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Summary

Complex cases can provide many challenges and test the resilience and effectiveness of partnership working. In North Yorkshire we work hard to ensure that we work together to safeguard children and support families, this is at the core of our complex case arrangements.

This seven point briefing highlights the positive actions taken through a co-ordinated approach utilising the NYSCP Complex Case Procedures. This briefing is in relation to a criminal investigation led by North Yorkshire Police (NYP) in May 2018, which resulted in a person being sentenced to over nine years in prison after pleading

guilty at court to a number of child sexual offences and indecent images of children. Post-conviction, in September 2019, North Yorkshire Police received new information that a sexual offence had been committed against a child in the nursery where the perpetrator had previously been employed.

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Tasks and Challenges

The Complex Case Procedure was instigated and involved a series of multiagency meetings, chaired by North Yorkshire Police and included the Senior Investigating Officer responsible for the criminal investigation. One of the key actions from the initial meeting was for safeguarding partners to work together to establish the details of the children who attended the nursery at the time the perpetrator was employed in the setting, as well as establishing current addresses so that contact would be made with the families. Subsequent information sharing

identified that there were over 200 children who had attended the nursery at various stages during the relevant timeframe. Whilst there was no additional information to suggest that any other children were victims, it was agreed that families had a right to know this information and this provided an opportunity for partners to share any relevant information with the Police investigation team.

The Complex Case meetings afforded multi agency partners the opportunity to coordinate a difficult task. By following the procedure early information sharing with all agencies identified was enabled. The

agencies involved in the meeting included; North Yorkshire Police, Ofsted, North Yorkshire Clinical Commissioning Group, North Yorkshire County Council's Children and Families Service, Defence Primary Care, Harrogate District Foundation Trust, North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, Local Authority Designated Officers, and General Practice in and out of the county. This allowed a co-ordinated approach to families by agencies in relation to the disclosure of key information and a support package in place for families due to the difficult message that needed to be delivered.

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Actions taken by agency/ Professionals

A programme of action was agreed which included:

- Key information shared across relevant support services, including primary care, to ensure that families were able to access support should that be necessary.
- Briefings to staff who were selected to undertake visits to families.#
- Personal visits to families undertaken by Police Officers and Social Workers within North Yorkshire to provide a written letter detailing the concerns.
- Families who were visited were offered the opportunity to discuss the content and identify if additional support was required.

- The visits took place within a short window of time to ensure families were given the information at the same time as other families.
- The personal visits facilitated the purpose of the visit, sharing of the information to be fully explained and the need for the families to work with organisations to maximise the effectiveness of the investigation. Because of this, information was tightly controlled and mitigated wider disclosures affecting the criminal investigation.

A key positive outcome of this approach was that the families felt supported, information was not widely shared and no alerts to the media or sharing of information on social media or other media networks took place. This ensured the integrity of the Police investigation.

There were a number of families who lived out of the county and plans were implemented to manage dissemination of requests to other areas of the UK and internationally to undertake a similar approach, this was led by North Yorkshire Police.

Joint working with the Military Special Investigation Branch within the Army was explored and a number of Special Investigation Branch officers were assigned to work with North Yorkshire Police officers. Together the majority of the families living within North Yorkshire area were visited using this method and this was particularly successful. Furthermore, Special Investigation Branch were able to trace serving military families stationed outside of the UK, of whose children attended the Nursery at the relevant time, and they were able to facilitate the delivery of the letters to these families via the Royal Military Police in the relevant areas.

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What was the response to the actions undertaken?

The positive outcomes relating to this case was achieved by the sustained focus on what was right for the children involved and this being at the forefront in terms of investigative processes.

Upon evaluation of the effectiveness of the Complex Case Procedure it was highlighted again the strength of the strategic response to co-ordinating operational action. The Chairing of the Complex Case Meeting by the NYP Safeguarding lead, together with the involvement of the Senior Investigating Officer for the case provided real strength in the complex case decision making

process with all involved. Having the Senior Investigating Officer present allowed partners to provide direct involvement and contribution to critical investigative thinking, ensuring that this truly was a partnership arrangement and response.

Contingency plans and communication strategies were in place and regularly reviewed to ensure that all partners involved knew in advance what action had been agreed.

The Senior Investigating Officer had a platform to keep partners updated at key points during the investigation. This

ensured that partners were aware when planned action was to take place and could ensure that relevant professionals within respective organisations were suitably briefed, and in a position to respond to requests for support if required.

Strategic membership from partner organisations was key. All meetings were well attended by partners who could make decisions on behalf of their organisation, contribute to the planning and ensure agreed action was delivered. The meetings initially were face to face however towards the end of the investigation moved to a virtual platform.

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Outcome of the case

The outcome of the investigation is that the suspect was charged with further child sex offences

in respect of the victim who had come forward, and that is now pending trial. At this time no other victims have been

identified but more than 200 families have been provided with the advice and access to further support provision if required.

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Learning points

- Complex Case Procedures, when instigated, ensure a platform to facilitate strategic co-ordination, planning and delivery of operational response to cases that meet the threshold.
- Awareness raising and thresholds should be refreshed to ensure that Operational Managers are aware of the approach and appropriate refer cases to the statutory leads for consideration.

- North Yorkshire Police and the Special Investigation Branch are looking at joint training around specialist criminal investigations to explore how joint working can be developed further. This is currently being explored and a draft memorandum of understanding has been completed.

- This case together with others has been used to develop and strengthen the NYSCP Non Recent and Complex Case Procedures
- There is confidence across the partnership to hold these meetings in a virtual space, utilising virtual technology can offer advantages for the membership and greater flexibility in frequency of meeting and attendance.

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Resources

- You can access the Complex Case Procedures here: [NYSCP Complex Case Procedure](#)
- You can access the Managing Allegations Against Staff Practice Guidance here: [NYSCP Managing Allegations Against Staff and volunteers Practice Guidance](#)