

Learning & Improvement Report
Brighton & Hove Local Safeguarding Children Board Response
to Siblings W and X Serious Case Review



This Serious Case Review was commissioned to support the identification of the strengths and gaps in multi-agency responses, in the city of Brighton & Hove, to vulnerable adolescents at risk of exploitation through radicalisation. It concerns two siblings, W and X, who originated from a country in North Africa / Middle East and received services from our local agencies. Both siblings travelled to Syria aged under eighteen years old and both are reported to have died in 2014, the elder soon after his eighteen birthday and the younger at age seventeen. It was understood that the boys were with the Al-Nusra Front, which in 2013 pledged allegiance to Al Qaeda.

In May 2014 I commissioned a Learning Review following the reported death of the eighteen year old sibling - W. He had gone to Syria with a sibling (sibling X) and a friend to join his elder sibling (P). At this time it was my view that the case did not meet the criteria for a Serious Case Review, as W was an adult when he died, but I commissioned a Learning Review in view of the fact that he was a child when he travelled and also because the risks to young people of radicalisation had become a concern in Brighton & Hove. When sibling X died in Syria in October 2014, aged seventeen, I requested that the Learning Review be halted and appointed an independent lead reviewer to work with internal reviewers on a full Serious Case Review. Whilst the mandatory criteria for a Serious Case Review were not fully met, I felt such an approach would provide a robust framework by which to maximise learning.

The purpose of a Serious Case Review is to conduct “a rigorous, objective analysis of what happened and why, so that important lessons can be learnt and services improved to reduce the risk of future harm to children,” (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015).

The review covers the period of January 2012 – October 2014, a time in which Syria had descended into civil war and, in both Syria and Iraq, sectarian violence had become rife. This unrest enabled the rise of Jihadist groups across the Middle East and North Africa. During the timeframe under review professionals across the UK were working to the June 2011 Prevent Strategy and following the non-statutory guidance regarding the Channel strand issued to Police, Local Authorities and partners in 2012.

Brighton & Hove Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) fully accepts the findings of this Serious Case Review and is committed to taking the learning forward to better safeguard children in the city. This Learning & Improvement Report sets out the formal response of the LSCB to the findings and learning identified through this review. It provides key information about the process and its purpose and also gives an overview of how it was conducted and who was involved. Most importantly it sets out the learning for the LSCB as the partnership responsible for ensuring that joint working arrangements to protect children are effective.

This has been a complex and large scale review spanning a number of years. From the outset it was clear that this review warranted a participative approach with an emphasis upon professional, family and Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) community involvement. Unfortunately, attempts to involve family members, at different stages in the review, proved limited and it was only in the latter stages of the review that reviewers were able to partially achieve this. Representatives of community organisations were invited to meet with the reviewers to provide their perceptions on how children can be better protected from exploitation into radicalisation. The reviewers also met with representatives from mosques who provided valuable input to further develop findings. Reflections on working effectively with minority ethnic and community groups are explored more fully in the report and form the basis of a number of the review’s key findings.

Thirty-eight practitioners (both current and ex-members of staff) who worked with the siblings and their family contributed to the review, reflecting on their experiences and safeguarding practices. Facilitating the involvement of this number of staff was a considerable undertaking. The review also benefited from the perceptions of representatives from community organisations about how children can be better protected from exploitation into radicalisation. The mother of another other young person who travelled,

also contributed her perspective on the background experiences which can make young people more susceptible to being exploited into extremist ideology.

Supporting the process was a review team comprising senior managers from involved agencies, who met with lead reviewers, providing necessary context on organisational policies and practice as information was shared. The breadth of the review, together with some emerging necessary information-handling restrictions, contributed to the extended timescale of this review. The review required three lead reviewers as well as an experienced cultural advisor. He participated as part of the review team in the data collection stages of the review as well as providing feedback and agreeing the report. Additionally, he advised at all stages on cultural matters, contacted family and mosques, provided information and drafted part of section 3 of the report.

The review I commissioned has reflected upon:

- The effectiveness of current policies and procedures across local and national agencies within Brighton & Hove in identifying children and young people at risk of radicalisation¹
 - a) how well they enable understanding of any safeguarding implications and
 - b) how well they provide a framework to identify, assess, manage and review any safeguarding risk.
- What we can learn about the links between radicalisation, familial and personal experiences and vulnerabilities that would help increase awareness of the issue and support staff and managers to recognise and respond to risk.
- The confidence within our partner agencies and staff to understand the issues around radicalisation, including whether they have the tools, skills and knowledge to address it, alongside having the confidence to engage in conversations with young people and their families about their culture, attitudes and beliefs.
- What further support and resilience-building the community as a whole could provide to support children and young people at risk of radicalisation.

The heart of this review examines the siblings and their family's experiences. This includes their experience of being subjected to racist and religiously motivated abuse and attacks, domestic abuse and physical abuse. The review also considers the youngest four siblings' involvement in anti-social and criminal activities. It evaluates the professional practice and services offered to the family.

It is important to make clear that the review has found that prior to the siblings travelling, the national intelligence and threat assessment did not suggest that young people were travelling abroad to fight, nor did local professionals identify that the siblings were at risk of being vulnerable to radicalisation or at risk of travelling to join fighting abroad. Many findings relate to the challenges for professionals to provide effective help and support to those children who have suffered trauma in their early childhood. Such trauma can provide the context for children becoming vulnerable to exploitation as well as becoming involved in various risk taking and anti-social behaviours.

All professionals who provided services to the siblings and their family met to consider reflect on and debate what happened. They have identified some practice that could be improved, believing it possible that, if managed differently, it may have had a more positive influence.

