

HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELL BEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 10TH SEPTEMBER 2013

SUBJECT: CHILD NEGLECT

REPORT BY: ACTING CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the actions being taken by Children's Services and partner agencies to reduce the harm caused to children by neglect.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 There are currently 167 children whose names are on Caerphilly's Child Protection Register. 114 of these are under the category of Neglect. This report sets out how Caerphilly Children's Services are working with our partners to reduce the harm caused to children who are neglected.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Working Together
3.2 All Wales Child Protection Procedures
3.3 Children's Services Service Improvement Plan

4. THE REPORT

Background

- 4.1 Working Together, The Welsh Government 2006 describes neglect as "*The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of or un-responsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.*"
- 4.2 There are 114 children whose names are placed on Caerphilly's Child Protection Register under the category of neglect. The main contributing factors for this are domestic abuse, substance misuse and parental mental health. Other Local Authorities have similar numbers of children on the Child Protection Register for Neglect.

Caerphilly Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB)

Recognising this as a major cause of harm to children the CSCB led on the development and implementation of a regional "Recognising Neglect" Guidance and toolkit for Practitioners.

- 4.3. The guidance contained useful research and policy information about neglect and the toolkit was a range of validated tools developed from across the Country that aim to support practitioners in identifying and working with neglect.
- 4.4 Multi agency training was rolled out, which means that social workers attended alongside police officers, health visitors, teachers and other professionals who work with children and young people. One of the most positive by products of this training has been the increased understanding across agencies of roles and responsibilities and the debate across and within agencies about thresholds for intervening in families where there are concerns about neglect.
- 4.5 The training expands on the information in the guidance using participative exercises to increase understanding and stimulate debate. It covers identification, referral and planning with neglect cases.
- 4.6 We evaluate each session and there is always positive feedback from attendees who feel more confident about their ability to identify and intervene in situations. We have also done a follow up evaluation on a sample of attendees 3 months after they have completed the course to ascertain what impact this has had on practice. Practitioners who participated told us that they felt better able to identify neglect, that it had helped remind them to remain child focused when some of these families are extremely chaotic and they felt more confident in working with chronic neglect.
- 4.7 In June 2012 we held 3 multi agency focus groups with front line practitioners across the region to evaluate the guidance and toolkit. In response to their comments in December 2012 we published the revised neglect guidance document, which has been reduced in size and merged with the toolkit. This was distributed to all agencies.
- 4.8 Case studies, outlining outcomes achieved by practitioners working with children experiencing neglect are attached.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. This report is for information purposes, so the Council's Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process does not need to be applied.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. There are no financial implications.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. There are no personnel implications.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The views of those consulted have been incorporated into the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that Members note the contents of the report.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1. To ensure that members are appraised of the actions being taken by Children's Services and their partners to reduce the harm caused by the neglect of children.

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Consultees: Social Services Senior Management Team

Cllr Robin Woodyatt, Cabinet Member, Social Services

Children's Services Divisional Management Team

Zarah Newman, South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board Business Manager

Anne Marie Mckay, Child Protection Co-ordinator, Caerphilly Children's Services

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Family Composition

Appendix 2 - Children X and Y

(Please contact Jonathan Jones, Democratic Services Manager on 01443 864242, if you wish to view the Appendices)