



Rapid Review Snapshot 0225 Child M

In relation to a Rapid Review undertaken in June 2025

Context:

Date of Review: June 2025

Subjects: Child M and sibling child K both non-British

Purpose: To understand the multi-agency response to allegations of long-term intra-familial child sexual abuse against the children's Father, and child neglect by the Mother.

Key Concerns:

Historical Allegations: Multiple family members disclosed past intra-familial child sexual abuse by Father.

Protective Action: Repeated concerns and disclosures placed the children on a child protection plan however this plan was dependent on the co-operation and protection from the Mother.

Misplaced Trust in Mother: She was wrongly considered a protective factor, despite evidence to the contrary.

Professionals Feeling "Stuck": Over-reliance on police threshold for conviction (beyond all reasonable doubt) rather than focusing on the safeguarding threshold (reasonable probability) and the concerns of prolonged exposure to abuse.

For details on review process and professional resources visit:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gscp/local-child-safeguarding-practice-reviews/>

Learning Points:

Disclosure Dynamics: The retractions of disclosures of abuse by the children, were not fully understood. Professionals lacked the skills and confidence in recognising that retractions can be a coping mechanism, not a denial of abuse.

Professional Helplessness: Agencies felt “stuck” and lacked mechanisms to escalate concerns or challenge decisions and there was evidence of ineffective planning.

Legal Threshold Misjudged: There was a misinterpretation of the threshold for legal planning and actions to protect the children. Professionals waited for new disclosures rather than acting on cumulative evidence.

Mother’s Influence: The role of the ‘perceived’ non-abusing parent (Mother) was not properly considered or investigated and how her behaviours contributed to the concealment of the abuse.

Improved Practice: A change in practitioner involvement and approach, in early 2025, led to decisive actions being undertaken, demonstrating the importance of relational practice, professional curiosity, and confidence in safeguarding processes.

Recommendations:

Multi-agency Reflection Forums: GSCP should establish mechanisms for professionals to reflect and act when feeling “stuck” in complex cases.

Review Decision-Making: Children’s Social Care should continue to audit the decision-making process during CP planning and replicate and promote effective practices.

GSCP CSA Working Group Assurance: To ensure timely implementation of learning from national CSA reviews and local safeguarding practice reviews and support improvement in the skills, knowledge and confidence of practitioners working with families where child sexual abuse is a concern .

Assessment of Non-Abusing Parent: Improve how the role and influence of non-abusing parents are understood and assessed in safeguarding planning.

Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership

