

Lessons Learned: Child LS Serious Case Review

Thomas's Story

What Happened?

Thomas was born in Autumn 2018. Two weeks later Thomas was found with a serious head injury at home and a non-accidental cause suspected. His parents were both present at the time the injury was sustained as was Liam, his half sibling aged three. Both parents said that Thomas was alone in a room with Liam when he became injured. Fortunately, Thomas survived but the injuries sustained have left him visually impaired.

Mother had lived with her grandmother throughout much of her life and had suspected learning difficulties and a history of other vulnerabilities including substance and alcohol misuse and debt. At the time of Liam's birth in 2015, Team Around the Family (TAF) support was established with regular engagement from mother and sometimes Liam's father.

When the relationship between Liam's mother and father ended in late 2017, mother's relationship with the father of Thomas began. In the Spring of 2018, mother booked her pregnancy with Thomas at 12 weeks gestation but did not attend all antenatal appointments and was seen intermittently by professionals.

*Thomas and Liam are not the children's real names.

What Have We Learned?

Early Help: At the time of the referral, Thomas's mother had multiple needs including housing, debt, bereavement, help with nursery for Liam and with parenting generally. Several attempts were made by Early Help to contact mother without success. A joint visit between Early Help and the Health Visitor took place five weeks after the initial referral. Following this, mother was not seen for six weeks despite the best efforts of the support worker and Early Help support was closed.

A new referral was submitted to Early Help as mother had been identified as 'pregnant and at risk of homelessness.' Assistance was provided on a wide range of issues under difficult circumstances. However, a formal plan of support with agreed actions and outcomes was not evident. *Since the Family Safeguarding Model came into place in early 2021, the Early Help service has introduced new practice standards and a new quality assurance framework. This is providing evidence that outcomes are improving as a result.*

Abusive Head Trauma: Abusive head trauma was a suspected cause for Thomas' injury. [.ICON](#), an evidence based; multi-agency programmes is now in use across the safeguarding children partnership area where the incident occurred. Case recording did not evidence mother as receiving any advice or support regarding safe handling and responding to crying babies and it is less likely that father received any similar guidance. There is increasing awareness of the need to involve fathers including preventative messaging.

Impact of Domestic Abuse of Children: Liam was witness to a domestic abuse incident between his parents.. A Child and Family assessment took place regarding Liam. Father was not part of the assessment due to mother claiming the relationship had ended. There is considerable research relating to the negative impact and cumulative harm on children living in households where domestic abuse is present.

In [Sowing the Seeds- children's experience of domestic abuse and criminality](#) the importance of focusing on children is highlighted and it is recommended 'identifying children who live in households with domestic abuse as victims in their own right'.

What Have We Learned? continued...

Supporting Adults with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Trauma: From what is recorded about mother's own childhood and transition into adulthood, it is clear she had experienced ACEs. Professionals were aware of some or all of these ACEs, there was some evidence of ACEs being identified and recorded, (albeit not specifically using ACE terminology) and some support was offered. What was less evident was the consideration of the impact of ACEs on mother as an adult and a parent, and any consequential impact on her children. Since the review timeframe the knowledge and awareness of ACEs and their impact has improved extensively, and a trauma informed workforce is the aspiration for the whole partnership.

Safer Sleep: Throughout the review period, mother moved between temporary addresses which presented professionals with a lack of clarity as to what equipment mother had to facilitate a safer sleep environment for her children and safer sleep advice was intermittently given and recorded. Clear guidance repeated consistently is a method which takes account of any additional needs and circumstances of the parents and should be a priority for all professionals to share with families they are supporting.

Identifying and Supporting Parents and Carers with Learning Difficulties: It was suggested that mother had a learning difficulty, this was evidenced in records by various professionals, but recorded evidence of action taken, adjustments or additional support offered was limited.

What Do We Need To Do?

Read and familiarise yourself with the practice guidance in following documents:

Abusive Head Trauma: The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's National Review – [The Myth of Invisible Men, September 2021](#) has been a catalyst for the local partnership to try to strengthen work relating to males.

See the CSAP website for the following 7mb's [ICON 7mb Myth of Invisible Men 7mb](#)

Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children: [The Domestic Abuse Act, April 2021](#) explicitly recognises children as victims if they see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse.

Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel: [Multi agency safeguarding and domestic abuse](#)

Supporting Adults with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Trauma: 'Little Book of ACEs and other online resources, information on Trauma Informed Lancashire and a 7mb on 'trauma informed approach and practice' [Resources Hub | Explore | Lancashire Violence Reduction Network \(lancsvrn.co.uk\)](#).

ACEs [eLearning](#) course.

Safer Sleep: [Safer sleep guidance and materials](#)

Identifying and Supporting Learning Difficulties of Parents and Carers: The Working Together with Parents Network has updated the '[Good Practice Guidance of working with parents with a learning disability](#)'. The updated guidance supports professionals working with parents with learning difficulties and learning disabilities, and their children.

Keep in Touch

Further learning and resources can be found on the [Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership website](#)
For queries or feedback please contact the Joint Partnership Business Unit Team at jpbu@lancashire.gov.uk