
Meeting	Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date	27 November 2013
Subject	Analysis of Child Protection Registrations in Barnet 2012/2013
Report of	Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families.
Summary of Report	This report provides data and analysis of Barnet's children who were subjects of child protection plans in April 2012 to March 2013. The report analyses Barnet's data and provides comparisons with the national picture of Child Protection registrations. The report also provides information on the strength and quality of the child protection conference service and makes recommendations for future improvements.

Officer Contributors	Ann Graham, Assistant Director; Children's Social Care Jo Moses, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Status (public or exempt)	Public
Wards Affected All	All
Key Decision	Not applicable
Reason for urgency / exemption from call-in	Not applicable
Function of	Safeguarding and Overview Committee
Enclosures	None
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- 1.1 That the Safeguarding Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the contents of this report and make appropriate comments.

2. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS

- 2.1 None. This is the first occasion that analysis of child protection plans has been reported to the Committee.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Safeguarding is a key priority for the Council and partners and is reflected in strategic partnership goals including the Corporate Plan 2013 - 14, Health and Well-being Strategy, Sustainable Community Strategy and Commissioning Strategy.
- 3.2 The Corporate Plan includes the strategic objective 'to create better life chances for children and young people across the borough' with an emphasis on early intervention and support and a further objective 'to promote family and community well-being' with a commitment to 'strengthen our approach to safeguarding'.
- 3.3 Safeguarding children and adults from avoidable harm or abuse underpins everything we do and is the responsibility of everyone who works for or with the London Borough of Barnet.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 A failure to keep children safe represents not only a significant risk to the children themselves but also to the reputation of the Council. Failure to keep children safe is identified as a key risk in Children's Services. Although safeguarding must be the concern of all agencies working with children, the Local Authority is the lead agency. As such, both members and senior officers carry a level of accountability for safeguarding practice in Barnet. Governance structures, in particular the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board, are in place to ensure that other lead stakeholders, including health and the police, are represented to ensure that practice across the partnership meets safeguarding requirements.

5. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 5.1 Equality and diversity issues are a mandatory consideration in decision making in the Council pursuant to the Equality Act 2010. This means the Council and all other organisations acting on its behalf must have due regard to the equality duties when exercising a public function.
- 5.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality and good relations into day to day business requiring equality considerations to be reflected into the design of policies and the delivery of services and for these to be kept under review.

- 5.3 The report provides data on gender, age and the ethnicity of Barnet's children on the subject to a child protection plan and this data will continue to be gathered and analysed to inform service delivery and to ensure that the Council meets our equalities and diversity obligations.

6. USE OF RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (Finance, Procurement, Performance & Value for Money, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 6.1 The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service sits within Children's Social Care and is funded from existing resources.

7. LEGAL ISSUES

- 7.1 The Children Act (2004) and statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2013) sets out the framework for the protection of children including a child protection conferencing system with the ability to make children the subject of a child protection plan. The plan is formed at a multi-agency child protection conference that parents and the child, if of appropriate age and understanding can be supported to attend.

- 7.2 The procedures for these arrangements are set out in the Pan London Safeguarding Children Procedures' and by Barnet's Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB).

8. CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS (Relevant section from the Constitution, Key/Non-Key Decision)

- 8.1 The scope of Overview and Scrutiny Committees is contained within Part 2, Article 6 of the Constitution.

- 8.2 The terms of Reference of the Scrutiny Committees are in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (Part 4 of the Constitution). The Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee has within its terms of reference the following responsibility:

- To scrutinise the Council and its partners in the discharge of statutory duties in relation to safeguarding.

9. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 9.1 A child protection conference must be convened when it is considered that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm. The assessment is usually undertaken by a qualified social worker but statutory guidance allows for professionals to ask for a conference to be convened on a child if the professional considers the child to have suffered or to be likely to suffer significant harm.

- 9.2 Family members and the child, in appropriate circumstances, are invited to attend conferences along with professionals engaged with the child. In order to enable parents and children to have greater participation at child protection conferences, Barnet Council has implemented the Strengthening Families

model for Child Protection Conferences. National research on this model is very positive; highlighting that it is more interactive and family friendly and that information is presented more clearly and is easier to understand.

9.3 Managed within Safeguarding & Quality Assurance, Barnet has an Independent Conference & Reviewing Officer service in place that is responsible for chairing child protection conferences, looked after children reviews, and a range of specialist strategy meetings, including allegations against people working with children, child sexual exploitation and children looked after missing from care.

9.4 Data and Analysis

9.4.1 The number of children subject to a child protection plan in Barnet between April 2012 and March 2013 ranged from 265 at its highest to 206 at its lowest.

