

What was the story?

- A child known as Sameer for the purpose of this review is a young boy born and brought up in Bradford. He is bright, expressive and articulate.
- From age 3 – 5 he suffered severe, persistent cruelty and physical abuse by his mother and her female friend, who both worked at his primary school. They were familiar with Bradford child protection procedures and made false allegations against other staff, to distract attention away from their abuse.
- His abuse ended when action was taken by Bradford children's services, following a medical diagnosis of non-accidental injury.
- Sameer's mother and her friend are now serving prison sentences.
- [Bradford Safeguarding Children Board \(BSCB\)](#) only became aware of the case through media publicity about the trial. The case had not been brought to the Board's attention by BSCB member agencies, who had come into contact with Sameer.

Voice of the Child?

- Sameer consistently demonstrated great courage in speaking out about his abuse, but could not rely on his voice being heard.
- the multi-agency children's workforce was not consistently well skilled at communicating with children.
- Sameer was under great pressure from his abusers to collude with their lies, mislead professionals or maintain a silence.
- Sameer encountered professional hierarchies which compromised child-centred practice
- Those who knew him best, in the nursery & school, listened carefully and shared concerns with both children's services and the police.
- However, despite their best efforts, Sameer's "voice" was not given the same credibility, further up the professional hierarchy.

What's going well?

- Sameer showed great courage and did report his abuse to professionals.
- Police, the nursery and the NSPCC shared their concerns with children's services.
- Counselling provided by the school for Sameer.
- The role of the [LADO](#) was called upon.

What are we worried about?

- Sameer encountered professional hierarchies in Bradford district which compromised child-centred practice, with Children's Social Care at the top of the hierarchy and concerns from other agencies who knew Sameer the best were considered mistaken.
- Sameer could not rely on his voice being heard, when he spoke out about his abuse (see above)
- The [BSCB multi-agency escalation policy](#) did not work effectively for Sameer (policy reviewed Dec 2017)
- the multi-agency children's workforce in Bradford district was not consistently well-skilled at communicating with children
- the children's workforce in Bradford district was not sufficiently supported in child-centred practice through access to reflective supervision
- The children's workforce had become too hardened to domestic violence being part of the lives of children in Bradford District which led to them minimising the impact of domestic abuse when responding to the lived experience of Sameer and his siblings.
- The role of criminal evidence and medical diagnosis was given disproportionate weight, in multi-agency decision-making about the lived experiences of Sameer.
- Sameer's mother and friend were employed by the school attended by Sameer and his siblings. Both perpetrators of Sameer's abuse were therefore familiar with child protection procedures in Bradford and made false allegations against other staff, as a way to distract attention away from their abuse of young Sameer. Professionals were 'groomed' by the abuser.
- The school was unaware of the work being undertaken by the family centre and which was completed the month after he began the school.

What needs to happen?

- BSCB multi-agency escalation policy should be reviewed (completed December 2017). See below.
- Increase awareness of the BSCB escalation policy and threshold guidance through training and publicity (completed Jan/Feb 2018).
- Education Safeguarding Sub-Group to consider how communication from BSCB to schools can be improved.
- BSCB Neglect strategy to be reviewed (completed and signed off January 2018).
- Neglect tool-kit for practitioners to be developed, giving staff better understanding of thresholds for neglect.
- BSCB to hold a multi-agency challenge panel case file audit of cases of where children have disclosed abuse.
- BSCB to consider funding multi-agency training focused on disclosure and communication with children.
- Agencies to provide assurance that within their single agency supervision is child centred and reflective.
- BSCB and partner agencies to encourage attendance on the BMDC Domestic Abuse training.
- BSCB to request progress update report from the Early Help Board to improve understanding of the Early Help Offer and what difference it is making for children.
- Improve information sharing between agencies across the district.

Learning for Professionals and multi-agency practice

- Improve understanding of escalation policy and thresholds through training and staff supervision.
- Improve skills in child-centred practice, by access to reflective supervision.
- Improve skills in communicating with children around abuse.
- Attend Neglect and Domestic Abuse training.
- Respect professional experience and relationships of those closest to the child.
- Understand how abusers can groom professionals.
- Ensure work with families and children is shared with relevant agencies.

Multi-agency resources for this case

- [Resolving Professional Disagreement and Escalation](#)
- [Resolving Professional Disagreements and Escalation evidence log](#)
- [Multi-Agency Threshold Guidance for Bradford](#)
- [Bradford Neglect Strategy 2017-2020](#) and toolkit (when available)
- [Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers](#)
- [Domestic Abuse training](#) See also guidance for [Domestic Violence and Abuse](#)
- [Early Help offer \(Bradford\)](#)
- [Reflective supervision](#)
- [Key documents and resources \(BSCB website\)](#)

Guidance on non-accidental injuries

- [NSPCC guidance on bruising in children](#) and [physical abuse](#)
- [Multi-Agency Protocol for the Assessment of Bruising, Burns and Scalds in non-mobile babies](#)

Multi-agency training

For further training, guidance and resources for professionals, including policies and procedures visit the [Bradford Safeguarding Children Board website](#) and the [Bradford Safeguarding Adults Board](#)