



Warwickshire
Safeguarding

Warwickshire Safeguarding Partnership publication of Serious Case Review

Released: Friday 4th September 2020

Warwickshire's Safeguarding Partnership has today (Friday 4th September 2020) published the findings of a Serious Case Review into the death of two sisters, Alice and Beth.

At the time of their death's Alice was 3 years old and Beth was a little over 1 year old. Both children died within 2 weeks of each other. Their mother Clare was subsequently found guilty of their murders and is now serving a term of imprisonment.

Following the deaths of Alice and Beth, Warwickshire's Safeguarding Partnership commissioned a Serious Case Review to establish if any lessons could be learned as to how local agencies and professionals work together in order to safeguard children.

The Serious Case Review considered agency involvement with Alice and Beth from the date that Alice was born in 2014 to after Beth's death in February 2019. The review encompasses the birth of both children, their move from Walsall to Warwickshire and their tragic deaths.

The review makes a total of 9 recommendations, which agencies have put in place or are in the process of implementing.

Elaine Coleridge Smith, Independent Chair of Warwickshire Safeguarding Partnership said: *"The family of Alice and Beth have suffered the tragic loss of two much loved little girls and our thoughts are with them today.*

Alice and Beth's case is incredibly sad and unusual. The death of two small children within weeks of each other at the hands of their mother is very rare indeed. The Serious Case Review allowed professionals the opportunity for reflection to identify areas where improvements can be made.

The review highlighted a number of learning points for agencies across both Warwickshire and Walsall. These include the importance of agencies sharing information with each other when a family known to them moves across a local authority border, the need for professionals to exercise 'professional curiosity' in order to build a full picture of the family they are working with, for professionals to explore different possibilities of the causes when faced with the death of a child and to maintain an open mind when safeguarding concerns are raised about children by those who may be in conflict with a family.

Although the review recognises that concerns were raised with agencies regarding Clare's care of Alice and Beth, the conclusion of the review is clear that on further investigation by agencies there was no evidence to suggest that Clare was capable or indeed had any intention of causing the harm that she ultimately did to her children and there was nothing that agencies could have reasonably done, on what was known at the time, to predict or prevent the tragic death of Alice and subsequently Beth.

"As a result of the learning from this review, nine recommendations for ways in which practice can be improved in future have been made and the Partnership is committed to ensuring they are implemented and monitoring their progress moving forward.

She added: *"On behalf of the Partnership, I would like to thank the Lead Reviewer, Jon Chapman and all who contributed to this review during what must have been a very difficult time for them."*

A total of 16 agencies spanning both Warwickshire and Walsall contributed to the review and the report makes recommendations for action by Warwickshire and Walsall's Safeguarding Partnerships, Walsall's Children's Services, Warwickshire's Children's Services, Warwickshire Police, South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust, Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, Black Country Women's Aid, West Midlands Ambulance Service, NHS Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group.

The report, authored by the independent Lead Reviewer, Jon Chapman, has been published on the Warwickshire Safeguarding Partnerships Website: www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk.

ENDS

Notes to editor:

Please note that family members have requested that their privacy be respected at this difficult time and that the media do not contact them for comment on the review.

Warwickshire Safeguarding replaces both Warwickshire Safeguarding Children's Board (WSCB) and Warwickshire Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB) with effect from 29th September 2019 and takes on the combined responsibility for safeguarding children and adults under the guidance of Working Together 2018 and the Care Act 2014.

Jon Chapman, who led this review and wrote the report, is an experienced Lead Reviewer of Serious Case Reviews, Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews and is entirely independent of Warwickshire's Safeguarding Partnership and its partner agencies.

A Serious Case Review (SCR) is a locally conducted multi-agency review in circumstances where a child has been abused or neglected, resulting in serious harm or death and there is cause for concern as to the way in which the relevant authority or persons have worked together to safeguard the child.

The purpose of a Serious Case Review is:

- establish what lessons are to be learned from the case about the way in which local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- identify clearly what those lessons are both within and between agencies, how and within what timescales they will be acted on, and what is expected to change as a result; and,
- improve cross agency working and better safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

An SCR is not an inquiry into how a child died or was seriously harmed, or into who is culpable. That is a matter for the criminal courts and Coroner to determine.

At the time of the deaths of Alice and Beth, the Serious Case Review was conducted in accordance with the statutory guidance Working Together 2015.

If a member of the public has concerns that a child is suffering any form of neglect, abuse or cruelty, contact Warwickshire's Children's Social Care on:

01926 414144

Lines are open from:

Monday to Thursday: 8.30am – 5.30pm

Friday: 8.30am – 5pm

Out of hours

If you have an emergency outside of usual office hours, please contact the emergency duty team immediately on:

01926 886922

Emergency contact

If you think that a child is at immediate risk, contact the police immediately on:

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For media enquiries please contact Warwickshire County Council's Marketing and Communications Team on T: 01926 413727 or E: newsteam@warwickshire.gov.uk