



Derby and Derbyshire
Safeguarding Children Partnership

Promoting the Safety of Babies

Learning from Reviews



INTRODUCTION

This briefing sets out the main themes and key learning points from case reviews carried out following serious harm experienced by babies under the age of 1 year as a result of abuse or neglect between 2018 and 2020 across both Derby and Derbyshire.

KEEPING BABIES SAFE - KEY LEARNING FROM REVIEWS

1. Babies are born vulnerable and are totally dependent on their carers for their needs including safety. Ensure you understand the natural vulnerability of babies and that this is at the forefront of your professional thinking.
2. Ensure that all parents, carers, and family members are aware of the vulnerability of babies and how adverse factors will impact on the baby's wellbeing.
3. Check with parents and carers that they have received and understand advice about:
 - Safe sleep practice including the assessment of co-sleeping;
 - Safe handling including managing a crying baby,
 - Safe baby equipment and home safety messages
4. Be professionally respectful and curious when working with families, including extended family members. Effective identification of risk factors and the mitigation of risk is underpinned by comprehensive assessment.

5. Always ensure that Domestic Abuse routine enquiries have been completed with the mother prior to and after the birth of the baby. Record if the opportunity for routine enquiry has not been completed, (for example the partner was present or an interpreter unavailable) and ensure that this is followed up.
6. Use the [Derby and Derbyshire multi-agency Protocol for Pre-Birth Assessments and Interventions](#) if there are emerging safeguarding concerns during pregnancy.
7. Use the [Practice Guidance on Bruising in Babies and Children](#). Bruising and suspicious marks on pre-mobile babies are always a child protection concern and you must [make a referral to Children's Social Care](#), '***If babies don't bruise they rarely bruise***'.
8. Ensure that the identity and history of any men involved in the child's home is understood. This includes biological fathers, new partners or ex-partners who may impact on the baby's life (sometimes these are referred to as 'hidden men').
9. Has the identity of the father been shared? If not, is this an indication of coercion or abuse? If there has been a delayed or concealed pregnancy, is there sufficient understanding for why this has occurred? Has this occurred on more than one occasion? Is this an indication of coercion or abuse? It is rare for expectant mothers not to disclose the name of the birth father but if this occurs these 'hidden men' should be viewed as a safeguarding concern.
10. Ensure parental / carer vulnerabilities such as mental ill health, alcohol and substance misuse and learning needs are effectively assessed and the impact on the lived experience of the child understood and services put in place to meet any additional needs.
11. Ensure that every agency involved with the child and family contributes to the development of Early Help and safeguarding plans and that the plans are shared and understood by parents and all professionals involved with the case.
12. Develop skills and strategies to effectively use your professional authority with confidence so that you can engage respectfully with parents and have courageous conversations about difficult issues, creating the motivation and opportunity for change.
13. Managers should develop and maintain a positive leadership culture providing support and supervision enabling staff to reflect on the work they are doing with children and families, especially where there are concerns about neglect, drift in a case and improvements needed to the lived experience of a vulnerable baby. If there are emerging concerns about a baby, discuss them with your manager at an early stage, don't wait until the situation becomes serious.
14. Ensure you understand the roles and responsibilities of your colleagues from partner agencies as this will help to achieve a more effective and joined up multi-agency working.

KEY RESOURCES

[Three Steps to Baby Safety](#)