

## **Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

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**Date of Meeting:** 10 May 2018

**Report Title:** Neglect Strategy – Impact Progress Report

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Jos Saunders

**Senior Officer:** Nigel Moorhouse, Director of Children's Social Care and Deputy DCS

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### **1. Report Summary**

- 1.1. There is considerable national research and local evidence which demonstrates the damage done to children and young people living in situations of neglect. Whilst the harm resulting from neglect can be especially damaging in the first 18 months of life, it has a cumulative impact across childhood and into adolescence and so affects all of our children and young people. Sadly, for some children the consequences of neglect are fatal.
- 1.2. Neglect is '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 Local Children Safeguarding Board (LSCB) revised its Neglect Strategy in 2017 to better address the impact of neglect and launched a campaign called 'User Busy' that has a particular focus on adolescent neglect. Both the campaign and the strategy were developed in collaboration with young people who had experienced neglect and young people from a High School's safeguarding group. This report provides a summary of the impact of the neglect strategy and identifies areas of focus and improvement.

### **2. Recommendation/s**

- 2.1. Note the contents of this report and scorecard.
- 2.2. Identify areas where the Local Safeguarding Children Board should continue to focus on and improve.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation/s**

- 3.1. The Local Safeguarding Board (LSCB) is the accountable body for overseeing all aspects of children's safeguarding in Cheshire East,

including the implementation and impact of the neglect strategy. Therefore in scrutinising progress the committee should identify any areas of performance that should be highlighted to the LSCB and seek assurance by requesting a further progress report confirming that the matters identified have been addressed.

- 3.2. The neglect strategy supports Council objectives 3 and 5, ensuring children grow in supportive family arrangements so they develop the life skills and get the education they need to thrive and above all that they live well and for longer. Children who suffer neglect for long periods will not achieve these outcomes.

#### **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1. The Council has statutory duty to protect children and young people from significant harm and to provide support so they can do well. The neglect strategy is part of discharging these statutory duties with partner agencies and the effectiveness of the strategy will result in children and young people being protected from the effects of neglect.

#### **5. Background**

- 5.1. The neglect strategy has four main priorities;
- Strategic commitment across all agencies
  - Improve awareness, understanding and recognition
  - Prevent neglect through early help
  - Improve the effectiveness of interventions and reduce the impact of neglect
- 5.2. The strategy is supported by an action plan and neglect scorecard as well as regular multi-agency auditing of practice. The impact of the strategy will be evaluated in 2019 to inform a revised strategy and will be subject of further scrutiny when Ofsted undertake an inspection of safeguarding under the new Inspection of Local Authority Children Services (ILAC) framework.
- 5.3. The overall aims of the strategy are to;
- More robustly tackle the 'neglect challenge'
  - More effectively mitigate the impact this form of child abuse has on children and young people.
  - Be able to identify neglect much sooner when it happens and earlier in children's lives.

- Reduce the number of children that suffer neglect and reduce the impact and time they suffer.
- Elevate child and adolescent neglect to the highest level of awareness and priority that this single most prevalent form of child abuse merits.
- Deliver a well trained workforce confident in tackling neglect and a public that recognises and reports neglect.

## **6. Impact of the Neglect Strategy**

- 6.1. In evaluating and measuring the impact of the strategy we need to have regard to whether identifying neglect sooner and tackling it could result in more children being subject of a child protection plan for neglect or less if we are more successful in identifying it sooner. The same could be said for referral rates, the number of early help plans for neglect, admissions to care and an increase or decrease in child in need plans for neglect. A reduction in the length of time children are subject of child protection plan for neglect is a good outcome if we are confident that parenting has improved so the child is no longer suffering neglect and that the changes are sustained. This is why we have to tackle neglect in a number of ways that both seeks to prevent it but when identified it is tackled effectively thus reducing the impact on the child.
- 6.2. The following are examples of where we can identify that the neglect strategy is having a good impact on neglect.
- 6.3. The neglect strategy and campaign has been short listed for several national awards and we have received requests from a number of local authorities asking if they can use our strategy and scorecard as a template.
- 6.4. In 2017/18 the percentage of children subject of a child protection for neglect for more than 12 months has reduced from 22% in 2016-17 to 7%, thus indicating more effective interventions are being delivered more quickly.
- 6.5. In 2017/18 the percentage of children made subject of a child protection plan for a 2nd or subsequent time for neglect reduced from 67% in 2016-17 to 39%.
- 6.6. In 2017/18 the use of the graded care profile, a tool use to assess the level of neglect, increased from less than 10% in 2016-17 to over 60%, and in

the month of March 2018 all child protection case conferences considering plans for neglect were supported by a completed grade care profile.

- 6.7. Since the neglect strategy was launched in 2017 over 600 staff across the multi-agency partnership have been trained in the use of the grade care profile. This is a testament to the strategic commitment of the partner agencies and a very good indication of the priority that neglect is afforded by frontline staff.
- 6.8. In 2017/18 the number of children subject of a child protection plan for neglect reached a peak in quarter 2 at 175, which is evidence of better identification of neglect and a number of these children went on to be subject of court proceedings and being protected from further harm.

## **7. Areas for Further Improvement**

- 7.1. The Council has now implemented the early help case management system which is accessible to partner agencies. This development will lead to greater performance reporting on early help plans for neglect (CAFs) along with an audit programme that will allow for greater scrutiny of the impact of early help. Early help is a LSCB priority.
- 7.2. We need to continue to see an increase in the use of Graded Care Profile and Neglect Screening tools and a further reduction in length of time children and young people are subject of child protection plans for neglect.

## **8. Implications**

### **8.1. Legal Implications**

- 8.1.1. The Council has a statutory duty to work with partner agencies to protect children and young people from significant harm, and where necessary, to make applications to the Family Court to secure their welfare.

### **8.2. Finance Implications**

- 8.2.1. Although there are no direct financial implications the number of children and young people that become cared for in Cheshire East and protected from harm increased this year and this places budgets under significant pressure. In response to this, the Council agreed to provide additional funding to meet the increased costs.

### **8.3. Equality Implications**

8.3.1. Members may want to use the performance information to ensure that services are identifying the most vulnerable children, for example children with disabilities.

### **8.4. Human Resources Implications**

8.4.1. The Council has a workforce strategy which is designed to recruit and retain qualified Social Workers and Managers, so it is important that this is effective so that the Council retains the capacity to respond to children and young people at risk of significant harm.

### **8.5. Risk Management Implications**

8.5.1. There are risks associated with some of the performance measures, e.g. the length of time a child is subject to a child protection for neglect and a rise in demand and therefore the capacity of services to respond in a timely way.

### **8.6. Rural Communities Implications**

8.6.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

### **8.7. Implications for Children & Young People**

8.7.1. The report and scorecard set out the progress being made to reduce the impact neglect has on children and young people.

### **8.8. Public Health Implications**

8.8.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

## **9. Ward Members Affected**

9.1. The neglect strategy applies to all Ward areas.

## **10. Consultation & Engagement**

10.1. The development and implementation of the neglect strategy has been informed by the Neglect Sub-group of the LSCB, which is a multi-agency group. The neglect strategy and campaign was also devised in collaboration with young people affected by neglect and a team of young people from a high school safeguarding group.

## **11. Access to Information**

11.1. This report should be considered in conjunction with the LSCB Neglect Strategy and Neglect Scorecard attached

11.2. Appendix 1 Neglect Strategy

11.3. Appendix 2 Neglect Scorecard

## **12. Contact Information**

12.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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