

Learning from Multi-Agency Case Audit - 5-step Briefing

Use of Neglect as a category in Child Protection Planning



Themes and cases

Themes are based on the priorities identified by the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board (now the Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership [SVPP]). This theme was identified because the percentage of children who have a plan under the category of Neglect continues to be very high. It is not clear that this is always the most appropriate category to ensure that the plan is focused on the risks to and the needs of the child, particularly in relation to child sexual abuse concerns. Five cases were anonymously identified with the following characteristics:

- Child Protection plan under the category of neglect.
- Features of child sexual abuse in the case.
- Stepped down from Child Protection planning within the last 6 months.

Process

Agencies involved in each case completed an audit of the work of their agency. These audits were then considered and analysed by a multi-agency audit group. Each case was given two gradings: one for outcomes for children and one in relation to the effectiveness of multi-agency working. A report with the audit and recommendations was provided to the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board.

Strengths and good practice identified through the audit

- In all cases, the category of neglect was not considered to be detrimental to the plan. Some categories were not considered to be the right ones by the moderation panel, however the plans overall were found to be sufficient and addressed the risks.
- Good practice was identified in relation to:
 - Recognition of the emotional impact to one child and relevant support put in place.
 - Focused and prompt actions taken once a Child Protection plan was in place, which quickly impacted on outcomes for the child.
 - Persistence of agencies, in one case, to work with the child despite them being hard to engage.
 - A Social Work manager challenging the decision to step down from Child Protection planning; this meant that that child remained subject to a child protection plan including when the case transferred to another local authority.
 - In one case, the Initial Child Protection Conference report set out the discussion that professionals had about which category to use; Neglect or Sexual Abuse. Agreement was reached on Neglect and the Chair clearly noted that there were also concerns about sexual abuse. This ensured all presenting risks were highlighted.

Overall the audit panel judged the audit to be Good in terms of outcomes for children and Requires Improvement in relation to the audit theme and multi-agency working.

The audit findings remind us that

- Consideration should be given to all allegations of historic sexual abuse as part of current risk assessment and risk trajectory – this means being able to assess potential future risk based on the evidence of past risk.
- Where there are concerns about parenting capacity to protect, the emotional impact of this on the child should be considered.
- Where there is drift or non-completion of an action on a Child Protection plan, Child Protection Chairs should escalate in a timely way and professionals should expect to receive this challenge.
- Sharing information with GPs supports and encourages their involvement with the Child Protection process.
- If there is a lack of clear and specific language in plans in relation to any sexual abuse risks, this can impact on the risk assessment and consequently these risks may not be considered.
- Where there is a change in category, clear and relevant recording of the category decision making at conference is key in narrating the changing nature of risks.
- Risks of Child sexual abuse and sexual harm should be specifically addressed in any plan.

Further information:

Visit the SVPP website at <http://www.wiltshirescb.org.uk/>

Resources and tools to support assessment and identification of child sexual abuse: <http://www.wiltshirescb.org.uk/child-sexual-abuse/>

Tools to support the assessment of neglect: <http://www.wiltshirescb.org.uk/neglect-tool/>

South West Child Protection Procedures: <https://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/>