

‘You lost sight of me’



# Webinar programme

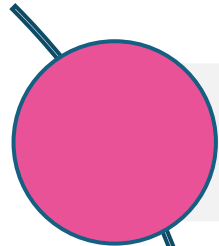


- 14:00 Welcome & Introduction – Jane Armstrong, Co-Chair Serious Cases Sub-Group
- 14:10 Case Overview and Key Learning – Kevin Ball, Lead Reviewer
- 14:40 Comfort Break
- 14:45 Safeguarding Children ‘Out of Sight’ – Charmadean Palmer, Kate Eaton, Dee Ncube, Birmingham Children’s Trust
- 15:05 Silent Voices, Hidden Lives – a whole system response - Razia Butt, Birmingham City Council Director for Thriving Children and Families
- 15:25 Q&A Session
- 15:55 Closing Remarks

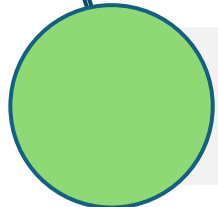
# **Child Safeguarding Practice Review: Case Overview and Key Learning**

Kevin Ball, Independent Chair and Reviewer

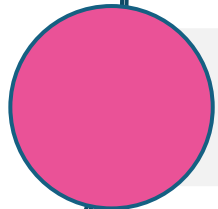
# Background



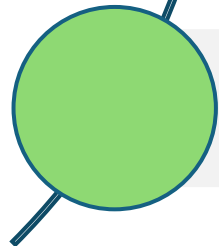
Death of a 3-year-old child who it is believed died in January 2020. The child's remains were recovered from an address where the family had lived whilst in Birmingham, before moving to Somerset.



The family are of Black British heritage, have strong religious beliefs, adhere to a strict dietary regime, and had an alternative lifestyle described as living 'off-grid', avoiding engagement with any universal services.



Cause of death was undetermined, it was clear that the child was severely malnourished, had stunted growth, and severe dental decay, in the period up to his death when there was no professional contact.



Both parents were found guilty of causing or allowing the death of a child, as well as perverting the course of justice. The father was sentenced to 24½ years and mother to 19½ years.

# Principles underpinning the review

Learning &  
improvement

What & why?

Transparent

Evidence &  
research based

Proportionality

Publication  
expected

Independence

Practitioner  
contribution

Recognising  
complexity

No blame

Systems  
perspective

Family  
contribution

# The Review process

1. Multi-agency Review Panel established to support the CSPR.

2. Information Reports received from a range of key agencies, based on the key lines of enquiry.

3. Independent analysis & reporting.

5. Further information gained via criminal proceedings.

6. Seeking parental contributions, governance & implementing learning.

# Key practice episodes

## Key practice episode 1

- **March to June 2016**

- Partner 1 presents to services in the Birmingham area during late stages of pregnancy for Child A.

## Key practice episode 2

- **November 2017 to August 2018**

- Partner 2, in the London area, did not engage with antenatal care during pregnancy with Half-Sibling B. Concerns about parental care emerged requiring statutory intervention.

## Key practice episode 3

- **September 2021**

- Concerns raised by Housing Service in the Birmingham area about welfare of an adult & child.

## Key practice episode 4

- **October to December 2022**

- Concerns raised in the Somerset area about Sibling B, aged 3 months, the mother (Partner 1) & father living in a caravan. Subsequent disclosure by the father that Child A's body was buried in the garden of their former Birmingham residence.



## Key findings: emerging features from professional interactions

- There was a general lack of knowledge or assessment of the parents' belief systems, resulting in an insufficient understanding about the impact on the care given to Child A. This lack of understanding was not just about the father, as might be expected, but extended to Child A and Sibling B's mother as well. Child focused practice was needed.
- Parental behaviour often distracted or diverted professional attention away from keeping the safety and welfare of Child A in mind. Parental resistance of advice, support or authority ultimately resulted in Child A becoming invisible and lost from professional view.

**‘You lost sight of me’**



# Key learning points



**1. The critical role of assessment:** Gathering, assimilating, and analysing information from a range of sources is critical to any assessment of risk to children. When carrying out assessment across a diverse multi-ethnic and multi-cultural landscape, exploring race, culture, religion, language, faith, beliefs, and values alongside the implications these might have for children's wellbeing is essential; such activity requires cultural awareness - being alert to one's own preconceptions and unconscious bias. Managers need to be aware that practitioners sometimes feel a sense of discomfort in relation to discussing such matters and lack confidence.

**2. The importance of relationship-based practice:** Relationship-based work between parent and professionals is key to working with resistant families. Parental resistance to change, or parents who are outspoken, can be perceived as aggression or arrogance – this can impact decision making and can obstruct the proper assessment of a child by agencies. This should increase agencies' concerns around the safety of the child, and lead to more urgent and authoritative scrutiny. Recognising the degree to which cultural or belief related behaviours or practices are entrenched is an important step for professionals to disentangle.

# Key learning points

**3. Remaining child focused throughout:** Even when parents hold strong beliefs, the necessity to remain focused on the needs, safety and welfare of the child remains paramount. Small improvements in engagement by parents can lead practitioners to become overly optimistic and lose sight of the full history and timeline of professional involvement, thereby losing focus on the child's needs. Coercion and control are features that have been identified; children are now seen as victims of such behaviours under Domestic Abuse Act 2021, further highlighting the need to maintain a sharp focus on the child's lived experiences.

**4. Enhancing access to universal services:** It is important not to assume that parents who wish to live an alternative, or more off-grid lifestyle, have the knowledge, confidence, or capacity to understand or access universal services. When appropriate, practitioners should take every opportunity to remind parents of the importance of seeking early help, support and advice for their child and how to access universal services in their locality. This is even more important when their child is unwell so they can quickly access medical treatment and advice.