It is recognised that some themes or issues appear in more than one finding. This Learning & Improvement Report should be read in conjunction with the full report. These documents seek to demonstrate and support the transparent and objective approach all parties have taken to looking at and learning from the tragic circumstances that lead to the death of these two siblings.

¹ Radicalisation is defined as children and young people who are at risk of being *drawn into extremist or terrorist related activity*

This serious case review has identified 13 findings. These findings have been grouped into the following priority areas:

- **Priority Area 1: Working with trauma** (Finding 1)
- **Priority Area 2: Working with high risk adolescents** (Findings 2,3,4,5)
- **Priority Area 3: Working with children vulnerable to radicalisation** (Findings 6,7,8, 9,10)
- **Priority Area 4: Working with minority ethnic groups** (Findings 11,12,13)

Actions arising from this review are being monitored by the Brighton & Hove LSCB's Case Review Subcommittee with progress reported to the Board.

Graham Bartlett
Independent Chair
Brighton & Hove Local Safeguarding Children Board

1.0 Priority Area 1: Working with Trauma (Finding 1)



Finding 1: Professionals do not have effective ways to intervene in families who have suffered long standing trauma: in such circumstances, the risks of young people being vulnerable to exploitation increases.

[This finding is closely linked to finding 4 concerning adolescent risky behaviour, which may also be associated with the impact of early trauma.]

This finding is also linked with finding 11 which considers the specific impact of such trauma in relation to domestic abuse experiences within the family and the need for professionals to understand additional cultural complexities.]

Board Response to Finding 1: Unresolved trauma & distrust of statutory services

- 1.1 Childhood trauma is an important public health concern, with adverse childhood experiences being one of the strongest predictors for difficulties in future life.
- 1.2 The Board accepts this finding and acknowledges challenges for professionals when working with children and families who are disengaged from professionals, particularly in the context of the family's experience of unresolved trauma. We understand that if a family's experience of services has not been perceived as being able to protect them or resolve particular problems, this is likely to contribute to a lack of trust in the ability of professionals to be able to effectively safeguard in the future.
- 1.3 At the start of the timeframe under review, the children in the family were aged twelve to seventeen years old. Agency records show that the family had been subject to a long history of contact with agencies. What the review has not been able to determine is whether anyone working with the family fully understood their life experiences. The mother spoke to reviewers of the trauma for the whole family, of the changes in their lives brought about by political events in their home country and the impact of leaving an educated high status section of society and moving to Brighton where they suffered from racism. Whilst the mother did not describe feeling any lack of trust or faith in practitioners, she did acknowledge that the impact of her family living with threats to their safety was traumatic. Comments made in media reports, in agency records and by other members of the community suggest that by January 2012 the children may have been feeling distrust in the ability of local professionals to help to them. The lack of any prosecution may have left the children feeling that the authorities were unable to protect them.
- 1.4 The Board acknowledges that developing a trusting relationship with families is vital but that it can be difficult to overcome entrenched defence mechanisms in families who have learnt to be self-sufficient and not disclose abuse. We recognise that children who have been abused and victims of domestic abuse are more likely to be vulnerable to further risk and harm. The Board agrees that early identification of the risk of trauma is key; once children reach adolescence it can be more difficult for professionals to intervene and so therapeutic services need to be offered at a much earlier stage to children and parents.
- 1.5 The Board is exploring how the safeguarding partnership collectively intervenes to provide co-ordinated and responsive therapeutic support to children who have experienced, or who are at risk of experiencing, trauma. So far the Board has learnt:
 - At present, one commissioned community and voluntary service provider uses a trauma informed approach and Public Health have a joint contract with housing for vulnerable young families that similarly uses a trauma informed approach. Other commissioned services adopt this ethos in terms of service delivery.
 - A Schools Wellbeing Service team located within Brighton & Hove Inclusion Support Service has been established by the Brighton & Hove Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) with Public Health and Children's Services in the Local Authority. The aim of the service is to improve schools' approach to mental health and wellbeing. The service helps schools build their own capacity to identify and support young people.

This is achieved through a whole school approach, identifying needs within the school and offering short-term interventions.

- A mirror service has been commissioned by the CCG from 1 June 2017. The Community Wellbeing Service provides a single point for mental health referrals, including those for Specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and supports children and young people with mild to moderate mental health needs through 1:1 and group work interventions. This provides children and young people in Brighton & Hove with increased access to therapeutic interventions.
- The CCG has worked with Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT) to re-design Specialist CAMHS (Tier 3 CAMHS) ensuring the service is able to offer:
 - Assertive outreach; engaging children and young people more proactively to ensure they seek help and engage with treatment;
 - Increasing access and choice of environment that will be more child/ young people-friendly and provide the service in a place that suits the child/ young person;
 - Improved access to services by reducing the waiting times for assessment and treatment, including improving the urgent response;
 - Specialist mental health practitioners working alongside the Community Wellbeing Service (triage), the Schools Wellbeing Service, GPs and Social Care; and
 - Improved mental health response to vulnerable children and young people, building a team around the child with mental health being embedded within Local Authority Teams, Youth Offending Service, Looked After Children and Substance Misuse.
- The CCG also commissions a specific therapeutic trauma pathway for young people aged 14 years and above, provided by a partnership of SPFT, Rise, Mankind and Survivors Network. The overarching aim for the service is to reduce levels of distress, depression and self-harm amongst young people over 14 and adults who present with trauma reactions and trauma related symptoms and experiences, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and complex PTSD.
- The local authority introduced a relationship-based model of social work practice in 2015. This requires social workers to take an approach which is informed by an understanding of trauma and which combines directness, honesty and consistency to ensure their relationships can be therapeutic and reparative. Social workers are offered training in trauma-informed approaches.

