

SCSP Spotlight Review

SR2 LEARNING BRIEFING



In 2022 an ambulance was called for a 6 week old baby who was reported to have fallen from a sofa at home. Further examinations showed the injuries were not consistent with this account and indicated non accidental injuries. An Interim Care Order was granted and, following successful treatment in hospital, the baby was discharged into the care of extended family. A placement risk assessment was carried out which concluded that carers could not keep baby safe as they refused to believe that parents had deliberately injured the baby. Whilst plans were being made to move the baby, parents absconded with their baby and returned to their native country in Europe.

Sandwell Children's Trust and West Midlands Police are working closely with their counterparts in the family's native country to ensure the baby is safeguarded.

What were the key issues?

- At supervised 'Family Time' sessions attended by baby, their parents and their extended family carers, the supervisor did not speak the family's native language therefore was unable to monitor and report on conversations that were taking place. Interpreters were also needed on home visits to gain accurate picture of the family's life and ensure they also understood what was happening and why as well as their rights
- Use of language to refer to types of assessments e.g. risk assessment and safety plan - do all agencies know what this means? It could be easy to assume that they are one and the same.
- Risk assessments should be carried out with the parents as well as the carers using interpreters when needed to fully understand protective factors and risks to the child.

What do good systems and practice look like?

- Ascertain a person/family's first language and level of ability/confidence in using English (e.g. conversational, fluent) at a first contact
- Even if the person states that are fluent, this needs to be regularly monitored and assessed for accuracy
- Ensure provision of technical/detailed language, i.e. medical information, is provided in the family's first language
- Use independent interpreters with proven ability in both languages - in some cases it may be appropriate to use a family member to interpret however there is always a risk that the conversation may not be interpreted accurately. Always use an interpreter for meetings.
- Ensure communication is jargon free with families and other professionals, or provide a detailed explanation of what the acronym/phrase means. It is easy to get desensitised to agency jargon but don't fall into the trap of thinking that what means something in your agency means the same thing in another!

What can practitioners do?

- Be culturally sensitive and aware in practice - this means taking time to understand what culture, race and faith means to a family and how this may impact on their beliefs, attitudes and choices
- Investigate options such as leaflets/posters which are available in other languages to share with families
- Consider how the child and family's confidence and ability in speaking/understanding English might impact on their strengths and areas of risk e.g. are they attending school? Information on accessing Education for school aged children who are newly arrived to the area can be found here <https://steps.sch.life/>
- Pool resources with other agencies, such as the cost of interpreters or use of colleagues/staff who speak the language, to ensure information is accessible to families

For further information, including learning briefings and partnership activities, visit:

<https://www.sandwellcsp.org.uk/key-safeguarding-issues/>