# Recommendations & improving practice

- ✓ 1. Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership should take strategic responsibility for overseeing the effective implementation of the learning from this review.
- ✓ 2. Examine current multi-agency guidance, to ensure it supports effective assessment and intervention which safeguards those children that become hidden from professional sight and/or, when parents choose to live an alternative, or more off-grid lifestyle.
- ✓ 3. Benchmark local strategy, policy, procedure, and practice against all the recommendations, and reflective questions set out in the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review's briefing report: *"It's Silent": Race, racism and safeguarding children, Panel Briefing 4, March 2025.*
- ✓ 4. Review and strengthen practice guidance and pathways for child at risk of hidden harm.

# Next Steps

- ✓ Read the full review & briefing note/slides.
- ✓ With your colleagues; reflect and challenge your own practice:
  - How confident are you in using cultural genograms or webs as a tool to support having difficult conversations with parents when assessing risk to a child? What needs to change?
  - How do you guard against bias in your assessment, planning, and decision making, particularly regarding race, culture, religion, faith, and beliefs?
  - When diverted or distracted by parental behaviours, how do you ensure you remain focused on the safety and welfare of the child?
  - How do you consider the full history and timeline of professional involvement to maintain your focus on meeting the child's needs and avoid becoming overly optimistic when there are small improvements in engagement by parents?



# Comfort Break

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# Safeguarding Children 'Out of Sight'

Best practice, tools and advice

Charmadean Palmer

Kate Eaton

Dee Ncube

Quality Assurance and Improvement Officers , Practice Hub



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# Safeguarding Children 'Out of Sight': Learning from Child A

- Children who are 'out of sight' may be at greatest risk.
- Keep the child in focus – always ask: What does this mean for them?

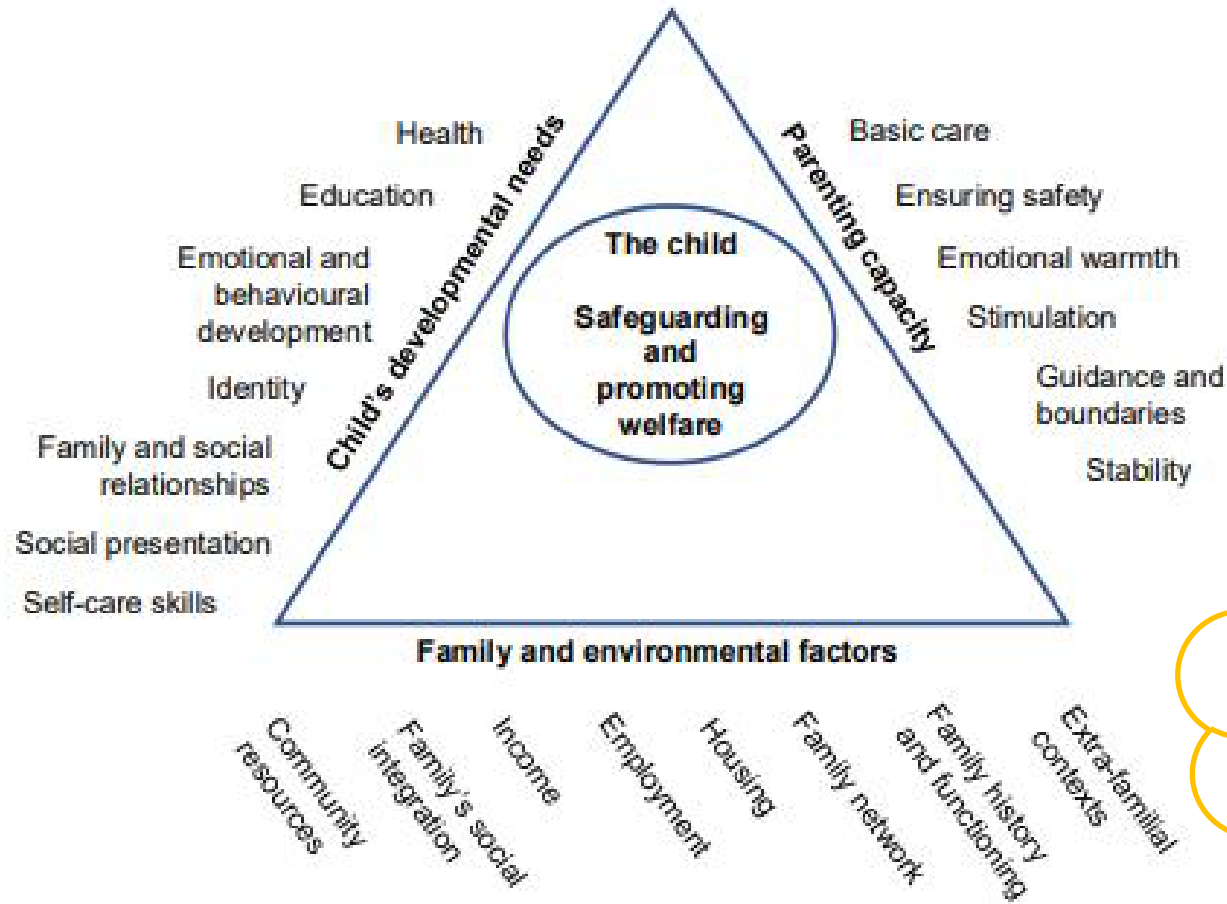


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# Referral & Assessment– Seeing the Unseen



