

Child M

Statement – Jim Gamble QPM, Independent Chair CHSCB

It is hard to imagine the pain caused by two fractured femurs. It is almost unbearable to imagine such injuries being sustained by a 13 month old child. The case of child M is disturbing and yet, sadly, not unfamiliar.

The doctor that initially treated child M described the injuries as “horrendous” and for many, it might be hard to understand why no one has been convicted of causing them. Whilst both parents were recently sentenced for child cruelty, there has been no admission of guilt and no clear evidence identifying the perpetrator.

The CHSCB has accepted the findings of the SCR in full and as a partnership, we are committed to improving practice based on child M’s experiences. We will absolutely avoid demonising front-line staff who continue to do what they can in difficult circumstances and as the Independent Chair of the CHSCB, I can promise you this, we will heed the lessons to be learnt and we will go further than the recommendations set out in this report. Our multi-agency work cannot afford to be influenced by uncooperative parents, it cannot be hindered by professionals avoiding the difficult questions and it cannot be unduly influenced by a lack of healthy scepticism.

Whilst the CHSCB will seek to promote a wider understanding of these complex issues, they aren’t new. We know that effective management oversight, the provision of reflective supervision, training and comprehensive information sharing are all essential to mitigating the risk of such weaknesses. As such, I will be seeking the necessary reassurance from all partners that our collective systems to support front-line staff are sufficiently robust and fit for purpose.