



This Serious Case Review (SCR) relates to the death of Baby C, a white British child, who died within a week of birth. The pregnancy, birth, death and burial had been concealed by both parents. Neither parent was involved with services until after the death.

Baby C's mother told her own mother, maternal grandmother to Baby C about the circumstances of the baby's death. Baby C's maternal grandmother told her support worker, who passed the information to the police. The police investigation led to Baby C's body being found.

Two key themes were identified: -

- Understand what support is available to parents whose birth child is adopted
- Understand what led to this couple being so disengaged from universal services and under the radar; to identify any preventative measures that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of future concealed pregnancies

NB Please read horizontally

GOOD PRACTICE

The actions of the adult support worker who recognised harm to a child and took swift action to report this through the safeguarding channels in the setting.

GMP's response to concerns identified via a vulnerable adult and the resulting persistent and tenacious investigation.

Without the actions of these individuals and services, the circumstances of the life of Baby C might never have been discovered.

THEMES

Coercive Control - practitioners recognised the complex and often volatile nature of the parent's relationship and that this was not always physically abusive. Legislation and definitions of coercive control were not in place at the time of service involvements.

Research identifies the factors which might enable an individual to leave coercive relationships - the first facing the reality of the abuse, the second is seeking or being offered support, the third is the motivation of protecting children and the fourth is fear of violence.

THEMES

Concealed Pregnancy - research on concealed pregnancy leading to a child death is limited.

Research linked to this theme identifies that the pregnant woman's personality is marked by immaturity, dependency, weak self-esteem, absence of affective support, psychological isolation and poor communication. Pregnancies are characterised by conflicting feelings of desire and rejection of the infant and an inability to ask for help. Those around the mothers are often aware of the pregnancy but offer no help.

LEARNING

Given the unusual circumstances of Baby C's death, the SCR could only identify potential actions which would support practice and lessen the likelihood of a similar course of events in the future: -

Early Intervention - delivering an evidence-based approach (such as the Family Nurse Partnership Model) to first time vulnerable mothers; offering intensive support to promote a healthy pregnancy, positive attachment, improved physical and mental health for the mother and positive cognitive, emotional, social and physical development for the child.

LEARNING

Post Adoption Support - the offers that are available to birth parents, mainly focus on helping them through the trauma of losing a child. Few work with parents specifically to improve their chances of avoiding future pregnancies, which might result in a repeating cycle of removal and the associated trauma.

A critical moment in the sequence of events that led to the tragic death of Baby C was his conception by parents who were not ready to have a child. Pro-active support for these parents in making informed choices about family planning, might have made a difference.

REFLECTING ON LESSONS LEARNED

Are you up to date in identifying and responding to coercive control as well as understanding its impact on individual victims and their actions?

Are there opportunities for you in your role to talk to parents about their experiences of having a child removed from their care?

Are you able to offer pro-active support to help potential parents explore their readiness and emotional commitment to having a child? This could include signposting to post-adoption services, women's support services, family lives etc.