

SUMMARY:

Baby ON16, aged 16 weeks, was admitted to hospital in early 2016 after her mother noticed she had a swollen arm. This followed at least 15 previous contacts with health professionals, some routine appointments, and some where mother raised concerns about various marks, bruises and skin lesions. The first marks had been noted by a health professional when baby ON16 was just 6 weeks old as “bruises to head, blue marks on toes and other marks.” After medical investigations at the hospital it was concluded that the various injuries, which included bruising, swelling and multiple fractures, were non-accidental and had occurred over a period of time. The household of baby ON16 was part of an extended family with a complex arrangement for the care of some of its members.

KEY LEARNING:

1. The appearance of unexplained marks and bruises on very young children who are not mobile are not likely to have been caused by themselves or another young infant. The possibility of NAI should be part of any assessment of a non-mobile baby presenting in these circumstances.
2. Repeated returns to Initial Child Protection Conferences should be carefully examined.
3. Practitioners need to be clear on the legal status of children and where children are placed with extended family members the quality of assessment required must be as high as that for children taken into the care of the Local Authority.
4. The strategy of placing a child with extended family members should consider the impact on the welfare of any other children in the household and be subject to regular reviews.
5. Practitioners need to have the skills and confidence to challenge and escalate problems that arise in practice.
6. Assessments should not be regarded as complete without consideration of all relevant information from partner agencies.

IMPROVING PRACTICE

Here are some suggestions for improving practice:-

- Share this bulletin in team meetings and during supervision.
- Familiarise yourself with the NSCB [Bruising in Pre-Mobile Babies](#) guidance and the [Bruising in Pre-Mobile Babies](#) flowchart
- Familiarise yourself with the NSCB [Resolving Professional Differences \(Escalation Procedure\)](#) and be clear about when and how you would use it.
- The NSCB provides a range of training opportunities which are relevant to this review and can be booked via the [NSCB website](#)
- The full report regarding this Serious Case Review is available in the [Learning from Practice](#) section of the NSCB website. The online [NSCB inter agency safeguarding procedures](#) provide detailed guidance across the range of safeguarding issues.