

4.1.14 Safeguarding Vulnerable Children

Context

'Please keep me safe.' This simple but profoundly important hope is the very minimum upon which every child and young person should be able to depend.' Lord Laming (2009) ¹.

'Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.' (Working Together, 2013)

This chapter considers the needs of children in need of early help and safeguarding including those that are identified and considered vulnerable to the extent that they need to be safeguarded from risk of abuse and neglect. Certain groups of vulnerable children are discussed in detail in their own chapters e.g. Looked After Children or Young Carers. A child or young person could be considered 'vulnerable' for a range of reasons that have been grouped by the four key priorities for protecting vulnerable children in Bradford's Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014.

Maintain robust child protection arrangements

- Abuse and neglect - they may be experiencing some form of abuse, such as emotional abuse, physical abuse or sexual abuse or where parents and carers are unable to provide adequate care for a child.

Ensure children and young people are safe in their home and community

- Unaccompanied asylum seeking children and trafficked children
- Children that are privately fostered.
- Children who are/or go missing or whose families are missing

Target support for vulnerable families

- Children whose parents/carers are disabled
- Children whose parents/carers have mental health problems
- Domestic abuse - children who live in a family where domestic abuse is taking place.
- Young carers
- Children in contact - or at risk of being in contact, with the Youth Justice System

Build emotional resilience

- Children who are victims of bullying
- Children in contact with the Youth Justice system, either as perpetrators or victims
- Certain minority ethnic groups identified as at high risk of poor outcomes
- Children missing from education



- Young people who are NEET

National Data

Referrals and Assessments

In 2012-13 there were 593,500 referrals to children's social care services in the year ending 31 March 2013 (a decrease of 11,600 compared to the previous year). There were 441,500 initial assessments completed in the year (a decrease of 10,000 compared to the previous year). There was an increase of 12,000 core assessments in the same period (Department for Education, 2013a) ².

Children who were the subject of a child protection plan

At 31 March 2013, there were 43,100 children who were the subject of a child protection plan (an increase of 200 since the year before), a rate of 37.9 per 10,000 under 18 population. 52,700 children became the subject of a child protection plan and 52,100 children ceased to be the subject of a plan.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Children at risk of sexual exploitation are some of the most vulnerable in our society. Many have experienced abandonment or have suffered from physical and mental abuse or have been trafficked into the country for this purpose. They need help but don't know where to look or are prevented from seeking help (Barnardos, 2011). 18,915 sexual crimes against children under 16 were recorded in England and Wales in 2012/13, this accounts to 35% of all sexual crimes (NSPCC 2013).

Bullying

Children and young people report bullying as the single biggest barrier to them living their lives to the full. It was the biggest single reason for 31,599 children (10% of all callers) contacting ChildLine in 2011-12 (NSPCC 2013).

Young people in contact with the Youth Justice System

The average population of young people in custody in 2011/12 (under 18) was 1,963. The average population in custody (under 18) has reduced four per cent since the last year, and by 32 per cent since 2008/09. Overall there were 137,335 proven offences by young people in 2011/12, down 22 per cent from 2010/11 and down 47 per cent since 2001/02. In 2011/12, there were 36,677 first time entrants (FTEs) to the Youth Justice System. The number of first time entrants has fallen by 59 per cent from 2001/02 to 2011/12 and fell 20 per cent in the last year.

Private Fostering

The Local Authority has a duty to promote public awareness of the requirements to notify the LA of fostering arrangements made privately for the care of a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative for 28 days or more and to satisfy themselves that the welfare of such children or young people within their area is being satisfactorily safeguarded. At 31 March 2013, 1,500 children were accommodated in private fostering arrangements in England. This compares with 1,560 children reported at 31 March 2012 and 1,650 at 31 March 2011. 2,500 new private fostering arrangements began during the year to 31 March 2013, an increase on 2,240 new arrangements in the previous year⁴.

National and local targets

- N7 Rate of assessments per 10,000 of the CYP population
- N8 Rate of section 47 enquiries per 10,000 of the CYP population
- N9 Percentage of referrals leading to the provision of a social care service (as defined by the child becoming a child in need)
- N17 percentage of Child Protection Plans lasting two years or more at 31 March and for child protection plans which have ended during the year
- N18 Percentage of children becoming the subject of a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time (within two years of the previous plans end date)

- N19 Number of children who are the subject of a Child Protection Plan (rate per 10,000 of the CYP population)
- National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering
- Rate of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System

Relevant strategies and local documents

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013
- DCSF: Staying Safe Action Plan 2008
- DCSF: Safe from bullying guidance 2009
- DfE: Preventing and Tackling Bullying, Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies
- Bradford Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14
- Bradford Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) Strategic Plan
- Tackling Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy - Bradford District
- Every Child in Bradford Matters: Children and Young People's Health and Lifestyle Survey 2013
- Bradford Early Help Strategy 2013-14

What do the data tell us?

