

7 Minute Briefing: Safer Sleeping re Hazel

Date: May 2024

7 MINUTE BRIEFING

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1. A rapid review was held related to a multiple pregnancy, in which one of the babies died of a suspected SUDI. They lived with their mum and half sibling with complex needs, in a one-bedroom maisonette. A Reflective Practice Discussion was held with professionals who had worked alongside the family, giving an opportunity for agencies to reflect on their practice and for learning to be disseminated to the wider partnership. A key learning point was that when working alongside families with babies, all agencies must discuss and promote [Safer sleeping](#) principles. Other considerations included:

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2. The importance of building relationships with families is crucial, and that investment in time can help explore families' experiences in a different way. When families feel safe with a service or individual they are likely to engage and accept support; feeling threatened, can generate hostility and an aggressive response, possibly rooted in past experiences of dealing with statutory services. Taking time to understand and review previous history (in this instance Mum's mental health and trauma), aids professionals to support families with the appropriate help. See [Professional Curiosity 7 minute briefing](#) for more on this topic.

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3. For a lot of parents who have additional vulnerabilities with complex issues, there is sometimes a stark fear when dealing with statutory agencies. When working with any family we should be aware of how we offer support and how that offer may be received. Ensuring the right agencies and services are present at Child Protection discussions is imperative. In order to ensure all key information is obtained to facilitate effective decision making by all professionals from the outset, Social Care should include **all** agencies involved ie voluntary sector, housing, schools and health.

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4. Levels of need thresholds and how they are managed to meet the needs of families can be challenging for professionals to navigate. With this family, a number of referrals were made into Children's Social Care which didn't meet threshold for child protection. It's important to understand why a threshold isn't met so that an accurate assessment of need can be made as to what further measures can be brought to support families in this instance. When there is professional disagreement regarding the level of support expectations, this should be raised within internal safeguarding teams in the first instance and then escalated via Surrey's escalation process, [FaST](#)

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5. With this family there were conflicting reports as to the state and suitability of the home. Some professionals advised that the house was cluttered, and the smell of cannabis noted, but a management oversight note stated that although the property was small, the children had everything they needed. Professionals can see and judge a home environment in different ways; what is "acceptable" to one, may not be acceptable to another. There is a need to ask questions of each other and seek greater clarification, especially to ensure a home is safe for babies and young children.

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6. Housing is a significant issue for many families, but expectations can in some instances be unrealistic. It's important all professionals help families understand what their needs are and what accommodation will meet their requirements. This may not be the family's ideal choice which may take months/years to become available. If there are concerns of safety regarding a property, professionals should escalate this to the appropriate housing agency, in order for them to advise and help the family with their choices.

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7. An ongoing finding is a significant need to strengthen engagement with fathers and male figures within the family as part of our everyday practice. With this family there was lack of engagement with both fathers, and little was done to understand the support offered or the impact of their presence in the children's lives.

Training around this subject is provided via Olive: Engagement of Fathers and Significant Males in Child Protection email: surreychildrens.academy@surreycc.gov.uk