1.6 The Board has used this finding to build on and strengthen the LSCB Safeguarding Adolescents training offer. This is to support practitioners to have the knowledge, resources and skills to develop relationships with young people whose previous experiences have led them to be alienated from society and/or disengaged with services.

1.7 Going forward, the Board wants to further support practitioners to identify and support older children who are suffering from early childhood trauma.

1.8 ACTIONS

1. The Board to continue to seek an update on emotional health and wellbeing provision within the city and the capacity to meet identified need, across early intervention and specialist services.
2. The Board, with partners, to develop training to support the understanding of the impact of early childhood trauma, to include the impact of PTSD and the understanding of neuro-science and the impact of early childhood trauma upon brain development.
3. The Board to seek assurance that agencies identify trauma in families effectively and refer appropriately to services to address this.
4. The Board to seek assurance that multi-agency arrangements regarding complex and “hard to engage” families are robust and that services respond flexibly to the identified needs and address the impact of trauma.

2.0 Priority Area 2: Working with high risk adolescents (Findings 2,3,4,5)



Finding 2: Does the recent expansion of child protection processes to cover adolescents at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation or exploitation into radicalisation, adequately cover other types of adolescent risk of harm, such as that associated with truancy and involvement in anti-social, criminal or risky behaviour?

Child Protection & Safeguarding Adolescents

- 2.1 The report draws on the fact that traditionally the focus of the child protection system has been on parenting capacity and the safety and wellbeing of younger children. The more recent focus on child sexual exploitation has led to the increasing recognition of adolescent neglect as a safeguarding issue, particularly when it contributes to the risk of child sexual exploitation and, more recently, to radicalisation.
- 2.2 This finding has helpfully highlighted to the Board some current ‘blind spots’ in how agencies view and respond to behaviours of adolescents. It talks to a broad range of behaviours that some young people are involved in locally, which can expose them to harm and which could be related to vulnerabilities caused by earlier life experiences and/or parenting issues. The Board accepts that without early intervention there is an increased risk that children may become vulnerable to being exploited in a variety of ways, including through radicalisation.



Finding 4: In working with adolescents there can be a pattern of reactive crisis management as a means of handling the relentless stream of incidents; this minimises the likelihood of reflective thinking and analysis necessary to understand and tackle the root causes of the behaviour.

[This finding is linked to finding 1 about professional helplessness in the face of parents and children who are unwilling or unable to be able to make effective changes due to underlying trauma]

Adolescents & Reactive Crisis Management

- 2.3 Adolescence is a time of change. A powerful combination of biological, psychological and social changes make adolescents more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours than young children or adults, and these changes contribute both to opportunities for healthy growth and the risk of

negative outcomes (Calkins, 2010²). This finding addresses professional helplessness in response to a constant stream of incidents requiring immediate attention.

- 2.4 One of the notable features of this case was that prior to the review period, the siblings engaged with youth services, attended some activities and engaged with practitioners, disclosing they were suffering physical abuse. However, by the time of the period under review, the four youngest siblings had become increasingly hard to engage. As mentioned earlier, part of the explanation for this is likely to relate to family members' own history and experience of earlier professional involvement (finding 1). However, the lifestyle of the four youngest siblings was also a feature. This involved frequently being out until the early hours of the morning; returning home with friends; missing school; involvement with other young people in group anti-social and criminal behaviour (including violent offences against others): substance misuse and suspected drug dealing.
- 2.5 Professionals were unable to progress work with the family and instead found themselves responding to constant incidents. The Board understands that difficulties meeting with the siblings contributed to challenges in being able to develop a relationship based intervention, as well as reflective thinking and analysis.

Board Response to Finding 2: Child Protection & Safeguarding Adolescents & Finding 4: Adolescents & Reactive Crisis Management

- 2.6 The issue of how to safeguard adolescents involved in risky behaviour is not restricted to Brighton & Hove, but is common to most areas of the country.
- 2.7 As a result of the findings 2 and 4, the LSCB has reflected on current strategies for working with adolescents and whether they provide sufficient intervention to be able to safeguard young people who may be particularly vulnerable to exploitation. The Board agrees that the risk of harm for such adolescents is a clear safeguarding concern and that, since 2015, steps have been taken across the multi-agency partnership to improve responses to this. These include:
- The establishment of clear pathways for children identified as being at risk of exploitation into violent extremism into the Front Door for Families and Channel Panel. This process is supported by Brighton & Hove being part of the Dovetail Project, a Home Office initiative that places a Channel Co-ordinator within the Local Authority rather than with Police Prevent services.
 - Exploitation awareness raising training provided for staff across the partnership.
 - Sussex Police leading on the delivery of safeguarding training around violent extremism for Front Door for Families' professionals.
- 2.8 With regards finding 4, the Board acknowledges that the way services were delivered to the family unintentionally became an obstacle to developing a relationship with the family as a whole. Adolescents, particularly boys, are much less likely to ask for help than younger children and the Board believes that building relationships of trust is essential for successful intervention.
- 2.9 Since the start of this review there has been considerable development of Brighton & Hove children's social work services, including for adolescents. In 2015, the local authority introduced relationship-based practice as part of a whole-systems change. The key principles behind this model include continuity and consistency of relationships between social workers, teams and families. As part of the new model a specialist adolescent pod was introduced and an Extended Adolescent Service (EAS) developed in recognition of the specific and high risks faced by adolescents. The Adolescent Pod Social Workers carry lower caseloads and EAS workers are able to provide support out of traditional hours. Such changes have been made in recognition of the difficulties of working with adolescents with multiple needs including high levels of vulnerability, risk taking behaviours and complex behavioural issues.

