

Report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services to the meeting of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 14th March 2018

Subject:

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Arrangements by the Council and its partners to tackle Neglect.

Summary statement:

This report provides a briefing to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the issue of Neglect and it includes how the Bradford Safeguarding Children Board and partners are working together to drive improvements across the District's safeguarding partnership and to hold agencies to account for their work in their area.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides a briefing regarding the issue of Neglect within Bradford. The strategic aim in Bradford is to ensure effective prevention, early recognition and an appropriate response to neglect and its potential devastating impact on children's lives. From an early help and prevention stage to statutory intervention; there should be appropriate, consistent and timely responses across all agencies working together. The Bradford Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) has included Neglect within its Business Plan to enable partners to work together to drive improvements across the District's safeguarding partnership and to hold agencies to account for their work in this area.
- 1.2 The strategic aim in Bradford is to ensure the effective prevention, early recognition and an appropriate response to neglect. Agencies should work together in a timely and consistent manner and all those who have contact with children and families have a responsibility and role to play in the recognition and response to neglect.
- 1.3 If any member of the public has a concern that a child is being harmed as a result of abuse or neglect, the BSCB website provides guidance for reporting these concerns.
http://bradfordscb.org.uk/?page_id=13
- 1.4 In the Bradford district, these are the numbers that you can ring for advice and to make a referral:
- During office hours (8.30am – 5pm Monday to Thursday, 4.30pm on Friday) call Children's Social Services Initial Contact Point on 01274 437500
 - At all other times, Social Services Emergency Duty Team on 01274 431010
 - If you have reason to believe that a child is at IMMEDIATE RISK OF HARM, contact the police on 999
 - For all general enquiries, please contact Children's Specialist Services on 01274 435600
- 1.5 Practitioners seeking to refer a child or young person should seek advice from the Early Help Support and Think Family
<https://www.bradford.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/get-advice-and-support/find-early-help/>
- 1.6 The partnership has contributed a great deal of effort in recognising and dealing with Neglect, in summary:
- Neglect features within the BSCB Business Plan 2016-18
 - The BSCB has recently finalised a new Neglect Strategy
 - The BSCB have organised event in early 2018 to raise awareness and develop good practice
 - The JTAI sub-group of the BSCB has undertaken quality assurance work
 - The BSCB has developed a partnership Neglect action plan
 - The BSCB has undertaken a Neglect challenge panel case audit

- Training and awareness has been undertaken across the partnership
- Signs of Safety assessment & planning framework
- Early Help with a specific focus on workless families and those affected by domestic violence and parental mental health. Families in which children experience multiple adverse experiences.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 National Context:

2.1 Neglect is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government 2015; as;

2.2 “The persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and /or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health and development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect as children from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care givers
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- Neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.”

2.3 Parental factors may be present which impact on their ability to provide an appropriate level of care to their child/children without additional support for example experience of poor parenting in their own childhood, mental health issues, substance misuse, living with Domestic Abuse or having a learning difficulty. Determining what constitutes persistent failure to meet a child’s needs remains a matter of professional judgement. (NSPCC 2015).

2.4 Child neglect is the most common category of child abuse, but difficult to identify and evidence particularly at the early stages. In 2016-17 in England 47% of all new child protection plans were for Neglect. Approximately one in five children who became subject of a child protection plan in England had been the subject of a child protection plan at least once before.

2.5 The number of children who were the subject of a Child Protection Plan in Bradford at 31st March 2017 was 559. This was a rate of 39.6 per 10,000 child population. In comparison, the national rate was 42.9 and the statistical neighbour rate was 54.2 (March 2016). Neglect (38%) was the second highest Child Protection Plan category for children being the subject of a Child Protection Plan in Bradford. Emotional abuse was 48%; sexual abuse (9%); and physical abuse (5%).

2.6 NSPCC information regarding neglect indicates that nationally one in 10 children has experienced neglect. In the year ending March 2017, 24,590 children were identified as needing protection from neglect; this was 48% of all children subject to a child protection plan in that year (Department for Education characteristics of children in need 2016 – 2017).

