

CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE
ANNUAL REPORT 2013- 2014



Rutland
County Council

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 is the current guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 1.2 Where agencies most involved judge a child may continue to, or be likely to, suffer significant harm, Local Authority children's social care should convene a child protection conference. The aim of the conference is to enable those professionals most involved with the child and family, and the family themselves, to assess all relevant information and plan how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.
- 1.3 The Safeguarding Service in Rutland is responsible for convening and providing conference chairs to facilitate information sharing in conferences. In addition the service also provides an independent service to help agencies co-ordinate and share information about children who have been identified as being at risk of sexual exploitation.
- 1.4 This report provides an opportunity to highlight areas of good practice and areas which require improvement. It also identifies themes and trends in relation to safeguarding needs of children and families discussed at conference and child sexual exploitation meetings this year.

2. PURPOSE OF SERVICE AND LEGAL CONTEXT

2.1 The Child Protection Conference Service has been provided by the Safeguarding Team since July 2011 after the contract for the provision of the service was ended with a neighbouring Authority.

2.2 Working Together 2013 requires that when a Local Authority decides a child protection conference is required the conference chair:

- i. is accountable to the Director of Children's Services. Where possible the same person should chair subsequent child protection reviews;
- ii. should be a professional, independent of operational and/or line management responsibilities for the case;
- iii. should meet the child and parents in advance to ensure they understand the purpose and the process.

2.3 An analysis of trends in relation to children's needs and parenting capacity to support their children is also available in Appendix 2. The data used in this report represents that used by the service to track performance in relation to the timeliness of conferences, circulation of minutes, reports, agency attendance, child, young people and parent/carer participation. It is also based on the quality assurance forms that conference chairs provide following the conclusion of conferences.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3.1 What's working well?

3.1.1 Despite the increase in demand for conferences they have continued to be delivered within agreed timescales in accordance with given priority for this area of work.

3.1.2 Awareness and usage of the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Risk assessment tool has been effectively used to help some girls who have required CSE plans this year.

3.1.3 No child has been subject to a plan twice and no child has been subject to a plan for more than two years.

3.1.4 Older children have either attended or had some form of input into their conferences.

3.1.5 Parents have attended all meetings and special arrangements are made to

include parents/carers where conflict is anticipated but their contributions are needed in order to help information sharing so that agencies can make the right decisions about children and young people.

3.1.6 There is good recognition of risk in respect of children in Rutland. More children have been discussed at conference this year because of concerns about the risk of sexual harm. There is evidence of multi-agency awareness area of risk in this area.

3.2 What has not worked so well?

3.2.1 Agencies including Local Authority

- i. Social work reports are not always available in accordance with the timescales required for initial conferences and subsequent reviews.
- ii. Social work reports must be available for conference chairs in accordance with LSCB procedures.
- iii. The Single Assessment was implemented on 1st April 2014 and although the Local Authority is yet to formally introduce the Signs of Safety model, work is underway to ensure that assessments and child protection plans are clearer and linked to an analysis of children's needs showing the child's journey through services.
- iv. Further training should be provided for social workers in respect of assessment and intervention with the non-abusing carers in child sexual harm.
- v. The lack of availability of police and GP reports and attendance could increase the risk of agencies being unable to make well informed decisions to safeguard children. This requires further targeted scrutiny through regular quality assurance and feedback this year.

3.2.2 Conference Service:

- i. Monitor and challenge agency attendance at conferences through quality assurance reporting
- ii. Provide regular quality assurance reports about the service in accordance with the quality assurance reporting arrangements for the Local Authority and the LSCB.
- iii. Improve circulation of outline plans from 80% to 90% in 24 hours.
- iv. Work with the Local Authority and partners to embed the revised Single Assessment Framework and signs of safety practice so that plans are clearer and more clearly linked to analysis of need.

4. PROFILE OF CHILDREN'S NEEDS PARENTING CAPACITY AND FAMILY AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS PRESENTED TO CONFERENCE IN THE YEAR.

