

Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

11th January 2021

Neglect in County Durham



Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on Child Neglect in County Durham which will accompany a presentation by the Strategic Manager for the One Point and Think Family Services.

Executive summary

- 2 Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018 defines neglect as: 'The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. The multi-agency Neglect Working Group, a subgroup of the Durham Safeguarding Children's Partnership has developed a new strategic Plan on a Page and associated delivery plan. The plan sets out the vision and key priorities for identifying and tackling neglect, through promoting early help and delivering effective interventions.
- 3 Neglect continues to be a key challenge across County Durham. Data and intelligence show neglect in County Durham was the most common reason for a referral into Children Safeguarding Service between Jul- Oct 2020. Of assessments undertaken by Children Social Care, 22% recorded neglect as an assessment factor, up 31% from 2018/19. 78% of all Child Protection Plans (CPP) starts in Durham in 2019/20 had Neglect recorded as initial category of abuse which equates to a 12% increase from 2018/19. Of children on a CPP there is a strong correlation between neglect and most deprived localities in County Durham.
- 4 There are a number of key developments which support practitioners across the early help system and statutory children services to identify and effectively intervene where neglect is a concern including the revision and

launch of Durham's threshold of need; revision of the neglect practice toolkit, the development and implementation of a new way to request early help and implementation of Early Help Conversations; implementation of signs of safety practice model, a coordinated holiday activities with food programme and access to additional financial support to vulnerable children and families.

- 5 Further developments are also underway to strengthen our identification and intervention where neglect is a concern including the development and implementation of an Integrated Enhanced Parent Support Pathway and the potential use of Grade Care Profile tool in Durham.

Recommendations

- 6 Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:

- (a) note and comment on the content of the report and presentation

Background

- 7 An introduction to Neglect in County Durham was presented to the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2018 and an update provided in March and November 2019. Members requested an update on progress to date.
- 8 Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018 defines neglect as: 'The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:
 - (a) provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
 - (b) protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
 - (c) ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers);
 - (d) ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
 - (e) it may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.
- 9 In early 2020 the multi-agency Neglect Working Group, a subgroup of the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership has developed a new strategic Plan on a Page and associated delivery plan. See appendices 2 and 3.

- 10 Our agreed vision is ‘to reduce neglect, to reduce the impact of neglect by providing effective help and support at the earliest opportunity’. To deliver on this vision work is aligned to three key objectives: -
- (a) **Understand Neglect:** to understand the prevalence of neglect across County Durham in order to effectively target resources in order to help prevent and mitigate the negative impact of neglect on children and young people;
 - (b) **Early Identification;** to improve the recognition and assessment of neglect;
 - (c) **Effective Interventions:** practitioners across County Durham deliver effective evidence-based interventions that reduce neglect before the need for statutory interventions.

Progress to date

Key Objective 1: Understand Neglect

- 12 Since 1st of July 2020, all safeguarding referrals into Children’s Social Care have the main reason for referral recorded by the referrer. Neglect is the most common reason for referral with 22%. During October and November 2020 neglect was second to domestic abuse as the most common referral reason.
- 13 22% of all child and family assessments recorded neglect as an assessment factor, this is an increase of 31% from 2018/19 and is now higher than benchmarks including statistical neighbours (SN): 19%, England: 17%, NE: 22%). This is joint 3rd highest behind Mental Health and Domestic Abuse. (*Assessment factors are more detailed than CPP categories (Neglect, Emotional, Physical, Sexual Abuse) and multiple can be selected*).
- 14 78% of all Child Protection Plans (CPP) starts in Durham in 2019/20 had Neglect recorded as initial category of abuse which equates to a 12% increase from 2018/19. SN: 51%, England: 51% North East NE: 62%). As at 31st March 2020, 75% of children on a CPP has neglect recorded as their latest category of abuse, this equates to an 11% increase since 2018/19. (SN: 51%, Eng: 50%, NE: 61%) Both the above are consistently higher in Durham than regional and national benchmarks. Both the number of children on a CPP as at 31st March and % with ‘neglect’ as category of abuse increased. There were 403 children on a plan at Mar 19 (271 – Neglect) and 443 at Mar 20 (331 – Neglect).
- 15 Of children on a CPP there is a strong correlation between neglect and most deprived localities in County Durham. Due to demand on data and intelligence requirements as a result of COVID, work to develop a comprehensive data set on the prevalence of neglect across County Durham including patterns of neglect against age of child/number of children in family/geography/ deprivation and local causal factors has not to date been

completed. We do intend to complete this work in order to support our understanding of the factors which contribute to child neglect in County Durham which will in turn help better target effective identification and interventions at the earliest opportunity.