2.7 **Governance and Structure**

The Bradford Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) continues to provide the procedural framework for all partnership work to keep children safe within Bradford and fulfils its statutory responsibility around quality assurance and training.

2.8 Within our early help services, targeted work with families is based on a Think Family approach using Signs of Safety as our framework, with work incorporating the following key elements:

- A whole family Signs of Safety assessment including everyone living in the household.
- A family plan which would address the needs of each family member where identified.
- Regular family and agency meetings to ensure all agencies involved are delivering to timely agreed actions and the family are fully informed of progress.
- One worker who will build a positive working relationship with the family and act as the main point of contact and information for agencies and family as well as delivering direct support to families.
- Make sure relevant support/help is in place for every member of the household if needed with the help of the family network and other services.

2.9 We work with families with two or more of the following issues within a family and this captures a number of themes related to neglect and its impact on families:

- a. Involvement in crime or anti-social behaviour
- b. Children not attending school regularly
- c. Children who need help (social care/targeted early help)
- d. Adult out of work or at risk of financial exclusion
- e. Families affected by domestic violence and abuse
- f. Health problems

2.10 Bradford's arrangements for Targeted Early Help were implemented from October 2016. This enabled the commencement of district wide delivery through a locality model aligned with the children's centre clusters. From January 2017 we have had an Early Help Gateway Service (sitting alongside the front door for social care) and 5 early help clusters which are aligned with the 7 current children's centre clusters. Each cluster has a Targeted Early Help Manager to act as a key point of contact for local services, chair early help multi agency panels and manage a team of staff to do whole family work along with commissioned Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) services.

2.11 Collectively, this has helped shape a clearer targeted early help offer across the district which works closely with social care services, local settings and services such as schools, children's centres and health provision.

Across a number of partners, we have adopted the Signs of Safety approach to working with families and children. Signs of Safety is focussed on both the family's strengths and the safety and welfare of the child or young person. The approach involves both professional and family knowledge. Assessment and plans should fully involve parents, children and the network of services known to the child.

Plans will be clear and concise. Signs of Safety is a strengths based approach that

2.12 uses 'three columns' to assess. 1. What are we worried about? (Past harm, future danger and complicating factors) 2. What's working well? (Existing strengths and safety) 3. What needs to happen? (Future safety/ positive change) How worried are we on a scale of 0 – 10? (Judgement)

2.13 A chronology of significant events also remains an important tool within Signs of Safety. As outlined in the Paediatric Dental Neglect Guidance, a chronology of headline key events: places children/young people at the centre of assessment and analysis show early indications of patterns of concern help understanding of the immediate or on-going impact of events make links across seemingly unrelated events or information make links between the past harms and the present situation helps to understand the importance of historic information upon what is happening in a child's life now enables new workers to become familiar with the child and family analyse what action is needed to build safety and well-being

2.14 Work around Neglect has been undertaken by the BSCB through a number of sub-groups. As outline Neglect forms part of the BSCB 2016-18 Business Plan and this plan is subject to regular review. The Safeguarding and Professional Practice Sub-group (SAPP) has led on the development of the Neglect Strategy, the Performance Management Audit and Evaluation (PMAE) sub-group has led on the development of performance measures and the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) has undertaken preparatory work in preparation for inspections.

2.15 The new Neglect strategy was finalised in January 2018 and is now published. (http://bradfordscb.org.uk/?page_id=107)

2.16 Its core objectives are:

- 1. To ensure that the children's workforce is skilled, competent and resilient when identifying and working with neglectful families.*
- 2. To promote a wider understanding of the long term impact of neglect and raise awareness of the key indicators*
- 3. Bradford Safeguarding Board will monitor the effectiveness of the strategy and the impact of the multi-agency responses and intervention with neglect cases.*

