



SERIOUS CASE REVIEW REPORT: Family B

Date of Incident: Summer 2017

1. Case summary

- 1.1. In the summer of 2017, 4 siblings suffered life-threatening injuries inflicted by the father of three of the children. The father subsequently received a life sentence for attempted murder. There was limited prior involvement between the family and statutory agencies and little apparent evidence of previous abuse or neglect.
- 1.2. The four children initially lived with their mother and father/stepfather. In late 2016 the adults separated with the father moving out of the home but continuing to have some contact with the children.
- 1.3. There had been contact with the Police in relation to the adults on a small number of occasions following phone calls about low level domestic conflict which did not result in action other than routinely informing Children's Services. The Police also had some intelligence about possible involvement with drugs by the father. There were three occasions after the parental separation when anonymous calls were made about the care of the children. A Children's Services assessment as a result of one of these calls did not identify any evidence to substantiate the allegations.
- 1.4. In the summer of 2017, the mother contacted the Police as the father had not returned the children after taking them out for an evening. The following day the children were found, seriously injured.

2. Assessment of the practice

- 2.1. The children's main contact with services was with the school and the Health Visitor. Neither had any information to suggest that the children were at risk, or that their basic care needs were not being met. The children worked hard in school, were well presented and appeared happy. The school was dealing with some poor school attendance, which was their only concern. It was known that there were some pressures in the family including maternal low mood and lack of support, but there was no reason to consider that these were of the nature to warrant referral to Children's Services.
- 2.2. The one assessment by Children's Services reasonably concluded that there was no evidence that the children were at risk of harm. Children's Services made a referral to Early Help which was appropriate at that time given the level

of concerns. Specialist support had also been offered to the mother in relation to Domestic Abuse and psychological support services, but she did not pursue these options, as was her right.

- 2.3. No information was known to the mother, or to any of the services or professionals that could have predicted the serious harm that was ultimately caused to the children by their father/stepfather. There were no evident indicators of risk which could reasonably have triggered serious concerns, for example a particularly acrimonious parental separation or serious paternal mental health problems.

3. Learning from the Review

The Review concluded that whilst fully acknowledging the seriousness of the outcome for these children there would be no formal recommendations, and that a more proportionate approach was for some identified aspects of practice to be highlighted as learning points for consideration. This approach was taken as none of the identified practice areas evidenced systemic weaknesses in the safeguarding system or could be judged to have impacted on the outcome for the children.

Relevant Services were therefore asked to:

- Ensure continued development and utilisation of the GP led Vulnerable Child Meetings (attended by GP practice staff and Health Visitors) in order to contribute to professional information sharing and best practice in decision making for families.
- Promote the use of a more explicitly planned approach when undertaking joint meetings with professionals from different services, in order to ensure clarity of purpose and maximise effectiveness.
- Develop professionals' understanding as to their role in identifying whether a child may have been injured and whether a Child Protection Medical may be required.
- Ensure that referrals for Early Help/Supporting Families identify clearly the threshold Level intended.
- Promote the need for particular care to be taken when concluding that repeated anonymous allegations are malicious unless there is clear supporting evidence.