

# **PARTNERSHIP WORKING TO SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN BME AND FAITH COMMUNITIES**

**CONFERENCE 13 MAY 2011**

## **Morning Discussion group summaries**

### **1. Have you or your team had experience of abuse linked to beliefs in witchcraft and spirit possession?**

Groups reported:

- Increase in referrals to LA CSC
- Revival in belief of SP
- Rogue pastors
- One table everyone had experience
- Not in the referral but underlying in the case
- Challenge the behaviors not belief

Most of the discussion groups had either directly had experience of spirit possession and witchcraft, or were aware of cases to have this as an underlying element. In some areas, there was awareness of rogue pastors, apparent revival in these beliefs and an increase in referrals.

### **2. Are you aware of any initiatives addressing this issue in your area?**

All discussion groups named some local initiatives e.g. NSPCC, AFRUCA, CCPAS also smaller more local community groups raising awareness and providing training. Most of the focus is however more about general safeguarding issues not spirit possession specifically.

- NSPCC
- Training to challenge rogue pastors
- No – general safeguarding BME only
- Training for professionals & signposting – AFRUCA & CCPAS
- Ad-hoc Islamic & African (not across the board)
- Specialist workers in LA Children's Service

### **3. What have been or might be the challenges of responding to this type of abuse?**

Information:

- UK legislation
- Families thinking 'belief' is attacked
- Common language/terms
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Structure:

- hard to identify/community engagement

- difficult to find local champion

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Expertise:

- need to understand the difference between mental ill health and spirit possession

Challenges faced include information issues (explaining UK legislation, common language/terms), community engagement (difficulty to identify a local champion) and expertise issues (need to understand the difference between mental ill health and spirit possession).

#### **4. Have you heard anything this morning that might help in addressing those challenges?**

Examples include:

- Partnership working with communities
- How to support communities when something went wrong
- Partnership working with professionals
- Professionals to be less critical of communities & trust them
- Develop commonality
- Munro Review: opportunity to move from tick box to engaging with families and communities
- Knowing how to access info & services
- Look at cultural diversity within social work teams
- Importance of local knowledge
- Don't be afraid to engage
- Don't worry about being discriminatory
- Community champions
- Campaign don't complain
- Information sharing
- More professionals to work with communities/faith groups
- Passionate communication
- Educating children & parents about development
- Not a single cultural issue
- Link with local community elders and community groups
- More awareness-raising with young people, parents, etc

The key themes that have been helpful from this morning are:

- drawing on commonality
- not worrying about being seen as discriminatory
- partnership working with communities
- Munro Review: opportunity to move away from tick box
- Campaign (don't just complain)
- Diversity of social work workforce

**5. Do you agree with recommendations in the Trust for London/Centre for Social Work Research report? What else is needed?**

Agreed completely with the recommendations  
Focus on front-line expertise  
More emphasis on schools  
Train professionals and access to expertise

**Afternoon discussion group summaries**

**1. Priorities for local groups**

- Private fostering
- Sexual exploitation & child trafficking
- Lack of understanding about sexually abusive behavior
- Find out where the groups are
- Abuse in madrasas
- Parents scared of preachers
- Crime and gang involvement
- Community not listened to in planning initiatives
- Need to raise understanding of safeguarding issues
- DV & forced marriage
- Mental ill health
- Parenting
- Dealing with cross-culture & new immigrant issues

**2. Statutory agency success/failure**

Success:

- named person groups can contact in LSCB
- attending local faith forums (social services)
- flexibility & improving access
- preventative work
- building key contacts e.g. in mosques/madrassas
- police talks on appropriate chastisement
- appointing champions

Failure:

- inconsistency/withdrawing sources
- police response too formal
- safer neighbourhood teams not fully engaged

- social workers not knowledgeable or confident

### **3. What are key things which practitioners need?**

- Recording of cases by ethnicity/faith
- more thorough assessments (Munro will help)
- Self-awareness – know what you don't know
- Understanding diversity
- Networking with communities
- Reasonable understanding of different cultures and faiths (but be realistic re: what you can do)
- Link in LSCB with safer neighbourhood teams
- Improved communication
- test out/question cultural information
- training
- respectful curiosity
- listen to the child
- source of support for practitioners
- don't need to know everything
- community knowledge
- child protection comes first

### **4. What do you think your LSCB could do to improve safeguarding?**

- Better communication
- LSCB needs to increase profile with non-statutory organisations
- More inclusion of smaller groups
- Mapping community groups
- Champions
- Engagement with community
- Lay members on LSCBs
- Knowing local community
- Support communities
- Media
- District sub-groups
- Publicizing to parents
- Small organisations