



LEARNING BRIEF: BABY J

Learning identified at a health learning event in July 2025

KEY LEARNING: When there is a SCH in a baby over two weeks old this should be assessed in line with the non mobile baby policy.

WHAT HAPPENED

Baby J was born in April 2025 to professional parents, with no prior social care or police involvement. At 8 weeks, Baby J was found to have a subconjunctival haemorrhage (SCH) - a SCH is a bleed behind the conjunctiva and can show in the baby's eyes. Upon further investigation, multiple healing fractures consistent with non-accidental injury.

WHAT WENT WELL

- **Continuity of Care:** Consistent midwifery and health visiting support, with extended postnatal care
- **ICON Messaging:** Messages about coping with infant crying (ICON), were delivered at multiple touchpoints, including antenatal classes and postnatal visits
- **Information Sharing:** Timely and effective communication between midwifery and health visiting teams.
- **Appropriate Escalation:** Recognition of SCH as a sentinel injury by the GP and consultant led to safeguarding investigations and multi-agency collaboration.
- **NHS 111:** safety netting advice and opportunistic signposting to ICON

WHAT COULD BE BETTER

Domestic Abuse: Baby J's mother was asked about domestic abuse it is not clear if Baby J's father was. Professional curiosity and sensitive inclusivity of mothers, fathers and carers is needed

Parental Anxiety Support: maternal anxiety was identified and supported but there is a gap in services locally & nationally when there are low level concerns.

NHS 111 Service: There is no routine checking if babies are taken to ED when advised to do so.

Hospital Discharge: Discharge summaries often place responsibility on parents to seek further care. Clearer communication is needed to ensure parents understand and act on follow-up advice

KEY THEMES

- **SCH in Babies:** SCH is a sentinel injury in non-mobile babies and should prompt thorough medical and safeguarding investigations.
[NB: Sentinel= medically mild, superficial injuries]
- **Policy Alignment:** Multiagency policies on injuries in non-mobile babies should reference SCH and be regularly updated.
- **ICON Messaging:** Early and opportunistic delivery of ICON messages to both parents is crucial, especially antenatally and at hospital discharge

RECOMENDATIONS

- **Increase Awareness:** Cascade guidance that SCH in non-mobile babies over 2 weeks of age should trigger safeguarding reviews.
- **Policy Review:** Update multiagency policies to reference SCH.
- **ICON Messaging:** Ensure early and opportunistic delivery to both parents.
- **Discharge Communication:** Improve clarity of follow-up actions at discharge.
- **111/OOH Follow-up:** Review and improve follow-up protocols for babies advised to attend ED.
- **Domestic Abuse Enquiries:** Develop sensitive approaches to include both parents and carers.
- **Support for Parental Anxiety:** Review and enhance signposting for parents with anxiety below specialist thresholds

Further information about SCH is available here