

7 Minute Briefing – Neglect Audit



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SSCB recognise that Neglect of children is one of the most difficult areas in child care and child protection to identify, communicate effectively to professionals, assess and intervene in. It is one of SSCBs key safeguarding areas as performance information, learning from child death reviews and consistent findings from (serious) case reviews highlight neglect as a continued vulnerability for Sandwell's children.

Referrals to Children's Social Care with the presenting need of neglect has increased significantly in the last quarter from 1074 at the end of March 2017 to 1367 at the end of June 2017, however there is some work to do across the partnership with identifying neglect as the primary factor of abuse at an earlier stage. At the end of June 2017 there were 309 (out of 532) Children subject to a Child Protection Plan in Sandwell under the category of Neglect.

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As part of the SSCB 2017/18 audit calendar, a multi-agency audit was undertaken in June 2017 that focused on 'How well staff across the multi-agency partnership work together to support children at risk of, or currently experiencing, neglect'

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Key assurance questions included:

Did agencies respond in a timely and effective manner to address the underlying factors of neglect?

Were the risks to children living with neglect prevented or reduced?

Are we avoiding drift & delay in our operational response?

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Key strengths include:

Agencies that were child facing worked well together and were responsive in addressing the presenting issue of neglect

Tenacity of professionals reduced the neglect children were experiencing

Areas of good practice were identified i.e. services put in place before the school year ended; social worker helped reduce the child's anxiety by creating a 'book' all about their sibling to look at when they were missing them

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Key areas of development include:

More involvement from services supporting adults in the household

Agencies to address the root cause of neglect rather than the presenting issues in complex cases and focus on the longer-term outcome for the child and family

Effective management oversight & reflective supervision for practitioners working with cases of neglect

Avoid 'start-again syndrome' by taking into consideration any past complex history/chronology during assessments of children

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What can we do now?

Ensure when coordinating a meeting that all relevant children and adults service representatives are invited

If you are a Manager, ensure there is sufficient progress of the child's plan to prevent drift and delay of interventions for children

For the Guidance on Neglect please consult <http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk>

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Next Steps:

The learning from the audit will be incorporated into SSCB training programme

Neglect to continue to be an area of focus by SSCB during 2017/2018

Further audit of neglect to be undertaken in the 2018-2019 SSCB Audit Calendar