- 4.1 Appendix 2 summarises the safeguarding concerns that have been discussed in relation to children at conference this year. It can be seen that domestic violence is the single highest cause for concern and was a risk indicator in the lives of 17 of the 28 families whose children were discussed at conference this year. Multi agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) was involved in 4 of these families. Much of the violence that children experienced was attributed to alcohol and the poor parenting experiences of the parents of those children. Sixteen of these children were under five years of age. This predominant indicator of risk remains the same as in previous years.
- 4.2 Neglect and emotional abuse and physical abuse and emotional harm are the commonest categories used for making the child or young person subject of a plan. This reflects the potential impact of domestic harm on the child and the neglect that might occur as a consequence in some children's lives.
- 4.3 Agencies remain alert to the needs of children who need safeguarding from sexual harm and this year has seen some increase of children who have been subject to a plan due to risks in respect of the likely or actual harm caused. Working with denial in this area has presented some significant challenges for the service and in particular the non-abusing carer. It is recommended the Local Authority consider providing some further training and development to strengthen and develop practice in this area.
- 4.4 61 children and young people have been discussed at the 70 conferences held this year. Appendix 3 table 3 illustrates that 45 of these were children under the age of 10. Of the 16 over the age of 10, 15 attended or had their views represented by some other method (advocate or by writing to the conference chair). Children and young people who attend conferences have said it helped them make their views known and to understand what will happen next. Some of those young people also attend their core group meetings.
- 4.5 8 children have been made subject to proceedings this year. 3 children (2 families), have given consent for their children to be safeguarded through Section 20 of the Children Act (1989). 3 children (2 families) were involved in Public Law Outline meetings and agreements made with their parents to prevent proceedings.
- 4.6 The Local Authority ensures children are placed safely with family and friends as an alternative to coming into formal care where at all possible. Thus, of the children being made subject to proceedings, 4 of them were placed with family a friends at the outset and 2 more were subsequently moved once suitable family were friends at the outset and 2 more were subsequently moved once suitable family were identified.

5. CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

- 5.1 The work on identifying and tackling the sexual exploitation of children and young people remains a priority at both national and local level. Leicestershire & Rutland Local Safeguarding Children's Board launched a CSE, Trafficking and Missing Children Strategy in February 2013.
- 5.2 When a moderate or significant risk is identified, a Conference Chair is responsible for facilitating a multi-agency meeting. The overall aim is to develop a safeguarding plan to enable young people to make informed decisions and move away from exploitive and abusive relationships. CSE plans are continually reviewed and exit strategies put in place. If a young person is considered to be at significant risk of harm then child protection procedures are implemented.
- 5.3 In 2013-14 the Safeguarding Team received 3 requests to chair CSE meetings. These were all related to females. The average age was 15.
- 5.4 Two of the girls were made subject of CSE plans which were kept under regular review until agencies felt sure the risks were reduced. These two girls alongside others from across other Authorities were involved in significant high profile cases in which the perpetrators were brought to trial with the result of significant criminal disposals as outcomes.
- 5.5 A key indicator of CSE is being missing from home or care. The Safeguarding Unit in Leicestershire County Council hosts monthly multi agency information sharing meetings to effectively map the current status of missing young people across both Authorities and liaise with Rutland duty manager in respect of cases of concern where CSE is a factor and track the progress of intervention and support provided on individual cases.
- 5.6 Awareness of risk and multi-agency interventions in this area is good.

6. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHILD PROTECTION SERVICE

- 6.1 The service comprises 2 employees, one full time officer who chairs the conferences (this person is also the Authority's Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) in addition to having a wider quality assurance function) and a full time safeguarding administrator who also undertakes the convening and organisational aspects of the Quality Assurance (QA) and IRO service.
- 6.2 In order to provide a contingency and flexible service response the service also uses some independent workers who support service delivery through a contract known as the Rutland Register. The increase in the number of conferences this year as well as the work required to support the development of the Quality Assurance and Performance Group has necessitated a greater reliance on the use of Independent Chairs. This has meant the Working Together Guidance has been achieved - in that the same worker has been able to chair subsequent review meetings.
- 6.3 The full time employee is of white British origin and female. The independent chairs are also of the same gender and origin. This ethnicity generally reflects that of the children and young people who have been the subject of a conference meeting in Rutland.
- 6.4 Over the year the number of children subject to a plan has fluctuated between 23 and 34. There were 32 children subject to a plan at the end of March 2014 with a further 2 babies whom agencies have determined require a plan at birth. This represents 15 families, 7 of which comprise 3 or more children thus equating to 23 of the present number of children subject to a plan.
- 6.5 28 initial child protection conferences were convened to discuss the needs of 52 children. Within this group 3 conferences were convened to discuss the needs of unborn babies and a further 3 considered unborn babies alongside their siblings.
- 6.6 4 initial child protection conferences resulted in no plans. In one of these cases, the children were accommodated within the extended family until work could be completed to reduce the risk and thus achieve a rehabilitation home. In hindsight these children might have benefitted from a dual status (subject to section 20 and Child protection plan) pending further assessment. The judgement made to trust in the family ability to protect was over optimistic without the benefit of further assessment.
- 6.7 The further 3 conferences that resulted in no child protection plan were as a consequence of agencies' views that continued harm could be reduced by the continuation of a child in need plan.

- 6.8 8 of the initial conferences were requested by the duty team; the remainder were requested by the long term social work team following escalating concerns after child in need plans had been insufficient to prevent risk.
- 6.9 23 3 month review conferences were convened following these initial conferences. The majority of children remained subject to a plan. 5 children's (3 families) plans were discontinued for the following reasons: 2 children because they were made the subject of Interim Care Orders and 3 children (one family) following their complaints about the need for a protection plan. The older children in this family also held strong views about the requirement not to be subject to a plan. Agencies supported their views at the first review conference and the children were supported as children in need as a result.
- 6.10 19 6 month reviews have been convened. The following decisions were made at those meetings:
- i. 13 conferences concluded with the decision to end the child protection plan.
The following reasons supported those decisions:
 - ii. 7 cases resulted in the children being made subject to Interim Care Orders. 2 of these orders went on to be resolved by the granting of a Special Guardianship Order; 1 case (reviewed twice) resulted in a residence with supervision order. 2 other cases were granted Care and Placement Orders (so that the children might be placed for adoption).
 - iii. There are 2 sets of interim care made later in the year that remain to be finalised.
 - iv. 8 plans were stepped down to child in need plans.
 - v. 3 plans have been continued.
- 6.11 No child has been subject to a plan for more than two years.
- 6.12 No child has been subject to a child protection plan twice this year.
- 6.13 Appendix 3 Table 2 illustrates the performance of the service since 1st April 2013. 70 conferences have been convened. All these conferences have been convened within the required timescale. There is a good understanding of the need to convene conferences within timescales from the operational service to ensure those children who are deemed to have the most significant needs within the Authority are considered in a timely fashion.
- 6.14 Preparation Before Conferences
- 6.14.1 Communication between the conference chair and the operational service to plan for a good quality of information sharing in conferences remains a key service priority. A pre-planning

meeting between the chair and lead social worker takes place before every initial and review conference to ensure all relevant family members and children will be

included in the process and to provide a focus in relation to children and families who need greater levels of support. This meeting also provides the opportunity to consider the invitations list for agencies to be invited to the conference.

6.14.2 Adherence to current LSCB procedures in relation to sharing of social work reports with conference chairs remains a challenge for the social work team. All reports are available on the evening before the conference. Usually this coincides with the social worker visiting the family to look through the report in readiness for conference the following day. There has been good verbal communication between chairs and social workers. The provision of reports to the chair is an area that required improvement by the social work service in 2014- 2015.

