work and interactions with children, thus creating blockers to:
  - Recognising and responding to key indicators of child sexual abuse within the family environment (including physical and behavioural change)?
  - Sharing and appraising relevant historical information and context about families, which means that signs which could help identify child sexual abuse within the family environment are missed?

- Having the right conditions in place to enable CYP to safely share experiences and for professionals to hear child's voice & respond, without waiting for or relying on verbal disclosure.
- In working with safeguarding partnerships and practitioners explore:
  - The point at which abuse was first suspected by practitioners and those in contact with the child and their family, and what evidence led to this suspicion (including personal reflections of practitioner and conversations with others e.g. colleagues, family members).
  - If reporting was carried out at the point of suspicion and what considerations factored into decisions about when to report possible abuse?
  - Commonalities amongst practitioners in terms of the signs that first triggered suspicions and what then led to the point of reporting.
- And what can the current system do to create the conditions for effective practice and build professional confidence when identifying, following up on suspicions of, and responding to child sexual abuse within the family environment?

## Methodology

The review may include:

- Direct engagement with the safeguarding partners, professionals working with young people and families, agencies and third sector organisations working in the field.
- Engagement across government departments, agencies and the wider public sector.
- Roundtables and meetings with other interested parties, particularly third sector and expert advisory stakeholders.
- Direct interviews with young people and families affected by the subject matter of the review.

## Timeline

We expect the Review to be published in spring/summer 2024.

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