

Deep Dive into Practice to Support Children Experiencing Neglect

Why we did this deep dive:

Child neglect is not always easily identifiable, but is typified as the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs. This not only can put them at immediate risk of harm, but also can have long-term effects on their physical and mental wellbeing.

Neglect was prioritised for this deep-dive by the Partnership as it still is the main reason given as to why approximately two thirds of children are on a Child Protection Plan. The PSCP has completed previous audits on the theme of neglect in 2014 and 2017. This activity generated actions and recommendations, including the development of a new strategy, toolkit and practice guidance. Within the strategy, there are identified measures for success including a reduction in the number of cases open on a CP Plan for neglect and a decrease in the number of repeat referrals for neglect. It is apparent when reviewing these measures that the desired outcomes from previous recommendations have not been achieved and the same issues remain. So this deep dive was done to try and better understand why these previous measures have not been as effective as we'd hoped.

How we did this deep dive:

The primary purpose of the Deep Dive methodology is to assess the quality in a chosen area of practice and includes the following components:

- Multi-agency case audit
- Multi-agency data
- Voice of the family
- Practitioner survey
- Learning from case review findings
- Workshop event

What we found:

This findings of this 2020 Deep Dive appear to fall into two categories, those that are specific to neglect and others that more broadly relate to good and effective safeguarding practice.

Practice to support children experiencing neglect	
What's working well?	What are we worried about?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In families where neglect had been identified, the parents clearly understood what the concerns were and which of their children's needs they were not meeting. This is crucial in empowering parents to improve the care they give. • Those who had used the Neglect Identification & Measurement Tool (NIMT) described its benefits as being "a useful way to focus your thinking when you 'know' something isn't right but haven't worked out why you 'know' that" • GPs have also put a Safeguarding Processes in place so that when there has been 3x missed appointments or vaccinations missed, they raise their concerns with other appropriate health colleagues • In all cases there was evidence of consistency with the Portsmouth Model of Family Practice, with all family members being included in the plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was limited evidence of practitioners' awareness and use of effective, evidence based interventions to address neglect. • The NIMT is not widely used and is considered to be too lengthy to be routinely used • Medical neglect is often not recognised until the child is experiencing significant harm as a result • In some cases the categorisation of neglect is being used too broadly and failing to recognise other harm as well as the causal factors that are leading to the child being at risk of significant harm

Good & effective safeguarding practice	
What's working well?	What are we worried about?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Authority Link Co-ordinators have been employed to work with schools using a restorative approach, being curious in their communication when discussing individual children & families, keeping the child's needs at the centre of the conversation All of the schools involved in the cases reviewed showed a good understanding of the safeguarding concerns in the family and how these were impacting on children. There was some good examples of schools advocating for the need for services for families. Health Visitors were described by families as being very good at ensuring both parents were equally included in the service provided for their child, even when they are separated and not living together. Parents also told us that they felt the social workers built good relationships with the children Home Start's parenting courses were valued, by helping unpick the parents experience so they are empowered to improve their parenting skills which in turn improves the outcomes for their children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contacts into MASH being made without there ever having been an Early Help Assessment and an attempt to provide support early in order to prevent the escalation of concerns. Whilst improvements have been made, there is still more to do to ensure we are consistently exploring and recording the child's voice and lived experience There needs to be better awareness of the HIPS Escalation Protocol, to highlight the importance of professional challenge. Also to embed the new 're-think' practice to provide practitioners with the facility and support to review stuck cases We need to see that in all cases there's been a robust assessment of a parent's capacity to change that is shared across relevant practitioners and used to inform planning and decision making with the family.

What we will do next

1. Hold workshops with the workforce to understand what types of support and interventions they currently use with families where neglect is identified as an issue. Use the information from these to identify any current gaps in resources or provision, to inform updating the neglect strategy, toolkit and practice guidance.
2. Set up a working group to review the current Early Help Assessment and Plan to make it easier for universal services to identify risks and strengths and to plan and deliver change accordingly.
3. Work with partner agencies to raise awareness of the Escalation Protocol and Re-Think Process and support them with embedding this into practice.
4. Review our practice on assessment of parental capacity to change at early help and child protection levels
5. We will offer more tailored [restorative practice](#) training to services that work with families, to support the development of more effective, relational based working with parents, carers and children