6.14.3 The quality of some reports could be improved in respect of the analysis and subsequent recommendations. This observation has been accepted by the social work service. It has been agreed that further development work in respect of the Single Assessment Framework as well as the introduction of Signs of Safety will further improve practice by not only providing a better method for workers to use to recommend interventions, but also a clearer way of helping families to understand and therefore participate in plans. Conference chairs will be supporting the development of this work.

6.15 Participation of children and young people in conferences

6.15.1 Pre-planning for conferences involves chairs discussing children and young people's involvement in conference. The age range the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) generally feels that attendance at conference should be considered is 10. Appendix 3 table 3 demonstrates this age group is consulted and decides not to attend or decide to attend. The vast majority of children whose needs were discussed at conference were under 10 years of age. In addition, parents have also brought babies to a meeting when childcare has been difficult for them to organise.

6.16 Participation of parents in conferences

6.16.1 Chairs are available to meet parents and carers in the conference room prior to the conference. This helps parents and carers express any concerns they have about the meeting and for the chair to explain the meeting process and purpose and any sections they might not be able to stay for. Parents are always present and encouraged to make a full contribution in conferences. Parents are also sent a questionnaire with the minutes of conferences and invited to provide feedback. There has been one complaint about the decision of conference this year. This resulted in agreement being reached about the status of the plan (see quantitative information above).

6.17 Participation of Agencies in conferences

6.17.1 Agencies are also offered the opportunity to attend conference early and use a separate room to read the social work report and share any reports they intend to use in the meeting. The comments we have elicited from agencies would suggest there are mixed views about the need for the time allocated pre-conference. Attendance pre-conference remains optional for agencies and helps those who might not be core group members later at review conferences.

6.17.2 Appendix 3 table 4 provides an analysis of agency attendance at conference. It is clear that further work is required to ensure further police and GP engagement in the process. The CAIU have provided a report or attended all but 2 initial conferences. Participation thereafter is either via report, local police or in 6 instances neither report nor attendance at first review meetings. Subsequent review meetings indicate that there has been no response at all with an increased emphasis therefore on the lead agency (social worker) to liaise and provide any new/relevant information. This practice could provide missed information. It is recommended this issue is given further consideration.

6.17.3 GP participation remains a further area for targeted improvement. GPs have sent reports or attended 27 out of a possible 70 conferences this year. Social work reports generally contain details of any GP liaison and other professionals will have a level of contact to help with information exchange about children and their families but again the risk of poor information sharing remains a need for further targeted support.

6.17.4 Agencies are sometimes invited following the initial convening of the

conference and are able to attend (this has been typical of the Special Educational Needs/Inclusion and Intensive Family Support Services).

6.18 Conference Meetings

6.18.1 From feedback received all parties appear satisfied with the running of conferences. The purpose is well explained, the facility to share information is made easier by the chair, conferences are well run and everyone is clear about any decisions made.

6.19 Delivery of the Service after Conference

6.19.1 Outline plans and decisions are sent out by chairs within 24 hours after a conference in 80% of cases. Plans have been circulated within 48 hours otherwise. Appendix 3 table 2 illustrates the performance within which minutes are sent out to agencies after conference. There was a greater volume of conferences during quarter three which resulted in minutes being sent out later than agreed timescales. A backlog was generated and additional temporary staff employed to enable the service to get back on track. This was a successful short term intervention which it is hoped will be continued in similar situations.

6.20 Responsibility of the Service to highlight good practice and areas for improvement.

6.20.1 A revised Quality Assurance Framework and implementation group has been developed with a requirement for quality assurance reporting around this service area. This will be embedded during 2014 to 2015. It will improve the arrangements for more regular monitoring of work in this area.

7. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2013-2014

7.1 Conference Service

7.1.1 Monitor and challenge agency attendance at conferences through quality assurance reporting and escalation where necessary.

7.1.2 Provide regular quality assurance reports about the service in accordance with the Quality Assurance Reporting arrangements for the local authority and the LSCB.