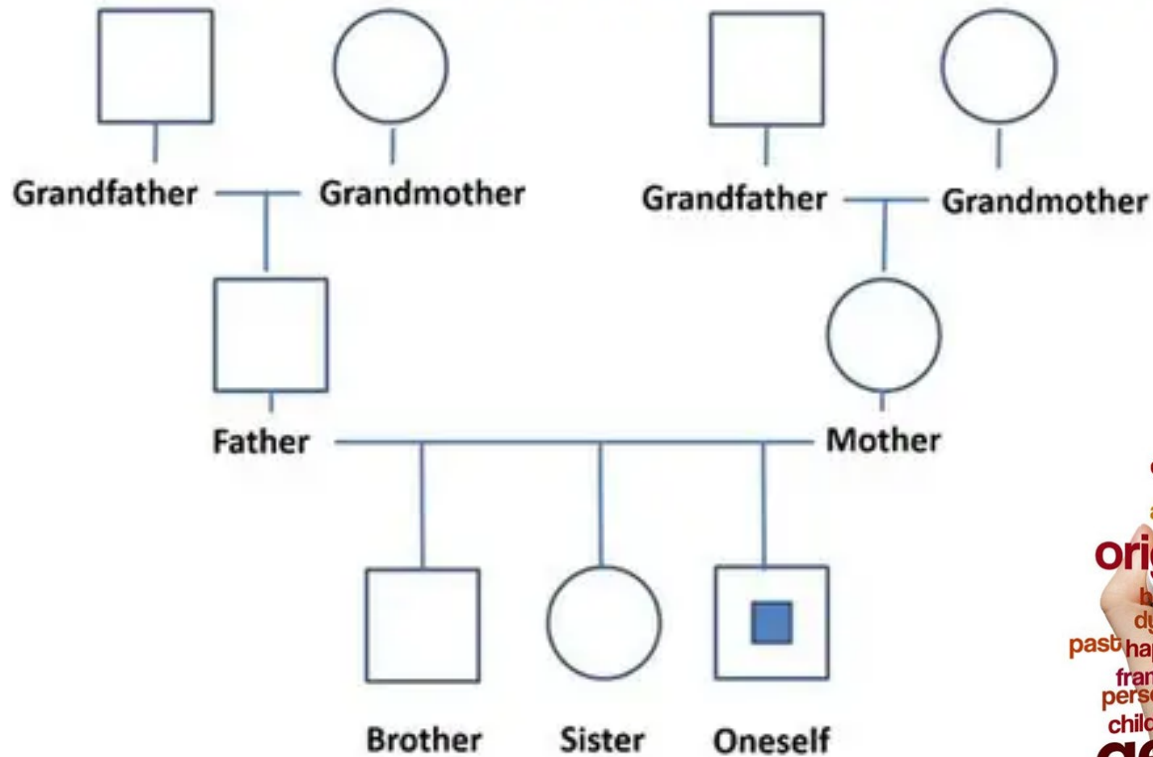
**Impact :** Reduce risk or harm, quicker and appropriate intervention

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

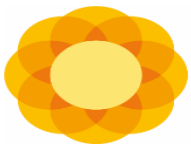


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# Understanding the child



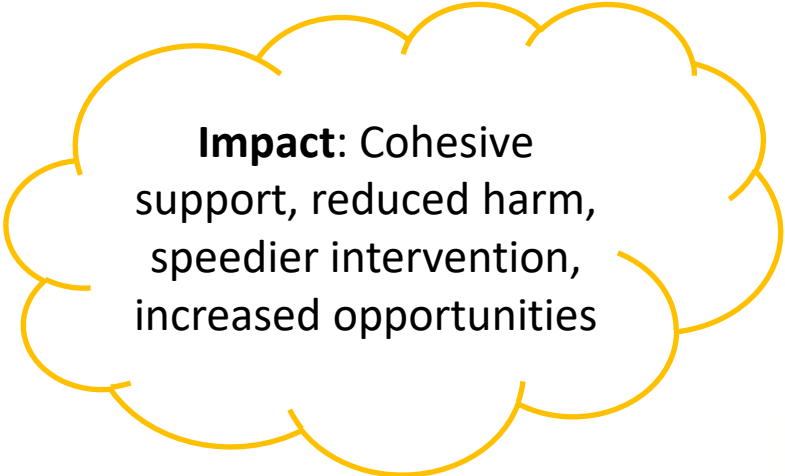
**Impact:** Increased insight into the child's identity and lived experiences



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# Professional Roles – One Child, One Network

- Safeguarding is a collective, not individual, responsibility.
- Share information and challenge assumptions across agencies.
- Keep the child at the centre.



**Impact:** Cohesive support, reduced harm, speedier intervention, increased opportunities

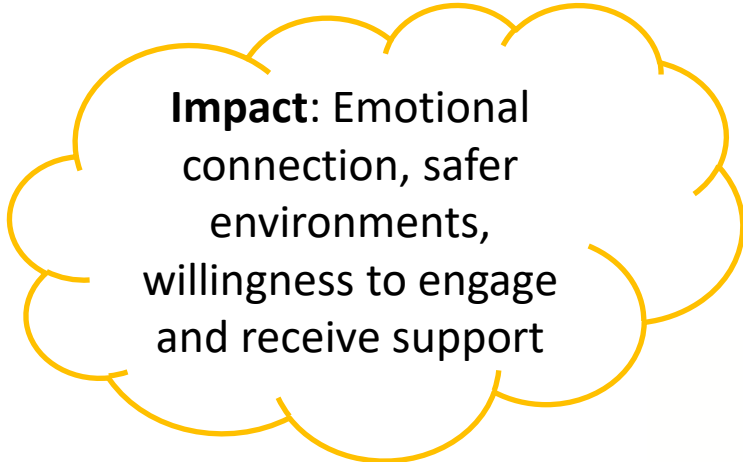


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# Relationship-Based Practice – Making Connections Count

- Build positive relationships through commitment, collaboration and trust.
- Think about the family's experiences of trauma to better understand their views, motivations and decisions to participate with professionals.

