



7 Point Briefing:

Multi-agency audit of partnership responses to non-verbal babies and infants

Background

Following the National Panel report regarding safeguarding children under one year old from non-accidental injury, the CYSCP Case Review group undertook work regarding engaging with fathers and requested a multi-agency audit of practice with babies and infants who are **non-verbal**. This audit was undertaken in June 2022.

The remit of this audit was to consider:

'As a safeguarding partnership; how well do we understand and articulate the lived experience of children who are pre-verbal or have limited verbal skill'. 'How well is this understanding reflected in assessment and planning for the child?'

What areas of multi-agency good practice was highlighted?

- Recording of visits to a child written directly to them
- Good multi-agency response to seeing the sleeping arrangements of children, including viewing different rooms and adoption of the Home Environment Assessment Tool (HEAT)
- Record of observations of children's interactions and responses to parents were consistently included in the recordings
- Evidence of good, descriptive observations of the child
- The cohort included some good examples of engagement with fathers and their inclusion in meetings about their child
- There were many observations of good interactions between children and their parents



The audit also identified some patterns and areas we could improve in relation to our joint working with pre-verbal children.

- Analysis was not consistently achieved in response to the recording of children's interactions with their parents
- The audit identified opportunities for additional analysis in respect of the needs of the children within this cohort
- Plans for babies would be better if they were more specific and identify their explicit needs separately to those of their siblings
- Generalisations were often made in respect of the needs of this cohort of children
- Some recordings contain 'assumptions' regarding what a pre-verbal child might need as opposed to specific recording of an individual child's needs
- The audit found that agencies need to ensure that they are consistent in terms of working with both parents. For example, mothers were often the focus of the intervention as opposed to fathers, despite them often having significant care/family time with their children
- We would like to have seen more time spent with parents supporting them to understand the impact of their behaviours on their children, leading to second order, sustainable permanent change
- The cumulative effect of neglect not always fully considered

Key Learning Points

Learning Point 1

More work needs to be undertaken within the wider partnership with parents to support them to understand the impact of adverse parenting on their child.

Learning Point 2

Practitioners need to be better supported to have challenging discussions with parents, in particular fathers where there are concerns about parental mental ill-health.



Learning Point 3

Plans for under ones should include safe sleeping when there are modifiable factors.

Learning Point 4

All children's plans should clearly identify their individual needs. This would be supported by headings for each child separately within the plan.

Learning Point 5

Actions within plans should be more outcome based and reflect what the impact is on the child of the change and the impact if the change is not made/sustained.

Learning Point 6

Plans need to focus more on the emotional safety of a child as opposed to just physical safety.

Learning Point 7

Greater focus on the importance of professionals engaging with fathers and having discussions with both parents

Next Steps

- Each individual single agency will disseminate the learning within their organisations.
- A multi-agency action plan has been produced and monitored by the partnership.

Useful resources and further reading

Community Care Inform

<https://www.ccinform.co.uk/topic/direct-work/tools-for-working-with-pre-verbal-or-non-verbal-children/>

Research in Practice: Working with men in Leeds: Journey Project

<https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/children/content-pages/podcasts/working-with-men-in-leeds-journey-project/>

CYSCP 'Babies and Pregnancy' webpage

<https://www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk/safeguarding-information/babies-pregnancy>

CYSCP 'The Child's Lived Experience' webpage

<https://www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk/safeguarding-information/childs-lived-experience>

Where do I go for further information?

Please visit the [CYSCP website](https://www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk) for up to date information and latest news.

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