

# **Serious Case Review Roadshows**

## **‘Making Neglect Personal’**

**May – June 2021**



Norfolk Safeguarding  
Children Partnership

# Programme

- Welcome
- Background and Context – including summary of cases
- Community Engagement & Group Discussion
- Contributory Factors & Group Discussion
- Emotional Impact & Group Discussion
- Plenary



# Welcome

Sarah Jones –  
Chair of the Neglect Strategy Implementation Group



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# Background & Context

Abigail McGarry  
NSCP Business Manager



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# Learning Outcomes

- Have a greater awareness of revised Neglect Strategy
- Have had an opportunity to feedback on strategic themes
- Have considered the impact of neglect: learning from Safeguarding Practice Reviews from the child's perspective
- Have developed curiosity and resilience



# Managing Expectations

- Six SPR roadshows held on MS Teams
- Linking published SPRs – Cases AG, AH and AI - to neglect strategy aims and objectives
- Expectation that these SPRs have been read prior to attending – used as ‘window on the system’
- Safe learning environment
- Importance of looking after yourselves
- Time for discussion – looking for feedback!
- Time for a cup of tea!



# Neglect Definition - WT

- ...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 or 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 a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
  - Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
  - Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treat



# Quick Reminder!

- Safeguarding Practice Reviews replaced Serious Case Reviews - written into Working Together 2018
- Same criteria, i.e.
  - (a) ***abuse or neglect*** of a child is known or suspected;and
  - (b) **either** —
    - (i) the child has ***died***; or
    - (ii) the child has been ***seriously harmed*** and there is cause for concern as to the way in which the local authority, their partners or other relevant persons have ***worked together*** to safeguard the child





# Published Cases – Brief Overview

## Case AG:

- Two and a half year old presented at hospital severely underweight
- Known to a number of services preceding presentation
- Travelling background and history of DA (?)

## Case AH:

- Four year old died following incident when he was trapped between two stairgates
- Neglect an increasing concern in weeks leading up to the incident

## Case AI:

- Five year old suffered significant burns
- Concerns prior to incident included ASB and queries around mother's learning capacity



# Neglect Strategy

Agreed as priority April 2020 and more senior leadership allocated to delivery

Strategy developed August 2020 with support of Marian Brandon, UEA – co-author of Triennial Analysis of SCRs

Three strands:

- Community Engagement
- Contributory Factors
- Emotional Impact

Each strand led by senior leaders across the partnership



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# Neglect: Community Engagement

Excerpt from *The Triennial Analysis*:

***'The family and wider community may be valuable partners and important sources of support and intervention.'*** However, working with the family and wider community in preventive or protective intervention are often missed.'



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# Neglect: Community Engagement, cont.

Case AG



Case AH



Case AI



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# Neglect: Contributory Factors

Excerpt from *The Triennial Analysis*:

*'We identified the **cumulative risk of harm to a child when different parental and environmental risk factors are present in combination or over a period of time** and, in particular, the **impact of poverty** on the lives of children and their families.'*

*'A good relationship with families is the **primary vehicle for protective practice when it is based on a sound grasp of the family context, circumstances, and roles and relationship** as an effective way of managing the complexity of compound and cumulative risk over time...[However] **professionals have to be both robust and compassionate in addressing the strategies parents use to defend themselves and their family from scrutiny.**'*



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# Neglect: Emotional Impact

Excerpt from *Norfolk Thematic SCR – Case AF:*

***‘Safeguarding children is a human service, the emotional content of the work has a bearing on how children are safeguarded. The psychodynamic aspects (including how defences are constructed against the inherent anxiety) need greater attention and ways found to acknowledge the impact and mitigate the risks to enable the workforce to think and act.’***



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# Neglect: Emotional Impact

- Neurological impact of neglect on children's brain development
- Need for empathy and compassion
- Guard against emotional fatigue
- Wider piece of work: developing trauma informed leadership and practice
- Resilience: a teachable and learnable skill





# The Child's Perspective

Case AG – struggling to compete for food and attention

Case AH:

- [Having friends back?] *“God no. I kept everyone away. It was shameful... the house was disgusting.”*
- *“I didn’t have a cooked meal every day. I didn’t know if that was normal or not.”*

Case AI – need for attachment and attention



# Community Engagement

By: Lauren Downes & Lucy Parsons



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# Community Engagement?



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# What is community engagement?

- Informing
- Consultation
- Deciding together
- Acting Together
- Supporting local initiatives

(Wilcox 1994)



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# Outcomes

- Communities have a good understanding of a positive lived experience for a child
- Communities have access to the resources they need to help themselves and their natural networks
- Professionals who work with families understand how they can be most effective in supporting families to reduce neglect



# Objectives

- We will talk to families who have experienced intervention around neglect and explore what helped and what hindered
- We will facilitate conversations and develop communications with communities that explore and promote positive parenting
- We will promote self help pathways and tools including family networking with professionals and service-users /communities



# What we have done so far....

- Multi-agency subgroup and developed an action plan focusing on our outcomes and objectives
- Initial engagement with a group of Young People to discuss neglect has taken place:-

Most of the young people had some understanding about what is meant by the term neglect. they were able to recognise that neglect is not necessarily always about being clean and fed.

