

June 2024

Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review Leo

Response from Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP)

Leo tragically died in October 2021, he was 4 months old and lived with his family in Cumbria. A criminal trial has since found his father guilty of his murder and two counts of child cruelty, and his mother was convicted of two counts of child cruelty.

In January 2022, Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership commissioned an independent reviewer to undertake a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) in relation to the services that were provided to Leo and his family. The purpose of a Child Safeguarding Practice Review is to identify any necessary improvements required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The CSCP commissioned an experienced, independent author to undertake the review.

The LCSPR involved the following agencies:

- Cumbria County Council Children & Young People Services
- GP Practice
- North Cumbria Integrated Care
- North West Ambulance Service
- Housing Association.

The full findings of the LCSPR are set out in the overview report which has been published alongside this response. The report and its recommendations were agreed and accepted by the Cumbria Safeguarding Children's Services Partnership.

The report identified the following key learning themes:

- The need to involve and assess fathers and identify any strengths or risks they bring to parenting
- The importance of the effective provision of early help services
- Recognising parental misuse of prescription and non-prescription drugs
- Assessing fathers and male care givers
- Feeding difficulties as a trigger to harm
- The importance of following 'was not brought' procedures
- The need to identify and meet the needs of care experienced parents.

Report Recommendations

Individual agencies involved in the review are taking forward the learning and recommendations outlined in the report. The report identifies the following nine recommendations:



1. For the Partnership to seek assurance that where information is requested by health and midwifery services, this is completed in line with the agreed protocols, and results in the relevant disclosure of information held on expectant mothers and fathers.
2. For the Partnership to be provided with assurance that:
 - a. the investment and changes to ensure that midwifery staff have access to GP notes and information, has had an impact for all midwifery across the County.
 - b. that the positive practices to ensure GP records marry up the names of mothers, father and children have had the desired impact across the County.
3. For Children's Services to give assurance about the rigour of responses to anonymous referrals made to the Safeguarding Hub.
4. For the North East and North Cumbria ICB and Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB to provide assurance to the Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership that children who are not brought to appointments within setting (the GP surgery) and across settings (GP and hospital) are alerted and responded to in a timely manner.
5. Health visitors and GP training pathways to raise awareness of the impact of feeding difficulties and being unsettled on child safety and provide Cumbria Children's Safeguarding Partnership with assurances that feeding difficulties and unsettled infants are recognised as potential triggers to harm and responses to feeding difficulties are responded to in a timely manner by health professionals.
6. For the Partnership to receive assurance that all agencies are clear on their roles and responsibilities in relation to the assessment of early help needs and the provision of early help services.
7. For Children's Services to consider adjusting the current pathways proforma or creating a pathways plan and assessment proforma for care experienced parents or expectant parents with the local care experienced parent group.
8. Cumbria Corporate Parenting Services to work with the care experienced parent group to consider the following:
 - a. a scheme where professionals that have developed positive relationships with young people are able to continue to support them when their original roles cease. E.g. previous residential workers, foster carers, or early help workers
 - b. Cumbria Corporate Parenting Services to work with the care experienced parent group to consider developing a WhatsApp group for parents which is formally monitored by experienced professionals to ensure that any safeguarding issues are identified.



- c. Cumbria Children's Services to consider publishing a care experienced parent guide or a description of a potential multi-agency 'offer' setting out what support they are potentially entitled to, in a similar way that other entitlements are published. This could then raise awareness among parents, expectant parents and other professionals supporting care experienced young people.
9. The Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership to seek assurance that local training offers for professionals enable them to understand the prevalence of the misuse of prescription drugs and they can recognise and respond when parents are misusing prescription and non-prescription substances.

The work to implement the recommendations and to monitor their impact on practice will become part of the long-term work of the CSCP and member agencies. The CSCP will be seeking evidence and testing via its Quality and Scrutiny Framework that the learning from this review is sufficiently embedded and driving practice improvement. The progress of this will be provided via the CSCP's annual report.

Lead Safeguarding Partners, Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership:

Martin Birch, Director Children & Family Wellbeing, Cumberland Council

Mil Vasic, Director Children's Services, Westmorland and Furness Council

David Stalker, Temporary Assistant Chief Constable, Cumbria Police

Richard Scott, Director of Nursing, North Cumbria Integrated Care Board

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