Child Protection and Referrals

4,609 child referrals were made to Bradford Children's Social Care in 2012-13. This is a rate of 334.7 per 10,000 population under 18 and was lower than the number in 2011-12 – 4,712 (345 per 10,000), this followed the national trend of a slight decrease. The majority of referrals were due to concerns around abuse and neglect (77%) whilst 18.6% of referrals were for children who had been previously referred (a slight improvement on the previous year (when it was 19.2%).

81.1% of referrals led to a further analysis of children's well-being in the form of an initial assessment being carried out – a proportion similar to last year following an increase in the two years before that. A new child-focused single assessment for children's social care has been developed in the District in response to the Munro recommendations and the revised Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) statutory guidance. The Bradford Single Child Assessment (BSCA) is being piloted in late 2013-early 2014. The BSCA has been designed to keep the focus on the child throughout the process of the assessment and provides a framework for the systematic gathering and recording of information, analysis and outcome.

The number of children who were the subject of a Child Protection Plan in Bradford at 31 March 2013 was 374 (a reduction of 16 children compared to the previous year). This is a rate of 27.2 per 10,000 under 18 population, lower than the national rate of 37.9. The proportion of boys (56%) was higher than girls. The category of abuse reasons for children subject of a CP Plan were:

- Neglect (46%)
- Emotional Abuse (39%)
- Physical Abuse (10%)
- Sexual Abuse (5%)

Children from an ethnic minority background are under-represented in terms of being subject to a CP Plan (29%) compared to 47% of children and young people from ethnic minority background in the district.

The number of children who newly became subject of a CP Plan during the year was 355, a reduction of 21 compared to previous year. Of these, 12% of children became subject of a CP Plan for a second or subsequent time. This was higher than the previous year's 7.3%.

In the year there were 371 children whose protection plans ended compared to 360 in 2011-12. On average children were subject of a CP Plan for approximately 12 months.

The number of children looked after by the local authority at 31 March 2013 was 877 children, a reduction of 19 children compared to 896 in 2012. In this period nationally there was an increase of 2%. Bradford's rate per 10,000 child population is 64 per 10,000 which is higher than the national rate of 60. 87% of children were looked after due to abuse and neglect, similar to last year's figure of 88%.

Children affected by Parental Risk Factors

Work has begun to synthesise information on children affected by parental risk factors, of 2684 child assessments carried out by Children's Social Care from 1st April to mid September 2013 the following parental risk factors were flagged and data is reported below.

Bradford's Early Help offer will be developed in the first half of 2014, a strategy is in place, supported by a detailed plan to develop an offer that meets OFSTED guidance on a 'good' Early Help offer, and to synthesise accurate information on children who have received an early help assessment.

Children at risk through Domestic Violence

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) aim to increase the safety of domestic violence victims at high risk of serious violence and abuse. In Bradford partners including Bradford Council, Police, Probation, Health and voluntary organisations share information about individual victims and perpetrators in order to identify potential risks. They then agree actions aimed at reducing the risks posed to victims. During 2012-13 547 cases were heard at the Bradford MARACs - ensuring that high risk victims of domestic violence were better protected and received a higher level of support. In addition, 440 or 16.4% of social care assessments carried out between 1st April and mid-September 2013 noted domestic violence to be an issue

Children at risk through Parental Drug and Alcohol Use

The district has 1390 drug users in treatment who live with children; 560 users who are parents but do not live with children; and 169 users for whom there is incomplete data. In addition, 220 or 8.2% of social care assessments carried out between 1st April and mid-September 2013 noted parental drug use to be an issue.

The district has 421 alcohol users in treatment who live with children; 129 alcohol users in treatment who are parents but do not live with children; and 6 users for whom there is incomplete data. In addition, 228 or 8.5% of social care assessments carried out between 1st April and mid-September 2013 noted parental alcohol use to be an issue.