Young people did not think they would feel comfortable to speak to anyone if they thought a friend was suffering from neglect or that they would have 'credibility 'in terms of being listened to



# What we have done so far....

## Cont...

Young people identified a number of factors that indicate parental love and safety including communication spending time together, celebrating success and respect. They did not specifically identify meeting basic care needs

Most young people did not see location based communities as supportive. they reported feeling excluded or scapegoated in their location based communities

Young people expressed concern that messages to parents and adults in the community about neglect might make them feel inferior. The young people thought that describing a 'good childhood' could be too broad and subjective.





# Next steps

- Identify community groups to have conversations around neglect
- Complete a multi-agency neglect audit which involves talking to families to understand their experience of interventions around neglect
- To develop a communication plan



# AH

Both parents expressed they were aware of the issues in the family home but neither acted in a supportive way of each other to seek a remedy to these.

Concerns were expressed that the parents needed to be more proactive in seeking information

The professionals involved in the case have reflected that it would have been helpful to explore the role of FAH in the family and better understand the complex dynamics in the parents relationship

MAH had no support from friends and family members. The wider family network was unknown.



# AH

Professionals could see that MAH was isolated and depressed at times.

No consideration of child AH1 as a young carer.

The relationship between the children is unknown.

There was not a shared view among the professional group regarding safeguarding concerns, including information about the parent's relationship or their individual backgrounds. It is possible this impacted upon professionals' ability to articulate their worries.



# How can communities support us with developing our response to neglect?

- What constitutes a community?
- What community support exists that you are aware of?
  - How do you tap into these networks in your role?
- Have communities changed during the pandemic?
  - What opportunities and barriers has this created?
- What are the benefits and challenges of understanding family networks where neglect is an issue?



# Contributory Factors

Detective Inspector Rachel Bell and  
Dan Newbolt, Assistant Director  
Children's Social Care



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“Complexity and cumulative harm are not unique to situations of neglect but almost invariably they are a feature of families where children experience neglect.”

‘Complexity and challenge: a triennial analysis of SCRs 2014-2017’  
Brandon et al. (2020)



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# What are the outcomes?

- Families have the capacity and understanding to make positive change and reduce neglect in their children's lives with appropriate support from services.
- Professionals have improved confidence, skills, resources and knowledge with regards to the contributory factors of neglect, and are able to impact on the ability of parents / caregivers to make positive and lasting changes.





# What are the outcomes?

- Practitioners have open, honest, robust and supportive conversations with families and colleagues across the partnership, informed by the interrelationship of contributory factors in order to facilitate better outcomes for children, young people and families.



# Contributory Factors and Case A1

- There were a number of contributory factors and questions remained as to how well did practitioners working with the family understand the complex and cumulative nature of contributory factors in this case.
- Mother had experienced challenges during her own childhood which may have impacted on how she parented.



# Contributory Factors and Case AI

- The Family Networking approach was relatively new at the time and was not fully embedded into practice.
- Could there have been a network around the family to support AI's mother to care for the children?



# Contributory Factors and Case AI

- There had been concerns regarding AI's mother's capacity to make the changes necessary to safeguard AI.
- There was not a shared understanding between professionals of what the capacity was.



# Contributory Factors and Case A1

- The Graded Care Profile had been used previously to assess A1's home situation but when it was suggested this should be redone it is not clear whether this happened.
- Why was this action seemingly not completed and how do we ensure staff have the tools they need to assess risk in neglect cases?



# Group Work Questions

- **How effective are we at linking contributory factors to risk assessments when neglect is a feature?**
  - How well do we understand contributory factors and analyse the impact on the neglected child/ren?
  - How do we assess parental capacity to change when planning interventions for children who are experiencing neglect?
  - What support do you need to help you make your assessments of parental capacity to change?
  - How do we explore strengths and resilience in parents/carers and use these as motivators for making sustainable changes so that neglect is addressed?



# Emotional Impact

Rob Cole and Karryn Dixon



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# Neglect Strategy: Emotional Impact Outcomes



Families for whom neglect is identified have the skills, confidence and resources to be emotionally resilient and able to support themselves and their children to recover from the harm experienced from neglect.



Professionals are supported to self-challenge and maintain professional curiosity in order to actively and effectively respond to neglect, with consideration for the emotional impact on all concerned.



The system around CYPF has a consistent and shared language and understanding of neglect in order to effectively work in partnership to reduce risk and harm.





# Emotional Impact & AG..... Questions asked...



How did the safeguarding network assess the risk and **impact on the mother and children** of the reported domestic abuse from: the father, extended family and neighbours?



Supervision and management oversight are critical in managing and **supporting professionals working with uncertainty**; why did this not happen effectively in this case?



How is 'neglect' understood and particularly the **ability of services to identify and recognise malnutrition**?