The new strategy has adopted a Five Stranded Approach

1. Improving Prevention
2. Improving, Recognition and Assessment
3. Improving Response to Children, Young People and Families
4. Improving Communication and Awareness
5. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 2.17 Bradford Safeguarding Children Board will work with the Bradford Children's Trust Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure a co-ordinated approach across Bradford.
- 2.18 Further work is on-going to develop a good practice document which will support the strategy and link in with other policies and procedures, including the threshold document. (http://bradfordscb.org.uk/?page_id=107). The BSCB will be hosting a professionals event in February 2018.
- 2.19 The Performance Management Audit and Evaluation (PMAE) sub-group has led on the development of performance measures around neglect. This has been a challenge due to the fact that neglect is often recognised through cumulative and secondary factors. The group is working towards a suite of measures to allow the identification and oversight of neglect from early stages through to the more serious cases involving child protection procedures. The group has worked closely with agencies such as the NSPCC around neglect call data and also dental data.
- 2.20 A summary of the data shows
- Neglect contributes to 38% of all children subject to a child protection plan in Bradford, against 43.8% nationally
 - 88% of Children were Looked After were due to abuse and neglect reasons at 31 March 2017, a slight increase on the previous year's figure of 86%
- 2.21 NSPCC helpline responded to over 19,000 contacts about neglect in 2016/17. Around 33% of contacts to the helpline were concerns about neglect. The JTAI preparation group is now additional sub-group of the BSCB. The initial purpose of the group was to prepare for the first possible JTAI inspection which was around CSE. The Sub group undertook a self assessment exercise, and developed and oversaw an action plan relating to this. This methodology enabled the Board to seek assurance, and to drive partnership improvement in a specific area. It was therefore agreed to continue this sub group and to use the JTAI themes as a framework for continuous improvement. The most recent work has been around Neglect.
- 2.22 February 2017 Bradford received a JTAI inspection and the work of this group was critical to assuring the inspection team that Bradford's partnership was sighted on domestic abuse.
- 2.23 The BSCB has an established process of multi-agency challenge panels audits in Bradford selected around a central theme. Previous themes have included children subject of Child Protection and as part of the JTAI preparation Child Sexual Exploitation and Children Living with Domestic Abuse have already been audited by BSCB in 2016. The challenge panel model has also been adopted and used wider in Bradford by Children's Social Care (CSC) and Health partners. The most recent panel focussed upon Neglect in July 2017.
- 2.24 In advance of the panel, a number of cases were identified which allowed an opportunity to conduct a diverse panel audit. Partners researched these cases against the following criteria:
- whether risks to children living with neglect were prevented and reduced at

an early stage through timely access to effective help and appropriate intervention

- quality of risk assessments, management oversight, supervision and quality assurance
- partnership working and information sharing
- evidence that professionals were confident and knowledgeable in understanding the impact of neglect
- evidence of children and their families views having been heard and understood

2.25 This presented an opportunity to share learning and challenge practice. Recommendations from the panel were taken forward by the group to form an action plan. The multi-agency Challenge Panels offer a good method of learning about practice and whether policies, procedures/guidance are working effectively, whilst also providing valuable learning for agencies.

2.26 The JTAI sub-group also undertook a self assessment against specific criteria and questions around Neglect. Collective areas of development were also used to inform the action plan.

2.27 Neglect action plan has 5 actions which can be summarised as

- Development of a neglect strategy
- Development of a set of performance measures
- Development of training and toolkits
- Better understanding of early help and schools in respect of support
- Dissemination and embedding learning from audits

2.28 The BSCB and PMAE are continuing to develop an understanding of Neglect. The BSCB are keen to raise areas and understanding around neglect, and particularly those who are often working within communities who may be able to recognise neglect at its early stage. Organisations such as housing and utility providers will be consulted to develop ideas on identification and awareness at a partnership event in February 2018.

2.29 **Learning and Development**

Neglect Training has been developed and reviewed over the last three years. The course content delivered in 2016 / 2017 “Neglect can you recognise it? What should you do?” was based on the draft Neglect Strategy. Future courses will promote the new strategy. The programme is delivered by a multi - agency pool of trainers.

2.30 The Learning and Development sub-group has undertaken evaluation of the impact of training around Neglect and this has enhanced the opportunity to triangulate the views of the learner their manager and the trainer’s evaluation on a sample of courses.