The Bradford Recovery System website summarises drug and alcohol treatment services including family support, support for pregnant women and a young people's service. Project 6, an Integrated Family Recovery Service provides holistic services to pregnant substance users and substance users with children including Tier 2 and 3 interventions to improve parenting capacity, reduce harm to children, improve their life chances and reduce child removal. Bradford Young Carer's service is commissioned to provide a hidden harm service to young carers affected by parental drug or alcohol use (see Young Carer's section of JSNA).

<http://www.bradfordrecoveryssystem.org.uk/alcohol-treatment-service.html>

<http://www.bradfordrecoveryssystem.org.uk/drug-treatment-services.html>

Children at risk through Parental Mental Health

Current estimates of prevalence are for numbers of working age adults receiving treatment for mental health conditions as outlined below, however, 297 or 11.1% of social care assessments carried out between 1st April and mid-September 2013 noted parental mental health to be an issue.

Working Age Population – Estimates of Prevalence

Affective Disorders	M:	29,000	F:	32,000
Bipolar Disorders	M:	4,800	F:	6,200
Psychotic Disorders	M:	1,000	F:	950
Personality Disorders	M:	9,600	F:	6,000
TOTAL:	M:	44400	F:	45150

M+F: 89550

Source: The Epidemiology of Mental Health in Bradford and Airedale – NHS Bradford and Airedale 2010

These data should be interpreted with caution and it is advised that they are discussed with Public Health.

Private Fostering

In Bradford 4 children had Private Fostering arrangements that started during the year 2012-13. All of the children were aged between 10 and 16.

Bullying

A 2010 lifestyle survey of 10,000 school pupils across the District reported that 35% of Year 4 pupils said they had been bullied at school in the 12 months preceding the survey; this figure fell to 26% for Year 7 and 17% for Year 10 pupils. The most common perceived reasons for being picked on or bullied were size/weight and appearance. Compared to an England sample, young people in Bradford were no more or less likely to be bullied. The 2013 survey is being analysed in early 2014.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Analysis of local data shows the number of children and young people in the District at medium-high risk fluctuates between 60 and 100. The current number (December 2013) is 73. Whilst the majority of children at risk are female, local and national analysis indicates that approximately 10% of the total is male. The ethnicity of those at risk shows that while the majority (approximately 70%) are identified as White British, some 15% are identified as British Pakistani origin, with the remaining 15% also being of other Black or Minority Ethnic origin, including a growing proportion of children of Eastern or Central European origin. These children ranged in age from 11 – 18 years, with the peak age for victimisation being approximately 15 years 6 months.

In Bradford there is a multi-agency response to CSE, this is primarily in the form of the CSE Hub a multi-agency team based at Javelin House which oversees work with children at risk of CSE. The Hub is an operational unit with co-located staff from West Yorkshire Police, Bradford Council and Barnardo's. There is also significant engagement with the Hub by staff from Bradford District Care Trust, Airedale NHS Trust, Bradford Teaching Hospital Foundation Trust, the Children's Society and BLAST (a VCS project working with young men and boys at risk of CSE). Each morning the Hub business meeting focuses on the key children believed to be most at risk of CSE across the authority.

Youth Justice

In Bradford there were 262 First Time Entrants into the youth justice system in 2012-13 compared to 355 the year before. 46 young people received a custodial sentence in 2012-13 compared to 60 the previous year. There has been a reduction in number of young people re-offending, but a slight increase in average number of offences (similar to the national trend). Those young people re-offending present a range of challenging behaviours.

Future needs and gaps in provision

- Ensure compliance with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013
- Secure the participation of children and young people within safeguarding processes

- Working with and understanding the role of men/fathers in protecting vulnerable children
- Raise awareness of private fostering both in terms for the public and also staff working with adults, children and families.
- Research on cyber bullying (an increasing concern at primary school level) and bullying of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools.
- Rigorous approaches to avoid young people needing to go before the courts, and support for offenders to avoid them entering custody as a result of breaching a court order.

Summary of priorities

- Maintain robust child protection arrangements
- Ensure children and young people are safe in their home and community
- Target support for vulnerable families [through development of the early help offer](#)
- Build emotional resilience
- Children and young people are actively involved in shaping the anti-bullying agenda
- All agencies that work with children and young people follow up-to-date policies and procedures. They seek to prevent the occurrence of bullying. Measures to ensure incidents of bullying are responded to in accordance with their agencies protocols.
- Ensure lessons are learnt from Serious Case Reviews, Learning Lessons Reviews and other forms of audit.

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