7.1.3 Improve circulation of outline plans from 80% to 90% in 24 hours.

7.1.4 Improve the circulation of minutes within 15 working days from 66 - 80%.

7.1.5 Work with the local authority and partners to embed the revised Single Assessment Framework and Signs of Safety practise so that plans are clearer and more clearly linked to analysis of need.

7.2 Operational Social Work Service

7.2.1 To provide a lead in revising further the Single Assessment Framework and Signs of Safety practice so that child protection plans are clearer and more clearly linked to analysis of need.

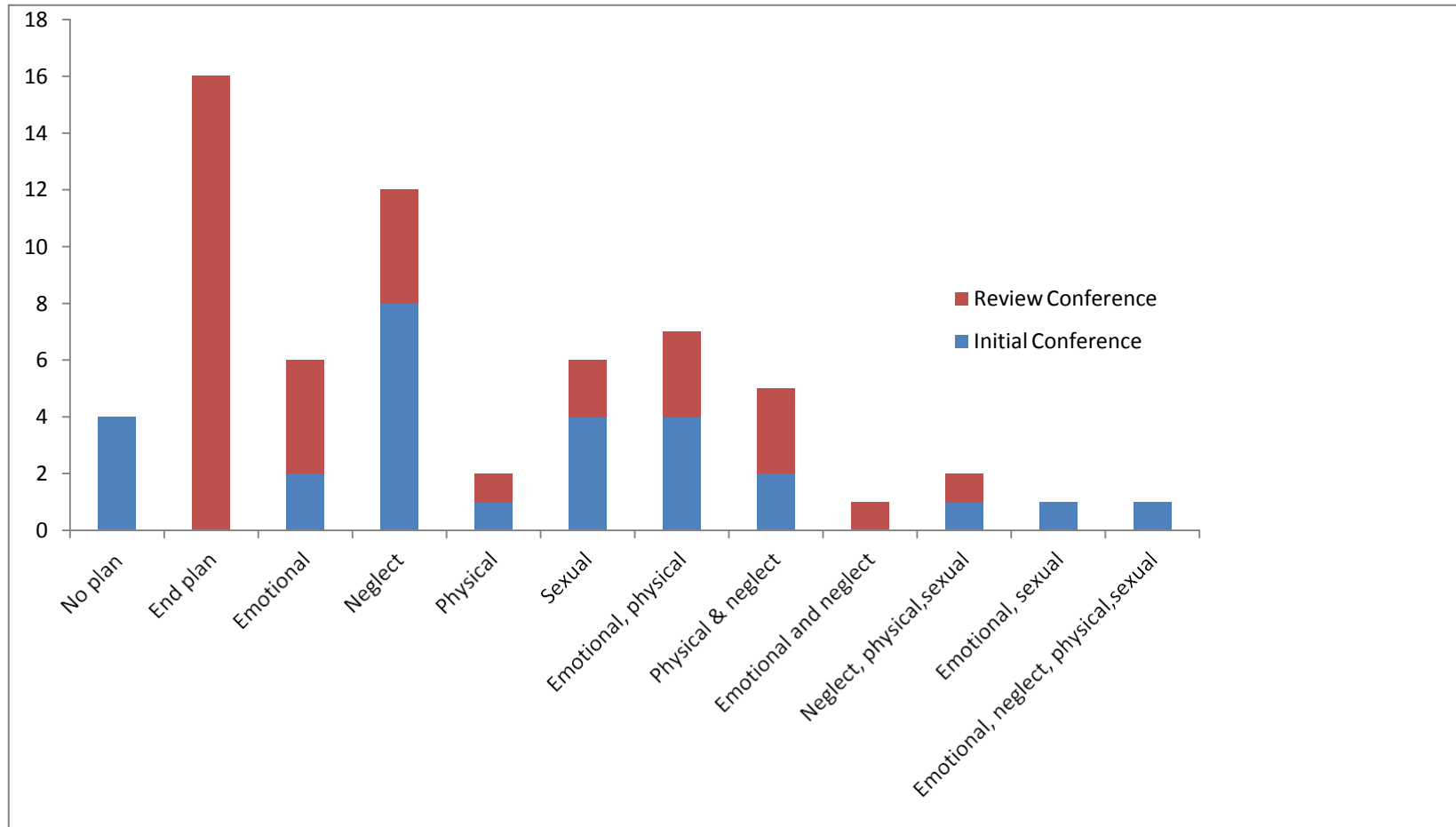
7.2.2 To ensure that reports are made available to conference chairs in accordance with LSCB procedures.

