

Eyes on – Enhancing our Practice

Learning from the Audit: Neglect

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. *Working Together, 2013*

A summary:

OSCB conducted a multi-agency audit to look at children on child protection plans due to neglect. Neglect is the most common reason for children becoming subject to a child protection plan (and to a repeat plan). Neglect is a common feature in the county's recent serious case reviews.

The purpose of the audit was to check compliance with procedures in relation to inter-agency working and shared assessment, planning, intervention and review systems. The audit focussed on the use of the Childcare and Development Checklist (known as the neglect tool kit), which was launched as a means of improving recognition and assessment of neglect. It sought to answer the question of whether staff members are in a better position to assess neglect effectively and better protect children.

The audit looked in depth at the cases of 6 children ranging from 1 ½ years to 8 years spread across the county. Agencies included children's social care, the early intervention service, schools and mental health services. The audit findings showed that there was work to be done to improve interagency working.

The more recent *Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers* reported that the development of the neglect toolkit has been 'highly effective' to support the identification of neglect in cases. Whilst this is positive the OSCB remains committed to promoting better ways of working.

Findings

- Domestic abuse, parental substance misuse and parental mental health issues influenced family dynamics in most of these cases
- Plans needed to have structured actions and measures of progress
- Parents were better able to engage with help when responses from professionals were honest and structured in terms of what needed to change

Themes in common with other audits in Oxfordshire

- ✓ Parents managing to avoid challenge and support and were able to 'wrong-foot' professionals
- ✓ Joint plans could be stronger and provide tangible, successful measures and outcomes for the child/family



- ✓ Managing risk on a multi-agency basis could be improved by jointly agreeing and adding to the Risk Assessment
- ✓ Holding partners and agencies to account is in everyone's interests

Learning points for managers

- Remember that the Neglect tool should be completed for all children subject to a child protection plan for neglect and for all children coming to legal panel: know where to find it and promote its use within your team
- Check that your team members are confident in knowing how to contribute to child protection planning and can support the objectives of the child protection plans they are involved in
- Identifying neglect is a matter of professional judgment; ensure that your team members are bringing as much objective evidence as possible to the judgment

Action points for practitioners

- Ensure that each child in a family is offered the same level of assessment however well the child appears to be doing
- Be transparent with families and clear on your expectations of what 'better' will look like
- Recognise that parents may give the appearance of compliance: keep the children at heart of what you do and be objective
- Take a forensic approach: this could be done by asking other professionals to complete the checklist, discussing findings and repeating at regular intervals

Key messages for inter-agency learning

- Model good practice as agencies: work well together and set clear, agreed goals
- Promote training for practitioners to gain an understanding of the key factors of neglect, such as mental health, substance misuse, domestic abuse, poverty etc
- Think and plan long term together; consider changing levels of risk

Remember to use the resources available....

- Positive working relationships and key contacts within agencies make multi-agency working more successful
- Seek advice and support from other agencies – If you have any queries or questions you can contact other agencies for advice and to share information

Reminder to practitioners

- **OSCB training** – the OSCB offers a variety of face-to-face and online courses to suit most safeguarding needs.
[Booking Training](#)
- **Multi-agency safeguarding procedures** – The OSCB multi-agency procedures cover a wide variety of situations you may encounter. You can access them at <http://oxfordshirescb.proceduresonline.com/>



- **Threshold of Needs document** – Professionals need to know the thresholds for accessing services within Oxfordshire. The OSCB has on the website a copy of the Thresholds document. You can access it here: [The OSCB Thresholds of Needs Matrix](#)
- **Good multi-agency practice guidance** – The OSCB have created a model of good multi-agency practice incorporating the Local Assessment Protocol. [Good multi-agency practice guidance](#)
- **Seven Golden Rules for Information Sharing** – Professionals should familiarise themselves with the golden rules for sharing information. There is a downloadable flyer available on the OSCB website: [7 Golden Rules.pdf](#)
- **Neglect Tool the Check-** [The Neglect Toolkit \(Childcare and Development Checklist\)](#)
- **Domestic Abuse** - For advice, support and information on Domestic Abuse please visit www.reducingtherisk.org.uk
- **Serious Case Reviews – Child H**
http://portal.oxfordshire.gov.uk/content/publicnet/other_sites/oscb/documents/new/about-the-board/case-reviews/Child-H-Overview-Report-Sept-2014.pdf
- **Serious Case Reviews – Child Y**
http://www.oscb.org.uk/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/Child%20Y%20-%20Executive%20Summary%20-%202007082014%20%28pdf%20format%20314KB%29.pdf
- **Mental Health services** – For children and young people
<http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/children-and-young-people/oxon/community-camhs/>
- **Drug and Alcohol Screening Tools** – The Parental Substance Misuse Toolkit
http://portal.oxfordshire.gov.uk/content/publicnet/other_sites/oscb/documents/professionals/PSM/PSM_toolkit.pdf
- **Drug and Alcohol Team, Public Health** – Visit www.oxfordshiredaat.org for up to date information on all drug and alcohol services for adults and young people.
- **OSCB Substance Misuse and Parenting Training**
<http://www.oscb.org.uk/training.html>
- **No Names Consultation** – Use the no names consultation service for advice and information on a child or young person, without having to divulge full information. Contact your Locality Social Worker who will advise you on next steps and whether you need to make a referral
North: 01865 323039
South: 01865 323041
City: 01865 328563