Missing Data, Complex Processes, and Differing Contexts: a case file analysis of school staff’s involvement in child protection cases for concerns of neglect.

Key Words: Case Files, Interprofessional, Protection, Neglect, Schools

Abstract

This paper reports the findings from the analysis of 119 children’s social work case files from three local authorities in Wales. The study offers new understanding about the extent of school staff’s involvement in the provision of statutory support when there are concerns that a child is living with neglect. Findings demonstrate evidence of a broad range of early and preventative school-based support provided in 42% of the sample, some gaps in schools’ contributions to statutory assessments, and a decline in the level of involvement of members of school staff following the initial child protection conference. The discussion also acknowledges a number of challenges encountered during the study: the complexity of social work processes, the variance in understandings of neglect within differing regional contexts, and large amounts of missing data on children’s files and the restrictions this created for statistical measurement. Findings have important implications for inter-professional relationships between schools and social work teams, at individual and agency levels. The author makes a call for social workers to actively engage members of school staff in child protection processes with the purpose of increasing information sharing across agencies, whilst enhancing interprofessional safeguarding practice.
**Introduction**

Child neglect is the most common reason for taking child protection action in England, and the second most common reason in Wales, with 26,440 children registered in 2019, under the category of ‘neglect’ (NSPCC, 2021). Neglect is not only the most common form of maltreatment, it is complex and has been shown to have a substantial impact on a child’s normative development. It is multi-faceted in nature and differs within a range of contexts, which makes responding to it effectively, and in a timely manner, a substantial challenge for practice (Sharley, 2019). Particularly so, given the current climate of cuts to local authority budgets, the reduction of early intervention and preventative services (Lepper, 2019) and the increasing burdens on child protection services. Intervening in neglect early, not only serves to minimise the long-term and dangerous effects of neglect on children, but also has the potential to reduce the cost of reactive services to the public purse (Haynes, 2015).

The governance of social welfare in Wales including the protection of children became a devolved matter for the National Assembly for Wales in 1999 (Sharley, 2019). In Wales the Children Act 1989 and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 provide the legal framework for social service provision for children and their families (NSPCC, 2020). During child protection investigations, all services such as education, health services and the police are obliged to share the information they hold with the local authority. Although not a legal process, the child protection system is governed by statutory guidance that promotes a partnership approach to safeguarding children. The Wales Safeguarding Procedures provide a system which protects specific children suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect by placing them on the child protection
register (Wales Safeguarding Procedures, 2020). In this system local authority social workers hold the duty to support and protect a range of vulnerable children through casework with families.

Although working together to safeguard children is everyone’s responsibility, joint working across disciplines continues to be one of the biggest challenges in responding to child neglect (Pithouse and Crowley, 2016). Even though local authorities take the lead role, schools are well-positioned to recognise the signs of neglect early, and provide a more effective inter-agency safeguarding response (Sharley, 2019; HM Government, 2018). Staff in schools hold distinct advantage in that they commonly possess long-standing interactions and relationships with children and families (Bandele, 2009). They can observe children’s attainment and development within the classroom, whilst a wide range of non-teaching staff can see how children interact with their peers and families in more informal settings such as the playground, at lunchtimes, and during school-based clubs.

Despite members of school staff acknowledged as being vital for intervening in neglect early, communication and inter-agency working between child protection services and schools remains particularly challenging (Stevens and Laing, 2015). Although schools form a key element of the wider safeguarding system literature has tended to specifically investigate the role of teachers or counsellors, rather than exploring the role of school staff as a combined professional group. For that reason, little is still known about the nature and level of support that a wide range of school staff provide in classroom and non-classroom settings. This study offers new evidence and understanding about the extent of this group’s involvement in the statutory provision of support to children living with neglect.
With that in mind, children’s case files offer an important resource for social work research. They can provide a window into contemporary practice, useful in terms of their content but also, the context of their inter-professional production. Case file analysis can deliver rich insights into organisational policy, professional judgment and decision-making practice (Hayes and Devaney, 2004), and present evidence about the nature of support provided. Collecting data from children’s case files has the capacity to illustrate a comprehensive picture of the scale, range and effect of a particular issue, such as neglect, as well as the way in which professionals respond. The method can also provide practitioners with evidenced-based knowledge that supports the quality of future practice and understanding about what works most effectively for children and their families (Sheldon and Chilvers, 2002).

