

# CASE STUDY

## Charlotte's STORY



Charlotte had been a healthy baby and toddler with no complications at birth. She suffered her brain injury as a toddler. Mum contacted us and self-referred the family. She was distraught and we responded immediately and visited the family at home out of concern.

### Background

With Mums help we compiled all the reports and information she held. Charlotte was involved in a road traffic accident when she was three. She sustained significant head and other physical injuries, including more than one brain-bleed. She required emergency lifesaving surgery and was taken to the nearest Children's Hospital by road ambulance. She was critically ill and remained in Paediatric Intensive Care on life support for several days; before eventually being transferred back to their local hospital.

In the discharge letter, the consultant had **not** mentioned that Charlotte had sustained a significant head injury or had several brain bleeds. It was simply stated that the child had gone on to make a good physical recovery. There was no mention of a traumatic brain injury or any potential neurological impairments Charlotte may now have or develop in the future. This had horrific ongoing connotations for Charlotte and her mum.

At the time of meeting this family, which was almost two years after the accident, Charlotte had not received any neuro-rehabilitation intervention to support her ongoing neurological recovery.

### Health

Following the accident, Charlotte missed every development milestone and failed to progress. This was picked up in pre-school. She now struggled with expression and speech did not have the language skills to express her needs and wants. She had significant memory and attention problems and she was bullied and excluded at school, so had no friends. She was 5 years old!

Community Professionals were blaming Mum for Charlotte's difficulties and development delays and she was accused of child neglect. Even worse, Charlotte was in the process of being taken into care by the local authority because of this inaccurate judgement.

### Social Services

Mum told us that a Social Worker had attended several MDT meetings in the hospital, at which Charlottes needs were discussed and was also present at the Discharge Planning Meeting. Post discharge, none of the services that were promised to the family were



provided because the Social Worker assumed that the child was fine and there was nothing wrong with them. As such they were not entitled to receive any additional services.

We also learned:

- a) The council were not aware that this child had sustained traumatic brain injury; despite a Social Worker participating in MDT and Discharge Planning Meetings.
- b) The Children with Disabilities Team had refused the referral because the child does not have a disability!
- c) Mum had not had a Carers Assessment; nor was she receiving any Carers Benefits or Respite Breaks.

With our help, the local authority eventually acknowledged that this family had indeed been through a traumatic ordeal and accepted the child had sustained a serious brain injury. It was acknowledged that personal prejudice from Social Workers and other professionals involved in this case, meant this family had not received fair treatment.

### Child Protection Professionals

Despite a range of Child Protection Professionals being involved with this family as part of the multi-agency Troubled Family Services; not one Professional acknowledged

- the severity and impact of Mum's traumatic experience, or
- that the child had sustained a severe traumatic brain injury.

This meant that Mum was not listened to and a brain injured child's needs were ignored for almost **two years** because they couldn't get past their own prejudice.

### Education

Charlotte was not meeting the expected development milestones and was behind at school. This was also confirmed in her end of year school report. Despite Mum telling the school about the child's brain injury, she was ignored, and Charlottes complex development, recovery and support needs were not being met. Despite receiving 1-1 SEN support at school, her teachers were unaware of her significant hidden disability needs. Her teachers knew nothing about acquired brain injury or neuroplasticity and they were not neuro-rehabilitation specialists. As such Charlotte ended her first year at school significantly behind their peers.

### Outcomes

- Charlotte now has an EHC Plan tailored to her needs.
- Mum has had a Carers Assessment and is receiving support.

Fighting 'the system' this Mother had consistently tried to fight for the needs of her child; but had been failed at every turn by statutory bodies. Sadly, the person the suffered the most was Charlotte; a vulnerable brain injured young child whose complex needs were ignored and



remained unmet for two years by every adult within multiple statutory agencies that were involved in her case.

**It is unthinkable where this family would have been - had we not been there to support them and challenge what was going on.**