

Anna – DHR – Summary, Key Issues and Recommendations

Summary

Anna, aged 17, was murdered by her stepfather after disclosing that he had been sexually abusing her to her mother. The abuse included voyeurism, coercive control, and prolonged sexual exploitation. Her mother dismissed Anna's disclosure and later colluded in covering up the murder.

Key Issues

- Multiple referrals (2018–2020) regarding siblings' injuries, sexualised behavior, and neglect were not escalated. The children were viewed in isolation.
- Anna's GP consultations and contraception request lacked routine enquiry into abuse.
- Over-reliance on parental narratives; lack of challenge to perpetrators' accounts.
- Failure to recognise coercive control and its impact on parenting capacity.
- Poor communication between schools, health, CSC, and Police; safeguarding meetings lacked full intelligence - information sharing failures
- GP practices not consistently informed of risks; no "tag and flag" system.
- Missing person risk wrongly assessed as medium despite sexual abuse disclosure.
- Sexual assault allegation not recorded as a crime; inadequate search and investigation.
- COVID-19 Impact: Reduced face-to-face contact limited disclosure opportunities; increased perpetrator control.
- Marginalisation of Anna: Quiet, compliant child overshadowed by siblings' behavioural issues; her voice largely unheard.

Recommendations

- Think Sibling Approach: Holistic assessments; ensure all children's voices are heard.
- Routine Enquiry & Professional Curiosity: Embed domestic abuse screening in health, education, and social care; challenge disguised compliance.
- Information Sharing & Record Keeping: Standard operating procedures for strategy meetings; consistent invites to GPs; accurate chronologies.
- Training & Awareness: Multi-agency training on coercive control, sexual abuse indicators, and non-verbal disclosures; Youth-informed campaigns on safe disclosure and signposting.
- Risk Assessment & MARAC Referrals: Apply professional judgment in DASH assessments; escalate high-risk cases without consent when necessary.
- Community Engagement: Equip peers and community members to respond safely to disclosures.
- Improve COMPACT missing persons database functionality.
- HM Prison Service to support confidential DHR contributions.
- Guidance for Caldecott Guardians to ensure timely information sharing.