



Serious Case Review

Practitioner Brief: Anna

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Serious Case Review (SCR)

Practitioner Briefing: Anna

Background

Anna, then aged one year, sustained a serious head injury that is assessed to have been non-accidental. The injury is likely to affect her sight and mobility throughout her life. Anna was a twin and also had two older siblings, her parents originated from eastern Europe. There were ongoing concerns about domestic abuse within the parents' relationship and the children were the subject of a child protection plan that had been in place for the majority of Anna's life, at the time of the incident. Practitioners were also concerned about the twins' poor weight gain, for which there was no medical explanation and was noted to resolve when they were admitted to hospital. There were also a number of recorded minor injuries to the children, some of which were accepted as accidental.

Concealed and denied pregnancies

Mother claimed that she was unaware that she was pregnant prior to giving birth to the twins at 30 weeks' gestation. While it was accepted that there was no opportunity for professionals to identify the pregnancy prior to that point, the panel questioned the subsequent assessment that the pregnancy was not concealed. Since the time of this incident, detailed [Concealed and Denied Pregnancy Guidance](#) has been published by the CSAP. This provides research evidence as to why pregnancies may be concealed or denied and the expected response, together with service specific guidance.

Good practice

Good practice – above and beyond what is expected – was identified by the SCR panel in the response of hospital staff to a domestic abuse incident just before the twins were to be discharged. This included offering emergency accommodation that could meet the needs of mother and her four young children. Separately, the health visitor also challenged a consultant paediatrician's conclusion that the twins were thriving, despite their poor weight gain.

Managing language and cultural differences

Records were contradictory about mother's ability to speak and understand English, whereas any indication of father's capability was altogether absent. Given the complex circumstances from the unexpected birth of the twins to their lack of consistent weight gain, it was imperative that Mother fully understood the expectations regarding her family and the ongoing safeguarding processes, including at one point pre-proceedings. However, it was unclear whether this was the case in practice. Equally, professional curiosity about parents' culture and its impact on their parenting was not evident. See these NSPCC briefings for more information on the use of [interpreters](#) and the impact of [culture](#) in SCR.

Failure to thrive as a form of neglect

During the timeframe of the review there were a number of indicators that the children were being neglected: both twins failed to gain weight without there being a medical explanation, their cleanliness and presentation was noted to be poor, and they experienced a number of minor injuries. Furthermore, mother was a single parent of four young children with a limited support network and did not have English as a first language. The report notes the definition of neglect as the "*persistent and severe failure to meet a child's needs*", meaning that circumstances do not have to deteriorate, but that a threshold for action can be met by concerns not getting substantially better. Concerns should be evidenced using a standard assessment tool: Graded Care Profile 2 will be launched in Lancashire in 2022