

After Action Review C89

What were we worried about?

C89 was four months old at the time of her father's arrest for sexually assaulting her. Her father was under police investigation at the time of this alleged sexual assault for other alleged sexual offences against children in another area. This investigation had been on-going for three years. As C89's father had not been formally charged by the police for the alleged offences committed in the other area, he was free to reside where he chose and C89 was conceived following him forming a new relationship with her mother. The police were unaware that C89's father had moved into a home with other children or that his new partner was pregnant. Midwifery and other health practitioners were unaware of the on-going police investigation. C89's mother was aware of the police investigation but appears to have accepted her partner's explanation that he was innocent. C89's father did not disclose to the police that he had moved in with a new family, or that his partner was pregnant, nor did he or C89's mother share information about the on-going police investigation with health practitioners.

Concerns were eventually raised when C89's father's ex-partner, mother of the children he was under police investigation for sexually abusing, saw a social media post about his new baby and alerted the police. A safeguarding referral was immediately made to the MASH, safeguarding procedures instigated and a medical examination was undertaken on C89 which evidenced sexual harm. Legal proceedings were initiated in a timely manner and C89 was placed in Local Authority care where she remains to date. Care proceedings are on-going, as is further police investigation in relation to the alleged sexual abuse of C89 by her father. The father is now subject to bail conditions which prevent him being in contact with any children under 16 years of age.

C89's After Action

Review took place on 15th November 2021 with the aim of identifying learning from an incident in which a young baby (C89) was sexually assaulted, but the criteria to hold a Rapid Review was unmet.

Please use this link for more information on the criteria for undertaking a Rapid Review: [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

The purpose of the After Action Review was twofold. Firstly, to ascertain how the father had been able to move into a home where children were present, when he was under a current police investigation for child abuse, and secondly to consider the effectiveness of local multi-agency practice once the risk that he posed had been identified.

South West Child Protection Procedures
Click here

Impact of COVID-19
Expectant fathers were not able to attend midwifery appointments under Covid arrangements and this impacted on the Midwifery team's ability to identify risk.

Ensure risk assessments are relevant, regularly updated, and reviewed

Learning Identified/What Next?

1. Internal police learning, prior to the After-Action Review, suggested that the initial investigation into C89's father may have been progressed in a timelier way had the investigation been split into two elements, one regarding the contact offence and the other around any information on his IT or mobile devices. It was noted however, that in some instances, splitting the investigation could impact negatively on CPS decision making. The police will be undertaking a review of their capacity to check IT/mobile phone equipment alongside the timescale of this investigation.
2. There is no obligation for someone to report where they are living or who they are in contact with when they have been released by the police 'under investigation'. However, the police noted that proactive policing meant an officer should have checked in with C89's father every so often, and it remains unclear whether this happened.
3. Health professionals should be more professionally curious when expectant mothers/fathers disclose that they have other children, including the extent of their contact and relationship with them. This may have led to further information being available pre-birth about C89's father's lack of contact with his other children and the reasons for this, which could have led to an earlier safeguarding referral being made. Health colleagues have agreed to take forward this learning.
4. The After-Action Review recommended that the issue of the lack of bail conditions associated with sexual perpetrators being released under long term police investigations, which has potentially led to another child being abused, is shared with National Panel in case there is a pattern of similar events in other areas.

What Good Practice did we see?

- Agencies responded correctly once the risk posed by the father had been identified, and risk was well managed from that point in time.
- The police had already reviewed their practice and identified an alternative model of investigation that may reduce delay in future.