## Where are we now....

- Joint Agency Group Supervision
- Reflective Practice Groups
- Reviewing the Neglect Identification Tool
- Increasing Family Networking in the Preventative space.
- Reviewing how SCR/SPR are disseminated within organisations.



## Where we're going.....

- Scrutiny of how neglect training is implemented in practice.
- Neglect knowledge bank
- Trauma Informed Practice Peer learning
- Evaluation of JAGS & RP groups.
- Promoting resilience of families experiencing neglect.





















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# Benefits of being Trauma Informed.....

1. Creating safe environments for families & staff.
2. Creating a proactive approach to safety.
3. Reduce possibility of re-traumatisation



## Examples of responses to anxiety & secondary trauma<sup>32</sup>

 Reduced critical thinking skills /think in black and white	 Retreat	 Stop Listening
 Stop seeing	 Go into flight mode	 Isolation (preventing collaboration)
 Experience difficulty recognising and monitoring emotions	 Low motivation and poor-quality work	 Feel helpless
 Become defensive and start to react rather than think	 Inhibited curiosity	 Increased absences
 Go into attack	 Blame	 Rush around
 Become desensitised	 Inaction/ Freeze	 Strict rule compliance

<sup>32</sup> Info graphic © Griffin Associates



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# The Effects of Trauma.



## EVENT



## EXPERIENCE



## EFFECT

*“Estimated that between 60% – 80% of women from travelling communities experience domestic abuse during their lives, compared to 25% of the female population generally”*

*“Trapped by culture, poor literacy and education, distrust of the police and social services, and fear of separation from family and friends.”*

*“The mother later denied the domestic abuse and stated that she had made it up, and that her partner was not and never had been violent towards her.”*



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# Responding & avoiding re-traumatisation.

**Realisation** of AG's history and that of his family?

**Recognising** the signs & symptoms of trauma in the family, such as relational factors, cognition of parents, behaviour of children.

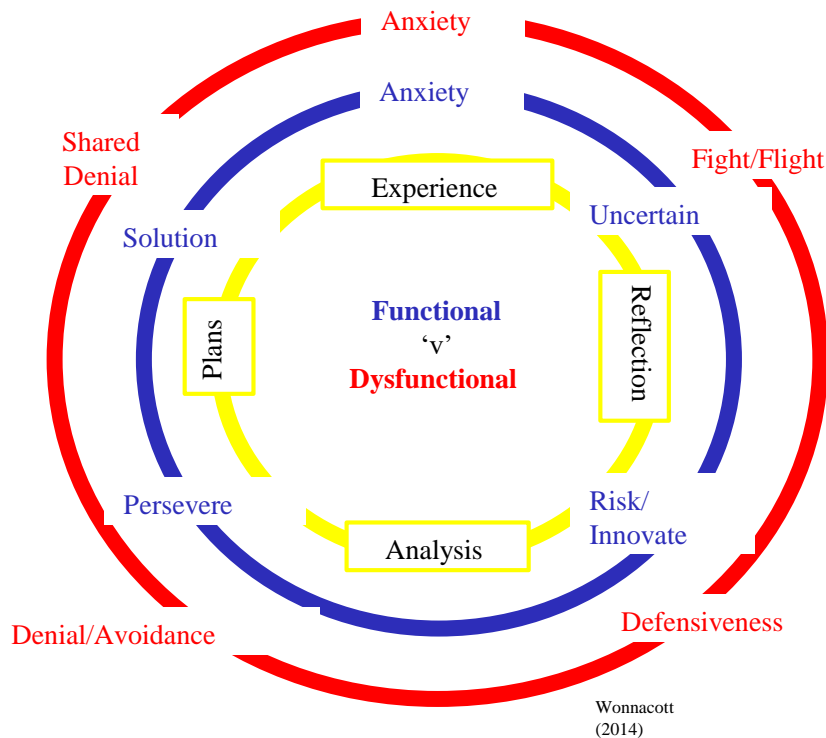
**Responding** & integrating our knowledge of trauma into our practice. Having a system that supports us to be trauma informed through policies & procedures.

Seeking to **resisting re-traumatisation**.....



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# Working with uncertainty & anxiety .....



Not managing anxieties

‘V’

Anxiety acknowledgement

**NEWS FLASH**

☆ Joint Agency Group Supervision (Sec 3.16)

☆ NSCP Reflective Practice Groups



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# Group Discussion.....



**What does a trauma informed and resilience oriented response to neglect look like for the safeguarding system?**

Prompt questions:

- How trauma informed is your organisation?
- What helps you to be trauma informed?
- Within supervision, what approaches have been or could be used to support your practice when dealing with neglect?
- What helps you to manage the emotional impact of working with children and families where neglect is a feature?



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# PLENARY

- Need to destigmatise neglect
- Cross cutting themes and actions:
  - Family/Community Networking
  - Communications
  - Trauma informed and resilience oriented working
  - Relationship based practice
  - Training and good practice guidance
- Please feedback!