7.2.3 To provide further training and development in respect of guidance for assessment and intervention with the non-abusing carer in child sexual harm.

Janet Marriott
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April 2014

Appendix 1: Conference Outcomes by Category

Figure 1: Conference Outcomes by Category of Plan



Appendix 2: Indicators of Need

Figure 2: Table of Parenting Capacity by Type and Number

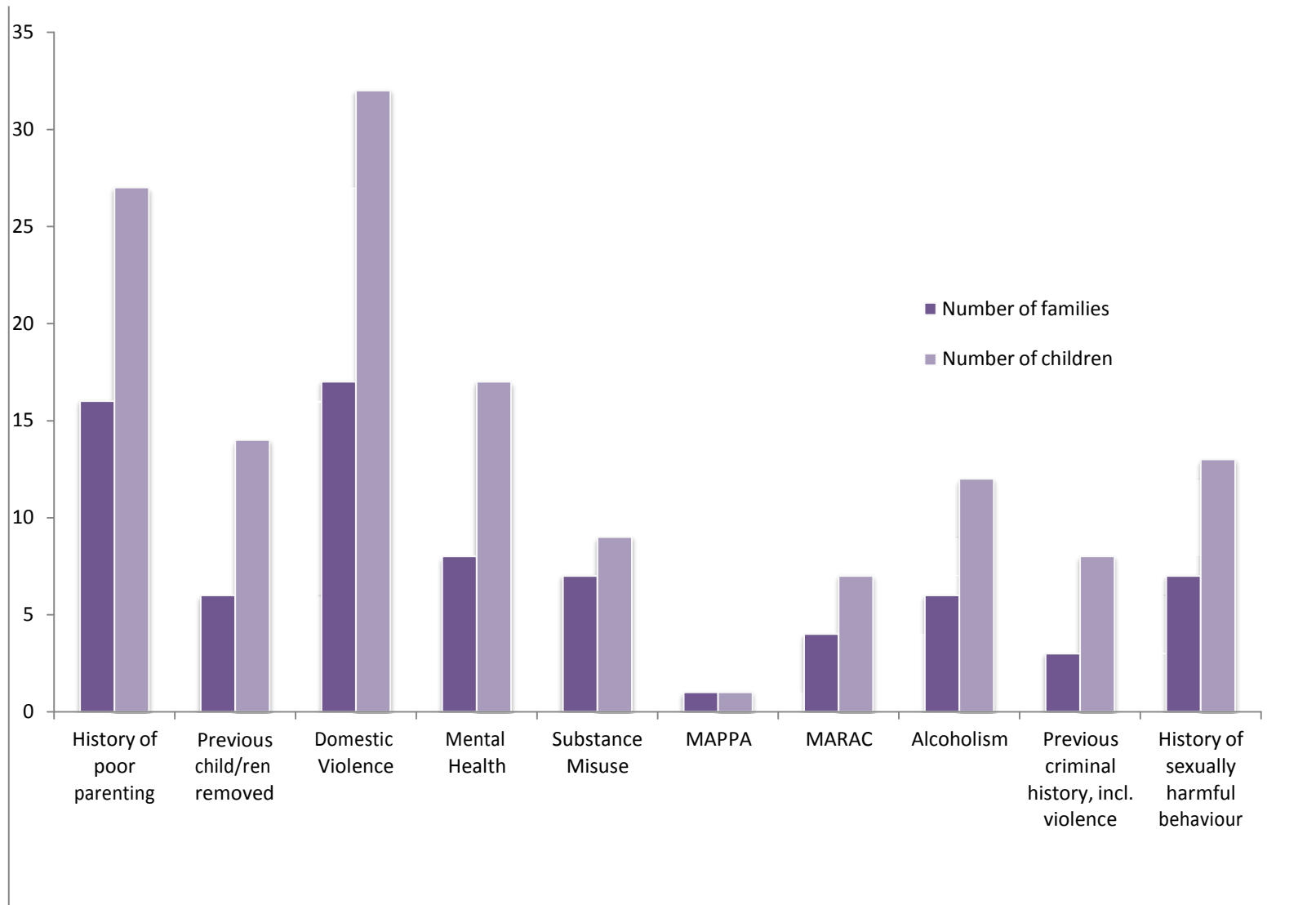


Figure 3: Table of Indicators of Risk Related to Parenting Capacity by Age of Child

