

Case Study 1

The MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) received a 121a form with concerns about the unborn child of a woman who had been arrested with her boyfriend. Their flat had been searched and 150 Valium pills were found, which the woman admitted using to help her sleep. The risk was assessed as amber by the police due to the drug taking in pregnancy and possession of a high number of pills. This was the twentieth 121a form completed by the police, and their information showed that the woman's partner had been warned for violence, drugs and weapons, with 57 crime links. CYPS (Children and Young People's Service) had three historic contacts for the mother, as she had presented as homeless, and there had been previous concerns about her drug use following an arrest for possessing amphetamine. Health research yielded a large amount of information regarding the maternal family history, which showed a pattern of non-engagement, and the maternal grandmother being known for substance misuse. The health information also highlighted that it did not appear that the woman had engaged with any antenatal services. Information received from the education service showed that, although the woman was no longer of school age, there had been frequent interventions due to non-attendance while she was at school. The housing team also contacted the MASH with concerns about unsavoury characters at the property. They told the MASH that the couple had been given notice of eviction due to anti-social behaviour. The MASH sent a referral to the assessment team the following day regarding child protection concerns for the unborn child. This initial assessment identified the following concerns:

- the mother was not attending antenatal appointments
- the mother was not registered with her local GP
- concerns about drug use prior to and during pregnancy
- there had been previous CYPS involvement when the woman was 16 and homeless
- concerns raised by housing because a notice of eviction had been served due to anti-social behaviour, but the family had not engaged with housing to remedy this
- the father's level of violence: he was well known to the police with warnings for weapons, violence and drugs.

An initial child protection conference was held within 15 working days, and the unborn baby was placed on a child protection plan under the neglect category. The plan was put in place to coordinate support and safeguarding for the child when he was born. The child remains on a child protection plan, and is thriving in the care of both parents. Both mother and father are engaging with services, and have shown a positive motivation to provide a stable and nurturing environment for their child. The early identification of need for this unborn baby led to a timely and appropriate response by the CYPS, with information gathered from a number of agencies.