The aim of the study was to gather understanding about the level of involvement of school staff in mainstream primary and secondary schools when children have been placed upon a child protection plan under the category of neglect. This paper reports the findings of phase one of a larger project which incorporates a second (qualitative) phase. The second phase of the study consisted of six in-depth case studies, one primary and one secondary school within each of the three local authorities to explore staff members’ experiences, thoughts and feelings through semi-structured interviews (n=30) and non-participant observations (n=5). This paper presents the quantitative findings from 119 children’s social work case files to consider the role of school staff in the child protection process. In doing so the author further reflects upon a number of challenges that were encountered during the data collection stage of the study, and for that reason, are in themselves considered findings.

Methods
Each local authority was asked to identify up to 50 case files (n=150) that met the following sampling criteria: (i) the school had referred the child to protection services, (ii) the child was of school age, (iii) the child was on the child protection register under the category of neglect at the initial child protection conference (ICPC). Seven documents were analysed from the case files at key stages of the child protection process to gather binary data: (i) initial referral from the school, (ii) initial assessment made by social services, (iii) strategy discussion and related s.47 investigation, (iv) assessment, (v) minutes from the initial child protection conference (ICPC), (vi) minutes from the first core group, (vii) minutes from the child protection review conference (CPRC).

However, due to the small populations within the three participating Welsh authorities, only 142 files met the sampling criteria. After the data had been cleaned and prepared for analysis the total sample was reduced to 119. Twenty-three files were removed prior to analysis because they either did not meet the study’s sampling criteria (belonging to the children’s younger siblings who were not yet of school age) (n=21) or they contained no data aside from the child’s name and age (n=2). Data were systematically recorded on a coding schedule, before being transferred to a single electronic dataset in IBM SPSS software. The values for each variable were entered in numerical format. Binary variables were coded 0 (no) or 1 (yes). Nominal and ordinal variables were assigned consecutive values, whilst continuous data such as the child’s date of birth, were entered as scale variables.

All 22 authorities were contacted to invite them to participate in the study. Out of the eight who wished to participate, three local authorities were chosen in accordance with the following principles of selection to provide a diverse sample: (i) their geographical position, (ii) a low, average, or high rate
of children registered on the child protection register (CPR), (iii) a low or high rate of children registered under the category of neglect, and (iv) a low, average or high rate of deprivation on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) (within the most deprived ten percent Lower Super Output Area) (LSOA) (Stats Wales, 2019). Wales is a small country with a population of around three million, so for purposes of confidentiality and anonymity each local authority was allocated a pseudonym that reflected their geographic characteristic (‘Urban Authority’, ‘Rural Authority’ and ‘Valleys Authority’), and each file was assigned a research study number.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval was obtained from Cardiff University’s Research Ethics Committee in April 2015. The explicit consent to access case files was not sought from individual children because the research question was not focused upon the individual child and their experiences, but upon the nature and level of involvement of professionals within the organisation’s statutory process. Due to the sensitive nature and complex construction of neglect, there would have been substantial difficulty in deciding who was best situated to give consent and who owns the data, particularly given the substantial amounts of personal information contained in case files about other family members (Shaw and Holland, 2014). Seeking consent from a parent would have meant asking the person responsible for the act of neglect to give permission, risking the likelihood of incomplete evidence and an increase in bias in the sample (Hayes and Devaney, 2004). For these reasons consent was sought from the Heads of Services in accordance with their data protection policies. This decision took the ethical viewpoint that evidence-based knowledge gained about professional practice was in the public interest, outweighing the potential harm caused to the individual and their right to privacy (Teater et al., 2017).
Data Collection & Analysis

All data was collected over a period of six weeks during early 2016. Electronic case files were accessed within each of the child protection departments in the three local authorities. Descriptive statistics were produced through the production of frequency tables which offered an overview of the nature and level of involvement of school staff in responding to child neglect in the child protection system. Cross tabulations were run to test the association between variables with a view to building a logistic regression model to estimate the probability of a child who was living with neglect, receiving support from the school. Variables were chosen based upon the prevalence of existing literature on child neglect, as having impact on services provided (Jonson-Reid, 2007; Nohilly, 2019).

