

BSCB Neglect Conference - March 2018

82 delegates from a variety of agencies attended the second neglect conference held by the BSCB, the previous one having been held in 2013. The event took place at Wycombe Wanderers football club conferencing venue and the majority of the audience were front line practitioners.



The event was opened by **Fran Gosling-Thomas**, Independent Chair of Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board. Fran explained the need for all agencies to work better at identifying and responding to the early signs of neglect.

The national trend for the number of children on a child protection plan has increased and it is no different in Buckinghamshire – currently running at 62% (as of 31st January 2018). The work completed with regard to neglect by the board includes writing a multi-agency strategy to tackle neglect, revising the neglect guidance, several audits and being a licenced provider of Graded Care Profile training.

Dr Lesley Ray – Designated Doctor for Safeguarding Children then gave a presentation that had everyone scratching, as she showed some of the common infections, infestations and injuries some neglected children may present with. However the message was that ALL children may have these issues at some point in their childhood but by not treating them parents/carers can become neglectful. Dr Ray discussed some of the cases she has come across in clinic and how the children present, which included very smelly/dirty, displaying challenging behaviours and how the child interacts with their parent/carer. Dr Ray gave an overview of how neglect affects children's brain development and the implications this may have for later life. A very poignant slide was shown where a child becomes 'lost' due to the chaotic environment they are living in.



Delegates then attended one of three workshops.



Patrick Neil presented on the Graded Care Profile on behalf of the NSPCC. He described how the GCP version 2 came about and what research has told us from the 'pilot phase' and how families have benefitted from the tool. He showed the four domains and sub-domains and explained that these are based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and that by having a firm foundation provides stability. He went on to discuss barriers some of the sites using the GCP2 have faced.

You could have heard a pin drop during **Sue Woolmore's** workshop "sand stories". Sue set out to give people the space to reflect and to discuss where they were in a story that she powerfully created with sand and some figures (people who attended agreed not to share the content of the story in case others get a chance to experience it at a later date). It gave everyone a chance to put themselves into a child's lived experience and think about the barriers when working with families which lead to their needs not being met. Practitioners identified the need to use professional curiosity and to ensure that systems and processes do not become something that prevent us from building trusted relationships. The group also agreed on the need to understand children in their own context, families and communities. People attending took away messages about the role of peer support, reflective supervision and physical working environments that support information sharing and relationship building between agencies. The Board didn't get away without food for thought either, we will now be thinking about serious case reviews and how they are a reminder of what we know needs to improve rather than 'lessons learnt'.



Kim Hives and **Karen Parker** presented on Neglect and Children with Disabilities on behalf of Action for Children. This workshop looked at attitudes and assumptions towards disabled children and being able to challenge parents. The aim of the exercise was for each group to read some scenarios and then have a professional conversation about the concerns that came to their attention about a child they are working with at a community short breaks setting. Following their discussions they then had to rate each scenario on a scale of 0 to 5 (0 was low 5 was high). The facilitators explained that delegates didn't need to come up with solutions to each scenario and that decisions on the ratings needed to be given just based on the snippets of information given on the worksheets, a brief discussion took place regarding any concerns that stood out. Each group were then asked to complete a similar exercise also entitled How Concerned Are You. This time each group were asked to have a professional conversation about the concerns that come to their attention about a child/young person they are working with at a village play scheme and youth club. A discussion took place around how professionals may have different concerns in similar situations depending on whether the child has a disability i.e. abled child versus non-abled child and how this affected their scores.



Following a quick coffee break **David Glover-Wright**, Principal Social Worker (Buckinghamshire County Council) spoke about adolescent neglect and the difficulties of engaging with them and their parents. David provided some case examples of young people he has worked with and how he was able to break down the barriers that workers often perceive based on the young person's gender and societal stereotyping. David closed his presentation with a case where two children had become looked after and what challenges and changes they experienced as a result.



Gerry Byrne from Oxford Health gave an extremely detailed presentation on the relationship between a child and their parent and how this can be neglectful. His 'imaginative' drawings demonstrated how a simple discussion can cause an adverse reaction and how this can be perceived by the child and their parent as 'aggressive'

Gerry went on to show some videos of families he has worked with and how they made progress to realise the effect their actions were having on their children.

After a short lunch break **DI Emily Allen** and **DS Ami Chapple** from Thames Valley Police gave an overview of the police responsibilities when investigating cases of neglect and how they have to prove 'beyond all reasonable doubt' that the neglect was 'wilful'. They explained the powers they have, how they use them and the variety of ways that they can collect evidence. Emily and Ami then showed some photographs of a case they have investigated and provided delegates with an overview of what happened when police attended the address.



The BSCB then posed delegates with 4 questions;

1. Does your agency train staff specifically on neglect? (Awareness raising)
2. How does your agency measure the impact of this training on the children? (Measure)
3. What are the barriers to you identifying and acting on neglect? (Identifying)
4. What do you do with cases when neglect is suspected/identified? (Act upon)

A summary of the responses is below. Unfortunately we did not have the opportunity to discuss or challenge any of the responses due to time constraints as we wanted to ensure the conference finished on time. Agencies may wish to take some of this information and use it to plan development opportunities or discuss with staff as part of supervision.

Fran Gosling-Thomas thanked everyone for coming before formally closing the conference.

<u>Awareness raising</u>	<u>Measure</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of broader safeguarding training • Mandatory e-learning • Face to Face workshops • Sharing of information learnt • Discussion in team meetings • Discussion in supervision • Some staff offered GCP training • BSCB neglect training • Learning on the job/peer support <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough training specific to individual roles • Raising awareness of when training is on for non BCC staff (GCP training) • Front line staff need more specific training • Time is a key factor • Not always the people that need to do training attend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sharing • Record keeping • Following up on information shared • Safeguarding discussion in supervision • Increase in knowledge • Influx of referrals after training – but short term • Reduce the number of referrals for neglect • Reflect on practice and change because of training • Identify gaps in provision • Audits <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not get rid of early help • Difficult due to threshold barrier changing • Masking problems • Increase in staffing/funding needed
<u>Identifying</u>	<u>Act upon</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worried about being too alarming • Lack of knowledge/recognising signs • Repercussions from parents • Poor record keeping • Lack of support • Lack of supervision • Upsetting relationship with client • Not wanting to acknowledge what we've seen • GCP form is too long • Lack of professional curiosity • Knowing who to escalate to • Poor training and awareness • Lack of time and pressure to close cases • KPI's – not allowed to visit too often • Workload • Not being able to attend training • Disguised compliance • Constant changes in staff (Social Workers) • Colluding • Not child centred – focus on the family • Drift when a child is on a plan – need a way to challenge • Being given a tool (GCP) but not supported by line manager to use it • Start again syndrome (assessment) • Families need longer engagement • Need training on completing MARF and thresholds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend meetings • Write reports • Sharing on a need to know basis • Whistle-blowing • Carry out a GCP • Discuss with line manager • Referral to Early Help or Social Care • Build up history of concerns • Offer support ie parenting course • Speak to other agencies • MARF • Strategy meeting • Remove child/PPP • CP plan • Foster care • Refuge • Unannounced visits to family • Respond, report, record • Discuss with family • Call police • If child on a CP plan speak to their social worker • Time to reflect with child on the long term effects