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Context

Amber was taken to hospital by parents due to worries about her arm. Initially it was thought by hospital staff to be a bone infection but a scan and child protection medical showed multiple healing fractures on both Amber and her sibling, Joshua. It was concluded that the injuries were non accidental. Amber was 2 months old at the time of the serious incident. She resided with her parents and 4 siblings

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Background

Amber was of dual heritage. She had 3 pre-school aged siblings and an older half-brother. The family moved to the local area in 2022. There has been no previous social care involvement with the family.

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Vulnerability Factors

- Professionals working with adults who are parents thinking about the welfare and protection of their children.
- 'Significant others' with caring responsibilities
- Culture, community and networks of support

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Learning

- Developing systemic practice to aid a better understanding of family relationships and systems and the inter-connectedness between the social, economic and cultural context in which live.
- Developing system wide cultural confidence.
- Strengthening language, communication and conversations around consent.

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Themes

- Understanding vulnerability & risk.
- Information sharing & language
- Cultural confidence & competence
- Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements when children present out of hours.

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Recommendations

1. There is an opportunity for the HSSCP to use the national reforms for children's services and the families first partnership programme, to take the learning outputs from this review into local transformation implementation plans:

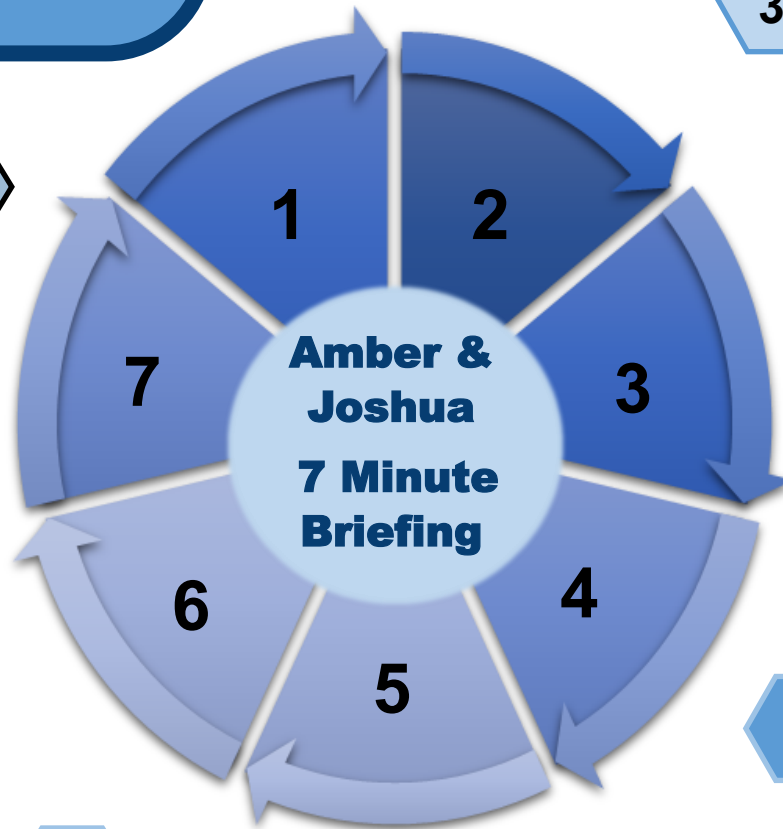
- Developing a systemic practice model and approach across the partnership.
- Early information sharing, professional curiosity and building early pictures of family needs before statutory intervention.
- Language, communication and the reframing of consent into a context of 'how can we help.'
- ensuring out of hours systems align more closely with daytime services, with consistent standards of practice.

2 (i) Review and strengthen Out of Hours/EDT call handling screening tools for timely and effective triaging, ensuring that professionals speak directly with each other in a timely way.

(ii) Review Out of Hours/EDT in line with the Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme guidance, 'considering out of hours services, to support the identification of need outside core working hours' and 'establish a mechanism for triaging, reviewing and acting on referrals sent to the MACPT, including links to the MASH or other front door referral teams and responsibilities for out of hours services' The Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme Guide DfE (2025: 27; 29)

3. Review the HSSCP Training Offer and Tees Safeguarding Procedures to ensure that there is practice guidance and tools that support language, communication and conversations about consent.

4. Review the HSSCP Training Offer to ensure that it includes and addresses, cultural confidence and competency across the multi-agency workforce.



Understanding Vulnerability and Risk

- When undertaking assessments, consider a systemic, ecological approach.
- Use professional curiosity to understand the whole picture and context.
- Agencies to provide the right tools to support practice models. For example, Genograms, Scaling, Support Circles.
- Ascertain at the earliest point, if parents and all members of the family unit feel that their voice and needs are understood?
- Identify and consider the support that local voluntary, community and faith-based services can offer, as well as universal services.

Information-sharing and Language

- Reframe consent to 'wanting to help and broker support' for families within a context of non-stigmatising family help.
- Consider language and questions that can be used to gain a better understanding of the family, considering also who to ask.
- Promote tools that support language, communication and conversations around consent.
- Supervision and training are essential to build practitioner confidence to be curious and ask more respectful questions.

Cultural Practices

- Workforce development and training systems to build cultural confidence and competency across workforce.
- Use professional curiosity to better understand identity, gender, race, culture and intersectionality.
- Use professional curiosity to understand family's context and systems, including race, culture, gender and religion.
- Safeguarding procedures and practice models to be underpinned by equality and inclusion principles.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements when Children Present Out of Hours

- Strengthening call handling screening tools for timely and effective triaging including prioritising and escalation, ensuring that professionals can access and speak directly with one another in a timely way, when out of hours.
- Paediatricians to be included in out of hours strategy meetings.
- Consider the role of out of hours teams within the context of the reforms of children's services.