Chi square analyses were run to explore whether school-based support (prior to or during the child protection process) was associated with: gender; type of education provision (mainstream or alternative); school type (primary or secondary); number of siblings on CPP; previous registrations on CPP; and whether further concerns of neglect were raised within the local authorities’ initial assessment. All chi square tests were found to be not statistically significant (at $p<.05$ level).

The absence of significant associations meant it was not possible to run the regression model as anticipated. It is possible that the high levels of missing data impacted the quality and consistency of the data available for analysis. This could be attributed to the small sample size within this study (due to low regional populations) as well as the quality and content of the case files in the sample.
Sample

More boys (58%) were identified as living with neglect than girls (n=119). All referral documents cited at least two or more concerns that were held about a child. Unsurprisingly, educational neglect (51%) was the most commonly cited type of neglect (given schools were the referring agency). This was closely followed by physical neglect (45%), other forms of abuse (40%) (physical, sexual and emotional), lack of supervision and guidance (35%), medical neglect (16%), nutritional neglect (13%) and emotional neglect (7%) (see Table 1):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Neglect</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Neglect</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Concerns</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of Supervision</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical Neglect</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nutritional Neglect</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Neglect</td>
<td>7</td>
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The majority of children (73%) in the sample were more likely to be of primary school age (M= 9.1 years SD=3.1) and had not been on a child protection plan (CPP) before (58%), be from a White British background (88%, slightly lower than the White population in Wales 96%) (StatsWales, 2019). Findings correspond with literature suggesting boys are more represented than girls in terms of the prevalence of neglect (Egry et al, 2015) and physical neglect is often more easily observed on a child than any other type of neglect within the school-setting (Horwath and Tarr, 2015). The child’s average age of 9 years. This could suggest that physical neglect is more recognised in children before they reach adolescence (Rees, et al., 2011), or perhaps connected to the broadly-held view that primary schools are able to offer a greater ‘culture of care’ (Nohilly, 2019). It may simply reflect the most common age for a child to be on the child protection register in Wales is 5-9 years old (NSPCC, 2021).
Results

This section presents the findings from phase one of the study. The discussion is split into two parts. The first part answers the main research question ‘What is the extent of involvement of school staff in the child protection process?’ The second part reflects upon some of the challenges encountered during data collection and analysis to consider why a more sophisticated level of analysis was not achievable within the study. It is organised into three themes for discussion: complex processes, differing contexts and missing data.

(i) The Involvement of School Staff in the Child Protection Process

Provision of School-based Support

In 42% of the sample (n=50) schools provided a range of support to children who they were worried were living with neglect (data was gathered from all seven documents sampled). This support consisted of financial (100%), practical (42%) (e.g. transport to school), making referrals or signposting to other services (e.g. family support workers or charities) (38%), emotional (20%), clothing (20%) and food (18%). The small percentage of cases where schools provided food could be countered by children’s attendance at breakfast clubs, free school meals, or hidden within the ‘referrals and signposting’ category in terms of the increasing number of families accessing food banks in the UK (Heatherington, 2020).

Schools’ Contribution to Statutory Assessments

In terms of the contribution of school staff to social work assessments, 83% of initial assessments in the reported sample contained general information from the school about their involvement with, or
support given, to the child. That said, only 60% of those assessments included evidence that referred specifically to the child’s educational needs. Within the core assessments undertaken (when statutory services are being provided) findings show a 7% increase in the schools’ contribution of information (90%), and a 27% increase in evidence included about the child’s educational needs (87%). These figures could suggest that the level and depth of information shared from schools increases when children receive longer-term statutory support. This could be indicative of time available to assess a child’s needs, and/or the possibility for more developed inter-professional relationships between school staff and social workers. Although is not possible to ascertain the nature of relationships from case file records, it would most certainly have significant influence upon the quantity and quality of information included from partner agencies within assessments.

**Involvement in Child Protection Conferences**

When an initial child protection conference (ICPC) had been convened, a member of school staff attended in 89% of cases. At the child protection review conference (CPRC) three months later, this attendance had dropped to 73%. In nearly all cases school staff provided a report to the ICPC (97%), decreasing by 10% by the CPRC (87%). In just over three-quarters of cases (76%) the school had taken responsibility for some actions on the child’s plan at ICPC, again decreasing to by 7% by the CPRC (69%) (see figure 2).