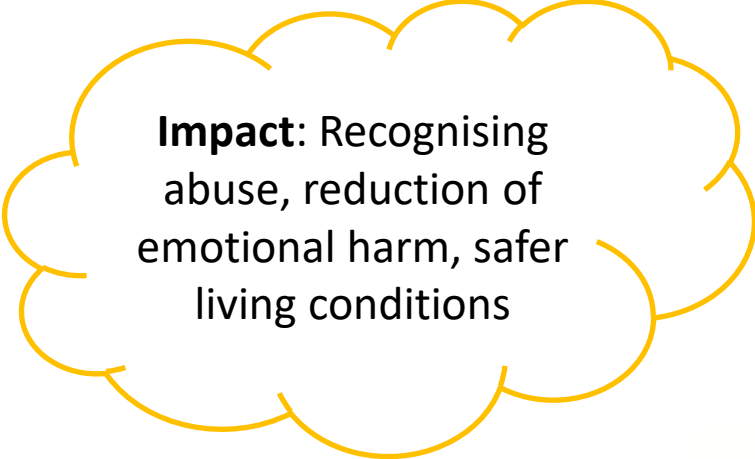


**Impact:** Emotional connection, safer environments, willingness to engage and receive support



# Parental Resistance – Listen, Challenge, Persist

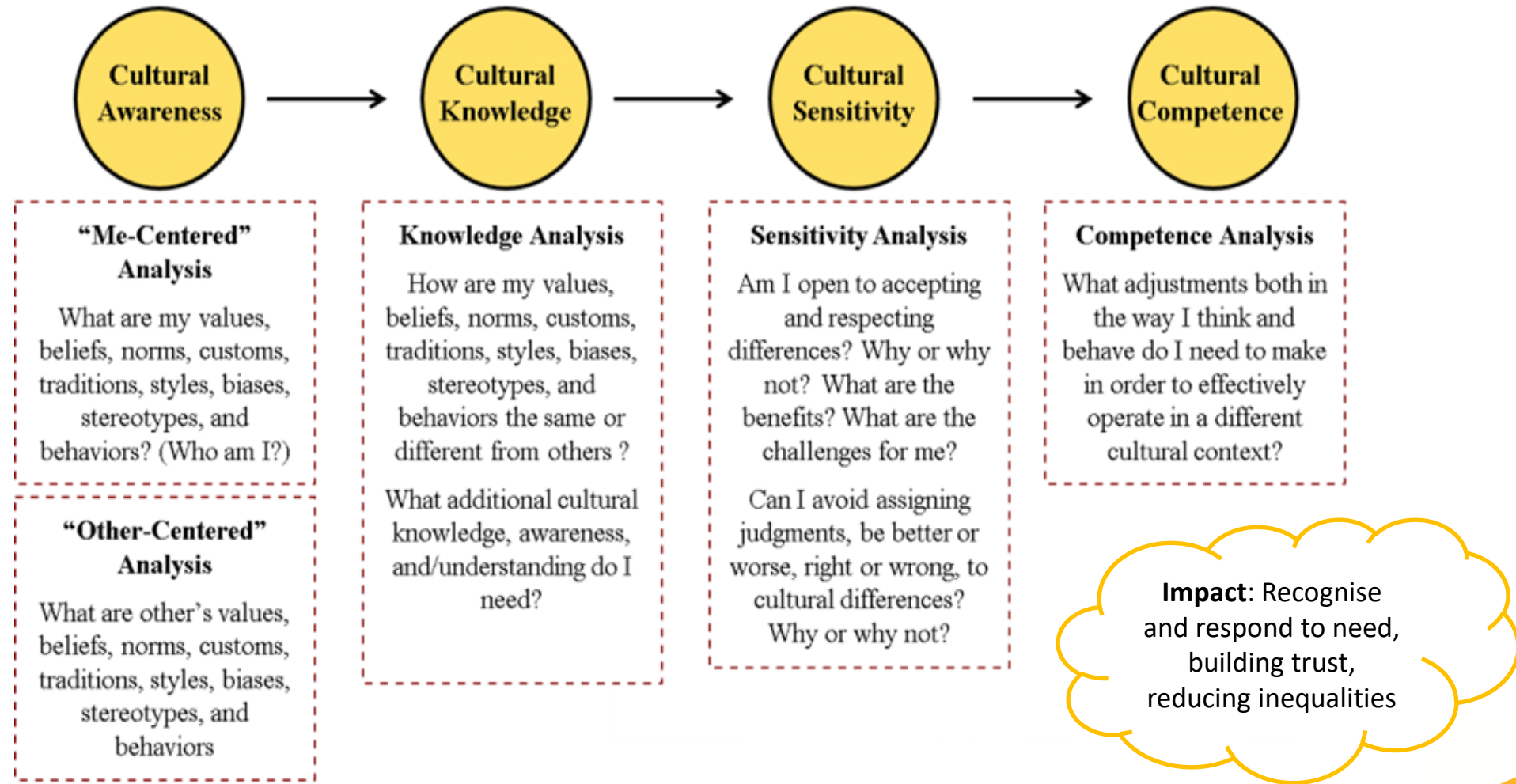
- Explore belief systems behind resistance.
- Use conversations with managers and colleagues, be professionally curious.
- What? So What? Now What?
- Remain assertive yet respectful.



**Impact:** Recognising abuse, reduction of emotional harm, safer living conditions



# Cultural Competence – Understanding Before Judging



The Winters Group Inc.



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# Identity – Seeing the Whole Child

## Social GRRRAACCEEESSS

- Gender
- Geography
- Race
- Religion
- Age
- Ability
- Appearance
- Class
- Culture
- Education
- Ethnicity
- Employment (Economics and Experiences)
- Sexuality
- Sexual Orientation
- Spirituality

**Impact:** Feeling understood and not judged, increased acceptance of support





# Call to Action – Never Lose Sight

- Who is your 'Child A' right now in your service?
- When did you last truly see or hear them?
- What will you do differently tomorrow?
- Remember: **The child's safety is our priority – keep the child at the centre of everything we do.**



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# References

- Assessment Triangle - [Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance](#)
- Right Help Right Time - [Right Help, Right Time - Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)
- MASH referral - [Refer a child who you're concerned about | Refer a child who you're concerned about | Birmingham Children's Trust](#)
- NSPCC learning - [learning-from-case-reviews culture-and-faith.pdf](#)
- Connections Count Rolodex



# Silent Voices, Hidden Lives – a whole system response

Razia Butt

Director for Thriving Children and Families

Children and Families Directorate

Birmingham City Council



2010

## Khyra Ishaq: the warning signs that were missed

**Seven-year-old starved to death at her home weighed less than three stone and had 60 injuries**



📷 Khyra Ishaq, the seven-year-old who was starved to death. Photograph: West Midlands police/PA

Only Angela Gordon knows why she stopped feeding her seven-year-old daughter, Khyra Ishaq, but there were many warning signs that something was seriously amiss in the months before she starved to death.

