South Gloucestershire Children's Partnership Child Safeguarding Practice Review September 2025

Sam*

The South Gloucestershire Children's Partnership agreed to undertake a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) to consider practice and systems there are concerns about the child's mental health along with child protection concerns at home. This follows a serious incident in 2024 where a 14-yearold child attempted suicide, resulting in potentially life-changing injuries. She was known to have made previous plans/attempts to end her life.

*anonymised for publication

Theme: Domestic Abuse (DA)

- Sam and her siblings were exposed to DA, this trauma was compounded by other forms of trauma including neglect and physical abuse
- Over 40 incidents of DA between Sam's father and his partner
- There is evidence of cumulative harm
- There is a link between Sam's experiences of domestic abuse and neglect and her emotional vulnerability and mental health struggles, including suicidality

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children as victims in their own right this review found practice had not caught up with policy

suicidality

The Children's Partnership commissioned Nicki Pettitt, an to lead this CSPR



'People must give a kid help BEFORE it gets really bad' Sam

Recommendation 1

This report to be shared with the Local Authority who were responsible for the adoption assessments and placements, so that they can consider their own learning.

Recommendation 2

The relevant agencies must outline how they will ensure that all appropriate staff are aware and competent, for their role, in respect of working with service users where trauma is an issue.

Recommendation 3

The relevant agencies must work together to agree an improved approach for understanding and assessing the increasing risks of suicidality, outside of responding to or safety planning for a specific incident or concern. The Partnership should be provided with assurance about improved systems and practice in this area.

Recommendation 4

The Partnership to consider how they ask agencies to identify and work with families where adolescent neglect features. This should include an addendum to the 2024 neglect tool kit which focuses specifically on identifying neglect and concerns within the home for older children

Adopted children are uniquely vulnerable due to early trauma and disrupted attachments

Children's voices must be heard and acted on when they express distress or

Adopted Children

- There was an overarching priority to keep the sibling group together
- Tendency to hope for improvement despite ongoing concerns
- Therapeutic life story work did not take place, Sam and her siblings have limited knowledge of their birth family
- Child protection plans were initiated 3 times post adoption

Supporting adopted children with complex trauma requires coordinated, traumainformed, and proactive multi-agency responses that go beyond incident-based interventions to address cumulative harm, emotional vulnerability, and the child's lived experience

Theme: Responding to children with mental health issues

- Sam showed signs of emotional distress from a young age
- Her parents often minimised or misunderstood her mental health
- Safety plans were often incident specific rather than addressing the overall safety and wellbeing
- The review calls for a multi-agency strategy to assess and respond to suicidality – not just reacting to incidents but understanding the child's capacity and intent over time.

Theme: Information Sharing & Communication

- Sam's school were unaware of escalating concerns after a serious incident that took place in the school holidays.
- There needs to be a plan to share with schools even outside of term time.
- When a plan ends there must be clear communication to all those involved

Theme: Online activity & Social Media

Sam posted videos of herself in risky and self-harming situations across multiple social media accounts.

Posts increased vulnerability and potentially posed risk to viewers. Online behaviours can be a reflection of emotional distress.

> You can read the full CSPR by clicking here

