

Introduction

Anya is a 2-year-old child to Grace. She has a half-brother called Nicholas who lives with other family members due to concerns for his safety in the home. The mother, Grace, has a history of alcohol/drug abuse and intoxication as well as instances of domestic violence within her household. Grace did not always engage with multi-agency services and partners; however, she did see a midwife for the duration of her pregnancy with Anya. When Anya was 2 years and 3 months old, she was found in the family home soiled, cold, and wet, with her mother Grace unfortunately dead. The autopsy revealed that Grace had an unknown heart condition, and this was ruled as the cause of death.

The Emotional Impact of Alcohol Abuse

Throughout Grace's history there are clear records that show how much she struggled with alcohol abuse. In Grace's words she was not an "alcoholic" but a "binge-drinker". In order to help fight her issues with alcohol, Grace was referred several times to CGL for sessions. Grace had a pattern of engagement with CGL where she would work hard, engage, and remain sober for periods of time, however she would then fall into her old habits and stop attending the sessions. Grace's sessions with CGL were entirely dependent on self-reflection and asking Grace to provide them with information on when she had had her last drink and how she was coping. Within this case, if there had been another type of data collection or tests it may have proven that Grace wasn't being honest, and that help could have been provided via an intervention sooner.

Throughout the records there is little information provided on how living around someone in this state affected Anya: it has been proven that the emotional impacts that situations like this can have on a young child are intense. A learning point to be taken from this case is to explore and ensure that the child's emotional impact is questioned when there is alcohol abuse present in the home.



One Minute Guide

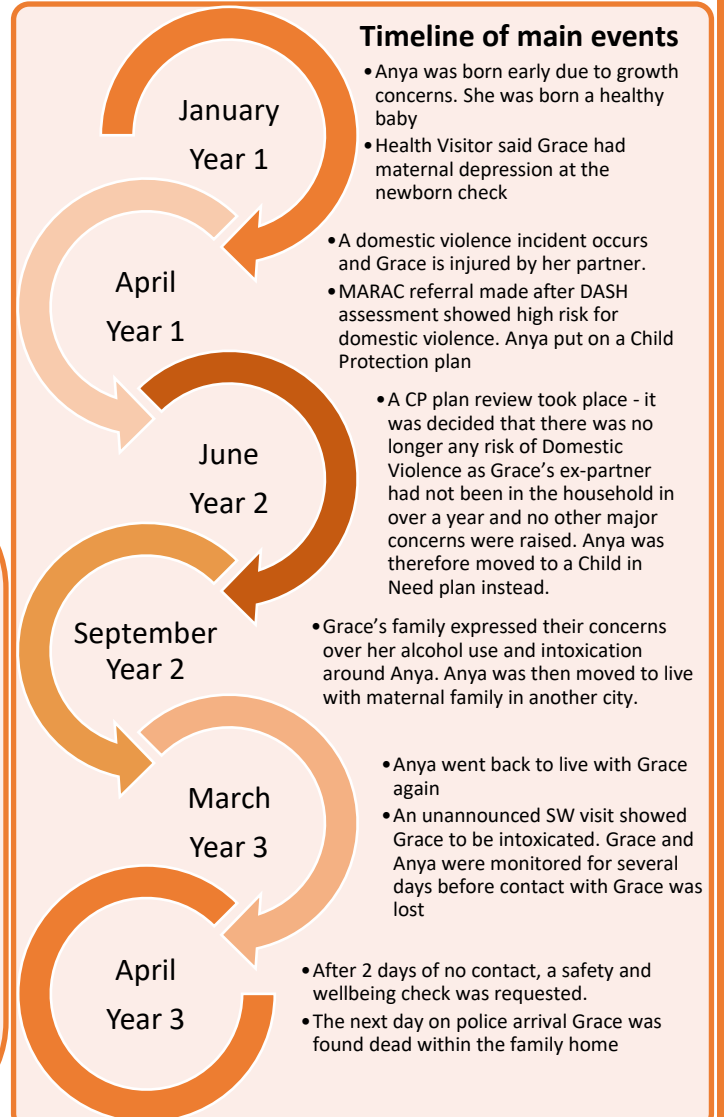
Serious Case Review - Anya

June 2023

Family History

Both Anya and her half-brother Nicholas were subject to Child Protection (CP) plans at multiple times within the 13 years of multi-agency involvement. In the case of Nicholas, a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) was granted, leading to Nicholas living permanently with another member of the maternal family. Despite the fact that there was never an SGO for Anya, she spent several periods of time living with her maternal grandmother and maternal aunt. During those periods of time Anya resided in another city with those members of the family instead of remaining in Coventry with Grace. Anya returned to live with her mother shortly before Grace's passing.

Timeline of main events



Learning points

Agencies often noted that although Grace struggled with intoxication and was seen intoxicated, Anya was healthy and seemed to have a good attachment to her mum. It can be seen that through highlighting the positive it negated the impact of the negative actions. It is crucial to understand the impact that Grace's intoxication would have had on Anya.

Anya was living in a household in which intoxication was a regular occurrence. The psychological impact on Anya can be said to have been overlooked. The Right Help Right Time (RHRT) has been missed and earlier intervention could have potentially prevented some of the damage to this family. Studies have shown that being in an environment with someone with a Substance Usage Disorder (SUD) has a profound impact on the children, and even adults within the household. This becomes a much more profound impact when the person with the SUD is the primary caregiver: the caregiver with the use of substances such as alcohol or drug use, can be less attuned to the needs of the child, or neglect the child.¹

Regarding the incident of Domestic Violence that took place within the household, the review has found that the voice of the child was lost within this case. It is imperative that the voice of the child is reflected in each case, as this focuses on the lived experience and needs of the child in question. As well as this, Grace was the subject of several DASH assessments to see what level of risk she was in for future domestic violence. Grace was classed at being at high risk, however Grace's ex-partner who lived with both her and Anya was not included in any interventions or intervention plans.

Finally, the engagement and intersectionality must be considered to be learning points from this case. Regarding the engagement that Grace has with the agencies and services involved, it is clear that there were consistent and concerted efforts to engage with Grace. However, the engagement from Grace was not regular or consistent: she would go through periods of time in which she engaged well with services before disappearing and refusing to make contact. This pattern is clear from the history; however the question must be asked as to why this was a pattern, and if the issues behind Grace's behaviours could have been explored in order to maintain a better working relationship. Grace as a Black British woman of Caribbean heritage, therefore this must be taken into consideration to ensure that the care and involvement from each agency was of equal contribution to any case in Coventry.

Learning Points summarised



Understanding around Grace's intoxication

- Grace's verbal response around her drinking should not have been assumed fact.
- There was a lack of understanding around binge drinking and the effects this would have had on Anya



Domestic Violence

- This case lacked the voice of the child in the instances of Domestic Violence
- Not all people within the household at the time were considered in the interventions



Engagement

- Grace's pattern of engagement could have been explored to understand how best to support her
- Diversity should be explored to ensure that this was not a factor in the sequence of events.

Key Contacts and Further Information

[Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

¹ [The Impact of Substance Use Disorders on Family and Children: from theory to practice](#)