

Learning from Multi agency Case Audit – 5-step Briefing

Pre-birth Early Help Assessments (CAF) and Vulnerable Mothers-to-be



Themes and cases

Themes are based on the priorities identified by the WSCB (now the Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership [SVPP]).

Cases were identified anonymously by the acute hospital trusts and then selected to ensure a cross selection of relevant cases to support maximum learning from the audit.

Process

Agencies involved in each case completed an audit of the work of their agency. These audits were then considered and analysed by a multi-agency audit group. Each case was given two gradings: one for outcomes for children and one in relation to the effectiveness of multi-agency working. A report with the audit and recommendations was provided to the WSCB.

Strengths and good practice identified through the audit

- One case was judged to be good with outstanding features; had there been a CAF on the unborn child the case would have been judged outstanding overall.
- In all 8 cases audited, mothers' vulnerabilities were identified at the earliest opportunity.
- In 7 cases, evidence indicated that the cases were being held at the appropriate level therefore no escalation was required. In the remaining case it was escalated appropriately, however this was by an agency who was not already working with the child and their family.
- Outcomes for children were graded as Good in 5 cases.
- Good practice examples in engaging fathers:
 - Use of a genogram to explore parents' history, the key people and relationships in their life and help them and us to see patterns within those relationships and generational patterns affecting them.
 - Father's views on his wife's mental health being sought and recorded.
- Voice of the child clearly articulated in an Early Help (CAF) Assessment completed on a 1-month old baby.

For further information and guidance on safeguarding unborn babies and under 1s go to...

Overall the audit panel judged the audit to be Good in terms of outcomes for children and Requires Improvement in relation to the audit themes and multi-agency working.

The audit findings remind us that...

- The multi-agency Pre-birth Protocol supports the identification of vulnerabilities within a family and action to be taken to protect an unborn baby.
- Keeping the focus on the child is critical in fully understanding risks to them in the pre-birth period – the voice of the child should be captured and recorded accurately in all cases. This means setting out what it is like to be a child in this family in these set of circumstances and, for unborn babies, imagining what it might be like.
- Where cases were graded as requires improvement this was because as there was either no Early Help (CAF) Assessment in place or the quality was poor; for example, it focused on the parent rather than the child.
- An Early Help (CAF) Assessment enables a holistic assessment of needs and strengths and provides a structured framework to support good multi agency working, information sharing, and evidence progress towards good outcomes.
- Our practice should be curious and reflective – asking questions and gathering evidence to ‘get underneath’ the presenting issue supports good and accurate assessments.
- Clear and accurate recording of contacts, and equally lack of them, with fathers will help ensure they are part of all work with children and families (e.g. if they are described as supportive by mother record that this is self-reported and try and better understand what ‘supportive’ means).
- When a decision is made not to initiate an Early Help (CAF) Assessment, particularly if this is following a recommendation from MASH, the rationale should be discussed with a manager or safeguarding lead and clearly recording in the child’s case file.
- Consideration should be given to any decision in relation to closure of an early help assessment within 6 – 8 weeks of birth. Is there evidence at this point that this can reliably be sustained and outcomes for the child met?

Further information on safeguarding babies and under 1s

Visit the SVPP website page on [Safeguarding babies and under 1s](#)

[NEW guidance on responding to bruising and injuries to non-mobile babies and children](#)

Download our poster on [Safeguarding babies and under 1s](#)