9.4.2 During this period, 550 initial and review child protection conferences were held involving 1012 children.

9.4.3 At the end of March 2013, there were 206 children subject to a child protection plan, a significant decrease of 53 from the 31st March 2012. This figure equates to 24.8 children per 10,000 of the under 18 population and is significantly below the national average equivalent rate of 37.8. The decrease is against the national trend which saw an increase of 1.1% of child protection registrations in 2012/13.

9.5 Child Protection Plans and the categories of registration

9.5.1 The table below gives a breakdown of child protection plans during 2012/13 by category of abuse. This highlights the high prevalence of neglect cases that accounted for more than 39% of all child protection plans. This mirrors the national trend which is that neglect is the most common category of abuse for registration and is used in 41.0% of cases. Emotional abuse is the next most common category (31.7%) followed by physical abuse (11.7%).

	4/12	5/12	6/12	7/12	8/12	9/12	10/12	11/12	12/12	1/13	2/13	3/13
Neglect	99	86	90	102	98	86	91	85	92	97	93	83
Physical	61	68	73	69	57	57	51	52	52	51	51	50
Sexual	15	16	13	15	13	13	13	13	14	13	13	10
Emotional	69	66	74	79	84	84	73	68	60	58	55	58
Multiple	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	5
Total	244	236	250	265	252	240	228	218	218	220	214	206

9.5.2 Neglect is the most used category for registration because it covers so many different situations that are harmful to a child and may include an overall picture of combined and cumulative concerns that together are significantly harmful to the child. Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs resulting in serious impairment of health and/or development.

- 9.5.3 The perception of child neglect has changed significantly over time, as 'it is now recognised as one of the most dangerous forms of abuse because of its harmful and sometimes fatal effects' (Turney and Tanner, 2005).
- 9.5.4 There is no single cause for neglect. Most neglectful families experience a variety and combination of adversities. Depression, domestic violence, substance use and poverty are among the factors linked to neglect. Some children are particularly vulnerable. At risk groups include children born prematurely, children with disabilities, adolescents, children in care, runaways, and asylum-seeking children. Neglect has adverse short- and long-term effects. In extreme cases, neglect kills.
- 9.5.5 Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.
- 9.5.6 Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
- 9.5.7 Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact activities or non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.
- 9.5.8 A very small number of cases are registered under dual or multiple categories of abuse. This happens when there is strong evidence of different types of abuse of the same child/children and when professionals feel that it is important to give sufficient weight to each of the abuses.
- 9.6 Ages of children subject to a child protection in Barnet 2012/13
- 9.6.1 The largest age group of children subject to plan nationally are those aged 1-4 years old. Almost one third (30.3%) of children are in this age range. 5-9 year olds account for 28.7% of the registrations, 10-15 yr olds account for 25.2%, unborns account for 2% and over 16 yr olds are 2.6%. Whilst the table below provides a snapshot for one month the data for the whole year shows that Barnet is in line with national averages for the age make up of child protection registrations.

	Percentages of the CP registrations by age bracket as at end of March 2013
Unborn	0.97
Under 1	13.11
1-4 yrs	36.89
5-9 yrs	29.13
10-15 yrs	19.9
16-18 yrs	0

Ages Breakdown 2012/13

AGE	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Unborn	7	3	6	7	4	3	5	6	5	4	5	2
Under 1	30	38	34	33	39	36	32	34	30	37	32	27
1-4 yrs	87	85	92	92	83	77	70	67	74	69	75	76
5-9 yrs	67	58	64	75	74	72	72	64	62	60	57	60
10-17yrs	53	52	54	58	58	52	49	47	46	50	45	41
	244	236	250	265	258	240	228	218	217	220	214	206

9.7 Children subject to a child protection plan by Gender 2012/13

9.7.1 There is no significant difference in the gender of Barnet's children subject to a child protection plan with roughly half boys and half girls. This is in line with the national trend.

9.8 Children subject to a child protection plan by Ethnicity

White	
White British	82 (40%)
White Other	25 (12%)
Mixed	
Mixed white and Black African	8 (4%)
Mixed white and black Caribbean	13 (6%)
Mixed white and Asian	6 (3%)
Mixed other	13 (6%)
Asian/Asian British	
Asian/Asian British Indian	1
Asian/Asian British Pakistani	1
Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi	3 (1%)
Asian/Asian British other	6 (3%)
Black/Black British	
Black/Black British African	28 (14%)
Black/Black British Caribbean	6 (3%)
Black/Black British Other	3 (1%)
Other	
Traveller of Irish descent	2 (1%)

Any other	4 (2%)
Unborn	1
Not know	3 (1%)
Total (as at end of March 2013)	205

9.9 National child welfare data on ethnicity

9.9.1 A national study compared the ethnic breakdown of children in England from the 2001 census with three sets of child welfare data: the Children in need census (2003, 2005); the number of subject to a child protection plan (2004, 2005 and 2006); and the number of children looked after (2004, 2005 and 2006). They found that given proportions in the national population:

