

Lessons Learned



Warwickshire
Safeguarding

Poppy's Story....

Poppy had been a looked after child since birth following concerns over her parent's significant history of drug misuse and domestic violence. Shortly after her birth, Poppy went with her mother and father to a family-based treatment facility to address her parent's substance misuse and undergo further assessments as a family.

Poppy's father left the facility before completing treatment, however her mother remained and continued to progress well with treatment and her parenting to Poppy was considered to be good. Prior to her discharge, Poppy's mother expressed concerns about returning to her previous home address due to her previous drug use.

Poppy's mother completed her treatment to become drug free and was discharged where she returned with Poppy to live at her previous address. Poppy's mother engaged well with agencies, however there were ongoing concerns around conditions within the home. Poppy's mother stated again that she wanted to leave the area due to her past drug use, but she remained motivated and was looking forward to caring for Poppy on her own.

Unfortunately, Poppy's mother's contact with the professionals started to deteriorate. She would often rearrange appointments and was not home for unannounced visits. When professionals did manage to meet with Poppy and her mother, they reported that Poppy's mother was maintaining her good progress in relation to parenting although she appeared to be becoming increasingly agitated with their involvement.

Some weeks later, emergency services were called to Poppy's home where Poppy's mother was sadly found deceased.

What we have learned....

- Poppy's mother expressed to services that she did not wish to return to her previous property once she had completed her treatment due to her history of drug use. Poppy's mother was unable to move as she had rent arrears, some of which had been accrued whilst the property lay empty when the family attended the family-based treatment facility. As Poppy's mother was still registered as a tenant at this address, she also did not meet the homelessness criteria.

Learning for Practice: If you are supporting a parent who is known to Children's Social Care who does not wish to return to a property after leaving rehab, speak to the appropriate housing authority as soon as possible to see if a plan can be put in place for relocation.

Lessons Learned (cont.)



What we have learned (contd.)...

- Many of the agencies involved had a good level of awareness of Warwickshire's Escalation Protocol including where to access it and how to use it.
Learning for Practice: If you haven't done so already, familiarise yourself with the Escalation Protocol. Challenge is part of any healthy working relationship and professional curiosity should be pursued, when things don't quite appear right/normal.
- Multi agency communication and partnership working before and after the death of Poppy's mother was good and considered to be effective. Good practice was identified in the proactive approach the GP took to ensure that Poppy's was regularly reviewed at their weekly safeguarding meeting and the sharing and recording of information when Poppy went with her mother to the family-based treatment facility. In addition to this, good practice was identified in Children's Services quick response to notifying other relevant agencies of the death of Poppy's mother as quickly as possible whilst ensuring that the care and wellbeing of Poppy remained a priority.
Learning for Practice: Sharing information between professionals and local agencies is essential to providing effective early help and to put in place child protection services. Practitioners should be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns about the welfare and safety of children whether they are known to local children's services or not.

What do I need to do....

Advice for professionals

1. Familiarise yourself with the following sections of the West Midlands Child Protection Procedures: [1.1 Information Sharing](#) and [2.3 Children of parents who misuse substances](#).
2. Read Warwickshire Safeguarding's 7 Minute Briefings on [Professional Curiosity](#), the new [Escalation Protocol](#) and [Parental Capacity to Change](#)

Advice for communities

1. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. If you have any concerns about a child, talk to the [Warwickshire MASH](#) to establish if you need to submit a Multi Agency Contact (MAC) Form.