2023

## Ten-year-old Sara Sharif known to Surrey authorities before her death

**Council is conducting rapid safeguarding review after death that has sparked international manhunt**



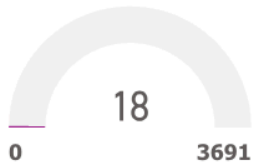
📷 Sara Sharif was found dead at her home having suffered injuries likely to have been caused 'over a sustained and extended period of time'. Photograph: Surrey Police/PA

A 10-year-old girl whose death sparked an international manhunt was previously known to the authorities, Surrey county council has confirmed.



EHE with a Social worker

CIN



CP



CIC



Total EHE

3,691

EHCP

114

Early Help

68

Safeguarding

30

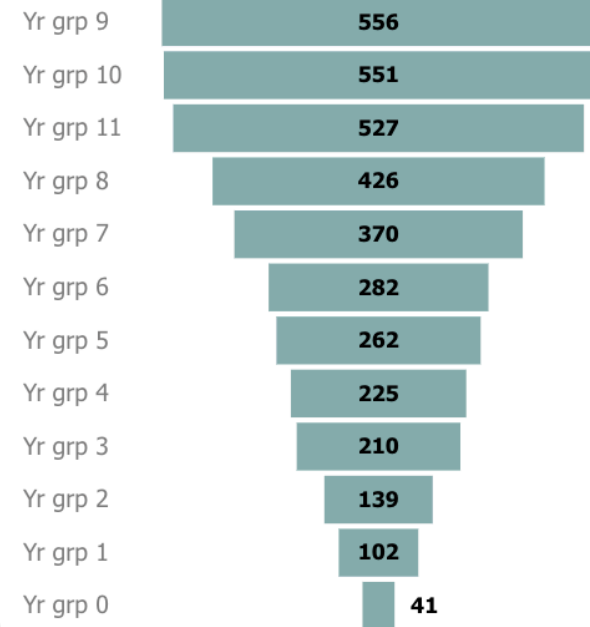
New this week

63

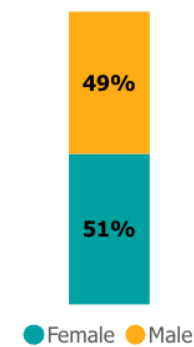
SEN Support

90

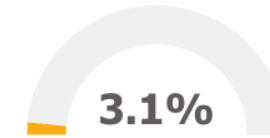
Year Group



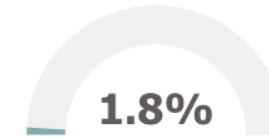
Gender



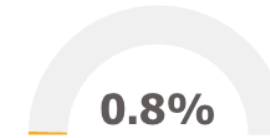
% EHCP



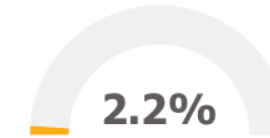
% Early Help



% Safeguarding



% Removed Referrals



% New Referrals

1.7%

Previously CIN

186

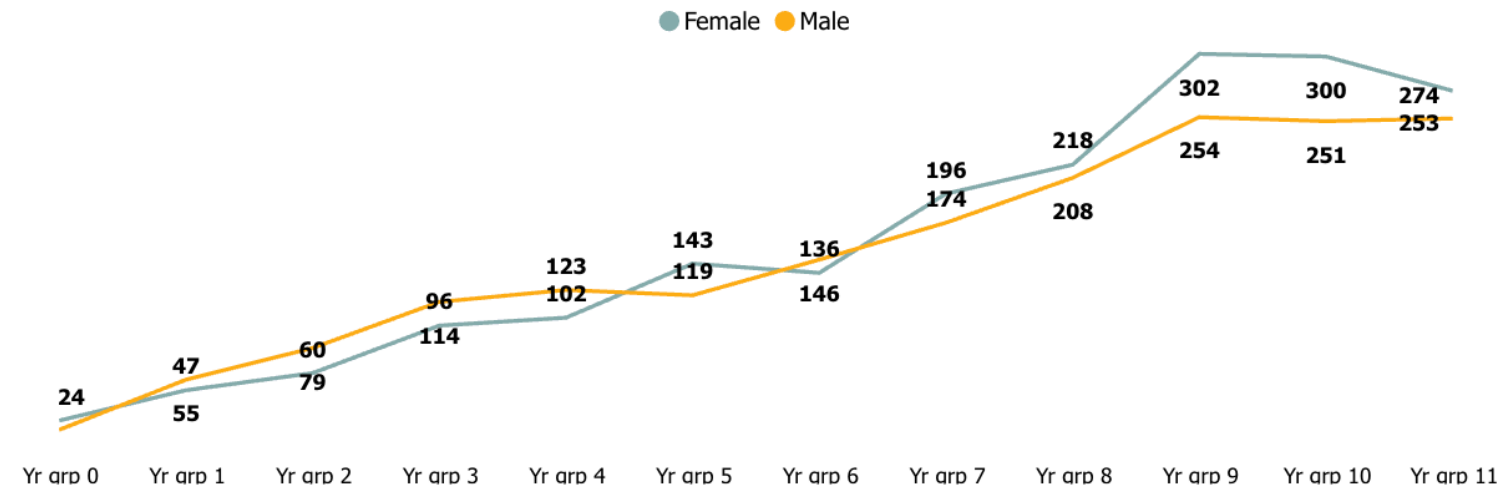
Previously CP

232

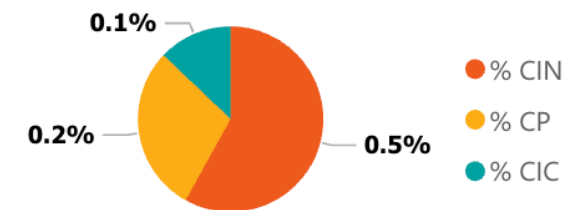
Previously CIC

45

Year Group by Gender



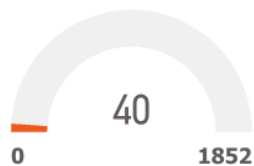
% EHE with a social worker (Safeguarding)