2.31 The BSCB offers a number of on-line training courses for partners, one of these is based upon Neglect.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 There are no other considerations.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

4.1 Children's Services currently spends approximately £2.9m on children prevention and support services.

4.2 The Bradford Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB):

- sets the procedural framework for all partnership work to keep children safe within Bradford
- fulfils its statutory responsibility for ensuring that staff receive multi-agency training to support them in their work
- ensures that agencies are held to account for their work and that there is a learning and improvement framework in place to ensure that serious case reviews and other challenge and learning processes are effective.
- conducts a multiagency review of every child death in the District, carried out by the Child Death Overview Panel.
- In addition, BSCB plays a role in supporting and planning innovative partnership responses to safeguarding children challenges, such as the establishment of the multi-agency CSE Hub

The staffing resource for BSCB is:

- Manager
- Administrator
- Learning and development coordinator
- Learning and development administrator
- Performance and information officer
- Child death reviews manager

5 RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

5.1 The protection of children and vulnerable adults is the highest priority for the Council and its partners. The partnership recognises that child neglect is the most common category of child abuse and the links with other forms of abuse such as Domestic Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation. Failure to protect and provide appropriate services significantly increases the risk to children in the District. It would also lead to significantly reduced public confidence in Bradford Council, West Yorkshire Police and other partners, as has been demonstrated in some other Districts

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 6.1 The report has been considered by the office of the City Solicitor and there are no identified legal issues to highlight.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The BSCB considers matters of equality and diversity in all its work. There have been no issues highlighted with regard to Neglect and specific communities at risk.

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

None.

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

None.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

Addressing Neglect is linked to the Communities Safety priorities around Reducing crime and re-offending and Safeguarding against violent and serious crime. The BSCB recognises the links between Neglect and other forms of vulnerability and criminal activity.

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Neglect is a violation of the rights of the child under the Human Rights Act. The arrangements made by the Council and its partners are intended to prevent the rights of the child being violated in this way.

7.6 TRADE UNION

There are no implications for Trades Unions.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None.

9. OPTIONS

This report is tabled for information and discussion.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The Committee is invited to note the comments of this report and shall receive a further update on the progress of the response to Neglect in 12 month's time.

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1: Neglect Performance data

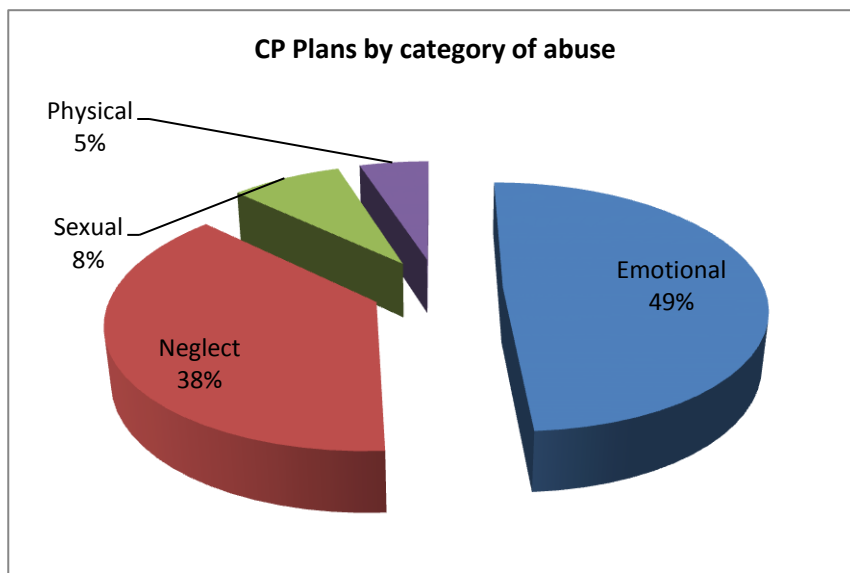
12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

BSCB threshold document. (http://bradfordscb.org.uk/?page_id=107).