Key Objective 2: Early Identification

- 17 There has been a number of key areas of progress to support the identification of child neglect including:
- (a) The [County Durham Threshold of Need](#) has been revised and relaunched;
 - (b) the roll out of a new way to request early help and implementation of Early Help Conversations across all 7 County Durham localities;
 - (c) weekly step up/ down meetings between CSC /OPS /Health 0-25 Service to ensure children and families receive right support in a timely manner;
 - (d) on-going thematic audits within Children Social Care and the One Point Service of re referrals including weekly team level scrutiny to ensure children where neglect is a regular feature of the re-referral are better understood and effective support put in place to mitigate impact of neglectful parenting.
 - (e) revision of the Home Environment Assessment Tool (HEAT) to include dental health;
 - (f) 'Was not brought' guidance has been embedded across dental practices and health services across County Durham;
 - (g) introduction of Reducing Parental Conflict Programme;
 - (h) implementation of the Cutting cost of the School Day which supports school staff better understand the impact of poverty and its association with neglect. To date over 100 schools have undergone this training programme.
- 18 Vulnerable children continued to attend school during the initial COVID lockdown period, and a robust system put in place to ensure effective communication between school and statutory children services. Where schools continued to be concerned about children not currently known to early help or statutory children services a protocol has been put in place for welfare checks to be made on behalf of the school by the One Point Service

Key Objective 3: Effective Interventions

- 19 To support practitioners working with children and young people to better recognise the signs of neglect and effectively intervene at the earliest opportunity the Neglect Practice Toolkit has been revised using evidence-based research and incorporated into the Children & Family Practice Toolkit. The toolkit also includes specific guidance on identifying and working with adolescents who are neglected. The new toolkit will be launched in February by an online webinar for Children Services and key partner organisations such as schools and 0-25 Family Health Service.
- 20 Signs of Safety practice model continues to be implemented across Children Services and key partner agencies. The model ensures children have a network of support around them and their family and a safety plan in place to ensure children are safe and well beyond the support offered by statutory services.
- 21 The current DSCP Neglect learning and development programme and E learning module is under review and will reflect the new practice guidance. The review will ensure robust impact measures are implemented to ensure the training translates into improved confidence and skills of the practitioners and in better outcomes for children.
- 22 In support of addressing financial concerns which negatively impact on children a range of additional financial support is now available such as the Back to School Support Fund which provides additional funds to address barriers to education and COVID Winter Family Fund which provides essential household goods such as washing machine, beds and bedding.

Next Steps

- 23 It is the intention to present a report to the DSCP Executive in March on the potential implementation of the NSPCC Graded Care Profile (GCP). The GCP is a practical tool to give an objective measure of the care of children across all areas of need. The profile gives an indication of the quality of overall care for a child on a graded descriptive scale. GCP has been deployed in over 60 local authorities to help identify and intervene in cases of child neglect. The plan is to pilot this with a number of teams in social care and early help and also that it fits alongside signs of safety practice framework.
- 24 Development and implementation by April 2021 of an Integrated Enhanced Parent Support Pathway with 0-25 Family Health Service. This pathway will identify vulnerable unborn babies and provide additional help and support through 'team around the family' ensuing effective coordinated offers of help and support before, during and after birth of the child.

Conclusion

- 24 The neglect of children and young people in County Durham continues to be a key challenge. The multi-agency Neglect Working Group is providing a forum for services across the early help system and those responsible for statutory interventions to work together to review best evidence currently available to ensure practitioners across County Durham feel confident to identify and intervene effectively at the earliest opportunity.