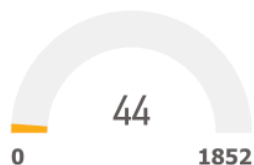
# Children out of sight

- SEND
- Exclusions
- Part-time timetables
- Elective Home Education
- Poor attendance
- No school place
- Newly arrived, new to area
- Insecure immigration status
- Private fostering arrangements
- Transient groups
- Unregulated provision
- Temporary Accommodation
- Families living 'off-grid'
- No take up of EEE
- Risk of serious youth violence
- Risk of exploitation
- Abroad and out of contact
- Never been known to services

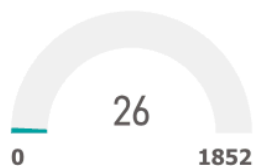


**CIN**

**CP**



**CIC**



**1,852**

534



928



176



128



86

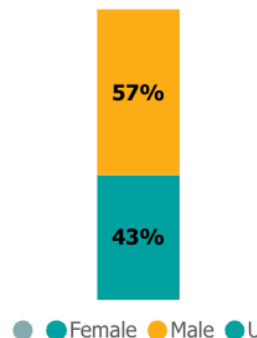


| Yr grp    | Count |
|-----------|-------|
| Yr grp 9  | 249   |
| Yr grp 11 | 228   |
| Yr grp 10 | 199   |
| Yr grp 7  | 180   |
| Yr grp 8  | 167   |
| Yr grp 1  | 147   |
| Yr grp 0  | 131   |
| Yr grp 2  | 128   |
| Yr grp 3  | 118   |
| Yr grp 5  | 116   |
| Yr grp 4  | 112   |
| Yr grp 6  | 112   |

2.2% 2.4% 1.4%

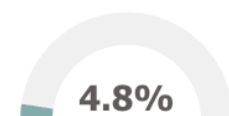
- % CIN
- % CP
- % CIC

89



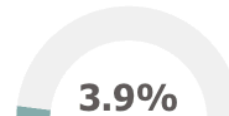
89

### % New Referrals



73

### % Removed Referrals

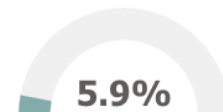


110

146

174

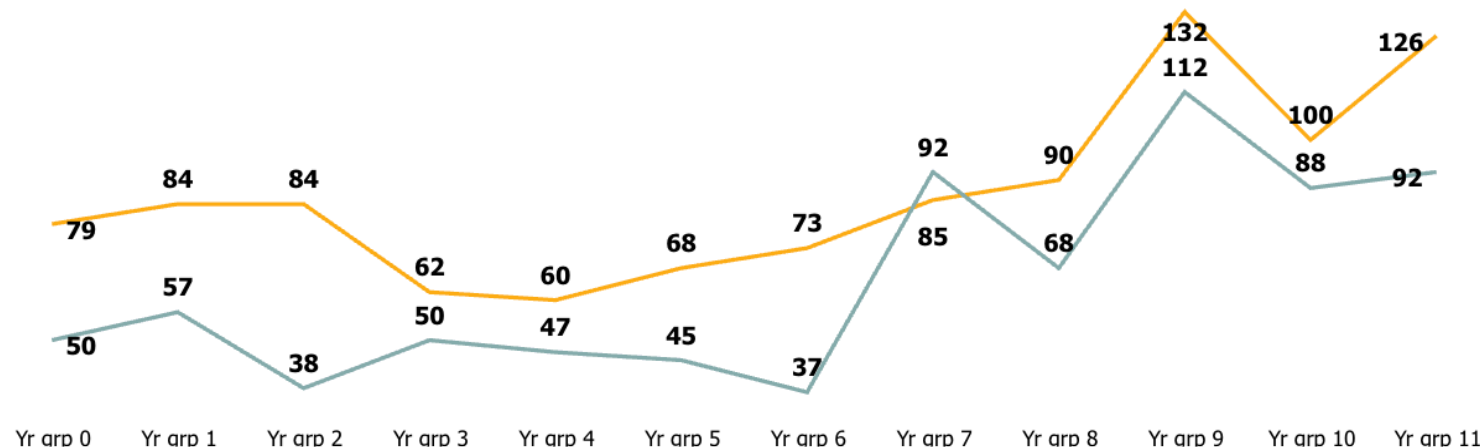
### % Safeguarding



22

### Year Group by Gender

● Female ● Male





# State Surveillance



## Birmingham Project Champion 'spy' cameras being removed

9 May 2011



West Midlands Police said it accepted mistakes were made in relation to Project Champion