Source: Bentley, H. et al (2017) [How safe are our children? The most comprehensive overview of child protection in the UK 2017.](#)

Neglect Performance Data

Children subject of a Child Protection (CP) Plan by categories of abuse

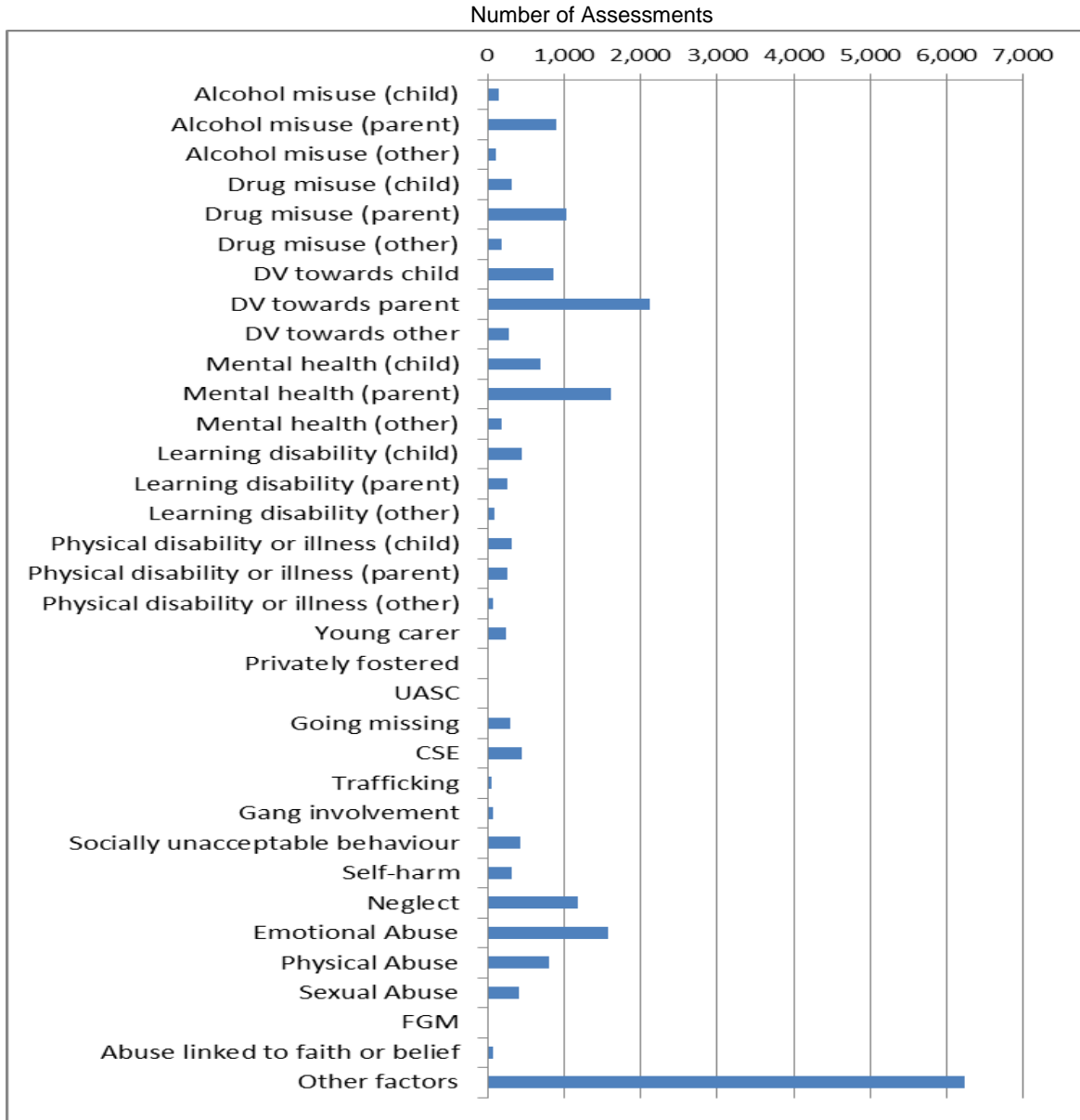


Children in need by primary need at assessment

At 31 March 2017 there were 3,975 children in need in Bradford. **Abuse & neglect** was identified as the primary need at assessment for 3,214 of those children (81%). This was higher than the national figure of 52.3%.

88% of Children were Looked After were due to **abuse and neglect** reasons at 31 March 2017, a slight increase on the previous year's figure of 86%.