² First published: 8 March 2010. Psychobiological models of adolescent risk: Implications for prevention and intervention; Calkins. Susan.

- 2.10 Learning from this review has informed the development of a LSCB Safeguarding Adolescents training course. Consideration is currently being given to the development of an Adolescent Board within the city, to support and inform multi-agency working and commissioning with high risk and vulnerable young people. It is proposed the Adolescent Board will deal with all aspects of adolescent work from teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol issues, mental health provision, offending behaviour, child sexual exploitation etc. This is to ensure that all strategies, services and approaches for adolescents are joined up. Reporting to the Adolescent Board, it is proposed that a multi-agency operational group will review the young people identified at highest risk in the city. This will include those who are struggling to engage with services.

2.11 ACTIONS

1. The Board to evaluate the work of the Adolescent Board, once established, and the multi-agency response in meeting the needs of high risk adolescents.
2. The Board to continue to develop and evaluate LSCB Safeguarding Adolescents training offer.
3. The Board to seek assurance that the High Risk Operational Group, once established, is improving outcomes for adolescents.



Finding 3: The current child protection processes distinguish between children who are missing in the UK and those who are suspected of being missing abroad; as a consequence the potential positive strategy involved in the formulation of a child protection plan is not provided for those who are suspected of being abroad.

Board Response to Finding 3: Missing in UK vs Missing Aboard

- 2.12 When it was recognised that children in Brighton & Hove may be at risk of travelling to Syria, initial child protection conferences were held on each child identified. This did not, however, include young people who were already missing, thought to be abroad and already in Syria. The Board agrees that if children who go missing abroad are not subject to the same child protection processes as children missing in the UK, and the investigation is left entirely to the police and the authorities of the country where the child is suspected of being, there may be a potential loss of both information and potential strategies to protect the child.

2.13 ACTION

1. The Board to seek clarification from the Government regarding expectations of notifying and the working arrangements between local authorities, the Government and counter terrorism agencies when children thought to be at risk of exploitation, are missing abroad.



Finding 5: The systems of collecting and sharing data about young people who come to police attention, in Brighton & Hove, do not consistently provide all relevant information to practitioners so as to assess, identify and address safeguarding needs.

Board Response to Finding 5: Information Sharing & Agency Perception of Relevant Information

- 2.14 Information sharing about young people who come to police attention has been found to be lacking. This is attributed to a systems issue which, at the time under review, prevented the full details of known or suspected criminal involvement being fully shared. More robust interventions within the criminal justice system, either through prosecution or closer monitoring by the Youth Offending Service, which was experiencing its own difficulties at the time, may have resulted in safeguarding concerns being considered at an earlier stage.

- 2.15 In this case there seemed to be differing views or perceptions of the siblings. Some professionals, including social workers and youth offending officers, held a view that the younger male children in the family were victims of racism and this had led them to retaliate and get involved in anti-social behaviour and minor criminality. On the other hand information held within police systems depicted them as being suspected of involvement in aggressive and violent offences.
- 2.16 The issue of information sharing regarding young people coming to the attention of the Police was highlighted in another SCR (Brighton & Hove LSCB, September 2016). As a consequence Sussex Police, in consultation with other agencies, have begun to review the circumstances in which a SCARF (Single Combined Assessment of Risk Form) should be completed and are updating Force Policy accordingly, to include notifications of arrests and sharing of information about young people involved in criminality. This is a pan-Sussex piece of work in consultation with the three LSCBs in Sussex. There are already established information sharing systems in place regarding young people who are arrested within the city. A daily briefing is circulated by an Integrated Offender Manager (IOM) in the Youth Offending Service (YOS) detailing young people who have come to the attention of police. This is shared with the social worker or YOS worker, as most will have a lead professional within these services. This professional then communicates the issues to the wider network working with the family.

2.17 ACTIONS

1. Sussex Police to monitor compliance with the updated Force Policy around information sharing in respect of young people coming to police attention.
2. The Board to assure itself that, once the Force Policy is updated, operational practice regarding sharing safeguarding information through SCARF reflects the revised Force expectations.
3. The Board to explore the benefits, in terms children's welfare, of schools and social care services being notified of all children who come into contact with the police.
4. The Board to seek assurance that the daily IOM briefing is supporting effective communication across the partnership regarding young people who are arrested

3.0 Priority Area 3: Working with children vulnerable to radicalisation (Findings 6,7,8,9,10)



Finding 6: Do practitioners understand and know how young people are radicalised in Brighton & Hove and how to counter the propaganda that influences them into extremist thinking?

Board Response to Finding 6: Countering Propaganda

- 3.1 As previously stated, prior to the discovery that the siblings and their friends had gone to Turkey/Syria in January 2014, there had been no suspicion of young people being radicalised and thinking of travelling to join any of the various factions fighting in Syria. Despite frequent contact with local professionals, there was nothing to suggest any changes going on within the family. This indicates that the siblings were skilled in hiding their thinking.
- 3.2 Professionals who knew Sibling P describe him as open and receptive to interaction. He offered reassurance based on the fact he was considered sensible. He has subsequently spoken of researching online what was going on in Syria and watching videos that encouraged him to travel.

- 3.3 The report talks of research undertaken which suggests that in up to 20% of cases where radicalisation has featured, family members played a key role in introducing and initiating to an extremist movement. Friends played the key role in almost 50% of cases.
- 3.4 Another feature that is identified as increasing risk to children's safety is the vulnerability of some children on the internet. Online environments are a major recruitment method, exposing young people to extremist content and persuading them towards an extremist outlook. The Board recognises that it is difficult for parents and professionals to be confident that they know what is influencing children on the internet and through social networks.
- 3.5 In response to this and other learning from local reviews, the Board has already developed training to support professionals to understand the different elements of social media, in terms of its impact, messages, sites and changing format.
- 3.6 In the academic year 2016-2017, four schools are working with the local authority to develop and signpost a range of resources that help students to develop digital resilience and the ability to take a critical approach to media including social media. These materials were shared with all secondary schools in June 2017.
- 3.7 In addition, the Participation & Engagement Subcommittee is developing, within the context of this finding, signposting to local and national resources to support children and young people to stay safer online.

