

Lambeth Safeguarding Children Board: Report on response to Balakrishnan case

REDACTED VERSION: CLASSIFICATION 'OFFICIAL'

Summary

In July 2014 the Lambeth Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Serious Case Review (SCR) Sub Group considered the limited information that it had relating to the allegations regarding the Balakrishnan case and determined that it did not meet the criteria to initiate a Serious Case Review or Learning and Improvement Review relating to the then alleged abuse of Mr Balakrishnan's daughter.

This was based on the view that the child was not known to Lambeth Council or any partner agency and therefore there were no concerns to consider regarding whether the authority, its partners or other relevant people could have worked together to safeguard the child. The meeting was advised that Mr Balakrishnan's daughter had not been known to any services in their childhood. At this stage, it was assumed that the child had been born at home; but this had not been confirmed. The SCR Sub Group was not advised about a record that Mr Balakrishnan's daughter had been registered with a Medical Centre.

During the trial, a reference was made to the birth of Mr Balakrishnan's daughter. This was subsequently followed up and in December 2015, the Metropolitan Police confirmed that the child had been born at a hospital in Wandsworth in 1983. The birth was registered in Wandsworth. This was new information. The Hospital no longer exists.

On receipt of this new information, further checks have been made to determine any contact with the authority or its partner agencies relating to Mr Balakrishnan's daughter.

What information was known about the existence of a child as a member of the household?

In November 2013 the following were requested to check their records for all those linked to the household including Mr Balakrishnan's daughter:

- GP (CCG / NHS England to support with this)
- Education
- Adult Social Care
- Children's social care

- Guy's and St Thomas's Community Health and Acute Health
- Kings College Hospital
- Lambeth benefits records and financial records systems
- Lambeth housing

Lambeth Adult Social Care had been involved with the household in relation to the care of Mrs Balakrishnan's sister. An Occupational Therapist did an assessment visit in 1999, when Mr Balakrishnan's daughter would have been about 16 years of age. There is no record setting out who was seen during this visit, or if the young person would have been living in the premise visited. Further Lambeth Adult Social Care contact took place when Mr Balakrishnan's daughter was over the age of 18.

Lambeth Children's Social Care confirm that they have no records of any contact regarding Mr Balakrishnan's daughter or the household.

In November 2013 a health record was located relating to Mr Balakrishnan's daughter. This suggested that Mr Balakrishnan's daughter was registered with a Medical Centre on the borders with Lambeth and Wandsworth. She was taken off their list in 1999 and the records are in storage with the Health Authority. This information was not shared with the LSCB SCR Sub Group in July 2014, although it was known at the time.

Lambeth Education found no records of Mr Balakrishnan's daughter attending school or being home schooled.

Guy's and St Thomas's reported no records found.

Wandsworth Safeguarding Children Board reported finding no records relating to Mr Balakrishnan's daughter.

What information is now known about the existence of a child as a member of the household?

Recent contact has been made with the Wandsworth Safeguarding Children Board, with a request for a further check on any records relating to Mr Balakrishnan's daughter or her mother, in relation to the birth or care given thereafter. They responded that no records had been found other than the birth registration.

Information has been obtained from the Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children and the Named Midwife at the NHS Foundation Trust (which took over responsibility for the Hospital where the birth took place) stating that no electronic records can be found relating to Mr Balakrishnan's daughter or her mother.

A Police Officer involved in the original investigation confirmed that the investigation had found no records of Mr Balakrishnan's daughter held by any of the statutory agencies across the boroughs where the child is believed to have resided. The GP at the Medical Centre removed her from the list

as all letters were returned to the Practice unopened and her file was blank. No Health Visitor contacts after the birth could be found.

Reconsidering if the LSCB should commission a Learning and Improvement Review or SCR

A review of this case would be challenged by the passage of time and lack of records or relevant information and lack of personnel who have knowledge, so raises the question of practicality and proportionality as Mr Balakrishnan's daughter became an adult in 2001. It would also need to consider the views of the subject and whether she wished this to happen and would be willing to be interviewed or answer questions by letter or through an intermediary.

Despite these issues and given the level of concern that this case has raised the Lambeth Safeguarding Children Board has programmed a piece of work to assess whether or not such a circumstance could arise today given the changes in legislation and systems. Additionally, given the serious nature of the offending, the LSCB has referred its findings to the National Serious Case Review Board for scrutiny.