

1. Background:

Lone parents in newly formed relationships may quickly involve new partners in a caring role. Professionals need to explore more fully with the main carer what they know about their new partner and their past.

7. Further Information:

Check out your local safeguarding children partnership

Shropshire (SSCP)

<https://www.safeguardingshropshireschildren.org.uk/>

Telford & Wrekin (TWSP)

<https://www.telfordsafeguardingpartnership.org.uk/site/index.php>

6. Helpful websites

On-line Dating Association – guidance to keep yourself safe

<https://www.onlinedatingassociation.org.uk/oda-consumers/date-safe.html>

How to stay safe when dating – article

<https://metro.co.uk/2019/02/02/stay-safe-dating-8428797/>

5. What can professionals do?

- During pregnancy and after birth, make active enquiries about the child's birth father and/or new partners
- From the outset identify 'significant' people in the child's life e.g. partners (current and 'estranged'), siblings, extended family members and friends. Talk to them.
- Clarify who are the members of the household, their relationship to each other and the role they play
- Consider some people may be using nicknames or aliases, or be given false status, for example, 'uncle'.
- When making checks, allow for different spellings of names
- Encourage and support the primary carer to see the importance of the role of significant others' in the child's life including when introducing new partners
- Make sure those with parental responsibility (including those who are not directly involved in children's lives) know when there are professional concerns about their child and the extent of them
- Use professional curiosity to explore details of the new partner



2. Why it matters?

There have been local and national child practice learning reviews which have highlighted instances where new partners, when left in a caring role, have been unable to keep children safe, and in some circumstances have harmed the child/ren. Learning has been shared by other Child Death Overview Panels where they have undertaken several child death reviews where relatively new partners have been the perpetrators of injury that have led to the child's death.

3. New relationships:

As a lone parent/carers without awareness of a new partner's past or capacity to parent, it is difficult to make an informed decision on whether, or not, to leave your child/ren in their care. As professionals working with vulnerable families we should encourage lone parents to ask uncomfortable questions and 'think the unthinkable' to safeguard their children. This can equally apply to other families, not just those deemed vulnerable.

4. How can professionals help?

New relationships can be very emotional and intense and as a result parents/carers' may not feel able to ask difficult questions without support. As a professional you can assist by:

- Having continuing conversations about new partners with the parents/carers you work with.
- Use different sources to gather information –
 - Consider the main carer of the child may be in a coercive/controlling situation
 - Facilitate a multi-agency professionals meeting (MAPM) where there are concerns
 - Engage with other family members/friends
- Offer the parent/carers the opportunity to find out about their new partner using sources such as:
 - Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme
[Clare's Law](#)
 - Sexual Offences Disclosure Scheme
[Sarah's Law](#)