3.8 ACTIONS

- 1. The Board to request the Local Authority consider commissioning a theatre in education production to highlight the risk of exploitation into radicalisation for high school students in the city, similar to those used in respect of CSE.
- 2. The Board to request Public Health to undertake a city wide campaign highlighting the risk of exploitation and on-line grooming into radicalisation.



Finding 7: Efforts to help and support children so they are less likely to become vulnerable to exploitation into radicalisation, do not seem to adequately address all the core issues, as perceived by community members.

Board Response to Finding 7: Links between Racism and Vulnerability to Exploitation

- 3.9 This finding focuses on the issues community members raised in the meetings held as part of the review. The Board agrees these are critical in terms of helping to minimise the risk of children being exploited by radicalisation.
- 3.10 The core issue explored in meetings with community members was around the need of all children to have positive self-esteem. In this case, early experiences of racism in nursery schools and primary schools were described as leading to children becoming alienated and, as a consequence, more vulnerable to searching for ways to feel better about themselves through other means. There was concern expressed by community members that schools are not able to protect Muslim children sufficiently from racism and that with the ending of required reporting of incidents, there is no longer awareness of the level of hate incidents within schools. The Board is advised that schools are recording and responding to the experiences of Muslim pupils and students and that guidance and training is routinely provided to schools to support them to identify, record and challenge bullying and prejudiced based incidents, including those which are racist and religiously motivated.

- 3.11 The community representatives participating in this review expressed support for the aims of the Prevent agenda, but aired frustration with the methods used, which are not considered to be working, Prevent is perceived by some as a tool to 'spy' on Muslims and is not trusted. This is a national, not just local, perception that will require a national response.
- 3.12 The Board notes the view expressed by some community representatives that the policy of arresting those who return from Syria may deter any young people who have gone from being able to admit this was a mistake and come home to the UK. This raises the complexities when individual vulnerability and national security issues collide.
- 3.13 The Board recognises the adverse impact of racism upon self-esteem, which in turn can contribute to a child's vulnerability to any form of exploitation, including radicalisation. The Board supports the need for parents, schools and communities to work together with organisations and institutions within the city to reduce racism and keep children safe.

3.14 ACTIONS

- 1. The Board to request that the Prevent Board debate the issue of returnees and current policy regarding arrest and for any developments on this issue to be shared, where possible, with local communities.
- 2. Given the links between racism and radicalisation highlighted in the review, the Board to seek clarification from the Government as to why experience of racism in schools is no longer a statutory reporting requirement.
- 3. The Board to seek assurance that schools within the city appropriately recognise the racism experienced by pupils and take action to address this.



Finding 8: Professional responsibilities arising from the Government's counter terrorism strategy are new, not yet fully understood by all relevant staff and subject to ethical dilemmas: this presents challenges in being able to reliably recognise both the risk of radicalisation and the links to safeguarding concerns.

Board Response to Finding 8: Recognition of Risk of Radicalisation and Link to Safeguarding

- 3.15 At the most recent Section 11 Self-Assessment, all statutory agencies confirmed they had a Prevent Lead in place within their agency. All agencies now judge themselves fully compliant with requirements under Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. All agencies confirmed multi-agency working arrangements were in place to manage individual cases and to prevent and disrupt children being drawn into terrorism. The Board has continued monitoring progress of the two health providers who initially rated themselves non-compliant with these expected standards
- 3.16 In this case there had been no specific concerns with regard to W & X in relation to radicalisation. It is understood that this had not been raised as a concern to the police and that other agencies working with the family had not anticipated or registered any suggestion that the siblings were considering travelling abroad. This reflected the lack of an intelligence picture nationally that children were exposed to such a risk. There were no overt intentions or behaviours, albeit it has been noted that when they were involved with the police in 2012, the siblings did make angry and abusive comments to officers, which did have radical connotations. These were viewed at the time as being the way in which they were expressing their aggression. By 2013 practitioners were beginning to be more alert to potential radicalisation and referrals were made to Community Safety and Prevent following concerns identified firstly at a school and secondly by a sessional youth offending worker.

- 3.17 The review iterates the importance of not just focusing on the individuals (subject to Community Safety and Prevent Referrals) but on links between people and wider safeguarding issues. This is addressed further in Finding 10.
- 3.18 The Board acknowledges that at the time of a second referral into the Channel Panel relating to Sibling X, processes for the panel were newly formed and this led to fairly limited information being shared at the meeting. There was a lack of clarity and details about the wider context of the referral were known to some participants but not shared or considered in the assessment of Sibling X (see finding 9). This led to the Youth Offending Service (YOS) being tasked with following up concerns, for which they did not have all available information. By this time the YOS only had two weeks left of statutory involvement and thereafter X was only required to meet with the service on a voluntary basis.
- 3.19 Since this review, there have been process and system changes to the arrangements of the Channel Panel. Brighton & Hove is part of Dovetail, a Home Office initiative in which the Local Authority rather than the Police is responsible for completing vulnerability assessments on Channel Panel subjects. Additionally, chairing of the Channel Panel has passed from Community Safety Team to the Head of Children's Safeguarding, to ensure effective focus and response is given to any safeguarding concerns in respect of the vulnerability to exploitation of Channel Panel subjects.
- 3.20 When to report concerns is a major ethical question for professionals, with very different views existing about what constitutes a risk of vulnerability to radicalisation. This is made more difficult by the fact that adolescence itself is a time when children explore beliefs and values. The Board has sought assurance that partner agencies are supporting their staff working with families to know how and where to report concerns about possible vulnerability to radicalisation. The Board accepts there is a delicate balance to be struck in order to counter the perceived concerns that a referral to Prevent will undermine free expression of political views. Referrals to Prevent should be seen as a supportive, rather than restrictive, measure and as a means by which vulnerability to radicalisation can be reduced.