*Figure 2: Bar chart illustrating the level of involvement of schools in Child Protection Conferences.*

![Bar chart](image)
The reduction across all three variables, could suggest that school staff are less likely to be involved in the child protection process once a child is placed on a plan and the local authority is named as the lead agency. This could imply that once a referral to child protection services is made, school staff feel less obliged to contribute to ongoing statutory provision, share information or concerns less readily, or may wish to avoid situations that damage their relationships with parents (SCIE, 2016). Conversely, this could reflect poor statutory administration whereby schools are not consistently informed about the dates for meetings, or meetings are planned on days which are not in the school term, making it difficult for staff to attend.

(ii) Data Challenges and Limitations

This second part of the discussion considers the challenges and limitations of the study and is split into three sections (i) complex processes, (ii) differing contexts, and (iii) missing data.

Complex Processes

Social work with children and families is considered one of the most complex and challenging areas of social work practice (Okitikpi, 2011). Although not a legal process, the child protection process is highly formalised and governed by substantial procedural guidance. The intricacy of statutory processes influenced the nature of the data collected. For example, it is usual in child protection practice in England and Wales for referrals to be duplicated onto the files of siblings. This resulted in children being included in the initial sample who were not of school age who did not meet the sampling criteria. There was further ambiguity hidden in the statutory framework for offering support in terms of the
different tiers of service provision which meant that the time taken for a child’s case to progress from referral to initial child protection conference (ICPC) varied considerably, as well as the nature and level of support provided to the family during that time. These variations can be connected to frequency and severity of risk posed to the child, the (un)/substantiation of events, and the presence of protective factors in a child’s life (Platt, 2007).

The nature of the study’s data highlights the intricacy of movement up and down the four tiers of service provision for children; depending upon the level of risk posed to the child and their identified needs (The Children Act, 1989). Lower level interventions which manage or lessen the level of risk posed can extend the length of time that a family receives support, before the need to convene a child protection conference. Although stringent timescales govern local authority processes, the time taken from point of referral to the provision of services, can vary substantially dependent upon a number of factors. The availability of practitioners both locally and nationally (amidst the profession’s recruitment and retention challenge); heavy caseloads can delay the allocation of cases to teams, and the scarcity of funding and resources leave little room for the provision of support to families or the crucial time needed to build and develop inter-agency relationships and cross-service collaboration (Hastings et al, 2015).

The complexity of these issues not only effect the timely delivery of statutory services, but also impacted the ability to more deeply analyse the case file data held in the study in terms of the level of support provided by schools, as well as the length of time taken from their referral to the child being placed upon the child protection register. The impact of the variance of statutory social work process is
acknowledged as a limitation of the study, in that the sample focuses on children who are receiving child protection support, omitting those receiving child in need provision (along with the associated case file documents). The rationale behind this decision was that the participating authorities were not able to identify child in need cases under the sampling criteria, as they are not operationally categorised for concerns of ‘neglect’ until the first case conference.

_Differing Contexts_

Defining neglect requires a social judgement about what is regarded as an adequate standard of parenting for a child at a particular point in time (Horwath, 2007). Agreeing upon a single definition of neglect causes for practitioners, not only because it is multifaceted in terms of construction, but because it differs within a range of contexts (Horwath, 2013). Establishing appropriate thresholds for intervention in cases of child neglect is more difficult than for other types of abuse (Dickens, 2007). Unlike physical or sexual abuse, neglect often has no decisive event on which to focus a decision, but instead is based upon impressions, judgements, or opinions about negligent occurrences, and occurs in the context of a child’s needs, age, culture, and individual family environment. As a result, cases of neglect raise fundamental dilemmas in practice, further magnified when working across professions or different organisational cultures (Sharley, 2019). Further, differentiating between the broader definition of neglect (in terms of a child whose needs are not met) and the much narrower operational category for statutory intervention and service provision presents a tricky issue for interagency practice (Daniel et al, 2011).
Somewhat predictably, variation emerged in the types of neglect identified by members of school staff in different local authorities (see figure 4). Aside from educational neglect, findings show that ‘physical neglect’ and ‘other forms of abuse’ (e.g. physical, sexual or emotional) were the two most common categories in the reported sample. When data is disaggregated by local authority, school staff in the Valleys Authority report ‘other concerns of abuse’ in over 65% of their referrals, followed by educational neglect (58%), then physical neglect in 41% of the reported sample. This could suggest that school staff in the Valleys Authority are less familiar with identifying neglect than other types of abuse, or perhaps wait for a ‘trigger’ before referring a child to statutory services where there are ongoing concerns of neglect. This is consistent with literature that suggests that school staff perceive referrals that include a tangible event are more likely to receive attention from statutory services than concerns of neglect alone (Jonson-Reid et al, 2007).

