

## Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	<b>Children &amp; Young People Policy Development &amp; Scrutiny Panel</b>	
MEETING DATE:	<b>18<sup>th</sup> September 2018</b>	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	<b>Support for the Children of Alcoholics</b>	
WARD:	All	
<b>AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>		
<b>List of attachments to this report:</b>		

### 1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology in February 2018 estimated that between 189,000 and 208,000 children in England live with an alcohol-dependent adult, while 15,500 children live with an adult receiving treatment for alcohol dependence. (These figures are likely to be under-reported)
- 1.2 The same report found that between 2011 and 2014, Parental Alcohol Misuse (PAM) was implicated in 37% of cases involving the death or serious injury of a child through neglect or abuse, and that 61% of care applications in England involved misuse of alcohol and/or drugs.
- 1.3 Children living with alcohol-dependent parents and unborn children to alcohol dependent mothers can experience significant impact to their physical health, mental health and future outcomes as a result.
- 1.4 The Council resolved at its March 2018 meeting that it has a responsibility to support the children of alcoholics and to ensure that the needs of these children are met.
- 1.5 This report was requested to provide assurance that all the relevant policies, procedures and strategies of this Council recognise and address the particular needs of the children of alcoholics.

### 2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel are asked to:

- 2.1 Note the positive assurance provided from the initial analysis work described in this report and to receive a further report in due course when the assessment

has been completed and shared with the National Association for the Children of Alcoholics (NACOA).

### **3 INITIAL ANALYSIS**

An initial review of policies, procedures and strategies has been undertaken and the following information provides examples of how current documents and practice ensure that the needs of these children are appropriately addressed.

#### **3.1 Referrals**

All new concerns come into children's social care via the Duty Team. Decisions about whether the concern meets the threshold for Children's Social Care are managed at this point, in line with the Threshold document. This document is on the Website and available to all professionals and the general public to use as a guide. Parental substance misuse is acknowledged as an issue that warrants at least a tier 3 response which would either receive a Common Assessment Framework or a Team Around the Child dependent on severity or would be considered a Child in Need at a Children's Social Care level and trigger a Single Assessment of the child's needs and parenting capacity to meet these needs. The Threshold document mentions substance misuse but specifically highlights that this includes alcohol e.g.

##### Child/Young Person's Development:

Child/Young Person at risk of sexual exploitation (including online abuse) – Risk taking behaviour – Substance misuse.

##### Parenting Capacity

Level 3 "Parental substance abuse, including alcohol, presents a risk to the wellbeing of the Child/Young Person. This includes not storing drugs/paraphernalia safely".

Level 4 "Parental/carer substance abuse, which seriously affects the care of the Child/Young Person".

##### Family & Environmental Factors

Level 4 - Neglect through poor parental choice, e.g. income spent purely on drugs/alcohol and not food.

#### **3.2 Assessments**

Once a matter has met the threshold for Children's Social Care involvement and an assessment is undertaken, there is a list of factors that are considered and recorded (with system prompts to ensure this happens) during the assessment stage. These include:-

- Alcohol misuse: Concerns about alcohol misuse by the child
- Alcohol misuse: Concerns about alcohol misuse by the parent/carer
- Alcohol misuse: Concerns about alcohol misuse by another person living in the household.

### **3.3 Care/Case Planning**

The factors that make up the complex trio (Mental Health, Substance Misuse and Domestic Abuse) are further captured at the plan stage for both Child in Need and Child Protection Plans, again with system prompts to complete.

### **3.4 Policies and Strategies**

The Child and Young People's plan considers and seeks the reduction of children subject to harm as a result of drugs, alcohol and tobacco. It is clear also about how it will support reductions in children and young people misusing alcohol and other substances including tobacco and how we will know that this has been successful. The focus here is however is in relation to supporting and capturing young people using alcohol, drugs and/or tobacco rather than parents.

The Neglect Strategy includes Alcohol as a parental risk factor. A new Neglect strategy and Tool Kit is being developed currently and is due to be launched in November 2018.

### **3.5 Practice Guidance on the Complex Trio**

The South West Child Protection Procedures, which we jointly commission, contain information for practitioners: 'Children of Parents who Misuse Substances' which covers alcohol, the impact on children and explains what the Complex Trio is and what to do when these issues are apparent.

A recent task and finish group has been looking at how to identify the complex trio and ensure that children of parents experiencing these difficulties at all levels are known and where appropriate supported by services.

### **3.6 Support Services**

#### Project 28

We commission services for children and young people who become involved with drugs, alcohol and other substances via DHI.

#### The Early Help App for Professionals

This App leads professionals to contact information and details about DHI and Project 28. In addition it has links to tools to establish levels of alcohol use and alert practitioners to the level of risk at that time. This will support professionals in the identification of problematic alcohol misuse and gives advice about what to do next in terms of appropriate referrals. (Drink Think Tool and the Alcohol Audit C tool and the Xanax Information).

#### Think Family

There is a Think Family Group convened to look at the links between Children's and Adult Services in order to identify children of parents who are experiencing a number of issues including alcohol dependency.

## Training

As part of the Think Family Initiative, 'Alcohol Identification and brief advice for parents', training is offered to multi agency practitioners from both Adult and Children's Services delivering targeted and early help services. The course aims to provide resources and techniques to build confidence across the Bath and North East Somerset workforce in delivering early interventions and brief advice to parents around their alcohol use.

## Early Help Panel

DHI/Project 28 attend the Early Help Panel to ensure appropriate help is offered for any children/parents where there are alcohol or drug issues at tiers 2/3 on the Threshold document.

## **4 FURTHER WORK TO BE COMPLETED**

- 4.1 The initial review of policies, procedures and strategies indicates that we have a range of positive measures in place to ensure that the children of alcoholics have their needs identified, and that families can access appropriate support to address these needs. Further work is required to complete the review and produce a set of recommendations to further improve the existing arrangements. The Council has asked that we share the findings with the National Association for the Children of Alcoholics (NACOA) and invite them to comment on our support offer. A further report will be brought to PDS when this has been completed.

<b>Contact person</b>	Julie Morris, Service Development Manager 01225 477084, <a href="mailto:Julie_morris@bathnes.gov.uk">Julie_morris@bathnes.gov.uk</a>
<b>Background papers</b>	
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	