Background papers

None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018 defines neglect as: ‘The persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Finance

Not applicable

Consultation

Not applicable

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable

Human Rights

Not applicable

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable

Staffing

Not applicable

Accommodation

Not applicable

Risk

Not applicable

Procurement

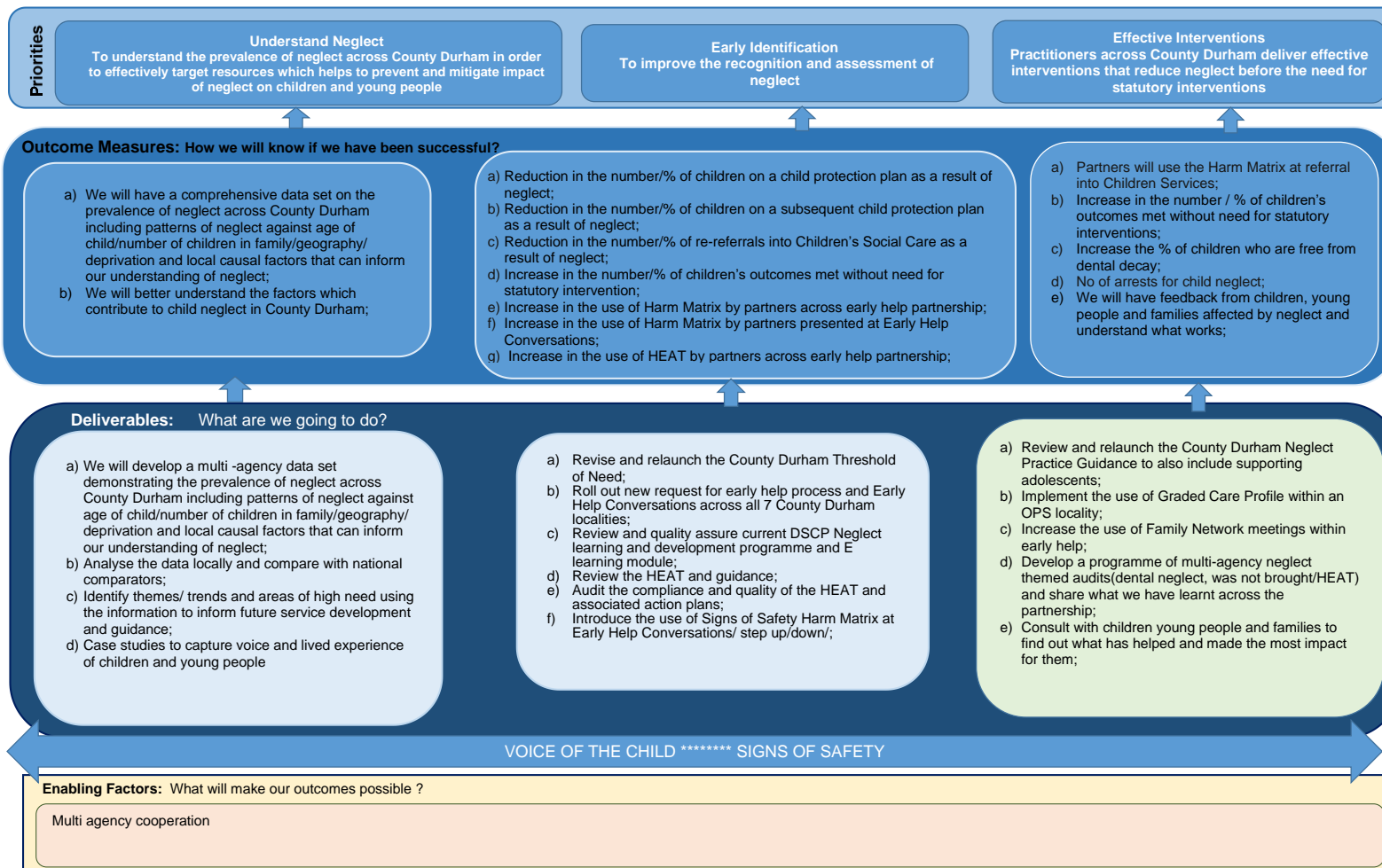
Not applicable

Appendix 2: Neglect Plan

DSCP - Neglect Group - Plan on a Page (2020-2021)



Vision: To reduce neglect; to reduce the impact of neglect by providing effective help and support at the earliest opportunity



Appendix 3: Action Plan

Neglect Action Plan Log 2020/21

Meeting: Neglect Working Group

Date: March 2020 to Mar 2021

Purpose: The Neglect Working Group to monitor progress of agreed key actions outlined in Neglect Plan on Page.

