



YOUNG PEOPLE, HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE



Lewisham Council

Lewisham Multi-Agency Child Protection Team (MACPT) - Skilled, Relationship-based Practice and Partnership Working

Lewisham was selected in 2024 to join wave 2 of the national Families First for Children programme as a Pathfinder local authority. This has put Lewisham at the forefront of innovation and the implementation of the reforms in children's social care to improve outcomes for children. One key area of the reforms is the establishment of Multi-Agency Child Protection teams and this case study illustrates how these teams are having a positive impact on child protection practice with children and families in Lewisham.

Background

Two girls aged 3 and 10 live with their mother, Ms B. They have different fathers, both of whom have reportedly been violent to Ms B. The father of the 3 year old is in prison and father of the 10 year old sees her regularly.

These two children were referred to the Families First Contact Point due to concerns about the home conditions where the children lived with Ms B. Pictures and videos were sent in by the father of the 10 year old, showing extreme levels of hoarding and all the rooms in the home were uninhabitable. The kitchen and bathroom were very unsanitary and unhygienic. There was no safe or clean space for the children to sleep, eat or bathe. The conditions were so poor that it was clear that the children could not stay a further night in the home. It was recognised that if Ms B. was not open to working with support to address the concerns, then the police may be required to take action to protect the children.



Partnership Working

The referral came in late in the day and the multi-agency child protection team (MACPT) lead child protection practitioner (LCPP) made the decision with the team manager to head straight to the property. The LCPP contacted the police before leaving for the home visit but due to the timing of the referral, a strategy discussion could not be arranged that day. However, because of the good relationships the MACPT have formed with police colleagues, the team was able to access police support to obtain assistance from patrol officers if needed on arrival at the family home.

Skilled, Relationship-based Practice

Using skilled and relational practice the LCPP was able to work with Ms B. to identify someone the family could stay with that night. The LCPP focussed on the presenting risks and explored the network with Ms B. to find a solution to ensure the immediate safety of the children. It became evident during the work with Ms B. that she was distressed and embarrassed because of the children living in these conditions and this had made it harder for her to reach out for or accept support. The relational, kind and non-judgemental approach of the LCPP enabled a solution to be found within the family network. Without this, the police would probably have had to take the children into police protection in view of the home conditions.

Using the Network

The lead child protection practitioner and subsequently the family help lead practitioner both sought to work with kindness and understanding with Ms B. to help her to come up with options and solutions within her network to start to make changes and address the worries and concerns. This co-working approach between Family Help and MACPT allowed the lead child protection practitioner to focus on risk management and safety planning and the family help lead practitioner to develop the family help plan with Ms B.

Although the children were later presented to initial child protection conference, and made subject to child protection plans, Ms B. reported that she felt supported by the LCPP in the MACPT and that she had formed a positive working relationship with the FHLP. Ms B. has made significant progress in addressing the home conditions as well as issues in respect of her own mental health. While the situation is complex, it is ultimately moving in the right direction and Ms B. continues to engage positively with the professional network.

Impact

The skilled practice of the LCPP in assessing risk and being family-led in her approach avoided an incident of police protection which would have been highly distressing for the children.

Furthermore, there is evidence that MACPT relationships with the police and other professional agencies such as the school and nursery promoted strong and timely information sharing and good coordination between key partners.

The co-working between the lead child protection practitioner and the family help lead practitioner has enabled a focus on the child protection enquiries and safety plan as well as the development of a strong family help plan to effect change. This example illustrates how skilled relational practice and partnership working improves outcomes for children focusing on the best interests of the children to create safety.

For further information contact:

Sara Taylor

Head of Service/Principal Social Worker – Lewisham Council

Sara.taylor@lewisham.gov.uk | lewisham.gov.uk