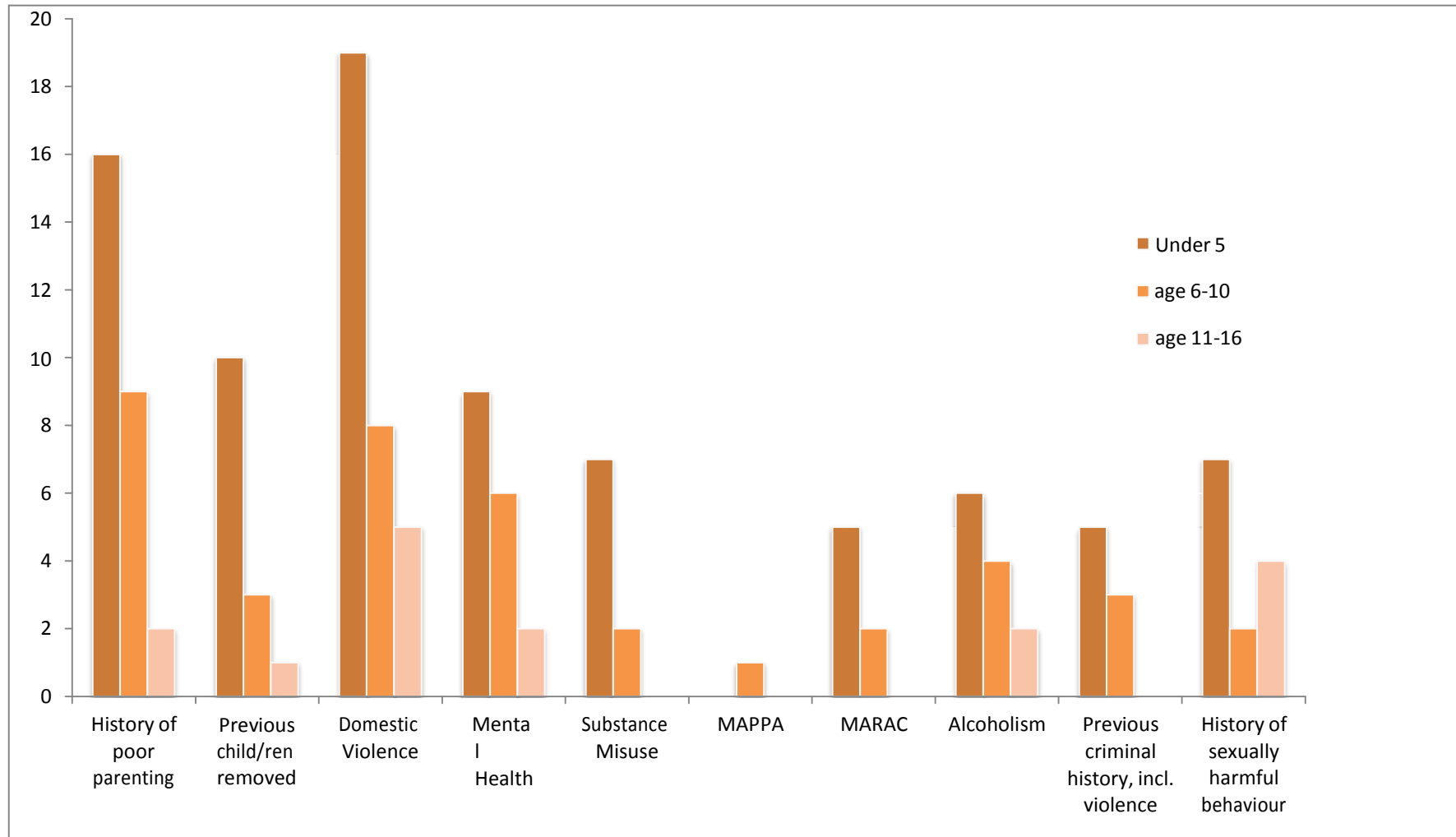


Table 1: Indicators of Risk by Family

Family	History of poor parenting	Previous child/ren removed	Domestic Violence	Mental Health	Substance Misuse	MAPPA	MARAC	Alcoholism	Prev. crim. history, incl. violence	History of sexually harmful behav.
1	✓									✓
2			✓			✓				
3			✓	✓			✓	✓		
4	✓									✓
5	✓		✓							
6			✓	✓						
7				✓	✓					
8			✓		✓			✓	✓	
9			✓							
10	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
11	✓									
12	✓		✓		✓					✓
13	✓		✓		✓					
14	✓	✓	✓							
15										✓
16										✓
17	✓		✓	✓						
18								✓		
19		✓	✓							
20		✓	✓				✓			
21	✓									✓
22	✓			✓	✓					✓
23	✓	✓								✓
24	✓	✓	✓	✓						
25	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	
26			✓							
27	✓			✓						
28	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	

APPENDIX 3

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Qualitative Data

Table 2a: Timescales – Distribution of Minutes

TIMESCALES	5 working days or less	6-10 working days	11-20 working days	21-30 working days	31-37 working days
Minutes sent to chair	25	18	16	9	2
Minutes approved by chair	60	9	1	0	0
Minutes Distributed	11	18	25	11	4

Table 2b Timescales – Distribution of Documents

Initial conferences held within 15 days of strategy meeting	28	100%