3.21 ACTIONS

1. The Board to request the Prevent Board debate the public perception of Prevent and how this may impact upon referrals in the City.
2. The Board to continue to seek assurance from the Prevent Board around the effective working of the Channel Panel.
3. The Board to seek an update from the Prevent Board about the response to cases where the vulnerability threshold for Channel Panel intervention is met but there is no consent to involvement.
4. The Board to seek clarification from the Government regarding the limitations in sharing information with regard to trends and themes of Channel Panel subjects with LSCBs.



Finding 9: The lack of a well-established working relationship between counter terrorism police officers and other agencies can lead to an atmosphere of suspicion between professionals of inappropriate confidentiality, which could compromise children's safeguarding.

Board Response to Finding 9: Welfare of Children and National Security Imperatives

- 3.22 There was nothing found to indicate that information held by counter terrorism agencies was withheld from the safeguarding system, albeit there had been a suspicion, mistakenly held by some, that this was the case.

- 3.23 The Board champions the principle that the ‘welfare of the child is paramount’, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989. The Board is of the strong view that there must be robust information sharing arrangements between all partner agencies. This is obviously made more difficult when there is potential for conflict between police investigations involving national security. Whilst in this case there is no evidence of any such conflict the Board acknowledges the risk of there being potential for, or a perception of, this.
- 3.24 Even though the review makes no discovery that any agency knew or suspected the siblings were being exploited into radicalisation and were intending to travel to Syria, it does stress that there exists a perception that counter terrorism police officers have insufficient understanding and experience of child safeguarding to know when to share information.
- 3.25 As mentioned also in finding 8, police information provided at the initial child protection conference attended by Prevent officers, as opposed to those from the local Safeguarding Investigation Team, did not include all the routine information expected at such meetings. This was due to their unfamiliarity with Child Protection Conferencing rather than a deliberate attempt to withhold information. The Board accepts this issue was raised with relevant senior police officers at the time and systems put in place to ensure that appropriate information was provided to future Child Protection Conferences. Additionally the police did not share that the siblings were by then believed to be in Syria (as opposed to having travelled to Turkey). The Board acknowledges the difficulty for police officers working in counter terrorism, who may have concerns that sharing particular sensitive pieces of information relating to children may be premature and / or may prejudice an ongoing investigation and, in doing so, risk the security and welfare of the wider population.
- 3.26 Both locally and nationally there is inconsistency in how safeguarding concerns relating to extremism are recorded. In terms of reporting and monitoring, the Prevent duty requires all agencies to record Prevent safeguarding concerns even if they do not refer to the police or the Channel process. In some areas there is a system in place which highlights if a family member is referred to Prevent, but this is not consistent across the country. This becomes more problematic if families move between local authorities. The Board agrees there needs to be improved oversight of this issue, both locally and nationally.
- 3.27 The Board are advised that the National Counter Terrorism Police Headquarters (NCTPHQ) will be launching nationally accredited Prevent training for front line safeguarding staff in the Autumn of 2017. This is linked with Dovetail, as mentioned earlier within this report. This will be recommended for all Police Safeguarding staff and officers. It will form part of a minimum standard of training which is required to be set under the Prevent Duty by every responsible authority. The Board agrees that all its partners should determine at what level they will train Prevent as part of their safeguarding duty.

3.28 ACTIONS

1. The Board to request Counter Terrorism Policing South East to formally respond to the review’s findings. In particular, to provide clarity around how police officers resolve potential conflicts between the security of the state and the safeguarding of children involved in such investigations.
2. The Board to consider with the South East LSCB Network how to develop a common approach to the oversight of recording, reporting and monitoring of Prevent safeguarding concerns.
3. The Board to seek clarification from partners as to what level they will train Prevent as part of their safeguarding duty, within the context of learning from this review and the likely developments with Dovetail in the Autumn of 2017.



Finding 10: Does the timely and constructive response of Brighton & Hove to the newly identified safeguarding risks to children posed by radicalisation, represent a systems strength?

Board Response to Finding 10: Brighton & Hove Systems Strengths

- 3.29 The review finds a 'striking' response following the discovery that the two siblings and another young person had gone missing. It recognises changes to processes, practice and working relationships to help prevent other young people at risk of radicalisation and travelling to Syria. The Board is assured that the response suggests a strong multi-agency environment in Brighton & Hove, which is able to provide an integrated approach across and within agencies when risk is identified.
- 3.30 The Board is assured that the strategic functions, established by the multi-agency strategic risk management group that was developed in the weeks prior to the first death, continues via the new Prevent Board which meet on a bi-monthly basis to ensure robust multi agency oversight of operational delivery.
- 3.31 The Board acknowledges that changes to Prevent through the Counter Terrorism and Security Act, 2015 and the placing of Channel on a statutory footing has enabled the strengthening of the multi-agency partnership.
- 3.32 The report highlights the good use of legal interventions, namely Wardship proceedings to prevent children identified as vulnerable to radicalisation from travelling to war zones. The Board continues to endorse the use of legal interventions, where appropriate. The Board is assured that agencies came together, shared information, and openly debated the issues raised for the system's abilities in responding to this newly identified risk.
- 3.33 In terms of schools in the city; the majority of secondary schools now have a member of staff who is an accredited Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP) trainer, to build the schools capacity to provide ongoing in-house training. There has been a wide promotion of materials to schools, including signposting to online training: Channel and Home Office Prevent e-Learning. There have been a series of Head Teacher and governor meetings which include have included Prevent and equality themes. Prevent is regularly addressed within the network meetings for school based Designated Safeguarding Leads and Prevent features within the annual schools safeguarding audit, on which the Board is updated annually.