In contrast, school staff in the Urban Authority most commonly reported physical neglect (54%) followed by educational neglect (46%), and lack of supervision and guidance (29%), with only 15% of referrals citing ‘other abuse’ as a concern held about the child. This could suggest that school staff in the Urban Authority more accurately identify child neglect in their roles, understand local threshold levels for intervention, or include more comprehensive analysis of the child’s experiences within their referral forms. It was noted that the Rural Authority did not report emotional neglect in any referrals, despite being widely regarded as one of the most harmful elements of neglect upon a child’s development. This could reflect school staff’s desire to include tangible and observable evidence of child neglect, to validate their decision to refer to statutory services (Author’s Own, 2019).

*Figure 4: Bar Chart Illustrating the Multiple Types of Neglect Cited in Referrals (by Local Authority)*
Splitting the data by local authority draws attention to the differing perceptions about what is considered ‘neglectful’ parenting, both within and across professional groups. Children’s needs are often understood and analysed in a variety of ways within different agencies (Dickens, 2007), underpinned by varying values, familial experiences, cultural beliefs, and personal or professional assumptions. All of which affect a judgment about whether or not the individual believes neglect has occurred, and if the threshold for statutory intervention has been met. Such variances in the reporting of child neglect (across local authority) could be due to differing threshold levels for service intervention, or simply the presence of specific contextual issues unique to the region. Either way, these variances are acknowledged as influencing the identification of the type of neglect, the type of school-based support offered to the family, and consequently, the level of statutory provision provided.
It is important to note that the sample size (n=119), a result of the small number of files that met the inclusion criteria in each authority, and the limited parameters of doctoral study for the number of local authorities able to participate: considerably restricted the level of statistical measurement made possible. For this reason, a more substantive study in this area is recommended with a larger sample size, both in terms of number of participating research sites, and number of case files sampled. This would be possible should the sampling criteria be expanded to include cases where families had been in receipt of 'child in need' support.

**Missing data**

Across all three authorities large amounts of data were missing on three particular variables: (i) child’s main language (27%, n=87), (ii) religion (46%, n=64), and (iii) whether the child had a Statement of Special Educational Need (SEN) (52%, n=57). These variables were gathered with the intention of comparing findings with the consensus on neglect prevalence, to detect patterns or relationships between a child’s characteristics and the likelihood of neglect to occur. When the three variables that possess the missing data are disaggregated by area (Urban, Rural, or Valleys as illustrated in Figure 3), differences in recording practices emerge. In terms of ‘religion’, the Rural Authority reported a vast 91% missing data, compared to the Valleys Authority (33%), and Urban Authority (22%).

These results could be influenced by the greater amount of older files within the Rural Authority’s sample (which were typically hardcopy paper files, retrieved from archive systems, often with missing or incomplete information). Alternatively, it could reflect the differing recording cultures within
different local authority areas in terms of what granular data is gathered and reported on children’s files.

*Figure 3: Bar Chart Illustrating the Amounts of Missing Data in Each Local Authority*

![Bar Chart](image)

The Valleys Authority also reported the highest level of missing data for child’s ‘language’ (43%). This was unsurprising given the lack of ethnic diversity and low rates of Welsh language speakers in the region (circa 18%). That said, the Rural Authority had 23% missing data for the child’s main language spoken despite having one of the highest proportions of Welsh speakers in the country (circa 50%) (Stats Wales, 2019). It is not clear why this may be, but documenting the child’s language, particularly if children are bilingual, may not be a priority for social work case file recording.

