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Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board Briefing

(Revised Procedures in relation to Unborn Babies)

Introduction

National and local Serious Case Reviews (SCR's) and other child reviews over many years have identified a range of risk factors which should alert professionals to the possibility that a child may be at risk. Many of these factors can be identified prior to birth. Examples include;

- Parents where previous children have been removed from their care. (Including Residence Orders made to other family members).
- Parents who have offended against children or otherwise are demonstrably a 'risk to children.'
- Domestic abuse/ substance misuse (especially those who are not cooperating with treatment or not engaging with specialist services).
- Parents with learning or untreated mental health difficulties with limited parenting capacity, particularly where there is inadequate family support.

Early intervention is essential in ensuring that for unborn babies whom risks are identified are given the best possible chances and to reduce the need for statutory assessment and intervention. It is important therefore, that pregnant women receive timely support from the correct service area. Furthermore, every agency must work together to ensure that all children, including those that are yet to be born are kept safe.

The purpose of the revised procedure 'Responding to Concerns about Unborn Children' is to therefore provide all referring agencies with a clear understanding as to how concerns regarding unborn children will be dealt with.

What are the benefits of implementing this policy and procedure?

1. It encourages the completion of early help assessments so that early intervention can commence at the earliest opportunity.
2. The completion of early help assessments will ensure that those children who require targeted support are referred for the timely implementation of the antenatal pathway.
3. Support will be available to vulnerable families from the first booking in antenatal appointment.
4. Cases will be stepped up to the appropriate Safeguarding team to ensure timely pre-birth assessments are undertaken with a clear process for social work assessments, S47 processes and Public Law Outline work.
5. Timelines of key activities are provided to encourage effective pre-birth multi agency planning
6. Procedure clarifies the arrangements for the efficient step up and step down of cases.
7. Ensures that clear plans are in place prior to the birth of the child which have been agreed on a multi-agency basis.

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