



People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021

Blackburn with Darwen
Highlight Presentation Peer Challenge
Effective understanding, recognition and response to neglect

21st – 25th June 2021



the remote challenge focused on the ‘Effective understanding, recognition and response to neglect’ – including

Leadership, management, and culture including vision and strategy

Capacity and managing resources – are leaders creating the right environment for good social work practice?

Effective practice, service delivery and the voice of the child – including impact on outcomes for children and families

Peer Review in numbers

Reviewers

14 days of remote challenge

10 cases audited

10 people spoke with reviewers (council staff & Elected Members, external partners and stakeholders)

15 meetings to gather information and views, including focus groups and observations, and additional research and reading

155 hours collectively spent by reviewers to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending nearly 3 weeks in BWD

Partnership Working on Neglect

Review Lead Inspector feedback:

“The education community, voluntary and faith organisations and the third sector have worked with the Council to support families through these unprecedented and challenging times”

Multi-agency approach:

BWDC we are determined to reduce the prevalence and the impact of child poverty in the borough and we aim to embed a multi-agency approach to neglect throughout the borough.

Challenges:

82% of open *Child in Need cases* have a primary need of Neglect or Abuse (June 2021)

41% of *Child Protection Plans* have a category of Neglect (June 2021)

12,639 (37%) of children aged 0-16 live in 'relative low income' households in BWDC

Covid 19 - since the start of the pandemic there has been an **increase in the number of individuals & families needing support** in the borough as a result of growing poverty and isolation.

Partnership Strengths:

- ✓ Neglect Champions are embedded across the partnership to ensure that relevant information is cascaded to partner agencies
- ✓ Rolling programme of Neglect Training and Graded Care Profile training available for partner agencies and staff
- ✓ Strong and well-embedded relationships across partner agencies who are engaged in driving strategic ambition for children

More to do:

Reinforce that 'neglect is everybody's business'

- How can partners further support the Neglect Strategy including Primary Care, Public Health and across the education community?
- Focus partnership energy and effort into the implementation of the **Well strategy** to ensure effective prevention, early identification, and intervention for children vulnerable to neglect.
- Further work needed with partner agencies to ensure the strategy is fully embedded across the wider partnership.

Voice of Practitioners

In conversation with reviewers, staff described working in BWD as:

a “refreshing culture”

“a positive learning culture which is led from the top”

“there is no hierarchical hegemony here”

Staff are encouraged to say, “I’ve never done this before, can someone help me out?”

Many staff spoke enthusiastically about “a systemic model of social work and an environment in which good social work can thrive”

Case auditors reported that “Almost all staff seen were confident & professional, and were able to articulate their casework & their positive experience of working for the LA”

Strengths

BUSINESS AS USUAL DURING COVID:

Despite a “prolonged and extreme impact of the pandemic the council and partners have demonstrated a determined approach of ‘business as usual’ as far as possible in these extraordinary times.”

LEADERSHIP:

“Leadership is impressive in Blackburn with Darwen – keep doing what you are doing”

“consistent and very powerful messages about the strength of leadership and governance”

PARTNERSHIPS & INTEGRATION:

“Strong and well embedded relationships across partner agencies is driving strategic ambition for children”

“Strong bond of honesty in relationships with schools”

BBWD has “an integrated, creative & tenacious approach to building relationships and working with young people underpinned by the Adolescent Strategy”

GOVERNANCE:

“The vision provides a golden thread that runs from frontline practice through to corporate governance arrangements and is underpinned by a systemic model of social work. Political leaders are highly informed”

CASELOAD MANAGEMENT – THE CHILDREN’S ADVICE & DUTY SERVICE EFFECT

Reduced caseloads are now enabling more direct work with children and families which is supported by effective supervision arrangements and strong management oversight.

Key recommendations

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT:

criticise the development of performance management reporting and analysis

improve and modernise performance management information systems to

- provide real time data to support oversight of cases and timely decisions
- give a more informed understanding of the prevalence of neglect across the continuum of need

EVIDENCE & OUTCOMES:

better understand and evidence impact of services on outcomes for children and families

identify the key measures of success across the continuum of need and evaluate the impact of the Neglect strategy against these.

CULTURE & IDENTITY:

make the significance and impact of culture and identity a more prominent feature in assessments & care plans

Better address diversity, community identity and family traditions through meaningful conversations and demonstrate in all records to fully reflect the child's lived experience.

Key recommendations - continued

PUBLIC LAW OUTLINE (PLO) :

Strengthen systems to promote the timely progress of cases in PLO including:

reviewing the number of trackers and role of Legal Gateway Meeting in oversight of all cases

FURTHER ENQUIRY TO BETTER UNDERSTAND IMPACT:

Repeat & short-term child protection plans where neglect is a feature require further enquiry

to enable a better understanding of the impact of the Neglect Strategy in decision-making.

CHILD'S LIVED EXPERIENCE:

Further develop a holistic approach to the child's lived experience of neglect including evaluating evidence and capacity for sustained change beyond consideration of physical conditions

Routinely feature and analyse the impact of poverty and the pandemic in children's and young people's assessments and plans.

Case Audit findings to examine: Effective Practice, Service Delivery & Voice

reviewers audited 20 cases concluded that:

The needs of children are well understood with consistent evidence of the voice of the child being apparent in an impressive and broad ranging Family Support offer, including a range of highly regarded support services provided in the voluntary sector.

The Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) is becoming embedded in practice & underpinning a better understanding of the child's lived experience and inform the focus of care plans

The quality and timeliness of assessments with an increased focus on the child's lived experience is improving
The roll out of the Risk Sensible Model is supporting improved analysis and assessment in care planning

Areas for improvement:

Ensure that the Neglect Strategy is fully understood across Primary Care

Increase engagement of General Practitioners in strategy discussions & child protection conferences

Better recording in children's assessments and plans to demonstrate

- the impact of poverty and the pandemic on the child and family

- the significance and impact of the child's culture, identity, and family traditions

Pre-birth assessments would benefit from "a bespoke assessment tool that would promote a holistic multi agency

assessment of the child's needs and parenting capacity"

Improve the timeliness of child protection conference minutes – to drive care plan

What Next?

Partnership recommendations from the Peer Review will be driven through the **Children's Partnership Board** and the **Neglect Champions sub group**

Children's Services recommendations will be actioned and monitored via the strategic **Service Development Board & Practice Improvement Operational Group** - "Outstanding Practice" priority

Ofsted ILACS Inspection of Children's Services - preparation is underway to implement the recommendations in advance of the inspection.



Any Questions?