

Learning Briefing 3

Synopsis of events that led to the case review

While in year 10 of secondary school Sophie was singled out by her drama teacher, she recalls that by the age of 16 her teacher had started touching her in a sexual manner and a full sexual 'relationship' had begun somewhere around her 17th birthday. At this time there was no recorded evidence of any professional being aware of this 'relationship'.

Sophie contacted a GP about problems with a 'relationship' in school. When asked about this further she retracted the allegation. When she was 18 she had a termination.

Sophie's relationship with her teacher continued after she left school and aged 21 she became pregnant; she informed her parents that this relationship began after she left school. Her teacher told school that this was an adult relationship that began after Sophie left school.

When Sophie was 25 she contacted the LADO and subsequently made a full disclosure to the police of the sexual abuse and abuse of a position of trust by her former teacher and father of her child. The teacher was suspended and subsequently resigned. He was convicted in November 2014 and sentenced to 12 months imprisonment.

Key Messages- areas for development

- There was insufficient awareness and openness within the school to enable staff and pupils to be alert to the possibility of grooming by a teacher.
- The LADO role in South Gloucestershire was underdeveloped and poorly implemented with a reliance on Schools HR to be the first point of contact for schools on safeguarding issues.



- LADO and school record keeping was poor or non-existent
- There was a lack of communication between agencies that meant that key information was not shared and analysed, for example the retracted allegation and Sophie's pregnancy.

Key messages- good practice

- **Sophie felt supported by one of the GPs and police officer she made her disclosure to.**

Recommendations for Practice:

- Encourage and challenge schools to develop a culture of openness about the possibilities of abuse within school. This can be done through a series of learning events focusing on real cases and scenarios to dispel an attitude of 'it couldn't happen in this school'
- The LSCB should offer regular stand-alone 'Dealing with Allegations' Training, involving specialists including the LADO and HR, with an expectation that all leads dealing with allegations in South Gloucestershire undertake the training
- Develop multi-agency training for school staff on child exploitation, sexual abuse, recognising grooming and other relevant topics, including the law and what is a criminal offence
- Review the accessibility and capacity of the current LADO role
- Strengthen and publicise the role of the schools' safeguarding advisor who will provide regular briefings, bulletins and safeguarding support to schools
- Disseminate Managing Allegations Procedures widely throughout South Gloucestershire
- Develop advice and guidance to schools on standards and expectations for safeguarding recording
- A young person who retracts a disclosure should be offered the opportunity to speak to an independent person
- There should be a strategy discussion in response to all retracted allegations
- Share the lessons learned by School from this case with all schools and post 16 settings
- All schools should review their staff behaviour/conduct policy and allegations referrals as part of the annual schools safeguarding audit
- Schools should develop knowledge and skills in value based selection methods to enhance safer recruitment strategies in order to create a safer environment for pupils
- The designated safeguarding health professionals should review the role of the school nurse in supporting colleagues with potential safeguarding issues

This review was commissioned by South Gloucestershire Serious Case Review Sub-Group and was undertaken in September 2015.