

Bath & North East Somerset Council 'One Minute Guide' to Pre-Birth Protocol

Pre-Birth Protocol

Aim of the Protocol

The aim of this protocol is to enable practitioners to work together with families to safeguard unborn babies where vulnerability and risk indicators are identified. It provides an agreed process between Health agencies, Children's Social Care and other agencies working with the mother and the baby's family on the planning, assessment and actions required to safeguard the unborn baby.

This Protocol is specific to Bath and North East Somerset and how services are structured in our area, it is intended to be read alongside the South West Child Protection Procedures that can be found at: http://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/banes/p_prebirth_sg_unborn.html and cover the whole of the South West.

Risk Factors

Risk factors that should alert professionals to consider a co-ordinated response:

Where mothers, fathers or partners or any other significant member of the household:

- Are involved in risk activities such as substance misuse, including drugs and alcohol
- Have perinatal/mental illness or support needs that may present a risk to the unborn baby or indicate their needs may not be met
- Are victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse
- Have been identified as presenting a risk, or potential risk, to children, such as having committed a crime against children
- Have a history of violent behaviours
- Are not able to meet the unborn babies needs e.g. significant learning difficulties and in some circumstances severe physical or mental disability
- Are known because of historical concerns such as previous neglect, other children subject to a child protection plan, subject to legal proceedings or have been removed from parental care
- Are known because of parental involvement as a child or adult with Social Care.
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- Are currently looked after or a classed as a care leaver
- Are teenage/young parents
- Are living in poor home conditions, homelessness or temporary housing
- Any other circumstances or issues that give rise to concern

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Working with fathers or new partners

It is important that all agencies involved in pre and post birth assessment and support, fully consider the important role of fathers for their baby. The South West Child Protection procedures provide useful information and advice for professionals about working and involving fathers:

[http://www.online-procedures.co.uk/swcpp/parenting-capacity-families/working-with men/](http://www.online-procedures.co.uk/swcpp/parenting-capacity-families/working-with-men/)

In addition any new partner or person within the household should trigger the professionals involved to re-assess the risk to the unborn child.

A Request for Service (referral) must always be made to CSC if there are the following circumstances:

- There has been a previous unexpected or unexplained death of a child whilst in the care of either parent.
- A parent or other adult in the household is a person identified as presenting a risk, or potential risk, to children. This may be due to domestic abuse, violence, substance/alcohol abuse, mental health or learning difficulties. If it identified that parents have a learning need then consideration needs to be given to any additional support or intervention they may require.
- Children in the household / family currently subject to a child protection plan or previous child protection concerns.
- A sibling (or child in the household of either parent) has previously been removed from the household temporarily or by court order.
- Where there are serious concerns about parental ability to care for the unborn baby or other children.
- Where there are maternal risk factors e.g. denial of pregnancy, concealed pregnancy, avoidance of antenatal care (failed appointments), non-co-operation with necessary services, non-compliance with treatment with potentially detrimental effects for the unborn baby.
- Any other concern exists that the baby may be at risk of significant harm.
- There is a perinatal mental illness that presents a risk to the unborn baby

If there is identification of risks and vulnerabilities that would suggest upon their birth the Unborn may experience neglect, emotional, physical or sexual harm, then a Request for Service (known as a Referral in Working Together 2018 Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>) needs to be made to Social Care as early as possible and no later than 18 weeks.

The Request for Service form for Bath and North East Somerset's CSC can be found on the B&NES website at: <http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/children-young-people-and-families/child-protection>

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