

7 - minute Learning Summary

WSCP Adolescent Neglect Audit

Audit Summary (June 2020)

This audit reviewed the quality of the child's journey through 5 key areas of case management, assessment, planning, outcomes for child and partnership working.:

- Focus on multi-agency response to Black Asian Minority Ethnic adolescents experiencing neglect
- Random sample of 6 adolescents: 3 Child Protection, 3 Child in Need; Aged 11 to 16 years; Male & female
- Auditors: Safeguarding leads from Children's Social Care (CSC), Health, Schools, Police, CAMHS

Key Findings: The Child's Journey

- 1) Evidence of robust, committed work with adolescents across agencies.
- 2) Most children had repeat cycles of neglect interventions:
 - 4 out of 6 known to CSC since birth or as a young child
 - For these, improved outcomes were short term, not sustained over time.
- 3) Non engagement of parents a factor behind repeated concerns & multiple interventions.
- 4) Assessments, analysis, planning and interventions did not sufficiently consider or explore Black Asian Minority Ethnic identity and culture.
- 5) Threshold for S17 CIN or S47 Child Protection not always clear with some professionals.
- 6) Other than social work & health assessments, no evidence of using other neglect assessment or intervention tools.
- 7) Adolescents do not always recognise risks to self or other (Contextual safeguarding).
- 8) In sibling groups:
 - Siblings who have less overt/obvious indicators of neglect & risk may be overlooked
 - Neglect may also result from the risk behaviours of older siblings.
- 9) Housing issues (overcrowding, temporary housing, facing homelessness) was a factor in 4 out of 6 families.
- 10) When fathers were involved with the planning (either living at home or not), outcomes for the adolescent improved.

Audit Recommendations

1. WSCP to consider setting up a multi-agency neglect working group to lead on:
 - A review of how adolescents can be supported more therapeutically with the emotional impact and trauma of neglect
 - The identification and development of adolescent neglect assessment and risk assessment tools, to include direct work with Black Asian Minority Ethnic children

This action is currently in progress

2. The findings and learning from this audit to inform the update of the WSCP neglect strategy including:
 - The development and implementation of local practice standards for working with Black Asian Minority Ethnic children experiencing neglect and their families
 - Local multi-agency guidance and protocols for addressing families and children who consistently do not engage with planning
 - The duties and responsibilities of each partner agency

This action is currently in progress

3. Parenting skills group work specifically for adolescent children (e.g. Strengthening Families).
4. All multi-agency training and guidance should specifically include more awareness and understanding of the needs and experiences of Black Asian Minority Ethnic service users.

What did we learn

BLACK ASIAN MINORITY ETHNIC ADOLESCENTS & FAMILIES

- Assessment and planning for Black Asian Minority Ethnic adolescents and their family needs to be more robust:
 - We may know the Black Asian Minority Ethnic background details, but not how this informs family life & parenting
 - More understanding of the religious, cultural, ethnic identity and needs and how this is reflected in the lived experiences of the adolescent & parent (s)
- More understanding the impact of interventions on parent's confidence and abilities in their parenting skills
- How Black Asian Minority Ethnic identity and experiences may inform parenting and impact on working together with professionals
- Parent's previous experiences with agencies may affect willingness to engage, especially when these interventions or professionals were experienced as discriminatory
- Consideration of the race, culture & gender of worker, especially social worker

NON ENGAGEMENT

Non engagement of children and parents, especially with CSC, presented as a key stumbling block to progressing safety planning with children. This may also be influenced by:

- Children who feel committed to their parents and don't want to be disloyal
- Children who are influenced by parents to not trust the social worker
- This may also reflect children's own perception of their neglect i.e. they don't feel or agree they are being neglected and may not understand the need for a social worker and CIN or CP planning

MULTI-AGENCY: WORKING WELL

- Agencies mostly identified & responded to neglect concerns at an early stage
- Consent for referral and interventions (S17 CiN) was mostly sought from parents & from the child for direct social work and health assessments
- All audit agencies involved with and contributed to the child and family assessment (CFA)
- Also good evidence of health assessments by school nurses (included emotional and mental health)
- Police and health reported good partnership working with social work

NEEDS IMPROVING

- More thorough risk assessment including analysis of family history, cycles of neglect & impact of chronic neglect
- More understanding & analysis on how presenting parental risk factors impact on and contribute to child neglect
- Understanding the reasons behind parent & child non-engagement
- Families who repeatedly fail to engage should trigger a more considered/ robust response at an earlier stage

VOICE OF THE ADOLESCENT

- Adolescent's experience of neglect is presented in their emotional health & behaviours rather than their presentation
- More focus on the voice & the lived experiences of the child, including recognition of trauma
- Gaining their perspective; understanding & recording their views on assessments, meetings and reviews
- More use interaction tools and activities
- Advocacy for the adolescent

A copy of the full report is available from the WSCP.

Many thanks to the agency auditors for their detailed audit work undertaken virtually during Covid 19.