- White children were represented as expected on the children in need census, as children subject to a child protection plan and as looked after children; our data showed a high percentage of white children were subject of a child protection plan; representing 52% of the cohort.
- Children of mixed ethnic background were over-represented on the children in need census, as children subject to a child protection plan and as looked after children. In Barnet 19% of children from a mixed ethnic background were subject of a child protection plan, second to white children.
- Asian children were under-represented on the children in need census, as children subject to a child protection plan and as looked after children. In Barnet this ethnic group only represented 4% of the population of children subject to a child protection plan.
- Black children were over-represented on the children in need census and as looked after children. Black children were represented as expected as children subject to a child protection plan. Similarly Black children accounted for 18% of the children subject to a child protection plan in Barnet.

From: Owen, Charlie, and Statham, June (2009) [Disproportionality in child welfare: prevalence of black and ethnic minority children within 'looked after' and 'children in need' populations and on child protection registers in England \(PDF\)](#) London: Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

9.10 Percentage of Review Child Protection Conferences held within timescale

9.10.1 In order to safeguard children well it is important that that their child protection plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are having a positive impact and are reducing risks. Therefore, the timeliness of reviews is important and is closely monitored to ensure that there is no drift in a case.

9.10.2 Barnet has over the last five years held 100% of its child protection conferences within the required timescale. For 2012-13, performance in Barnet exceeded the national average of 96.2%.

9.10.3 In order to assist with achieving timeliness, review child protection conferences are held at a maximum of five-month intervals (previously six) from the second review onwards. This then allows a month's leeway for occasions when a conference has to be adjourned for legitimate reasons.

Monthly reports of conference adjournments are used to monitor the frequency and reason why in order to avoid situation occurring again where possible.

9.11 Percentage of children ceasing to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan during the 12 month period who had been subject of a Child Protection Plan for 2 years or more

9.11.1 As detailed in the table below, the proportion of children with a child protection plan for more than two years has decreased from 6% during August to 1.4% at year-end. The national figure for 2012/13 was that 3.2% of all child protections plans had lasted for longer than 2 yrs. Barnet's performance at just 1.4% at the year end is within the top national banding for this indicator.

9.11.2 There has been an increase in long-term neglect cases moving into legal proceedings and this should usually result in the child protection plan being ceased. However, in some cases the court manages the case through the legal framework with parental co-operation and the child remaining at home. In these circumstances the child protection plan may continue so that risk is managed with the child remaining at home, this explains why some children remain subject to a plan for over 2 years.

Month	Number of Children subject to plans for over two years
April 2012	8
May	10
June	10
July	12
August	15
September	8
October	4
November	3
December	6
January 2013	5
February	4
March	3

9.11.3 Child protection conference chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers's currently conduct a detailed audit of children who remain subject to a child protection plan at 15 months. Where insufficient progress is being made with the child protection plan then team managers will be asked to consider whether the threshold for court proceedings has been reached. The purpose of these reviews is to avoid drift and delay for children who may be in need of further action to be taken to reduce risks and improve their outcomes.

9.11.4 When significant improvements have been made and a decision is made to cease the child protection plan then cases are stepped down to a child in need plan to ensure continuation of support for the family.

9.12 Children becoming subject of a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time

9.12.1 A low percentage is generally an indicator of good practice and Barnet achieved 8.4% against a national average of 13-14% for 2012-13. Also of note is the length of time between the first and second registrations which, if it is a significant gap between registrations, indicates that circumstances have changed within the family rather than any improvement not being sustained. A short time gap in between registrations could indicate risks not being adequately addressed and a child being prematurely removed from a plan.

9.13 Feedback from families on the child protection process

9.13.1 Parents and carers are asked to complete a questionnaire following every child protection conference to give feedback about their experience of the process. The questionnaires completed are mainly positive and evidence that conferences are user-friendly with parents/carers actively participating and feeling listened to. However, following feedback from a pre inspection audit, the process of asking for feedback immediately after a conference will be reviewed because parents may feel under pressure to give positive feedback.

9.14 Future actions to further improvement the child protection processes

9.14.1 A pre inspection audit took place during October 2013 and it reviewed the child protection conferencing process and also observed a conference. The final audit report is in the process of being finalised and will be reported at a future Committee Meeting. An action plan is being developed and will include actions to:

- Increase the number of children and young people that attend their child protection conferences
- Improve performance on routinely sharing conference reports with families in advance of the meetings
- Further improve the rigour and regularity of auditing across children's social care to improve service delivery and outcomes for children

9.14.2 Feedback from children and families and professionals taking part in Child Protection conferences will form part of regular performance reports for Children's Social Care and the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board.

10. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None

Cleared by Finance (Officer's initials)	A.D and J.H
Cleared by Legal (Officer's initials)	S.W