4.0 Priority Area 4: Working with minority ethnic groups (Findings 11, 12, 13)



Finding 11: Does the multi-agency safeguarding system have the resources and strategies available to consistently help abused women and children from minority cultural backgrounds, if they fear that co-operating with statutory authorities could lead to the loss of support of their wider family and community?

Board Response to Finding 11: Domestic Violence and Abuse among Families from Ethnic Minorities

- 4.1 Domestic abuse can seriously harm children and young people. Witnessing domestic abuse is child emotional abuse.
- 4.2 The report surmises that coercion and control aspects of domestic abuse were a feature of this family's dynamics, compounded by the mother's social isolation and lack of support. The Board recognise that these circumstances would have made it extremely difficult for the mother to co-operate with professionals.

- 4.3 Practitioners who participated in this review spoke of the (at the time) lack of Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) specific services for victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse in Brighton & Hove. Attempts to link the mother to other Muslim support groups failed, because the groups were either too far away, in another area, or the mother did not wish to attend. There was a view from professionals that she may have been concerned about what would be reported to her husband if she attended any local BAME services. The Board understands that within this context the risk of children continuing to be significantly impacted is increased.
- 4.4 Since the review, the LSCB's Domestic Violence and Abuse: Impact on Children training offer, has been enhanced to support an improved understanding of the different cultural factors that can influence the ability of professionals to intervene effectively in domestic abuse. Revisions to the training give more emphasis to how victims may experience more difficulty speaking openly within some parts of society and within some cultures.
- 4.5 The Safe in the City Partnership Board now also offers several training sessions to professionals working across Brighton & Hove to increase awareness around diversity and culture, with specific links to domestic and sexual abuse and harmful practices. Training is co-delivered by the Domestic and Sexual Violence and Violence Against Women and Girls Training Officer and the BAME Domestic Abuse Officer from RiSE, the commissioned domestic abuse service for Brighton & Hove and East Sussex.
- 4.6 A member of the Muslim community who participated in the review suggested that the involvement of Imams in supporting victims of domestic abuse would be beneficial. The Board agrees and proposes to engage directly with Imams and members of mosques to deliver training and consultancy around domestic abuse, child safeguarding and child protection. The Board favours a joint approach to help support victims of abuse to be adequately protected from further harm.
- 4.7 In this case, even though the mother and her children (on advice from professionals) lived separately from the father, he was still known to continue to have access to the children. At that time police lacked means to stop the father visiting, despite it being against his bail conditions, because police bail, prior to being charged, does not provide effective powers when contravened. There is no evidence seen by the review to suggest that professionals sought to support the mother to take out an injunction against him, with power of arrest.
- 4.8 Civil orders, such as Non-Molestation Orders, Occupation Orders, Forced Marriage Protection Orders, Exclusion Orders, Injunctions under the Protection from Harassment Act, and Domestic Violence Protection Orders can help victims of domestic abuse. The Board is aware that application processes for Domestic Violence Protection Orders have recently been streamlined. Subsequently, the Board has asked Sussex Police to undertake audit work to assess and assure how well the process is safeguarding family members.
- 4.9 The review asked the Board to consider to what extent bail conditions are broken by perpetrators of domestic violence and what action Police take in response. We also considered whether there is a national problem in relation to the lack of power attached to police bail prior to an alleged offender being charged. The changes to pre-charge bail contained within the Policing and Crime Act 2016 have been significant and have changed the focus of addressing this particular element of the review. The expectation now is that bail will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and has to be authorised by senior officers. If bail is granted with conditions, these must be policed and be enforceable, and the officer in the case must have a plan as to how they intend to enact this requirement, but the presumption now will be to release from custody without bail.

4.10 ACTIONS

1. The Board to recommend that the Safe in the City Partnership Board reviews the extent to which the current infrastructure of domestic abuse services meets the specific needs of the BAME communities in Brighton & Hove.
2. Sussex Police to evaluate how Policing and Crime Act 2016 bail provisions are impacting on the safety of victims and families.
3. The Board Learning & Development Officer to work with and support Imams and members of mosques to deliver training and consultancy around domestic abuse, child safeguarding and child protection.
4. The Board Learning & Development Officer to review the current Domestic Abuse: Impact on Children to better support professionals to have an understanding of the long-lasting trauma in families of domestic abuse.
5. Sussex Police to undertake audit work to assess and assure how well the new Domestic Violence Protection Orders and other civil remedies process is safeguarding families.



Finding 12: Do practitioners in Brighton & Hove have sufficient curiosity, knowledge and skills to explore the role of culture, identity, gender, religion, beliefs and potential divided loyalties experienced by some children and families?

