



Derby Safeguarding Children Board Thursday 24 April 2014

Derby Safeguarding Children Board today publishes the serious case review report into the tragic death in 2012 of a baby boy, known for the purpose of the review as DD12. He was born with very complex medical needs and during his short life he had significant levels of support from a wide range of professionals including health and children's social care.

In February 2012, concerns about his safety were considered by the Family Proceedings Court following an application for an Emergency Protection Order (EPO). The EPO was not granted and the Court determined that the injury being considered was accidental. DD12 returned home. Shortly after this, in May 2012, DD12 died as a result of internal bleeding caused by a head injury. His father pleaded guilty and was convicted of his manslaughter in 2013.

The aim of the serious case review into this case is not to investigate the incident that occurred in 2012 that led to his tragic death as this has been concluded by legal process, but to examine closely the work of individual agencies and their inter-agency process.

The complexities of this case are unusual and have identified improvements for all agencies involved and the Family Proceedings Court, both locally and nationally.

Christine Cassell, Chair of the Derby Safeguarding Children Board says, "This is a tragic case of a baby who died as a result of a sudden act by his father that could not have been predicted. He was not an invisible child, but one who was well known to local agencies during his short life and action was taken to try to protect him. The review does not identify major failings of agencies. In fact, the review concludes that the practice of professionals was at least competent and in many cases good. It does describe how agencies were disempowered by a Court decision that is very unusual and to our knowledge has not occurred before. This had implications for the way professionals felt able to protect this little boy when he returned home."

The serious case review concludes that DD12's complex needs were being met by all of the agencies working together but the case also emphasises the need to provide coordinated, earlier help where families are experiencing difficulties.

There are a number of recommendations from the review that have already been completed. Derby Safeguarding Children Board has received assurance that Her

Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service has taken immediate steps to ensure that this type of application is handled properly in future.

Christine Cassell
Independent Chair, Derby Safeguarding Children Board
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Notes for Editors

There has been a delay in the publication of the review due to complexities arising from the criminal trial and the need to ensure that remaining family members would not be adversely affected by its publication.

Following the conclusion of the trial of the father in May 2013 it was apparent that no evidence had been heard and, in particular, no reference was made to any previous alleged injury to DD12. There had been a previous Emergency Protection Order (EPO) application heard by the Family Proceedings Court in private and information relating to those proceedings was confidential.

The Derby Safeguarding Children Board considered that this material was a key area for potential learning as part of the review. Following legal advice an application was made to the Family Proceedings Court for permission for the material in relation to the application for an EPO to be disclosed to the Board for the purposes of inclusion in the published overview report. His Honour Judge Plunkett, sitting as a High Court Judge on the 17th September 2013, granted permission for the material to be disclosed.

The overview report required further amendment following this judgement. It has been written to comply with legal advice from Queen's Counsel and the decision of the Court to ensure that it can be published in a manner that does not adversely impact on the welfare of other children, relevant family members and others.

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