

Local Members Interest
N/A

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Thursday 16 June 2022

Neglect

Recommendation

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Scrutinises the work that has been undertaken so far to improve our response to issues of neglect (which includes low level neglect) on children and young people in Staffordshire.

Report of Cllr Mark Sutton Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Background

1. In February 2019, the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board (SSCB) commissioned a serious case review in respect of four children who died in a house fire on 5th February 2019. This review was published in November 2020 and made three main findings which resulted in a total of seven recommendations for the Local Authority and the Partnership. These findings were relating to issues around
 - a. developing understanding of impact of neglect on children within the partnership,
 - b. use of appropriate professional curiosity to understand family history and dynamics, and
 - c. ability to understand and act upon a child's lived experience.
2. This report brings together the work that has been undertaken by the Staffordshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership and Children's services since this review.

Summary

3. Following this Serious Case Review, Neglect (including the impact of low-level neglect on children and families) became one of the priorities for the Safeguarding Partnership and has remained on the agenda ever since. The work plan that sits within this priority is reviewed by the

Partnership each year to specify the area within this larger priority that will be addressed.

Progress update:

The awareness and understanding of neglect within the partnership is improving.

4. Staffordshire aims to have a clear strategically driven, multi-agency response to infants at risk of and/ or experiencing neglect, with a well embedded, effective multi-agency strategic approach and assessment framework leading to a reduction in infants at risk of and/ or experiencing neglect and ensuring our most vulnerable families are getting help earlier. To this end we have developed a local protocol for agreement from various strategic partnerships, a local dataset which allows performance review and management at a strategic level, and an annual assurance report which provides the Partnership Board with an overview of progress and improvements.
5. As a Partnership, it was agreed that Staffordshire would implement the use of Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) assessment tool. Effective use of this tool by all partner agencies will support our understanding and early identification of neglect (which includes low level neglect) on children and families. GCP2 helps practitioners measure the quality of care a child is receiving and if the child is at risk of neglect. We had ambitious plans for training and implementation, however, our strategy needed to be modified due to COVID restrictions. Despite all the challenges, we know that by the end of 2021-22, we have trained over 30 champions in GCP2, over 1200 people from across the partnership have attended the GCP2 awareness training and conferences, and over 600 staff have been trained in using this tool which assists in identification and evidencing presence of neglect in families.
6. We established a Graded Care Profile 2 Steering Group for a strategic oversight of the roll out and implementation of this programme. We have recently re-instated this group to oversee effective roll out of training and use of this tool within the partnership. We know that whilst staff have been trained, the use of this tool in assessments needs to improve across all tiers of service delivery for children and families.

Our Services are child centred and demonstrate a positive impact on outcomes for children.

7. In Staffordshire, we use extensive audit activity, regular supervisions, performance data, information from complaints and compliments, Learning Hubs, and feedback from children, young people and families

to triangulate the value and impact of our services to children and families.

8. Two thirds of files audited as part of the regular auditing of children's teams files were graded as outstanding or good. Considering the changes following our transformation this maintenance of standards is very positive. Audit findings are overwhelmingly positive about our practitioners' approaches to engaging children and young people (50/62 comments). Positive relationships are at the heart of our restorative practice model and are vital for children to feel able to share their wishes, feelings and lived experience with their allocated practitioner.
9. Most assessments and review reports identify worries and what needs to change well (53 positive comments out of 63). This is vital to ensure that we understand the risks our children are exposed to and can make informed decisions to reduce or mitigate them. The majority and over two thirds of interventions are based on good quality assessments.
10. Four fifths of comments made by auditors show that planning for our children is driven by their wishes and feelings and takes their lived experience into account. Our practitioners are taking decisive action where worries either increase or decrease.
11. We have recently launched a revised survey to gather feedback from families and professionals on the child protection planning process. An analysis of the responses received so far shows that:
 - a. 77% felt that the plan had a positive impact on the child.
 - b. 55% felt that the plan had a positive impact on parents.
 - c. 68% felt that the plan had a positive impact on families.
 - d. 86% felt that agencies worked together effectively.
12. The BRFC/supporting families programme addresses multiple disadvantages through a whole family approach.
13. In recent analysis of BRFC files most auditors highlighted practical support from a range of appropriate services and agencies. This remains consistent with the findings from the last report (Apr'20 to Sept'20). Support identified covered the whole range of BRFC criteria and included formal programmes, one to one session with professionals and provision of household items.

Areas we are working to improve

14. The Safeguarding Partnership recognises the improvements that have been achieved in training staff which positively impacts on

understanding and awareness about neglect. We however need to improve the use of GCP2 assessment tool in practice across all tiers of services and agencies. We know that approximately 28% of children known to our tier 4 social care services are so due to neglect. A further 34.8% are known due to family dysfunction, within which the primary indicators are domestic violence and neglect. Over 41% of children in our care have been known to us due to neglect, and majority of those children are within the age range of 10-15 years of age. This shows that if every agency like school, health, police and voluntary services develop capacities to identify early signs of neglect and are able to provide early intervention and support, we will be able to support children within families and communities more effectively.

15. The use of GCP2 will assist in early identification of neglect. We have a robust partnership approach for family support in Staffordshire, which will then be able to support families at the earliest opportunity. Children's transformation has put families first, at the heart of everything we do. Transformation needs to embed within the service so that district and central services work together around our place-based approach to service delivery. Our recent efforts have been negatively impacted by COVID and staffing issues within children's social care, however we are working to identify immediate, mid-long-term solutions to workforce issues. Our safeguarding partnership is working to bring together various strategic groups working on related priorities together so that we can demonstrate a joined-up approach. All these efforts are aimed to make a positive impact on the lived experiences of children and families in Staffordshire.

Link to Strategic Plan

16. The agenda sits within our SCC corporate delivery plan under embedding the restorative and place-based approach for families and communities. It is also a priority for the strategic delivery plan for Staffordshire Children's Safeguarding Board for 2022-23.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

None

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