

LEARNING FROM REVIEWS

THEMES

- Parental difficulties
- Chronic neglect
- Responding to children's individual needs
- Joint working between agencies

Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) - Neglect

Joint Targeted Area Inspections are carried out by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. The inspections look at multi-agency arrangements and take a 'deep dive' approach to look at responses to neglect for children and young people. In preparation for a possible inspection in Leeds, a multi-agency working group meets monthly to discuss the theme, and carry out multi-agency audits of relevant cases. Six audits were carried out on the Neglect theme during 2017, and the findings are detailed below.

KEY LEARNING & PRACTICE IMPROVEMENTS

Parental difficulties

- Parental difficulties in relation to alcohol and substance use, domestic abuse and mental and physical health problems were present in a number of cases, of which two included young carers.
- Working with parents to access support with their own trauma and emotional health can result in improvements in their ability to care for their children and reduce practitioners' concerns.
- A focus on parents' needs and risks may however obscure a clear focus on how the needs of parents impacted on the children.

Chronic neglect

- Whilst recent referrals had generally been dealt with effectively and robustly, many families had long histories of social work involvement, with patterns of interventions followed by improvement, case closure and subsequent deterioration. Parents' engagement with services was often sporadic.
- Long histories of chronic neglect were not always recognised, robustly responded to or escalated in a timely way.
- Comprehensive analytical chronologies are important in identifying and responding to chronic neglect, rather than taking a more episodic approach.
- When intervention in relation to neglect is not timely or effective enough, it can have a damaging effect on children's development, and a delay in acting can result in children and young people falling further behind at school.

Responding to children's individual needs

- Social workers knew the individual children in sibling groups well, and identified and responded to their individual needs.
- Individual plans for young people were made in line with their specific needs, for example in a group of siblings one child

remained on a plan as risks were still present for them but not for their siblings, and making individual placement decisions were made in line with the needs and wishes of children and young people.

Joint working between agencies

- Good identification of risk and appropriate referrals to the social work service had resulted in appropriate responses.
- Incomplete information received and unknown reasoning behind decision making communicated for families who had moved to Leeds from other areas had hindered risk assessment and planning processes.
- Effective communication and planning when arranging appointments will remove potential barriers faced by families such as travel, cost and clashes with other commitments.

YOUR NEXT STEPS

Share and discuss this learning with colleagues, and consider the implications for your practice including:

- Recognise the role of young carers and ensure that their needs are assessed and appropriately responded to.
- Be aware of the potential for losing focus on the needs of a child when providing support for parents—this should be balanced.
- Ensure a chronological analysis of neglect rather than episodic.
- Ensure individual needs are considered and responded to, especially within sibling groups.
- When sharing information (within or across boundaries) ensure that information is complete and reasoning behind decision making is recorded.
- When arranging appointments consider the needs of the family in attending e.g. timing, travel, cost and clashes with other commitments.