Review conferences held on time	42	100%
Social worker report received \geq 3 working days before review conference	3	7%
Social worker report received \geq 1 working day before initial conference	18	64%
Outline plan distributed within 1 working day of conference	40	80%
Minutes sent to chair \leq 5 working days following conference	25	36%
Minutes approved by chair \leq 5 working days from receipt	60	86%
Full record distributed \leq 15 working days from end of conference	46	66%

Table 3: Participation of Children and Young People

Attendance	
Child 10 years+ attended	7
Child didn't attend & not consulted	1
Child 10 years+ consulted	8
Child under 10 years	45

Table 4: Participation of Agencies

Agency	Invited	Attended	Didn't attend, sent report
HEALTH			
School Nurse/Health Visitor/Midwife	70	56	5
GP	70	1	26
CAMHS/CPN/MHSW/Psych etc.	12	5	7
EDUCATION			
School	39	33	1
Nursery	18	17	0
SEN/Inclusion	?	6	0
POLICE			
Local/Other Police	13	12	0
CAIU	70	9	35
SOCIAL CARE			
Social Worker	70	70	0
SW Team Manager/PSW in supporting role	70	11	59
Fostering	6	6	0
Intensive Family Support		25	1
Visions	16	12	4
HOUSING			
Housing Association/Housing Options/Tenancy Support	34	23	5
OTHER			
Community Safety	3	2	0
Youth	5	12	7
Swanswell	1	0	1
Army Welfare	4	4	0
LWA/IDVA		6	1
TOTALS			