

## ‘I was too frightened to tell anyone’

This Child Safeguarding Practice Review briefing note focuses on a family in which systematic physical assaults were carried out by the parents against their eldest children over a seven year period. The family are of the Islamic faith and are of Ghanaian heritage and culture. Disclosures of physical assault were made on four separate occasions which eventually resulted in the children being placed on Child Protection Plans. The parents removed their children from mainstream schooling, to provide home and tuition centre education. Approximately three years later the eldest child disclosed physical assaults by the parents; medical examinations found scars consistent with regular beatings. Subsequently, all the children were placed in foster care and both parents were arrested and convicted of assault, ill-treatment, neglect and abandonment of the children.

### Key Learning

- Practitioners had a lack of understanding and confidence when working with a family of Ghanaian culture, this acted as a barrier to delivering consistently safe practice.
- There was no robust system of communication between the children’s former schools and private tuition centre.
- The elective home education service had limited engagement and access to the children whilst they were being home educated.
- There was an inconsistent response to allegations of physical abuse which meant that a child protection medical assessment was not requested at an earlier opportunity.
- The initial Child Protection Plan was closed too early, this did not allow practitioners to see evidence of sustainable change by the parents.

### Improving Practice

- It is important to understand and take into account the culture, religion and customs of the families you are working with and supporting, but never lose sight of the children and your safeguarding responsibilities.
- When a parent decides their child is going to be home educated, it’s important that you share any safeguarding information with the Local Authority Home Education Team and, where appropriate, the Tuition Centre.
- Make sure you understand and follow the Child Protection Medical Assessment

pathway so that Child Protection Medical examinations are undertaken in a timely manner when required, especially if injuries could be hidden by clothing.

- At the point of stepping down from Child Protection or Child in Need Plans it is critical that you are satisfied sustainable change has been demonstrated to ensure that children are safeguarded.

### Next Steps

- ✓ Circulate this Learning Lessons Briefing Note to all members of your team. Use the PowerPoint presentation to ensure everyone understands, and are able to apply, the learning.
- ✓ Make sure you and your team understand the importance of supervision and the need to seek support when working with families from different cultures/religions if there are gaps in their knowledge which are leading to a change in usual practice.
- ✓ Birmingham Children’s Trust and Health colleagues should familiarise themselves with the NHS Birmingham and Solihull [Child Protection Medical Assessment Pathway](#).
- ✓ Look out and sign up for the forthcoming [Practitioners’ webinar](#) on 9th September 2024, where we will explore in more detail the emerging learning from this review and tips for improving safeguarding practice.