

1. Background and Concerns

A Line of Sight was held in relation to a young person who resided with her mother and father and made an allegation of sexual harm against her father.

Family factors included poor parental mental health, reports of parental conflict, parental substance use and elements of neglect including a lack of food and parental supervision. Additional factors included language and communication difficulties, and the use of an interpreter was required.

Throughout family Court proceedings, his Honours court judgement identified learning across the partnership regarding the investigation and management of the case.

2. Purpose of the Review

A family court judgement highlighted learning for improving practitioners understanding in relation to thresholds, strategy discussions, Sc47 enquiries and the need to train professionals more effectively in Achieving Best Evidence Guidance and procedures.

3. Key Lines of Enquiry

Within the Line of Sight consideration were given to the quality and effectiveness of training, including ensuring practitioners could access training. There was a partnership approach in considering how the sc. 47 investigation was planned and coordinated with appropriate information shared between partners, including the language used and whether decision making was recorded with robust safety planning. Additional enquires within the review focused on timely and early intervention.

7. Further information – links

- [Achieving best evidence in criminal proceedings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [The Cleveland Report:by Judge Elizabeth Butler-Sloss - The Therapeutic Care Journal \(thetcj.org\)](https://thetcj.org)
- [eLearning | CSA Centre](#) (free course- Identifying and responding to intra-familial child sexual abuse)
- [Do you know the difference between a 'disclosure' and an 'allegation'? | Social Work News \(mysocialworknews.com\)](https://mysocialworknews.com)
- [Worried about a child | Hull](#)
- HSCP learning Programme 24/25- [Training courses – Hull Collaborative Partnership](#)
- [Neglect – Hull Collaborative Partnership](#)
- [Threshold of Needs Guidance – Hull Collaborative Partnership](#)



6. Next Steps

- The HSCP are revising the threshold document, as part of the launch there will be a series of webinars delivered across the partnership in Winter 2024/January 2025.
- The HSCP will be holding a conference in January 2025 on Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.
- There is a continued focus within the HSCP delivery plan (2023-2025) in relation to timeliness and quality of S47 investigations. This will be a standing agenda item at the HSCP Multi-Agency Arrangements subgroup.
- A task and finish group has been developed to consider best practice in relation to strategy discussions, including the development of guidance.

5. What has already happened?

- Combined ABE training has been developed and rolled out across the Humber region for Children's social care (including foster carers) and Humberside police. This ensures a collaborative approach across the partnership and those partnerships who work cross boundary.

4. Key Learning

Early intervention- Children and families have better outcomes when early intervention is offered. It is crucial partners understand threshold of need and make timely referrals to the Early Help and Safeguarding Hub (EHASH). Consideration needs to be given to the whole family and how this may impact on children and parenting capacity, for example parental mental health or domestic abuse. This will also require a coordinated response with adult services. Please see section 7 for the revised HSCP threshold guidance 'Right Support, Right time, Right Place'.

Communication needs- Where an interpreter is required, it is imperative that this is done through independent advocates as opposed to using family or family friends to translate. This ensures communication is facilitated in a fair manner, whereby there is insight into individual experiences, needs and wishes.

The use of language- There is need to understand the difference between a 'disclosure' and an 'allegation'. We must not use the word disclosure in records, reports, and court documents to refer to something that is unsubstantiated. Instead, we need to use the word "allegation" examples for recordings can utilise phrases such as "the child shared" or "the child said" or "told". Practitioners should familiarise themselves with the learning highlighted within the Cleveland enquiry.

Strategy discussions- Need to be timely, have relevant multi agency representatives and outline the decision reached with rationale. If sc.47 is reached an action plan is coordinated that highlights the next steps with clear safety planning.

Information sharing and record keeping - It is crucial that information is shared in a timely way (including meeting minutes) and triangulated across all agencies, particularly during Sc.47 enquires and at any transition points. This avoids any misinformation and provides opportunities to coordinate and have a planned and timely approach. Records need to be accurate and up to date to reflect decision making and actions taken.

Achieving Best Evidence (ABE)- Following an allegation having been made, the approach between children's social care and the police needs to be coordinated, timely and planned prior to interview and evaluation after interview. Practitioners need to familiarise themselves with the ABE guidance to avoid situations whereby children are asked to repeat their lived experiences and/or impinge on investigations and outcomes. Medical examinations should always be considered as part of the pre-planning. It is imperative that children are not asked leading questions prior to the ABE video recorded interview taking place.

ABE Training: The review highlighted there is a need to have a coordinated and combined approach to training in relation to ABE. Mandatory training needs to be in place for those practitioners in front line roles (including foster carers). There is a need for adequate refresher training to be available.