



Statement from Thames Valley Police, Child Abuse Investigation Unit

On completion of the police investigation the decision was taken by the CPS to charge the father with an offence of wilfully assaulting Twin 2 in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health contrary to Section 1 of the Children and Young Person Act 1933. No charges were brought in relation to the injuries suffered by Twin 1 as there was insufficient evidence to show how they were caused or by who.

The case was due to for trial in May 2022, however in a case management hearing in June 2021 the father pleaded guilty, accepting that he had caused the serious injuries to Twin 2. He was subsequently sentenced to 8 months imprisonment suspended for 2 years, 20 rehabilitation activity requirement (RAR) days and 150 hours of unpaid work.

Whilst there was a dichotomy in the sentence length when considering the significant injuries suffered by Twin 2, the presiding judge made reference to this in his sentencing remarks indicating that a more significant prison sentence would have been imposed if he had been found guilty of Causing Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH) with intent contrary to the Section 18 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861. The decision to not charge with GBH by the CPS was based on the fact that the intent by the father to cause serious harm could not be sufficiently evidenced which was required to prove that offence.

Impact Statement – Family T Serious Case Review

We were fostering for Buckinghamshire County Council when we got a call in June 2018 to look after 3-month-old twin girls. We agreed but then the case went to court where the Judge ordered birth parents to attend a 'Child and Parent Foster Placement' with the twins. A few days later, we had a second call to ask whether we could still have the twins. At that point we knew nothing about the injuries. It wasn't until the morning of the placement that we were contacted by the Head of Children's Services to explain the circumstances and to tell us to come straight to the hospital.

Whilst I was caring for Twin 1 at the hospital, Twin 2 was being intubated and rushed off to Paediatric Intensive Care at another hospital. Twin 2 had multiple injuries including a bleed to the brain, multiple bruising, laceration to her liver, retinal haemorrhages and rib fractures, as well as healing rib fractures from previous non-accidental injuries. Twin 1 stayed with me at the hospital - she hadn't sustained any of the bulk of injuries that her sister had but was fully checked over by the hospital. Unfortunately, they found that Twin 1 also had multiple rib fractures that were healing. The twins were very small for their age as they were 10 weeks premature. Twin 1 was so distressed that when I met her, she screamed a high pitch scream unless I held her tightly against me. She was distressed all day at the hospital and endured hours of having blood tests, MRI scans and ultrasounds completed.

We took Twin 1 home late that night and visited Twin 2 as often as physically possible. We were praying that she would pull through and we purchased toy bunnies so each twin could have one to feel close to their sister. It was frightening seeing Twin 2 so poorly with so many 'unknowns' about her outcome and her future, and we couldn't help but feel helpless.



It was amazing when Twin 2 was discharged to us so she could be with her sister and start healing. She was still dazed, like a frozen gaze and was still having trembles in her hands. We had to have a refresher on basic life support and be able to deal with her seizures, as she was still on the anti-seizure medication. Luckily, she never had another seizure and her trembles were under control within a couple of weeks. She was extremely fragile. Both girls grew stronger and stronger, and we used every opportunity to help them developmentally.

The effects on Twin 2 because of the injuries are still very much unfolding, but because of her horrific injuries she suffers a Right Sided Hemiplegia (Cerebral Palsy) which means she has severe weakness in the right side of her body and sometimes struggles with her balance. She has learnt to walk through sheer determination but easily tires and can fall. Her right arm and hand are affected too, meaning it is sometimes extremely difficult for her to grip using her right hand. She has no supination in her right arm, which is the rotation of the forearm required for many functional activities like feeding or holding a bowl, and she also has significant speech disorder. We carry out daily physio as part of our routine and have done since she was a few months old. Twin 2 still has disrupted sleep every night where she screams until she is settled with cuddle. This sleep deprivation can have ill effects on her day, and in turn her balance. This has been really upsetting but confirmed by a psychologist that, because of her trauma, she cannot regulate on her own. This is the same with her emotions. Twin 2 has an EHCP in place for school and is seen by the Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist, and Speech and Language Therapist regularly, and she has a 1-1 at Pre-School. She is also seen by an Orthoptist and the Trauma and Orthopaedics Team.

Twin 1 also has an EHCP in place and is regularly seen by the Speech and Language Therapist, as she too has Severe Speech Delay. She also has a 1-1 at Pre-School. Twin 1 struggles regulating her emotions and is always on 'high alert', she gets very anxious and scared in certain situations or with loud noises.

The court case to sentence the girls' perpetrator for the injuries was nothing short of disappointing. I received the girls in June 2018 and the case went to court in July 2021. The CPS looked twice at the 'injuries namely the healing rib fractures' that both girls endured in the 7 weeks that they were in the care of both birth mother and birth father and decided there wasn't enough evidence to put forward. They expressed that they didn't want to 'muddy the waters' regarding the main charge towards the birth father for the 'main injuries'. The birth father pleaded guilty to a lesser sentence of 'child cruelty' and I watched in court how the 'Honourable Judge Sheridan', without a jury, sentenced the birth father to a 2 year suspended sentence, some community service and a rehabilitation programme. I cannot tell how frustrated we feel that justice hasn't been done for causing life changing injuries to a vulnerable baby. I am at present putting in a complaint to the CPS regarding the decision to not charge either or both birth parents for the injuries to both children.

I would like professionals to ensure all Pre-Birth Assessments to be as robust as possible in the future. The work beforehand is key to keeping children safe, and what I've read and what I know about the girls' case, is that there were many failings which have meant that these vulnerable babies were unsafe from the time of birth. I feel like far too many 'chances' were given to birth parents despite reporting issues so I would ask professionals to ensure their voices are heard and made to count. We had so many changes in Social Worker, so I can easily see where things go wrong - people



losing trust and getting completely different views on outcomes isn't easy to deal with. This happened to the Birth Mother when she was in care, and has happened throughout our time fostering and adopting, with regards to the Children's Social Worker. Maybe this is a case of the workload being too heavy or that staff are not well looked after in such organisations.

I would like to see changes in the way that the different agencies inform each other 'fully' so that everyone is kept in the picture, to enable working towards the main goal the child/children'. I think Buckinghamshire Council Social Services/Children's Services needs to be more 'child focussed'. At times I feel like too much was done to try to appease the birth parent/s, even in the girls' situation where injuries were caused non-accidentally.

Despite the battle these girls have had, we describe them as the 'our little warrior princesses'. The girls are now progressing so well, and more than that, they are happy and smiley and surrounded by siblings and family that adore them. We are so proud of our daughters and how far they have come.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our thoughts and feelings throughout our journey.