

‘Disguised compliance’: learning from case reviews

Reflection on Parker SC

‘Disguised compliance’: learning from case reviews

What is this topic?

This summary provides information on the risk factors of disguised compliance and how practice can be improved following further understanding on this. This summary is based on case reviews published by safeguarding partnerships between 2022 and 2023 where disguised compliance was identified as a key factor.

It is important to note that disguised compliance describes the behaviours of parents and carers who will appear to co-operate with professionals in order to prevent concerns and stop their engagement. The case reviews have found that behaviours of disguised compliance can be minimising concerns/denying there is a problem, having inconsistent engagement with professionals, manipulating or misleading professionals, undermining professional involvement and at times sabotaging efforts from professionals to bring about change. Ofsted report that professionals may not recognise safeguarding concerns, misinterpret vital information or struggle to work together which can lead to risks increasing and potentially prolonging harm to children.

This summary provides key issues and recommendations for this area. Therefore, both of these will be discussed in relation to what Parker SC does well to meet this topic. It is important to note that the children Parker SC care for are no longer in the care of their parents, therefore our workforce is not always presented with situations of disguised compliance due to being the children’s primary caregivers. Due to this, not all key issues and recommendations are relevant to Parker SC.

Key issues of the summary

The key issues presented in this summary highlight there is a lack of professional curiosity. NSPCC states that not all professionals are able to make the connection between caregivers’ ambivalence or avoidance and therefore, things get missed. Another issue is that professions often accept information from caregivers as fact without double checking this with other sources or professionals. This can happen due to professionals having formed a positive opinion of the caregiver.

Another key issue presented in this review is the difficulties to build positive parent-professional relationships. NSPCC states that when professionals have focused on compliance, and not considered the support that the families need, caregivers then felt more pressure and became more reluctant to work and engage with services. This can then result in evasive or resistant behaviour from the caregivers that prevents relevant professionals from gaining an understanding of the needs and experiences of families – therefore, preventing trusting relationships from forming.

NSPCC states that at times, professionals can become too focused on the parents or carers behaviours, that they lost sight of the child’s needs. This then results in children and young people not always being spoken to alone or put at the centre of the planning process. This then does not allow the child’s voice to be heard, however allows for an overlooking of their needs moving forwards.

Furthermore, it is highlighted that there is a lack of training and support for professionals. Gaps in training were highlighted in this review and this therefore prevented professionals from recognising and responding when parents or carers were not consistently engaging with services or failing to meet their children’s needs. It was found that professionals often lacked support and guidance around how to work with parents, and some lacked training or support needed to identify increasing risks for the children and be able to escalate these appropriately.



What does Parker SC currently do to meet the topic discussed?

Parker SC prides itself on being professionally curious with all other professionals and family members involved in the children and young people's lives. Nothing is taken for fact that relates to the child, until this has been substantiated with relevant professionals, such as Social Workers, and Healthcare workers. This ensures that Parker SC has the right information to look after the children and young people according to their needs, past experiences, and preferences. Children and young people are always at the forefront of the work that Parker SC does, and whilst it is important to maintain positive links with professionals, and family members, Parker SC will challenge where necessary for the sake of the children in their care.

Parker SC looks after children and young people of all walks of life. Some children have regular and more flexible time with their families, whereas other children have supervised and set times with their families. Parker SC adopts to individual circumstances accordingly, and despite what those circumstances are, attempt to have positive relationships with family members. Parker SC acknowledges and is aware that some families lack trust in services and professionals due to prior experiences, however, attempts to form relationships from the point of admission as this allows for clear and open communication and information sharing throughout the children's time in our care.

In regard to the children and young people being overlooked, this does not happen at Parker SC. The children and young people in the care of Parker SC are at the forefront of all decisions made. Whilst positive relationships with families are hoped for and attempted within Parker SC, this is not a priority over the children's care that they receive. Parker SC promotes the child's voice to be heard, and this is evident in daily practice. Children are encouraged to voice their views, wishes and opinions, and can do so through children's meetings, general conversations with our adults, or they also have the option to talk to their Social Worker or our Regulation 44 visitor. Children's views and wishes around their lives are listened to and embedded in their daily care plans, to ensure that they receive the care that is right, and appropriate for their needs, prior experiences, and stage of development.

Another area that Parker SC prides itself on is the training given to their teams. The staff are highly trained by all types of professionals, including Psychologists, that embed our trauma informed approach through training and consultation support. Our workforce are trained in a number of mandatory and specialist courses. Staff have the opportunity to attend other training and development opportunities that are relevant to the role and all of these encompass the promotion of children's rights, the child's voice, and the forums for challenging other professionals.

What do we need to do to improve how we meet the topic discussed?

Not all employees of Parker SC are aware of what disguised compliance is. The children and young people that we look after are no longer in the care of their parents, so it is therefore not essential that they know. It is however desirable that they understand what this is and how it can present as we still do maintain relationships with the parents. Parents can still display these behaviours in the brief times that we see them, and it would be beneficial for our workforce to be aware of what this can look like and how to appropriately respond. This could be something that Parker SC looks at in the future.

Strengths of the research:

The strengths of this paper is that it highlights areas that need to be worked on and also gives ways in which this can be achieved. It does not merely highlight areas for improvement but goes into depth for ways this can be managed. By giving detailed ways that improvements can be achieved, it gives professions options for how to approach key issue areas.



The paper also gives references should professionals want further information, especially in relation to Ofsted. Links are also provided for further reading and support and these give options to signing up to newsletters and resources that can help professionals.

Flaws of the research:

This guidance does give good insight for what is lacking and what needs to be changed for the sake of the children and young people. Whilst still new data, this reflects the period of 2022-2023 and insights into how this is currently looking, and issues that are important now would be beneficial. This area of work is always changing and adapting, therefore fresher evidence closer to the year of publication would be beneficial for all professionals involved in this sector.

Overall analysis of the research, and how we meet topics discussed in the research:

The overall analysis of this guidance is positive. It gives a detailed introduction of what this topic is and a breakdown of what this looks like in behaviours of parents and carers. It is a relevant topic that is of importance as it concerns the safety and well-being of children and young people today.

The key issues raised in this guidance are informative and areas that can easily be improved through further training or a reminder of what is actually the focus – the needs of children and young people. Whilst identifying key areas for improvement, it also provides guidance on how these can be rectified and improved upon.

In regard to Parker SC, it is felt that there is little to improve on in this respect, as at all times the children and young people remain a focus. Parker SC strives to maintain positive relationships with the parents and carers however is not afraid to challenge others when necessary, and seeks to answer questions of the children or be the voice for the children at times where they cannot. It is acknowledged however, that this area does not directly impact Parker SC on a daily basis, as all of the children and young people have already been taken from the care of their parents. Despite this, it does remain a relevant topic and one worthy of all of our workforce being aware of.



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