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### Circumstances that led to the review

In January 2024, Mrs X, the mother of 7 year old Child A reported to the police that she had caused the death of her son. Tragically, he was sadly pronounced deceased, shortly after arriving at the hospital. The previous day, a member of the public contacted the Local Authority to report concerns about Mrs X's mental health, which had deteriorated over the previous week.

The criminal proceedings against Mrs X concluded she was likely suffering from paranoid schizophrenia at the time of her son's death. Mrs X was given an indefinite life order.



## CYSUR 1 2024

### Concise Child Practice Review



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### Child A and family

Child A was a happy and intelligent child who loved playing with Lego; he was enthusiastic about quizzes and fascinated by the universe, planets and outer space. He was close to his sibling, with whom he spent all his time. Child A and his older sibling were born in another country after their English father met their mother during a holiday. Child A's parents, Mr and Mrs X, married and came to live in England; they briefly returned to Mrs X's country of origin for Child A's birth. Thus, Child A had dual citizenship. In 2022, Mr X assaulted his parents, he was deemed to lack capacity and detained in a secure mental health facility. During the next two years Mrs X and her children resided in Wales and England. Child A and his sibling were electively home educated.

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### Improving Systems and Practice

#### National recommendation

Welsh Government to adopt the principles, powers and duties set out in England Children Wellbeing and Schools Bill in its own legislative framework for electively home educated children.

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### Key Theme: Complex and contextual safeguarding

Maternal filicide is a complex, statistically rare and tragic event. When filicide occurs in the context of acute psychosis, the parent's perception of reality is driven by delusional beliefs. Mrs X had no known history of mental illness, and it is incredibly difficult to identify first time psychosis. The rarity of the phenomena and its inherent sensitivity means there is little research to assist our understanding. However, a recent academic literature review suggests emerging themes, such as poor maternal mental health and insufficient support systems. Mrs X experienced multiple and competing demands throughout 2022 and 2023, which at times led her to fear losing her home and the care of her children. She had limited family support and no recourse to public funds. She sold sex to financially support her family.

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### Improving Systems and Practice

- Promote the rights and wellbeing of electively home educated children and young people, through co-produced resources designed with and for children and their parents.
- Review multi-agency safeguarding training to ensure practitioners and managers understand the contextual experiences of EHE children.
- Review arrangements for submission of Domestic Incident Notifications from the Police into Children's Services.
- Assess and review the availability of support and training for practitioners regarding parental mental health.

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### Identified Good Practice

- Effective joint visits were conducted by police and children's services to engage with Child A and his sibling.
- Some Health Boards in Wales have introduced a named nurse for Electively Home Educated (EHE) children, enhancing support for a growing cohort of potentially unseen children.
- There was effective information sharing occurred between Mr X's mental health facility and the Welsh local authority.
- There was good cross-border communication between English and Welsh local authorities throughout the case.
- The introduction of monthly safeguarding meetings between education and social care teams facilitate improved inter-agency collaboration and ensure safeguarding issues are addressed early.

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### Key Themes: Elective Home Education

Children whose parents elect to educate them at home should not experience more barriers to their rights being served by public services than their peers educated at school or in another educational setting. In Wales, education is compulsory, but attending school is not. If a child is home-educated, there is an obligation on parents to cause their child to receive an 'efficient' and 'suitable' full-time education. Child A was registered with Wales EHE but the family's moves across borders meant that annual visits were easily missed. Arguably, current guidance is reflective of an unresolved tension between respecting family autonomy and the need for children to be seen and heard by public services as a preventative safeguarding measure.