

**Serious injuries to infants and the withdrawal of consent to services**

The DSCP undertook a Learning Lessons Review in relation to an infant who is believed to have experienced serious injuries as a consequence of being shaken. The learning from this review is presented below in the form of a case study. Individual actions have been taken where appropriate by the agencies involved. The DSCP has identified the wider learning which is relevant to all practice.

Jack is a young infant who was living with his mother and step father at the time the injuries were sustained. There were some risk factors that a review of research indicates are associated with serious injuries to young children. There are also a number of risk factors that were not present emphasising the often unpredictable nature of severe physical abuse. Identified risks can be reduced using the good practice guidance outlined below.

**DSCP 2 minute briefings**

What it told us…….During the course of the review a professional stated that she was unhappy with the decision to close the case and challenged the Social Worker regarding this. No record was made of this conversation nor was the concern escalated to senior managers.

What we all need to do now…..The DSCP has a clear escalation process for resolving professional differences. The full procedure can be accessed via the following link <http://doncasterscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_resolving_prof_diff.html>

What it told us……………Jack was subject to a Children and Families assessment as a Child in Need. The assessment focussed on the most obvious concern regarding mother’s parenting capacity and failed to explore other areas of concern.

What we all need to do now…………..Assessments need to be holistic and consider all aspects of a child’s life including the factors that impact on parenting capacity. Both strengths and risk factors need to be considered and balanced to form an analysis of the child’s circumstances.

What it told us…………… The case was closed without convening a strategy meeting. The rationale was that the family as required support under Section 17(10) of the Children Act ’89 but the family chose to decline the service which they were entitled to do given that engagement with CIN planning requires consent. However this assessment was based on incomplete information.

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What we all need to do now……….. Where risk factors have not been sufficiently explored or information remains unknown a multi-agency strategy meeting should be convened to consider whether closing the case is the correct decision. Withdrawal of consent alongside unknown risk factors may give “reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering significant harm” under Section 47 of the Children Act. Child protection enquiries can continue without parental consent.