



Dudley Safeguarding
People Partnership

Children's Learning Review Practitioner Briefing

Concealed pregnancies and late maternity bookings

WHO SHOULD READ THE BRIEFING?

Any practitioner and manager whose work brings them into contact with children including unborn babies, young people, adults and their families.

CONCEALED PREGNANCIES

The term concealed pregnancy is used to cover both concealed and denied pregnancies.

- When concealed pregnancy is suspected, it is of course difficult to know the stage or gestational date of the pregnancy. A concealed pregnancy is defined as one where the pregnancy is first confirmed at more than 24 weeks gestation – this may be in late pregnancy, in labour, or after the birth of the baby.
- A woman who presents at, for example, 22 weeks, is not considered to have concealed her pregnancy but may have additional needs or vulnerabilities, and should be offered appropriate assessment and support.

Risks or potential complications resulting from a concealed pregnancy include:

- No antenatal care
- Pregnancy complications, maternal and foetal concerns: anomalies, growth, eclampsia etc
- Complications from underlying medical conditions in mother: cardiac, diabetes etc
- Complications from vulnerabilities in mother: mental health, substance misuse, social issues, domestic abuse
- Risks related to unassisted delivery
- Increased morbidity for mother and baby

HOW WE DID THE REVIEW

A partnership learning review considered cases where safeguarding concerns were reported after mothers presented late to maternity services or tried to conceal the pregnancy from professionals. The review aimed to identify learning in relation to professionals and organisations working individually and together to safeguarding and promote the welfare of children.

OVERVIEW OF LEARNING

The following learning has been identified:

- Concealed pregnancies make it difficult for agencies to work together effectively, therefore effective multi-agency information sharing and timely liaison between professionals is key.
- In cases considered there was little or no professional curiosity regarding why mothers were late booking, and no liaison between services. Consideration for completion of GCP2A (Graded Care Profile 2 Antenatal) should be given to all cases of late booking.

- A lack of engagement and non-attendance at appointments was evident in multiple agencies records, however due to missed opportunities for information sharing, was not identified as a potential safeguarding concern.
- All practitioners should follow safeguarding processes, rather than relying on the judgement of Team Managers or other colleagues deemed to be senior or subject experts.
- Accurate record keeping and timeliness of updating records is required to ensure opportunities to safeguard children are not missed. Discrepancies between recording systems (i.e. mother's records are electronic but children's records are paper) means additional attention and scrutiny is required.
- Think family – there was little or no professional curiosity about any other dependents and a lack of enquiries around father/hidden men. No lateral checks were completed by some professionals when previous Children Services involvement was disclosed.
- Professionals to be more mindful of asking women if they could be pregnant during engagement around alcohol and drug use. Services to consider if early pregnancy testing could be offered within their organisation.
- Timeliness of appointments – due to late booking various antenatal appointments did not take place at relevant points. This led to missed opportunities to share key information/campaigns such as [ICON](#).

WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW

1. Consider completing GCP2A (Graded Care Profile 2 Antenatal) for any concealed pregnancy or late booker. See the DSPP [Child Neglect](#) Strategy on our website.
2. The [Dudley Pre-Birth Protocol](#) sets out how the partnership responds to concerns for unborn babies where vulnerability and risk factor are identified.
3. [Was Not Brought and Did Not Attend](#) policies should be adhered to, with information regarding concerns shared with relevant professionals and agencies.
4. View our resources on [Professional Curiosity](#) on the DSPP website.

MORE INFORMATION

The DSPP training offer and further information for practitioners relating to learning from reviews is available via the [Learning Zone](#)

Resources specific to learning from this review

[Safer7 – Information Sharing](#)

[Safer7 – Professional Curiosity](#)

[Safer7 - ICON](#)

[Safer7 – Hidden Males](#)

[Safer7 – Think Family](#)