Factors identified at the end of assessments for children in need 2016-17 (Bradford)

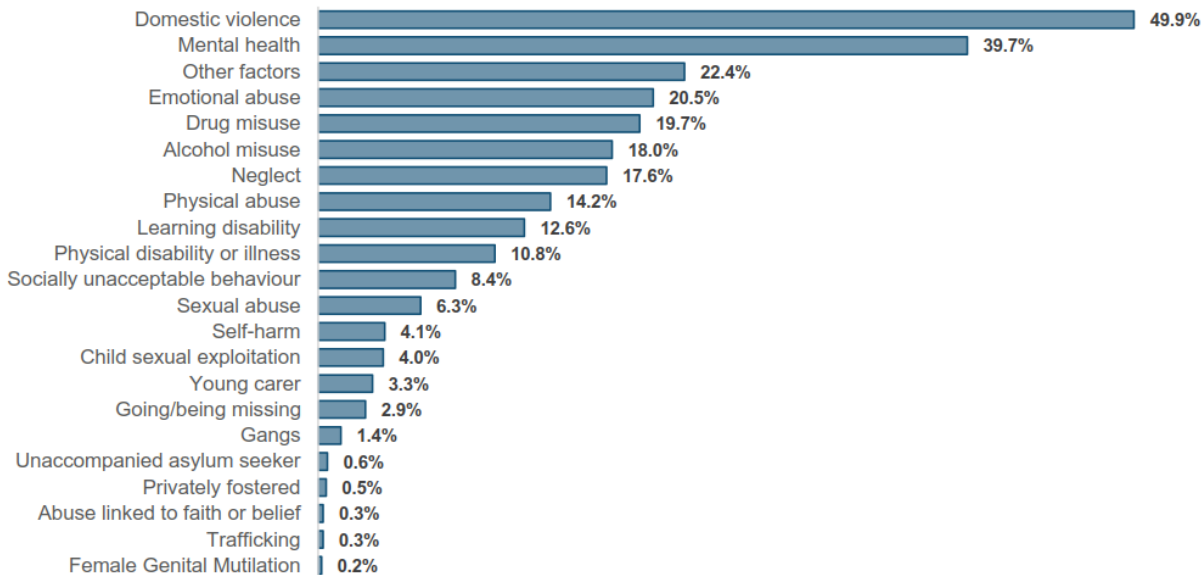


(Multiple factors can be recorded against each assessment)

The most commonly identified factors are Domestic Violence towards the parent (20.7%); Mental Health of parent (15.8%); Emotional Abuse (15.4%); and **Neglect (11.5%); this is compared to 17.6% nationally.**

The factors outlined are mandatory based upon DofE guidelines. The opportunity to record other factors allows some considerations and recording of matters that are a cause of concern and would impact upon any decisions around a child's development. Examples of these are behavioural problems, parent/adolescent conflict, general parenting issues. There are a high number of "Other Factors" recorded and the majority of these tend to be on on-going LAC cases where there are no concerns for the child in placement but there would be if they were returned to their birth family.

Figure K: Percentage of children in need at 31 March 2017, by factors identified at the end of assessment England, 2017



Domestic violence, which includes that aimed at children or other adults in the household, was the most common factor identified at end of assessment for children in need at 31st March 2017 – this year 49.9% of children in need had domestic violence as a factor identified at the end of assessment, followed by mental health at 39.7%, which incorporates mental health of the child or other adults in the family/household.

Source: DfE, Characteristics of Children in Need: 2016 to 2017, November 2017, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/656395/SFR61-2017_Main_text.pdf

NSPCC ChildLine Data 2016/17

The NSPCC helpline responded to over 19,000 contacts about neglect in 2016/17. Around 33% of contacts to the helpline were concerns about neglect. 42% of the concerns that the NSPCC’s helpline referred to police or children’s services related to neglect.

Source: Bentley, H. et al (2017) [How safe are our children? The most comprehensive overview of child protection in the UK 2017.](#)

Dental Neglect

37.3% of 5 year olds in Bradford had experienced dental caries; this is the second highest level of dental disease level in Yorkshire and Humber (National Dental Epidemiology Programme 2015).