

Preston Davey was born in June 2022 and entered foster care shortly after birth. He was placed with prospective adoptive parents in Spring 2023. Within a short timeframe, Preston suffered prolonged physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Preston tragically died in July 2023. In June 2026, the adoptive parents were jailed for their parts in his death. *This briefing reflects emerging learning identified through trial evidence and media reporting. The statutory Child Safeguarding Practice Review remains ongoing and may identify additional or different findings when [published](#).*



While a statutory Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) is ongoing via Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership, evidence presented during the criminal trial suggests that opportunities to identify and respond to escalating harm may have been missed. Importantly, concerns were not always viewed collectively, and information from different agencies was not brought together to form a complete picture of the child's lived experience.

Key Emerging Learning Themes

Professional Curiosity Matters Practitioners should be cautious about accepting explanations at face value, particularly where injuries, repeated incidents or concerning presentations occur. Viewed individually, incidents may appear less significant; when considered together, they could have indicated escalating risk. Safeguarding decisions should always consider patterns, chronologies and cumulative harm, alongside the child's lived experience.

*Practitioners should continually ask: "**What is life like for this child?**" and seek evidence to support explanations provided.*

The case demonstrates how assumptions based on a family's appearance, status or professional background can influence decision-making. It reinforces learning from previous local and national reviews around 'disguised compliance', where caregivers appear cooperative and engaged while concerns remain unresolved. Practitioners should seek corroborating evidence and avoid relying solely on the quality of explanations provided by caregivers.

Challenge and Escalate Concerns The case highlights the importance of respectful professional challenge when concerns remain unresolved. Where practitioners disagree with decisions, or feel risks have not been fully explored, [local escalation procedures](#) should be used. Effective safeguarding depends on constructive challenge across agencies.

Information Sharing is Key Critical information held by different services may not always be connected. Social Care, Police, Schools, Early Years providers, Health services and Community organisations must ensure concerns are shared promptly and that emerging risks are viewed collectively. Individual observations may be significant when combined with information held by other agencies.

Babies and Pre-Verbal Children Require Particular Vigilance Babies are amongst the most vulnerable because they cannot communicate abuse or neglect themselves. Unexplained injuries, repeated

Early Learning from the Death of Preston Davey *(pending Oldham Child Safeguarding Practice Review)*

health presentations, changes in behaviour or concerns about care should always prompt careful assessment and appropriate safeguarding consideration.

Reflective Questions for All Organisations

- Would we recognise and respond to repeated low-level concerns in a similar scenario?
- Are we keeping the child's lived experience at the centre of our decision-making?
- How do we ensure heightened vigilance when working with babies and pre-verbal children?
- Do we routinely consider cumulative harm and maintain accurate chronologies?
- How effectively do we share safeguarding information with partner agencies?
- Are staff confident in using professional challenge and escalation procedures?

What Can Agencies Do Now?

All agencies should use this case as an opportunity for reflection, supervision discussions, team meetings and safeguarding training. Particular attention should be given to professional curiosity, cumulative risk assessment, information sharing, escalation processes and maintaining focus on the child's experience. These themes align strongly with local and national safeguarding priorities and can help strengthen our collective ability to identify harm earlier and protect children more effectively.

How have you used this briefing?

We would welcome feedback on how this briefing has been used within your organisation and any evidence of its impact on practice. Sharing examples of learning dissemination, discussion, service improvements or practice changes helps the Safeguarding Children Partnerships understand the effectiveness of our learning activity and demonstrate how safeguarding reviews contribute to improving outcomes for children. [Preston Davy Briefing Survey](#)

Bedford borough, Central Bedfordshire & Luton Safeguarding Children Partnerships (August 2026)
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