Board Response to Finding 12: Culture, Identity, Gender, Religion, Beliefs and Divided Loyalties

- 4.11 The report makes clear that professionals were not curious enough about what life was like for this family before arriving in the city, including why they left their country of origin and the political links of the wider family. The Board agrees that there was insufficient understanding of the history of the family.
- 4.12 In this case there was inadequate consideration of the role of identity, religion, culture, family and community in the lives of the children and their parents including the existence, or not, of Islamist thinking.
- 4.13 The Board appreciates that changes in the world, especially in North Africa and the Middle East, and the impact on residents of the UK is only now better understood and the safeguarding risk of UK children going abroad to fight in a war is only newly identified. The Board recognises that for some adults and children the events in the world and the continuing struggles in their land of origin, or other places with cultural links, may elicit a duty to be part of a solution. Practitioners may not know how best to support children and families from different cultures and countries who may be subject to conflicting identities and political or religious loyalties.
- 4.14 This finding has strong links with findings in Priority Area 2: Working with High Risk Adolescents. The issue of identity for adolescents is developmentally significant, especially if they perceive themselves as different to those around them.
- 4.15 The Board has already set about determining how schools support children to develop a positive sense of identity and promote equality across all protected characteristics. Within Brighton & Hove, the PSHE education is considered strong, with established Curriculum Frameworks developed for primary and secondary schools. In 2016 Faith and Belief: A Guide for Education Settings was disseminated to all educational settings with the aim of building understanding of faith communities and sensitivity to different faiths. One purpose of this is to ensure that the faith and religious identities of all pupils and students are reflected and celebrated. This has been supported by an encouragement to visit local places of worship. Within schools in Brighton & Hove support for whole school approaches to equality including staff training is offered. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Service and the Standards and Achievement Service offer schools

equality and diversity learning walks. The purpose of these are to ensure that school environments reflect the diversity of the wider community and, in so doing, foster a positive sense of belonging and identity and raise aspirations for all. In secondary schools black and minority ethnic community champions support these.

- 4.16 This review, alongside other published serious case reviews, highlights that professionals can sometimes lack the knowledge and confidence to work with families from different cultures and religions; perhaps overlooking situations that may put family members at risk and accepting lower standards of care. The Board agrees the rights and needs of the child need to remain the focus of interventions at all times, regardless of the context. In the most recent Section 11 Self-Assessment the majority of agencies were assured that training, appropriate to the role, was in place within their agency to support with identifying and responding to concerns about children who may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.
- 4.17 Given the importance of building a relationship with alienated young people, the Board has set out to better appreciate how sufficient consideration is given when allocating practitioners to individuals, in particular cultural and gender criteria.
- 4.18 The issue of practitioners not consistently accessing historical files to obtain a full history and understanding of a family has been identified in a number of previous SCRs. Locally this issue was highlighted in a Learning Review (2014) and a themed review into young people and domestic abuse (2015). The Board has been assured on this issue having requested statutory agencies detail how historical information is stored and retrieved to inform risk assessments, and how agencies quality assure formulations of risk. The Board reiterated across the partnership, its expectation that agencies remind and enable their staff to access full information in their work with children and their families.

4.19 ACTIONS

1. The Board to assure itself that training in partner agencies adequately equips staff, including managers, with confidence, knowledge and skills, to work with families from different cultures and religions.
2. The Board to develop a briefing for staff on culture and faith: learning from case reviews. This will highlight a summary of risk factors and learning for improved practice around culture and faith.
3. The Board to recommend partner agencies review their own workforce diversity and consider appropriate allocation of staff to families, where appropriate and possible to do so.



Finding 13: Brighton & Hove statutory agencies have insufficient knowledge about, and understanding of, local minority ethnic and faith community groups and how best to work together to safeguard children, including those at risk of exploitation of local children into radicalisation.

[Findings 13 and 7 both concern support and resilience-building in the community to support children and young people at risk of radicalisation.]

[Finding 13 looks at the extent to which statutory agencies work together with community groups. The review sought ideas and opinions from representatives of mosques in Brighton & Hove and with representatives from the Muslim community about how best to work together to better support children and young people at risk of exploitation through radicalisation. To some extent this dialogue was started, as outlined Finding 7].

Board Response to Finding 13: Professional Understanding and Knowledge of BAME Communities

- 4.20 Whilst some officers from the local authority do liaise regularly with community groups in a variety of ways, BAME community members told reviewers that they did not feel listened to and heard. They did however feel they are consulted about various policy and service developments. Managers participating in the review also reflected that in the past there has been insufficient recognition of the needs and views of the city's BAME communities. It is a concern to the Board that there is a perception from local communities that when racial harassment incidents are reported to statutory agencies, in some instances, nothing is heard back of the outcome of the investigation and there is little sense of things changing.
- 4.21 The Board is clear in its position that community groups should be provided with opportunities to not just be consulted by policy makers, but to have their views heard.
- 4.22 The Board supports the 'One Voice' initiative and meetings, developed in the wake of local, national and international events that were impacting on communities in the city. The Board recognises the importance of this group continuing as a conduit to alert statutory services of community tensions and to work together to respond to these, as well as providing a platform to respond to any concerns about the radicalisation of young people. As the need arises, the Board will be represented at One Voice and also the local Racial Harassment Forum; this supports holding statutory agencies to account for the effectiveness of their safeguarding arrangements.
- 4.23 Counter extremist expert and Imam, Alyas Karmani, who spoke to lead reviewers during this review, has undertaken training of practitioners in Brighton in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation and has been in recent discussions with senior staff within Brighton & Hove City Council in relation to training and development in safeguarding children from all forms of violent extremism including both far-right and Islamist related extremism based on the programme that he has delivered across the UK.

4.24 ACTIONS

1. The Board, in partnership with the Community Safety Team to continue to develop links with local Muslim communities. This includes identifying local community advocates/safeguarding leads to help the Board and the communities engage in a dialogue to strengthen local arrangements for all children and families.
2. The Board to continue to seek to involve local mosques in the work of the LSCB, this will include an offer to work with local Imams to support the delivery of safeguarding training at local mosques.