



Learning from

CSPR SAM

OCTOBER 2025



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Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR): SAM

- CSPR published September 2025
- 'Sam' is the name chosen by the child
- There was a serious incident in November 2024 when Sam attempted to end her life, she sustained serious injuries
- She had made other attempts and plans and had told many people that she wanted to die
- Sam was placed for adoption (by a different LA) with her older brother in 2011
- Sam's younger sister was adopted by the same family a year later
- Sam and her siblings were placed on child protection plans three times due to concerns regarding the quality of care provided by the adoptive parents
- In 2021 there were care proceedings, and the court decided the children should continue to live with their adoptive family

Learning from this CSPR

- The particular needs and vulnerability of children who are adopted
- Responding to child protection concerns in an adoptive placement
- Children living with domestic abuse
- Working with and understanding risk to children with mental health issues who voice suicidality
- Social media and on-line activity

Child Protection Plans

- The first child protection plan was made in 2012, shortly after the youngest sibling was placed. Their child protection category was physical abuse
- It is now known that the parents separated shortly after the first child protection plans ended and the youngest child was adopted
- In 2019 the children were placed on child protection plans again – physical abuse perpetrated by mother
- In March 2021 the children were placed on child protection plans under the category of neglect
- It was at this stage that the Local Authority, with the support of other agencies working with the children, issued care proceedings.
- It was decided that Sam and her siblings would likely experience more harm being removed from their adoptive parent's care as opposed to the harm they experienced living with them

Mental Health

- Concerns first raised at primary school
- Seen by Thinking Aloud age 8
- Post adoption therapeutic support provided, same psychotherapist for many years, which is good practice
- Multiple conversations with Sam about her wish to die and a lot of multi agency work took place to make safety plans
- Sam's parents minimised this and made comments about Sam 'wasting ambulance service time'
- Gaps in sharing information – plan needed to include all agencies

‘The review has recognised that safety planning which focuses on alleviating risk in respect of one incident or increased concern will not make an overall difference to a child or young person’s own sense of safety.

It is this that needs to be focused on to prevent ongoing suicidality.

Sam was regularly voicing her intention to die at school, to her parents, her friends, her therapist, to CAMHS and to social workers.

She imagined and described dying.

Sam told the review that her biggest pieces of advice for professionals is that they should always ‘**listen**’ and ‘**take a person seriously**’ if they say they want to die. She said, ‘**people must give a kid help BEFORE it gets really bad**’. She was clear that she had been honest about her intentions, as indeed she had.’

I have been asking for
help my whole life

Sexual Abuse

- In January 2024 Sam disclosed a sexual abuse incident where she was touched by a family friend.
- This was investigated by the police and there was a S47 investigation led by CSC.
- Alongside the involvement of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- Sam did not wish to give a formal statement to the police, so no further police action was taken.
- The incident was minimised by her mother, this may have influenced Sam's decision
- The Bridge (Sexual Assault Referral Centre) was offered but refused by Sam.
- Her therapist was aware of the allegations and included support in her sessions with Sam.

Domestic Abuse

- Following their separation, the adoptive mother has made allegations of significant domestic abuse in the relationship, including physical abuse towards her that had put the children at risk of physical and emotional harm.
- There is also Domestic abuse between dad and new partner, (over 40 incidents) and alcohol abuse
- A safety plan was made that the children would only have contact with their father when his partner was not at his home.
- For children who are already vulnerable due to other trauma, as was the case for Sam, exposure to domestic abuse can lead to significant cumulative harm

Recommendations

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

Questions for professionals

Sam talked frequently about her intention to die
She told the review we should 'give a kid help before it gets really bad'

What does this help look like?

What do we need to do to better support children like Sam?

What needs to happen so that professionals better understand past trauma and work more effectively together?

What will you do differently as a result of this CSPR?

How could your team learn from this?

What training and resources are available?

Multi Agency Training

Child Sexual Abuse Half day training

Domestic Abuse Training

Mental Health Awareness e-module

Attachment Trauma and Recovery training

Resources

Domestic Abuse resources

Sexual Abuse Resources

Neglect Resources



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