

1

Background

In 2018, a five-week-old baby sustained potentially life-threatening injuries whilst in the care of, and living with, his biological parents and maternal grandmother. These injuries were deemed unexplained and not consistent with accidental injuries. The biological parents and maternal grandmother were subsequently arrested as potential perpetrators. The baby's mother and father both pleaded guilty to assault/ill treatment/neglect/abandoning a child to cause unnecessary suffering/injury; the CPS did not progress proceedings in respect of the baby's grandmother.

The baby has been adopted and has made positive progress, however, professionals remain unclear as to the long-term impact of the injuries.



CYSUR 1 2019

Concise Child Practice Review

**2**

Family History

When the baby was born, his mother was 20 years old, and his dad was 18.

Both parents were not raised by their respective biological parents, and both experienced complex childhoods and trauma. Mum experienced childhood adversities, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. She also exhibited some concerning behaviours, such as taking an overdose and self-harming.

The baby's parents moved from West Sussex to Wales in August 2018. They planned to live with maternal family and appeared well supported by professionals.

7

Learning and Actions

Two recommendations were given to the Board stemming from the learning gleaned from this review. These were:

1. The Board and its member agencies should ensure that professional curiosity is consistently and effectively applied by all practitioners across adults and children's services in their practice when working with families.
2. The Board and its member agencies should ensure that safeguarding referrals, assessments, and interventions include, reference and reflect the complete familial picture, always including the father.

3

Pre-Birth Assessments

The review identified vulnerabilities and trauma in respect of both parents. Had a Pre-Birth Assessment been undertaken, this could have facilitated consideration of individual and familial dynamics and history, which could have informed appropriate care referrals and support.

Alongside of this learning, practitioners at the learning event felt that, in hindsight, opportunities to exercise a greater level of professional curiosity could have been pursued.

6

Identified Good Practice

- Prompt action was undertaken by the Police on receipt of information regarding non-accidental injury.
- Surrey and Sussex NHS Trust identified and treated the physical and mental health challenges of the patient.
- Phone contact is documented between Powys and Surrey & Sussex Midwifery Teams following the move to Wales at 32 weeks gestation, to ensure effective handover of care.
- Staff enabled the father to stay to support mum while the baby needed to stay in hospital.
- Advice around safe care of the baby was given prior to hospital discharge and at the Health Visitor birth visit.
- Appropriate support was offered to mum as the signs of her low mood became apparent.

5

Identified Good Practice

- Child Protection processes were appropriately followed and occurred well within timescale.
- Placement searches commenced immediately, so they were sourced prior to discharge and a smooth transition occurred.
- The referral from the GP was triaged by the duty worker the same day. A further discussion was held at the multi-agency 'hub' meeting and allocated for assessment with duty worker.
- Mum was referred for primary counselling and ongoing support from psychiatry out-patient appointments.
- Initial assessments were shared with Children's Services and Powys Teaching Health Board Safeguarding Unit (Children's).
- Information was accurately and promptly shared internally and externally by the Police.

4

The Role of Fathers

The maternal grandmother commented that practitioners seemed to overlook the role and background of the biological father, and its potential significance in the care and interventions provided.

Although present for the Health Visitor appointments, more attention and analysis could have been paid to the father, his role in the family and with the baby.

The review therefore highlighted the importance of giving due consideration to fathers, if they are present, as a member of the family and not separate from the assessment process.