This may be attributable to the fact that the sample spanned almost two decades (dating back to 1999 in the Rural Authority, 2003 in the Valleys Authority, and 2011 in the Urban authority), meaning much of the data was drawn from records that predate the implementation of the Welsh Language Measure (WLM) (2011). The WLM modernised the legal framework regarding the use of the Welsh language in the delivery of public services, and the right to access services in Welsh. This means all of the local
authorities’ mechanisms for recording data around language, would have improved markedly over the last ten years.

These inconsistencies in recording could be ascribed to the organisational practices within each authority, varying professional practice within specific social work teams, or the preferences or style of the individual practitioners. Teater et al (2017) recognise the quality of recording on case files to vary enormously. Files can often include very little or no standardised data available for comparison with other populations. The use of any records in research routinely brings a collection of obstacles to overcome (Hayes and Devaney, 2004) with the information, often a representation of the social worker’s available time and based upon a judgement about what was considered significant to the everyday practice of the organisation. Irrespective of the reasons for the missing data, the high levels threatened the data’s reliability and is a substantial limitation of the study in terms of restricting statistical measurement. The missing data made it difficult to identify patterns, or relationships between these missing variables and the likelihood of neglect occurring.

**Implications for Practitioners and Policy Makers**

This paper has presented the quantitative findings from phase one of a larger mixed methods study. Findings draw upon data from children’s social work case files to investigate the extent of involvement of members of school staff in the child protection process, illuminating the extensive range of support that schools provide to children who are living with neglect, both prior to, and during statutory involvement. This emphasises the invaluable role schools continue to play as key safeguarding partners.
in the care and protection of children, particularly in the context of ongoing austerity and continued budget cuts to early and preventative provision.

However, aside from identifying the breadth of support that schools offer to families, findings also have some important implications for inter-professional relationships. Firstly, findings suggest that in over 80% of the sample information is shared by, or gathered from, members of school staff to inform statutory assessments. Although this is positive, it does raise questions about what reasons underpin the absence of school staff’s involvement in the remaining assessments, particularly so, when members of school staff are acknowledged as holding extensive expertise and knowledge about children, their families, and the communities that they live within (Sharley, 2019). Social Workers should be supported with time to build their relationships with a range of staff in schools to support more effective information sharing, and in turn, inform their professional decision-making in cases of child neglect.

Secondly, findings suggest a decline in the participation of members of school staff between the Initial Child Protection Conference and Review Conference. Many reasons for this decline have been acknowledged, but it is suggested this could largely be due to the nature and quality of inter-professional relationship between the school and Children’s Services, at both individual and agency levels. It is recommended that social workers should ensure that members of school staff are routinely invited to conferences, that their expertise and knowledge are considerably valued, and that conferences are listed within the school term. Care should be taken to identify the appropriate school
representative, when children change schools or make the routine transition between primary and secondary education over the summer holidays.

A number of challenges encountered during the study have been explored within this paper and could be addressed in further research. These include the small sample size (the sampling criteria limited the number of files available in each local authorities $n=119$, particularly given the low populations of the regions), the small number of local authorities participating ($n=3$, due to the doctoral nature of the study), the omission of cases where families were in receipt of child in need provision (due to challenges with the local authorities’ point of categorisation of neglect), and the large amounts of missing data (not all case files held information on all desired variables). The challenge of missing data impacted the ability to explore associations between a child’s religion, language, SEN and the likelihood of neglect occurring. Given the chronological spread of the sample, it would not have been possible to contact the social work practitioners responsible for the cases, many of which are expected to no longer be employed by the authority, nor in practice. However, this challenge could be addressed in future research if practitioners were to routinely record information about children’s basic characteristics on case files.

In conclusion, there is a need for more research on this topic with a larger sample size. A particular limitation of this study is the omission of school records which could have provided deeper understanding about the information schools record about children, and an opportunity for greater analysis around the elements staff members choose to include in referrals to Children’s Services.
Future research on this topic could also be expanded to include case file analysis on the involvement of school-based health practitioners in statutory processes.

Practitioner Messages

- Schools are key safeguarding partners and provide an extensive range of support to children and their families, both prior to and during statutory intervention.

- Members of school staff hold expert knowledge on children living with neglect which should be utilised more consistently within statutory assessments.

- Social Workers should ensure members of school staff are invited to attend child protection conferences, and develop inter-professional relationships to improve information sharing across agencies.
References


