AIMS For a better birth...

Letters - Child protection?

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Domestic Abuse

I have to write and say how much it means to me to hear that I am not alone in feeling that child-protection has got in a mess.

I suffered from domestic abuse for years, and the more I read, the more I am hugely relieved that Social Services were not interested in helping me. I did not seem to tick any of their boxes to qualify for help because I was not suffering the effects of limited education, I was not living in poverty and English is my first language.

Julie Seaton

Health Visiting

I was very interested to read this article in AIMS Journal 20 No 1, page 12. I have some comments - one is a positive experience but three are negative.

My own experience with health visitors some 15 - 20 years ago was much more positive on the whole. I had a very sick baby (he had a tracheotomy) and one health visitor in particular was amazingly supportive and helpful. My son (around 1 year) was not putting on weight because he was so often unwell, he caught coughs and colds easily and the extra suction and gunk would make him sick, also he seemed to get a lot of tummy bugs too, if he went into hospital for a scope he'd come out weighing less than when he went in and also he seemed to be unable to have anything with a lump in it such that he would just vomit back up again, and was incredibly picky with any food.

My health visitor came during a meal time, when I was feeding him, he threw up all over, I'd had a bad few days and just broke down - she helped me clean up the kitchen and change his trachy and tapes. Then she noticed a huge spreadsheet that I was keeping to see what foods my son would eat and what effect they had on him, and she was just so sweet. I will never forget how kind she was to us both. She said to relax, just feed him what he liked even if it wasn't the most nutritious and to not worry about the fact his weight was low, it was to be expected given all that was going on for him.

On the other hand there was another stand-in health visitor who was very abrupt and cold and basically told me not to be so sorry for myself, get a grip and get on.

Before my son had been given his trachy, he was only a month or so old at this time, we were in the local

hospital, he had been given a nebuliser to help with breathing and I took the opportunity to breastfeed him. A nurse came in and asked me what on earth I thought I was doing. The nebuliser was to allow my son to rest, I wasn't to tire him out by feeding him! She seemed to be completely ignorant of the fact that for a breastfed baby feeding is the most calming thing to do and definitely the nicest way to go to sleep. Breastfeeding only lasted three months for us. This attitude and the need later to express just meant my milk stopped.

The reluctance to approach the authorities does not stop with babies and small children.

We have also been lucky enough to have 2 girls who are currently 15 and 16. They have had a bad 12-18 months doing all sorts of things that we don't approve of, resulting in many groundings. Mainly smoking and drinking. I won't ask who is selling them the drink and cigarettes, that's another topic in itself. One afternoon our younger daughter phoned from town to say that we
needed to come and collect our older daughter as she wasn't able to stand and she was in and out of consciousness. We were distraught - and angry of course. We collected both girls and when we got home the usual denials were made by the elder, that she hadn't been drinking, only water. The younger one said that someone had said a friend of a friend may have put something in the elder's water bottle. By this time the older girl was still quite woozy, adamant that she hadn't been drinking and was star ting to hallucinate. My husband took her to A and E because I was now worried about drugs.

At A and E they took blood but found only alcohol, no drugs. The doctor said that spiking drinks with alcohol or drugs was extremely rare and that the hospital was obliged to let our daughter's school and Social Services know. We haven't heard anything more from Social Services. I don't want to check up on it as I don't want to stir a hornets' nest, but I'm not sure if the doctor was
telling the truth or just trying to frighten us. Either way its not very helpful is it?

We are responsible parents, we tell the girls about the dangers of drink, drugs, cigarettes. We don't smoke, we hardly drink at all ourselves, I am a stay-at-home mum, their dad has worked all their lives to provide well for them. We have given them punishments when we found they have drunk or smoked - but eventually you do have to let them out of the house again.

We went to A and E because we were genuinely worried about drugs and our daughter's health. We would certainly think twice or three times if we were in the same situation again. That can't be right can it?

name withheld

Thank you

Thank you AIMS for such a frank look at the issue of child protection and for asking the questions. I don't feel so alone now!

by email
name withheld