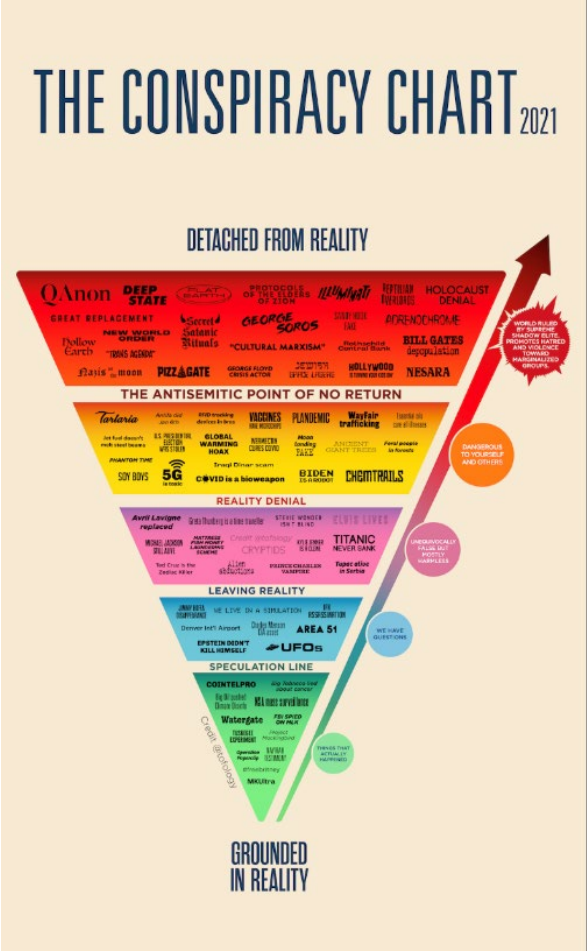
More than 200 so-called "spy cameras" installed in largely Muslim areas of Birmingham are being dismantled.

The cameras in Washwood Heath and Sparkbrook, some of which were hidden, were paid for with £3m of government funds earmarked for tackling terrorism.



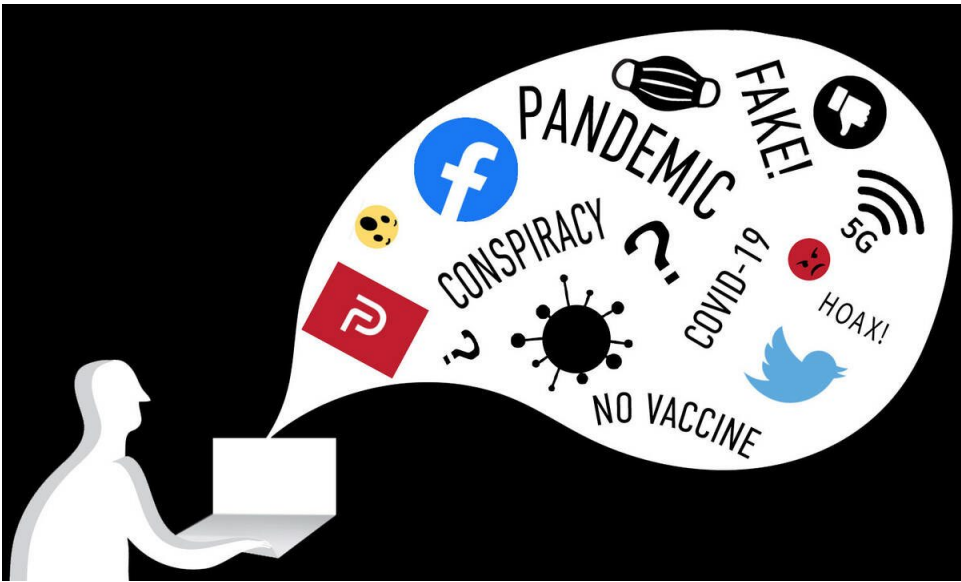


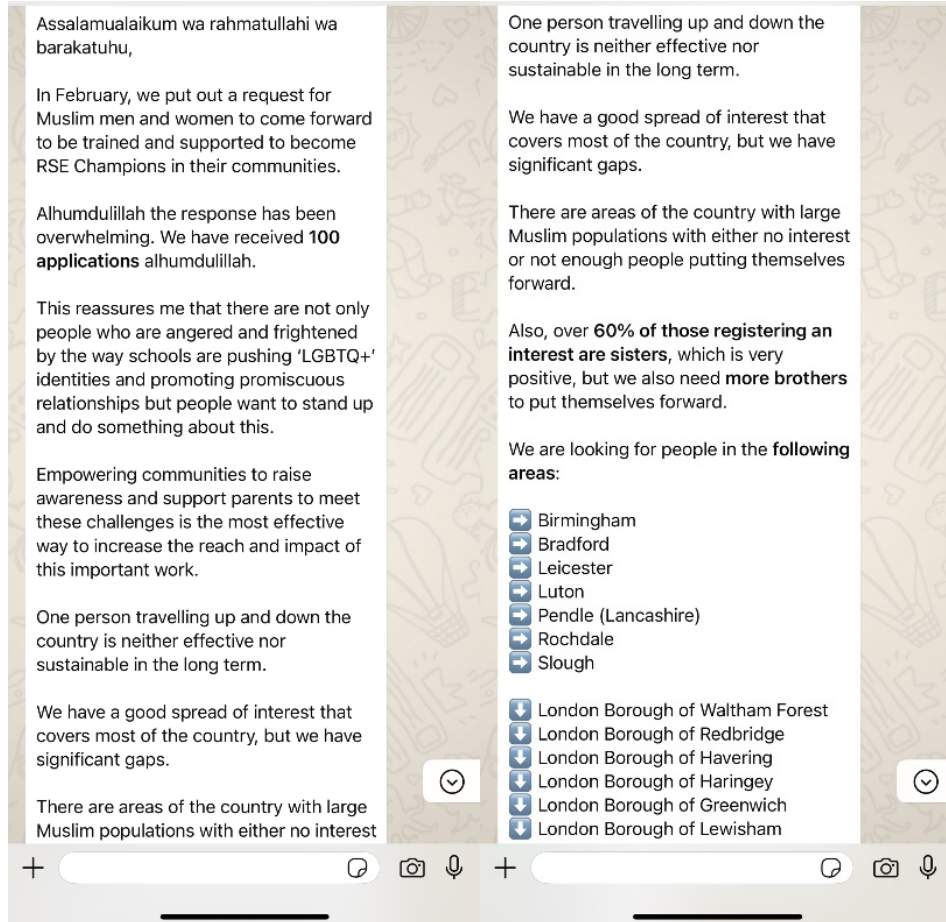
# Health Conspiracies



## MMR THE TRUTH

For three months, a top Mail writer has investigated the MMR controversy. Her findings, revealed in this major new series, are vital to every parent.



