

06 Resources

- [SCR Matthew – Published Report](#)
- [The effect of non-dependent parental drinking on children & families \(Foster, Bryant and Brown, 2017\)](#)
- [Child neglect - information and resources \(NSPCC\)](#)
- [Herefordshire Professional Differences Policy](#)
- [Right Help Right Time – Herefordshire Levels of Need](#)
- [Pre-birth procedures for Herefordshire](#)

05 Better Practice

Professionals should reflect:

- **Lived experience - what is the day to day life** of the child like?
- **What is the impact** on the child of repeated incidents?
- **Are plans focused** on the needs of the child, or are they overly concerned about the adults in the family?
- **Impact** - what is the plan and what difference is it making?
- **Understand** how non-dependent alcohol impacts on children and can put them at risk.
- **Identify** when you are not successfully engaging with a parent & consider how to adjust your approach.

01 Background

Matthew was one year and seven months old when he ingested medication used to treat psychosis while he was at home in the care of his parents. While Matthew survived the incident, a Serious Case Review (Working Together, 2015) was commissioned due to the significant harm that occurred to Matthew when he ingested the medication.

02 Safeguarding concerns

There were concerns of child neglect and there was a history of domestic abuse, mental health problems and substance use in the family. Matthew's father was also known to police and probation services. There were concerns that Matthew's parents were affected by early childhood trauma, which impacted their parenting.

Learning Briefing: Serious Case Review for Matthew

04 Learning

- Where a plan is stepped down to Early Help or where a parent/carer refuses the support of Early Help, consideration must be given as to whether this will adversely impact the child's safety, health and/or development and, therefore, meet the threshold for a referral to children's social care.
- Professional awareness is needed of the risks to children from parental alcohol misuse, even when the parent is not considered a dependent drinker.
- For behaviour to change, explicit multi-agency plans, that are monitored and to which there is good adherence, are needed.
- There needs to be continued awareness and use of the professional differences and escalation process, referral pathways and levels of need framework (Right Help, Right Time)

03 Analysis

The review found that:

- Matthew's lived experiences were not well enough understood.
- There were missed opportunities to intervene earlier – for example, a pre-birth assessment was not completed, despite previous concerns in relation to Matthew's older sibling.
- There was insufficient information-sharing between professionals, which resulted, for e.g., in a lack of understanding about the role that Matthew's father played in the children's lives.
- The significance of the family's history was not fully taken into account, and the parents' capacity to change was not effectively assessed.
- Greater challenge was needed when professionals were concerned about decisions made by other professionals.