

### 1 Summary of the circumstances

This seven point briefing relates to a young person who was discovered in a state of severe chronic neglect. He was home educated which had made him invisible to services and meant the neglect was severe before it was discovered. When he was seen a safeguarding referral was made, a strategy meeting was undertaken, followed by a section 47 enquiry which led to an initial child protection conference where the young person was made subject to a child protection plan.

His family had moved in and out of North Yorkshire several times which led to him not being known to any services in North Yorkshire for some time.

Then North Yorkshire Children and Families Service received an anonymous referral stating that the young person was being home educated but, in the view of the referrer was not receiving an adequate education. Based on the referral being made with no parental consent, and the reason for referral not meeting the threshold for a child protection strategy meeting, information and advice was provided to the mother of the young person. This consisted of a letter to inform her of the referral and signpost her to support available from the Prevention Service, the Healthy Child Team and also included information about Elective Home Education.

Another anonymous referral was received in 2020 during the CoVID pandemic. The family were offered visits from both the 0-19 Healthy Child Team and North Yorkshire Early Help Service, however both were declined.

Over a year later family members from outside the household made contact with Children's Social Care. They presented the young person to the hospital in a state of significant chronic neglect and child protection processes commenced.

### 2 Tasks and challenges to the case

The challenge in this case is that the young was invisible to services, he did not have contact with professionals such as GP, education, Children and Families Services or any other social groups and he did not leave his home.

There were no opportunities to routinely observe him to recognise the neglect he was suffering nor were there any records of this neglect.

### 3 Actions taken by agencies and professionals

When agencies finally became aware of the neglect, appropriate actions were taken to immediately safeguard the young person and his health needs were addressed.

## 4 Responses to the actions undertaken

The outcome was that the young person was discovered in a state of significant chronic neglect. He had unmet physical, emotional and educational needs. He did not have any shoes, he had not needed any as he never left the family home.

## 5 Outcome of the case

It should be noted that this case occurred before the current pathway for Elective Home Education was fully implemented. An improved offer and service is now in place for Elective Home Education and Children Missing from Education.

## 6 Key Learning Points

This case highlights that young people who are invisible to services can suffer a significant level of neglect before it is recognised. This is particularly relevant if a family moves between areas, enrolling with a school alerts other services that a young person is resident in the area.

It should be recognised that whilst most parents who electively home educate their children do so because they believe it is in the best interests of the child. Elective home education should never be seen as a solution to address parental factors that make it difficult to take their child to school. In these cases the emphasis should be on supporting families to overcoming the barriers.

Practitioners need to appreciate how invisible children who are Electively Home Educated can be and use a high level of professional curiosity at every contact that does happen to ensure that their lived experience is understood. If safeguarding concerns are raised this lack of visibility should be considered as an additional risk factor in the decision whether or not the threshold is met to override parental consent to assess need.

## 7 Next Steps and Resource

**[Keeping Children Safe in Education Section One](#)**

**[LADO Procedure & One Minute Guide](#)**

**[Professional Curiosity Practice Guidance](#)**

**[Whistleblowing Practice Guidance](#)**

**[Governance Handbook Section 6.8.2](#)**