

Please ensure this is shared with everyone working with children and families across Dorset



DORSET SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD SYNOPSIS OF LEARNING FROM SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS February 2017

Serious Case Review Family S22

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE CASE

The DSCB completed Serious Case Review in 2016 in relation to the serious harm of a baby. The baby moved to the area at two weeks old and within two weeks was taken to hospital with bruising to their arm. A further two weeks later the baby was admitted with rib fractures and a fractured skull and went on to make a full recovery. In this case the baby's mother had received ante-natal care in another area. This Review covers the period from when the baby into the area to when they were admitted to hospital with injuries and removed from the parent's care, this is a timescale of four weeks.

LEARNING

Referrals, Process and Practice

- Whilst most referrals are accepted at face value, there will be times when professional judgement suggests further information is sought before making a decision about appropriate action. For example, when the referral concerns a teenage parent who is new to the area and where there is a history of involvement with social care as a child.
- In this case not all the information shared between services was recorded. If information sharing is to be effective in safeguarding children, it is important that information gathered over time by all agencies is recorded carefully and contributes to a picture being built up over time.

The Significance of Bruising in Non-Mobile Babies and Children

- When bruising is first observed on a non-mobile child and a professional is seeking an explanation from the parents or carers, it is important to remember the NICE guideline 'When to suspect Child Maltreatment'¹ and to approach the conversation in a way which enables the parents or carers to be honest in order to establish the facts if they have or might have injured the baby.
- Whilst engaging with parents is likely to promote more honest sharing, it is essential that the professionals continue to retain their focus on protecting the child.
- Professional challenge is a vital part of the safeguarding system and all staff, however senior and experienced, should be open to challenge. All staff should also be confident to raise their concerns with colleagues and know how to escalate if they consider their views are not being heard.
- In order to obtain a full picture of family functioning and the impact of parental care on a baby, it is important to record interaction between the family and child and to share this appropriately where there are concerns social observations and discuss their relevance when assessing risk. Avoid relying on a medical explanation for an injury.
- The decision about whether it is safe to discharge a baby should always be based on the main carer of the baby, any reassurances which suggest a reduction in risk should be carefully considered.

¹ See: <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG89>

Child Protection and the Legal Framework

- If a child is at risk of immediate harm Section 46 of the Children Act allows for a police officer to detain a child in a place of safety for a period of up to 72 hours. The use of police powers in this situation was appropriate, police officers were present at the hospital when the injuries were diagnosed and the use of police powers enabled protective action to be taken promptly.
- At the time of the SCR it was felt to be the right course of action. However, since the Mumby ruling, the matter would have been put before the Court, and if more information needed to be shared, it could be part of a professionals meeting.
- If a child is removed from their parents it is good practice to bring the case before the Family Court as soon as possible. This ensures the parents have an opportunity to hear the causes for concern, why removal of their child is considered necessary and to be able to make representations to the Court about what they want. Most importantly, when a case comes to court, a Guardian is appointed whose job it is to represent the child and advocate on their behalf.
- A Child Protection Conference can serve a useful purpose when a child is accommodated, especially if there has been little opportunity for professionals to come together and share information about the family.
- It is helpful to remember that the purpose of a Child Protection Conference is not the same as a Looked After Child Review. A Child Protection Conference is an opportunity to bring together and analyse information about the child and his family in an inter-agency setting, to make judgements about the likelihood of the child suffering or continuing to suffer significant harm and to decide what action is necessary to safeguard the child and promote his welfare.
- Whilst it might be exceptional to hold a Child Protection Conference for a child who is looked after, in this case after some discussion, the practitioners involved concluded it would have served a useful purpose.

ENSURE THIS REPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

There are lessons to be learned for anyone who reads this. Please ensure you consider how you work with families with young babies, particularly those who are non-mobile. Please complete some feedback in respect of this learning by answering the survey below.

PLEASE GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK

Think about the learning points in the Synopsis of Learning you have just read and send us your thoughts via the following survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SB6FYZ6>

The comments you provide will be consolidated with those made by others and presented to the DSCB in order for them to work to ensure that Serious Case Reviews make a difference to children's lives.

Please complete your survey by 30 September 2018

Thank you

**Dorset Safeguarding Children Board
July 2018**