Action Plan Log					
Priority 1: To understand the prevalence of neglect across County Durham in order to effectively target resources which helps to prevent and mitigate impact of neglect on children and young people					
No.	Key Action	Lead	Due Date	Progress/Barriers	R A G
1.a	<p>We will develop a multi -agency data set demonstrating the prevalence of neglect across County Durham including patterns of neglect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • against age of child; • number of children in family; • geography; • deprivation and • local causal factors that can inform our understanding of neglect; 	PH Intelligence	Mar 2021	Data and intelligence against CPP category of neglect and deprivation. Further data and intelligence work required , delayed due to impact of COVID.	
1.b	Analyse the data locally and compare with national comparators;	PH Intelligence	Mar 2021	As above. Data available re CPP for neglect.	

1.c	Identify themes/ trends and areas of high need using the information to inform future service development and guidance;	PH Intelligence	Mar 2021	As above. Correlation between neglect and areas of high deprivation	
1.d	Case studies to capture voice and lived experience of children and young people	Neglect Working Group	Mar 2021		

Action Plan Log

Priority 2: Practitioners across County Durham have the skills, knowledge and tools to ensure effective early identification of neglect of children and young people

No.	Key Action	Lead	Due Date	Progress/Barriers	R A G
2.a	Revise and relaunch the County Durham Threshold of Need;	LW	May 2020	Revised and relaunched across partnership	
2.b	Roll out new request for early help process and Early Help Conversations across all 7 County Durham localities;	KD	July 2020	Halted due to COVID but reinstated in July 2020. CAMHS/SEND/Attendance Officers now also in attendance	

2.c	Review and quality assure current DSCP Neglect learning and development programme and E learning module;	NWG	Mar 2021	Liaise with Lisa Waites. Attendance at Neglect Training Group of practitioners identified to support revision of training materials	
2.d	Audit the compliance and quality of the HEAT and associated action plans;	NWG	Mar 2021	To be agreed and undertaken by partners early 2021	
2.e	Review the HEAT and guidance	NWG	Mar 2021	Annual review Jan- Mar 2021	
2.f	Promote consistent use of Signs of Safety Harm Matrix at Early Help Conversations/ step up/down/;	NWG	Mar 2021	Signs of Safety Coordinator attended EHC and provided feedback on use of Harm Matrix during conversations about children and families which we are worried about.	

Action Plan Log

Priority 3: Practitioners across County Durham deliver effective interventions to address the impact of neglect on children and young people

No.	Key Action	Lead	Due Date	Progress/Barriers	R A G
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3.a	Review and relaunch the County Durham Neglect Practice Guidance to also include supporting adolescents;	KD	Mar 2021	This work is progressing will be incorporated into Children and Families Toolkit . Webinar to be arranged when completed	
3.b	Implement the use of Graded Care Profile within an OPS locality;	NWG	Mar 2021	Presentation by NSPCC in Dec 2020. Procure train the trainer training. Pilot in 2 teams	
3.c	Capture the voice of the child/lived experience at the beginning, during and at closure of support to inform service development	NWG	Mar 2021	Children and young people feedback captured Introduction of MOMO	
3.d	Increase the use of Family Network meetings within Early Help;	KD	Mar 2021	Key objective in Signs of Safety implementation plan. Routine practice with families.	
3.e	Develop a programme of multi-agency neglect themed audits(dental neglect, school attendance and share what we have learnt across the partnership;	NWG	Mar 2021	to be implemented into multi agency audit programme	