

Together we can do

GREAT THINGS

Durham Pre Birth Intervention Service – *Improving the life chances of Children*



What we know.....

- **THE DANGER** - Children under 1 years old are at a disproportionate risk of death, serious injury or development delay resulting from abuse or neglect.
- **THE HARMFUL AFFECT OF NEGLECT** - There is growing evidence of the damaging effects that emotional abuse and neglect can have upon the Unborn Baby, Newborns and children's overall growth and development.
- **THE CYCLE** - Where a parent has had children removed into the care system; these adults are more likely to experience emotional, environmental and health related difficulties. Many have drug, alcohol and mental health difficulties and have grown up in care themselves. These vulnerability factors mean that their children are more likely to grow into vulnerable adults.

Durham's Response

- A dedicated Pre-birth Intervention Team to work with Parent's who are pregnant and have children permanently removed from their care.
- The service is delivered during the pre birth and for a period of time, post birth.
- The team is a County Wide service consisting of 5 Social Worker's, 1 Senior Social Worker and 1 Team Manager. Caseloads are between 10-12 per Social Worker.

Why Pre-Birth Intervention Service?

- **BENEFIT OF EARLY INTERVENTION** – Evidence based on National and Local research highlights the advantages that early planning and early permanency (deciding on the forever home) can have upon baby's outcomes and life chances.
- **SUCCESS** – the Pre Birth service was piloted in 2014 for almost 2 years and received commendation for the service and good, well planned outcomes provided to Families and children.
- **WHAT WORKS** – the approach used in the Pre birth Team, to work with families, is based on what we know 'works' to improve chances of good outcomes - understanding Families needs, developing good relationships based on respect, listening and helping.

How our service is delivered

- Intervention starts early (minimum of 12 weeks gestation - pregnancy) and continues until Baby is placed in his/her permanent home.
- The family have a dedicated Social Worker and Family Worker to work in collaboration with them. These practitioners remain allocated until after baby's birth and until the baby's final plan is in place.
- A network of multi agency professionals delivering expert services (in areas such as domestic abuse, alcohol misuse, harm minimisation).
- Parenting advice and support using different learning tools such as videos, practical examples, games and homework.
- An holistic assessment to understand the dangers posed to Baby and what can be done to reduce these dangers and increase safety.
- A clear plan is in place which explain goals and when these must be achieved by the professional network and family. This plan includes where baby sides at birth (parent's care, with family, in foster care or with Foster to Adopt carers).
- Assessment, support and planning continues after Baby is born.

The Numbers

- Since the team was established in May 2018, 64 referrals have been received. Of those referrals 56 families have progressed to receive work from the pre birth team.
- 2 families moved out of the area following the conclusion of the pre birth assessment and those cases were transferred to the new Local Authority with a clear plan for those babies.
- 54 families have continued to receive intervention

Unborn - 29 of those are in the pre birth assessment stage (3 are on a child protection plan)

Born - 22 babies have been born of which 9 babies have been placed in parents care from birth. 12 of those 22 babies are out of parental care, safe with either family members of in Local Authority Foster care.

Case Study - Baby A

12 weeks gestation – Referral to Children’s Services



- Midwifery services referred Unborn Baby A to Children’s service immediately after Birth Mother attended for her booking appointment.
- Birth Mother was very vulnerable and both her and Birth father had learning difficulties which affected how they could care for themselves and a child.
- The couples oldest child had been removed from their care by Children’s Services in the past and that she no longer lived with them.

12-28 weeks gestation - Intensive Support



- Unborn Baby A was referred to the Pre Birth team at 12 weeks gestation and a Social Worker was allocated.
- For the next 5 months, a team of multi agency professionals worked with Birth Parents. A family worker visited weekly, talking to Birth Mother and Birth Father about taking care of themselves, preparing for baby, discussing what had changed since their other child had been adopted and helping them focus on what else they needed to do. The Intervention was tailored taking into account Birth parent’s learning difficulty.
- Each agency worked with the Birth Parents to help them learn parenting skills and meanwhile a Pre birth assessment completed was Unborn A’s Social Worker. Both birth parent’s received legal advice from their own solicitor during the process.

Case Study - Baby A



28 weeks gestation - Assessment conclusion

- The Pre birth assessment was completed and highlighted lots of concerns in respect to the danger that Unborn Baby A was in from her parent's and the likelihood that he was suffer neglect and serious harm if in the care of her birth parent's at birth.
- The Social Worker recommended that Baby A would need alternative carers and permanent care outside that of her birth parents in the long term.



32 weeks gestation - Formulating the plan

- Baby A was placed on Durham's Child Protection list and it was agreed that the Social Worker would issue Care Proceedings at her birth in order to keep him safe.
- The Social Worker found carers who could care for her in the short term, while the Court decided upon her plan but also in the long term, should he be unable to return to her parent's care. These were called Foster to Adopt carers.



Birth – Placed into Foster to Adopt Placement

- At Birth, Baby A was discharged from hospital into the care of Foster to adopt carers. She is now 3 months old and the plan is for her to remain with these carers and eventually be adopted by them.

Case Study - Baby B



16 weeks gestation - Early Intervention

- Midwifery services referred Baby B to Children's services after her mother attended for a pregnancy appointment.
- Birth Mother had 3 previous children removed from her care some 8 years previously and they were living with family members.

16-28 weeks gestation - Intensive Support



- Unborn Baby B was allocated to the Pre Birth team and a Social Worker and Family Worker were appointed.
- During the next 4 months, a team of multi agency professionals worked with the family including practitioners. A family worker visited Birth Mother every week and also visited Birth father, as the adults lived separately and weren't in a relationship. Birth Mother and Birth Father were given the opportunity to talk about how their lives had changed. A family meeting was held to explore how other family members could also increase safety for baby. Birth parent's planned for the arrival for baby. Each agency worked with the Birth Parents to provide support and meanwhile a Pre birth assessment completed was Unborn B's Social Worker.

Case Study - Baby B



28 weeks gestation - Assessment conclusion

- The Pre birth assessment was completed and highlighted how things had changed for Birth Mother and Birth Father in respect to how much safety there was in comparison to in the past. Birth Mother was having lots of contact with her other children and they were being well cared for and she could demonstrate that she understood why their children had previously been removed and what her and Birth father needed to do for the future.
- Birth Mother talked about having a positive relationship with the Social Worker and how this had been really helpful in her feeling supported.
- Social Worker recommended that Baby B should be placed at home with Birth Mother and have regular contact with Birth Father.



32 weeks gestation - Formulating the plan

- Baby B plan detailed what other professionals would do when Baby was at home and how everyone would work together to monitor the situation and provide advice/support.



Birth – Home with Birth Mother

- At Birth, Baby B was born, she went home with her Birth Mother. The Social Worker monitored her, alongside other professionals to ensure that the care was good.
- Baby B's case was closed to Children's services in December 2019 when Baby B was 18 months old.

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QUESTIONS?

