

30 June 2016



Redcar and Cleveland Safeguarding Children Board publishes serious case review

REDCAR and Cleveland Safeguarding Children Board has today (Thursday 30 June 2016) published its Serious Case Review into how public agencies worked with the family of a child admitted to hospital with serious non-accidental injuries.

The Safeguarding Children Board commissioned Independent Reviewer, Paul Sharkey, to carry out the review, the purpose of which is to look at what happened in this case and why, and what action will be taken to learn from the review findings. The identified actions should result in lasting improvements to services which safeguard and promote the welfare of children and help protect them from harm.

“Redcar & Cleveland Safeguarding Children Board commissioned an Independent Reviewer to undertake this serious case review and has been working with our partners to ensure the recommendations are completed and that lessons are learned” said Jan Van Wagtendonk, Independent Chair of the Redcar and Cleveland Safeguarding Children Board.

“Although the review could not be published before now the Board and its partners have been implementing the recommendations made by the lead reviewer. All recommendations have been acted upon and most are now completed.”

“It is never acceptable for a child to be ill-treated and we are extremely saddened that this child received injuries. The Board remains committed to ensuring that children and young people in Redcar and Cleveland are protected from harm and are as safe as possible.

“We are pleased that the child involved has recovered from her injuries and has settled in her long term placement.”

The report identifies that professional concerns mounted throughout 2011 around aspects of the lifestyle of the parents, reports of anti-social behaviour, suggestions of substance misuse, the father’s violence and missed appointments with Emma’s older sister Sarah. *(The names of all those included within the report have been changed to ensure anonymity).*

The serious case review covers the period from when the mother informed the midwife that she was pregnant with Sarah in July 2010 to the point where care proceedings were started in response to the injuries to Emma in October 2013.

The relationship between the mother and father was described as conflictual in the report and they separated prior to Emma’s birth with the father maintaining regular contact with Sarah.

Following the birth of Emma in late 2011 she and Sarah were made the subjects of multi-agency child protection plans in January 2012 under the category of ‘neglect’. The plans ended in May 2013 and the children became subject to child in need plans, continuing to be cared for by the mother and her new partner.

In October 2013 Emma, aged almost two, suffered serious non-accidental injuries whilst in the care of her mother and new partner. She was taken to hospital for treatment and made the subject of Police protection.

The report identifies nine recommendations for improvement and four key areas that need to be addressed by the agencies involved including:

- **Child protection plans** – should only stop if it is judged that the child is no longer likely to suffer significant harm with all assessments completed by professionals. Protection plans need to be SMART with clear, child focused outcomes and named individuals taking responsibility for actions. Case management needs to be authoritative and robust when working with difficult to engage and non-cooperative parents and carers.
- **Risk assessments** – agencies need to consider ways of ensuring that significant males (and others), in households where there are children, are involved in family assessments and that risk is assessed in a timely manner.
- **Toxic trio** – professionals should be aware of the existence of the ‘toxic trio’ (domestic abuse, substance misuse and adult mental ill health) and factor into family/risk assessments their impact on children and young people.
- **Involvement of wider family members** – policy and practice needs to recognise the potential importance to children of including grandparents and other wider family members in the process of case management.

Barbara Shaw, Director of People Services, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council said:

“The learning from this review will help us to work together with our partners more effectively and do all we can to ensure we keep children safe.

“We have already made significant improvement in many areas outlined in the report and have taken action to implement the recommendations.

“The child in this case has settled into her new home and is making excellent progress.

“We will continue to work with schools, families and communities to build partnerships that can protect children, prevent abuse and transform lives. I can assure the public that we will always strive to achieve this.”

For interviews with Jan Van Wagendonk or Barbara Shaw please contact David Calderwood on 01642 444618 or email david.calderwood@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

A copy of the full report is available to view at

<https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/safeguarding>

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