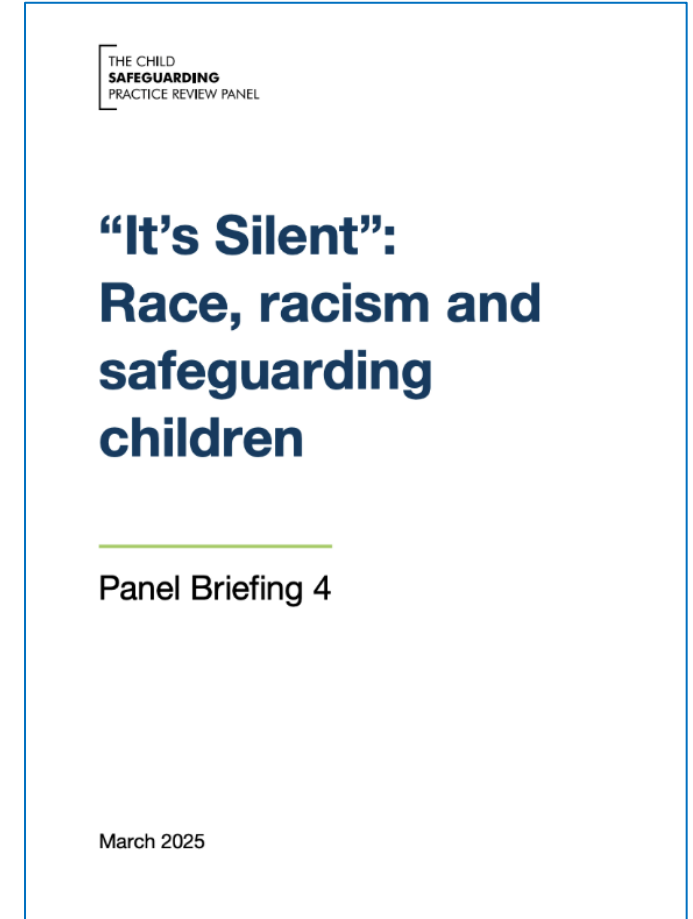


- ‘How can the liberty of one group be protected if it impinges on the liberty of another group?’
- ‘Can one group’s liberty be curtailed in order to allow the liberty of another group?’
- ‘Whose freedom is most important?’
- ‘Whose liberty and values count?’



# Race, Racism and Safeguarding

- THE REPORT ECHOES LONGSTANDING CONCERNS RAISED IN HISTORIC CASES LIKE JASMINE BECKFORD (1985), TYRA HENRY (1987), AND VICTORIA CLIMBIÉ (2003), HIGHLIGHTING THAT LESSONS AROUND RACE AND SAFEGUARDING REMAIN INSUFFICIENTLY EMBEDDED IN PRACTICE
- **Race and racism are often overlooked**
- **Racial bias and cultural assumptions**
- **Adultification**
- **Cultural incompetence**



# Place-based inclusion

- Aligning education facing services with BCT localities
- Bringing together all the teams that work directly with children and families to embed integrated working
- Making use of community capital as a system
- Working smarter together, creating warm handovers
- Inclusion at the heart of the response, child at the centre and in mind
- Children don't need to see the wiring, they need a great service
- Build capacity with partners, support a seamless journey
- Component part of the Birmingham Child Friendly City journey



# Children Out of Sight (COOS)

- Priority of the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership
  - **Priority 3: Developing a joint approach to understanding and responding to children who are, and who become, invisible to services**
- Established sub-group
- Audit of pathways where children may become out of sight e.g.
  - Health – Maternity to Health Visitor
  - Early Years to school
  - New to Country / City
  - Private education
- Data



# Complexity Hub

- Established and Piloting a Complexity Hub
- Integrated triage
- Key partners include
  - Education,
  - Health,
  - BCT
- Other partners as required but anticipated to include
  - Housing
  - WMP
  - DWP
  - Border force







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birmingham.gov.uk



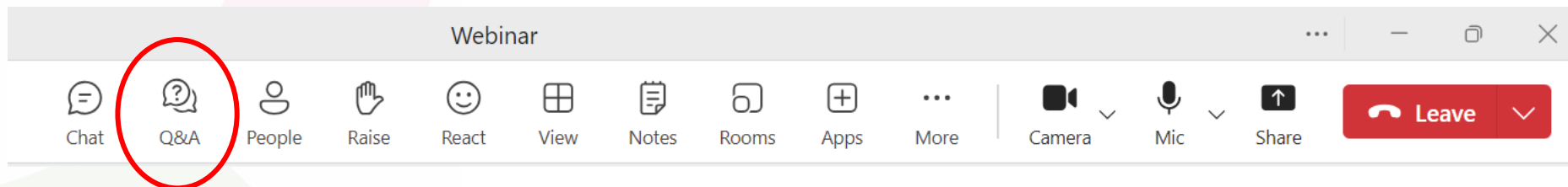
# Q&A session

You can ask a question by either:

Raising your hand and unmuting your microphone when prompted.

**OR**

Click on the Q&A button on the top toolbar and type your question.



# Contact BSCP



BSCP.ContactUs@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk



0121 464 2621

# SCAN THE QR CODE

**TO COMPLETE OUR SHORT  
FEEDBACK SURVEY!**

We would greatly appreciate your thoughts on how you feel today's event went, so we can improve future sessions.



Or visit:

<https://forms.office.com/e/hqR1bszQjv>