

### 5.3.25 Interventions and services

Decisions about how to intervene, including what services to offer, should be based on evidence about what is likely to work best to bring about good outcomes for the child. A number of aspects of intervention should be considered in the context of the child protection plan, in the light of evidence from assessment of the child's developmental needs, the parents' capacity to respond appropriately to the child's needs, and the wider family circumstances.

It is important that services are provided to give the child and family the best chance of achieving the required changes. If a child cannot be cared for safely by their parent/s, they will have to be placed elsewhere whilst work is being undertaken with the child and family. Irrespective of where the child is living, interventions should specifically address:

- The short and long-term developmental needs of the child;
- The child's understanding of what has happened to them;
- The abusing and non-abusing parent-child relationship and individual parent's capacity to respond to the child's needs;
- The parent/s relationship with other adults, including the other parent if there is one;
- If there are two parents, their ability to jointly parent the child;
- Other family relationships;
- Possible changes to the family's social and environmental circumstances.

Intervention may have a number of inter-related components:

- Action to make a child safe;
- Action to help promote a child's short and longer term health and development (i.e. his / her welfare);
- Action to help parent/s in safeguarding a child and promoting their welfare;
- Support and therapy for an abused child;
- Support or therapy for a perpetrator of abuse.

The development of secure parent-child attachments is critical to a child's healthy development. The quality and nature of the attachment will be a key issue to be considered in decision making, especially if decisions are being made about moving a child from one setting to another; re-uniting a child with their birth family; or considering a permanent placement away from the child's family.

If the plan is to assess whether the child can be reunited with the caregiver/s responsible for the maltreatment, very detailed work will be required to help the caregiver/s develop the necessary parenting skills.

A key issue in deciding on suitable interventions will be whether the child's developmental needs can be responded to within their family context, and within timescales that are appropriate for the child. These timescales may not be compatible with those for the caregiver/s who is / are in receipt of therapeutic help.

The process of decision making and planning should be as open as possible, from an ethical as well as practical point of view.

New information may change the assessment of risk of harm, either positively or negatively, and may require urgent decisions to protect the child. Similarly, where the family situation is not

improving or changing fast enough to respond to the child's needs, decisions will be necessary about the long-term future of the child. In the longer term it may mean it will be in the best interests of the child to be placed in an alternative family context.

Key to these considerations is what is in the child's best interests, informed by the child's wishes and feelings.

Children who have suffered significant harm may continue to experience the consequences of this abuse irrespective of where they are living: whether remaining with or being reunited with their families or alternatively being placed in new families. This relates particularly to their behavioural and emotional development.

Therapeutic work with the child should continue, therefore, irrespective of where the child is placed, in order to ensure the needs of the child are responded to appropriately.