

JS Serious Case Review

Learning Notes

What happened?

JS had been taken to hospital in January 2017 at six months of age; presented by parents due to not feeding properly and sleeping. A urine sample taken during admission identified JS had morphine in their system. The morphine was at a level the paediatrician considered could have had an effect on the breathing ability of JS, and which could have caused death.

There were additional concerns expressed by a police officer who attended the family home related to the environment in which JS was being cared for. The officer considered the family may be struggling to cope. The conditions could be indicative of neglect.

What did it tell us?

- The lack of recognition by professionals that this case required a multi- agency approach suggests there may be systemic issues
- Agencies involved with the couple and JS did not appear to recognise they had a crucial

role in supporting the move from home to independent living

- There is a lack of recognition of what constitutes a safeguarding concern and when there is the need to access support and supervision.
- The issue does not appear to be one where the policies and procedures provide insufficient guidance, but one of recognising when the threshold for implementing local safeguarding processes should be implemented.
- The actions of the acute hospital in discharging JS were in line with expected practice. However, consideration needs to be given to whether all children who attend with excessive drowsiness without an immediately identifiable cause should have their urines sent for toxicology
- It is vital that opportunities that present for professionals to directly challenge any administration of a medication that has not been prescribed for a child are taken.

What can we do now?

How does your agency engage with vulnerable teenage parents? Is this approach holistic?

When do you apply Thresholds? Is this consistent?

Are you confident in challenging parents when they are non-compliant or there are issues?

Are you able to recognise, record and monitor early indicators of neglect?

If in doubt ask for advice from your manager, safeguarding lead or Sandwell Safeguarding Business Unit on 0121 569 4800