

7 POINT BRIEFING



SUMMARY

Wakefield Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) undertook a Rapid Review concerning a 3-month-old baby, who sustained injuries consistent with abusive head trauma at home. The areas the review considered included the following:

- Managing complex safeguarding risk in families where there are multiple children
- Pattern of being in relationships with men who pose risk
- Parental Mental-Ill Health and the risk it poses to children
- Presentations of elder siblings as a means in understanding the extent of the risks all children have been exposed to



WHO WAS THE CHILD AND THEIR FAMILY?

At the time of the incident, the 3-month-old baby and siblings lived at home with their mother and adult sister. The family moved to the Wakefield district in 2024 after residing outside the area. Prior to moving to Wakefield, the family were known to another local authority where the children were subject to a Child Protection Plan and Child In Need.

The 3-month-old baby’s father resided in an area outside of Wakefield and was assessed by the previous local authority Children’s Social Care not to have contact with the children due to the risk he posed.

The family first became involved with Wakefield Children’s Social Care after being contacted by the 3-month-old baby’s mother. This led to the children being subject to a Child Protection Plan after it was established by Wakefield Children’s Social Care that the 3-month-old’s father was visiting the family home and having contact with the children.



SUMMARY OF THE INCIDENT

Mid Yorkshire Teaching Trust reported to Children’s Social Care that the 3-month-old baby had attended the Accident and Emergency Department with mother and adult sister. A bruise was evident, upon examination conducted by paediatric team and scans identified that the 3-month-old baby had cerebral haemorrhage’s consistent with an acute traumatic injury causing fluid around their brain and swelling of their head.

These injuries were determined to be consistent with non-accidental injury. Further scans were undertaken and identified 3-month-old baby had multiple acute brain bleeds consistent with abusive head trauma through being shaken.



KEY POINTS AND ANALYSIS FROM THE LEARNING CIRCLE

- **Managing complex safeguarding risk in families where there are multiple children.**

Strong professional curiosity:
Professionals consistently demonstrated strong curiosity and challenge. Although the 3-month-old baby’s injuries were serious, there was no prior evidence suggesting foreseeable physical abuse.

Multiagency working:
Agencies used creative methods (school sessions, 0–19 practitioner, nursery checks) to verify information and understand potential risks. Joint working was strong, with timely updates and proactive safeguarding actions.

Understanding the lived experience:
Continuity of workers and relationship based practice supported a clear understanding of the children’s lived experience. There was good use of ICON guidance, safer sleep advice, Home Environment Assessment Tool (HEAT) assessments, and safeguarding supervision, reflecting WSCP’s investment in recent years in strengthening professional curiosity.

Emergency Department response:
Good practice was demonstrated via an alert system being present in records which triggered a notification from Mid Yorkshire Teaching Trust to Children Social Care Social Worker. It was recognised amongst professionals, medical photography would have strengthened documentation and to undertake a review the guidance on red marks in non-mobile infants.

Transfer of information across areas:
The family had moved from another area with no active social care involvement, so no formal transfer occurred.
- **Pattern of being in relationships with men who pose risk**

Pattern of entering relationships which posed risk:
Service’s recognised a pattern in which the mother has formed relationships with partners who have presented safeguarding concerns, including the children’s father and a possible new partner with a known history of domestic abuse.

Strong professional oversight:
Professionals maintained strong oversight of these relationships, using curiosity, assessment tools, and checks through Sarah’s Law and Clare’s Law respectively. Partnership tools such as the Neglect Toolkit supported shared understanding and informed multi-agency planning and risk identification.

Missed opportunity for Person Posing Risk (PPR) assessment:

Practice could have been strengthened further by completing a Person Posing Risk assessment for the father, which would have triggered discussion at the Person Posing Risk Panel.

Breaches of the Child Protection Plan:

Records show periods where father had contact with the children despite restrictions. Agencies in Wakefield worked jointly and proactively to detect these breaches.

- **Parental Mental-Ill Health and the risk it poses to children**

Impact of mental health:

Mother experienced periods of low mood and anxiety linked to childhood trauma and abusive relationships, creating vulnerability that increased safeguarding risks for the children. While she accessed relevant agencies for support, partners reflected further opportunities to support mum were identified, including a referral for phone based Talking Therapies due to childcare barriers.

Intergenerational trauma and vulnerability:

The mother’s own experiences of abuse and trauma were well reflected in assessments and helped build an understanding of her vulnerabilities. There was less information available about the father’s background, which limited the ability to fully consider how his own history or experiences might influence current risk.

Recognised pattern in serious incidents:

Professionals noted that intergenerational trauma and vulnerability are common features in serious harm cases, reinforcing the need for trauma-informed practice. Wakefield is contributing to the West Yorkshire commitment to develop a trauma-informed system by 2030, supporting better understanding of parental adversity and its impact on children.

Future integration of adult services:

The Families First Partnership Programme is exploring closer alignment between adult mental health and substance use services within a new multi-agency Family Help model to strengthen early support for parents.

- **Presentations of elder siblings as a means in understanding the extent of the risks all children have been exposed to**

Sibling presentations as indicators of chronic risk:

The older siblings’ emotional and behavioural presentations highlighted long-term exposure to trauma and adversity, signalling the extent of risk experienced by all children in the household.

Emotional distress disclosed siblings:

Practitioners captured significant concerns: anxiety, sensitivity to loud noises, references to suicide, behavioural concerns as well as an awareness of financial strain, and worries about future caring responsibilities.

Trauma-informed responses for siblings: Services recognised that at least two siblings required trauma-informed support to address the adversity they had experienced, reflecting good awareness of the emotional impact of chronic safeguarding risk.



WHAT WILL WSCP DO WITH THESE FINDINGS?

- WSCP Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group (CSPRG) will oversee the learning generated from this review and ensure the following:
- Individual service, Group and System learning points are considered and appropriately attributed to relevant WSCP sub-groups to oversee implementation
- CSPRG adopts all learning points onto its practice review action log to monitor progress of learning and its implementation
- WSCP produces an anonymised 7-point briefing to provide a summary of the incident, key points and analysis and learning points and shares with services alongside holding practitioner briefings



NEXT STEPS

- The findings of the review have been approved by WSCP, and work is underway in implementing the learning from the incident



RESOURCES

There are a range of national and local resources, guidance, and training in relation to safeguarding children on the [WSCP website](#).

