

Repeated Removals of Children into Social Care

Summary from Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Why is this important?

There is growing concern among practitioners and policymakers regarding high intensity needs among cohorts of women and/or families who repeatedly have children taken into care. The health and wellbeing implications for those affected along with the costs of legal fees and court proceedings are considerable. This JSNA was conducted to describe the key characteristics of women in Lewisham who have experienced repeated removals of children into care, outline the scale and needs among this group and identify suitable interventions to address them.

Key Facts and Figures

28%

of all care proceedings in 2014-15 involved women who had children removed into Social Care.

There is a lack of social and emotional support for women entering or coming out of the care proceedings process, that can assist them in taking control of their lives.

50%

of women had one or two children removed previously and 20% had five or more previously taken into care.

The annual cost for local authorities in terms of family court legal fees and subsequent childcare is estimated to be

£714,000*

Mothers have a common history of being in looked after care themselves or have childhood exposure to abuse.

53%

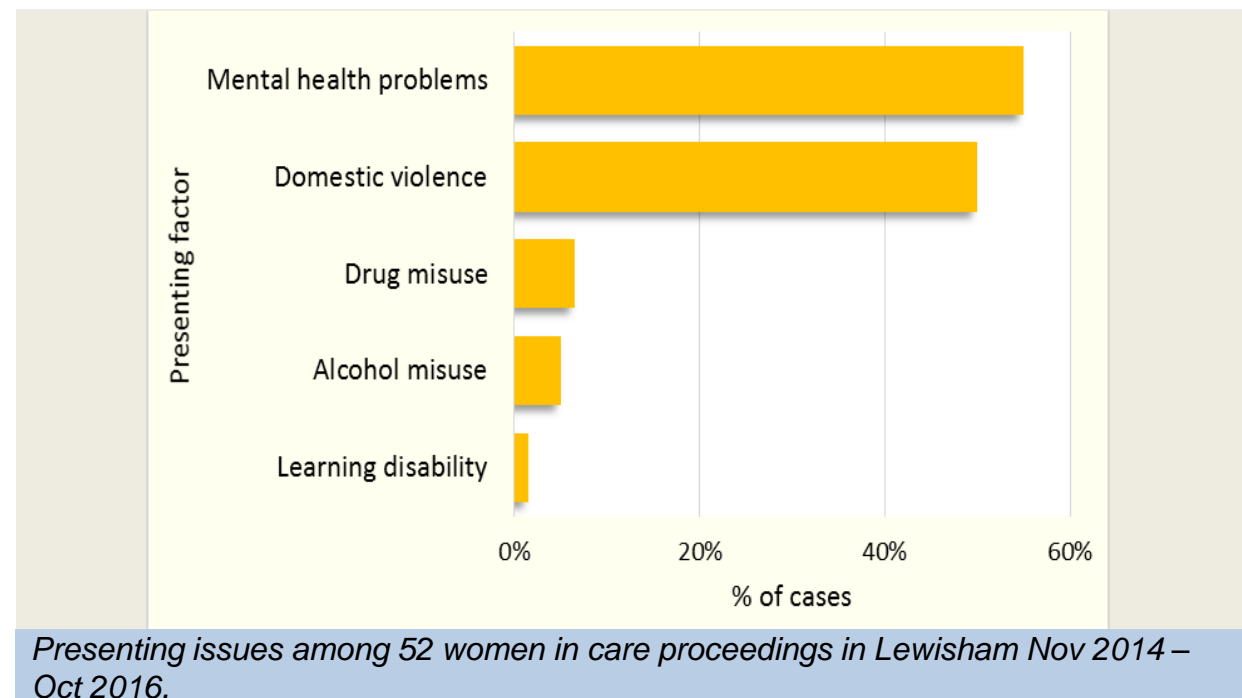
of women involved in Lewisham care proceedings had mental health problems, 53% had engaged in substance misuse and 51% had a history of domestic violence.**

What is happening nationally?

- There is currently no national-level strategy.
- There is, however, growing national interest in this area and some innovative programmes have been developed locally.
- The Pause programme in Hackney has shown potential in reducing repeated removals of children into care by offering mothers bespoke programmes of therapeutic, practical and behavioural support.

What is happening locally?

- Scoping work is currently underway to investigate options in setting up a service to support women who experience repeated removals in Lewisham, possibly in partnership with other services in London.
- Various models are being explored with a view to building a business case.



What needs to be done?

- Given the scale and scope of need among these women in Lewisham, and the cost to services associated with child removal and placement, a dedicated new service may be expected to deliver significant improvements in outcomes and savings to the Council.
- The Public Health Team has a key role in helping to develop a business case for the service and developing a robust set of measurable performance indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

* Based on a caseload of 20 mothers