

**Northamptonshire Multi-agency
Neglect Strategy
2018 – 2020**

June 2018

1. Introduction

The neglect of children and young people is one of the most difficult areas within the child care and protection field to identify, assess and intervene in. The impact of neglect on children and young people can be enormous and causes great distress to children, leading to poor health, educational and social outcomes, as well as being potentially fatal. Children's ability to make secure attachments are affected and their capacity to attend and achieve at school is greatly reduced. Children's emotional health and wellbeing is often compromised and this impacts on their success in adulthood and their ability to parent in the future.

All agencies providing services to children and young people have a statutory duty under Section 11 of the Children Act to understand the risks and ways in which children can be subjected to abuse by neglect, and the ways in which their agencies should safeguard them against this. Preventing neglect and intervening to protect and support victims is not just the responsibility of specialist children's safeguarding services, but is everyone's business.

2. Definition

'Neglect is 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); and
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.' Working Together 2018

3. Categories of Neglect

Howarth (2007) identified six types of neglect this breakdown is helpful for practitioners to begin considering where the child's needs may be being neglected.

Medical – minimising or denying illness or health needs of children; failure to seek medical attention or administer treatments.

Nutritional – not providing adequate calories for normal growth (possibly leading to failure to thrive); not providing sufficient food of reasonable quality; recently there have been discussions about obesity being considered a form of neglect.

Emotional – unresponsive to a child's basic emotional needs; failure to interact or provide affection; failure to develop child's self-esteem or sense of identity.

Educational – failure to provide a stimulating environment; failure to show interest in education or support learning; failure to respond to any special needs related to learning; failure to comply with statutory requirements regarding attendance.

Physical – failure to provide appropriate clothing, food, cleanliness, living conditions.

Lack of supervision and guidance – failure to provide for a child's safety, including leaving a child alone; leaving a child with inappropriate carers; failure to provide appropriate boundaries.

4. Vision and Principals

In Northamptonshire we are committed to making a difference to the lives of children and young people in our county. We want Northamptonshire to be a great place to be young, where all children and young people thrive and feel safe from harm and neglect. Our Neglect Strategy focuses on key areas we think will make the

most difference to improving the lives of our children and young people. This is in line with the NSCB Vision (*NSCB Business Plan 2017-18*).

“Working together to ensure all children and young people grow up in a safe environment.”

5. Why we need a Neglect Strategy

There is considerable national research (see 8. below) and local evidence (see 9. below) which demonstrates the damage done to children and young people living in situations of neglect. Whilst the harm resulting from neglect can be especially damaging in the first 18 months of life, it has a cumulative impact across childhood and into adolescence and so can affect all children and young people. Sadly, for some children the consequences of neglect are fatal.

- **Neglect** is the most common reason for a child to be the subject of a child protection plan (62% in Northamptonshire);
- **Neglect** is the form of maltreatment more likely to be repeated;
- **Neglect** exposes children to other forms of abuse, e.g. child sexual exploitation, increasing vulnerability;
- **Neglect** can be difficult to identify, making it hard for professionals to take action to protect a child; and
- **Neglect** is an area where there can be drift and delay and professionals can become de-sensitised to children’s living conditions and experiences of poor parenting.

6. What we want from our Strategy

We need our strategy to:

- Ensure all partners are engaged in helping tackle and prevent neglect;
- More effectively mitigate the impact this form of child abuse has on children and young people;
- Be able to identify neglect much sooner when it happens and earlier in children’s lives;
- Reduce the number of children that suffer neglect and reduce the impact and time they suffer;
- Elevate child and adolescent neglect to the highest level of awareness and priority that this single most prevalent form of child abuse merits; and
- Deliver a well trained workforce confident in tackling neglect and a public that recognises and reports neglect.

7. What we’ve achieved so far

This is a revised Neglect Strategy, having first been developed in 2015. So far we have:

- Raised the awareness of neglect via training, conference and bulletins and is a key NSCB priority with a task and finish group in place;
- Developed and launched a Neglect Toolkit to help practitioners identify neglect;
- Adopted the nationally recognised Graded Care Profile (GCP) as a multi-agency assessment tool;
- Continued to provide training on Neglect and supported the use of the GCP;
- Undertaken two multi-agency case audits (MACAs) on Neglect; and
- Taken part in the recent DfE national campaign to encourage the public to report neglect and child abuse.

8. Neglect as a National Issue

The **Department for Education (DfE)** is responsible for child protection in England. It sets out policy, legislation and statutory guidance on how the child protection system should work. In 2016, the DfE consulted on the introduction of mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect, which would see an increase in referrals for neglect.

At a local level, it is the responsibility of the **Local Children Safeguarding Board/Safeguarding Partnership** to co-ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of work to protect and promote the welfare of children, including setting local policy, procedure and guidance. From April 2018, the main statutory guidance is ***Working Together 2018***.

The role of **Ofsted** is to inspect the effectiveness of local arrangements and to make recommendations for improvement. ***‘In the child’s time: Professional Responses to Neglect’***, Ofsted’s thematic audit in 2014, found the Neglect Strategy v3

quality of professional practice around neglect was too variable overall, with the result that some children are left in situations of neglect for too long. The report set out a number of findings to be addressed that are embedded within our strategy.

Ofsted also announced that neglect is the focus of a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) from April 2017, and the findings are due to be published in May 2018. Once reviewed, any recommendations will be communicated and updated in this strategy.

The NSPCC report 'How safe are our children?' 2017 contains the following statistics regarding Neglect.

- 33% of contacts to the NSPCC's helpline were concerns about neglect;
- The NSPCC's helpline responded to over 19,000 contacts about neglect on 2016/17; and
- 42% of the concerns that the NSPCC helpline referred to police or children's services related to neglect.

While the NSPCC commissioned report from the University of East Anglia into Neglect and Serious Case Reviews (2013) found that neglect is a factor in 60% of serious case reviews.

The neglect of adolescents is an area that has received less attention, both in practice and research terms, but it is essential that the health and development needs of adolescents are considered by professionals. In order to ensure a measured and appropriate response is made for adolescent neglect in Northamptonshire a dedicated group will lead on providing a strategic response and pathway for professionals dealing with adolescent neglect.

9. Neglect as a local issue

In Northamptonshire, neglect has been identified as an issue in a number of SCR's including that of Child R and Family R published in April 2016. The overview report can be found [here](#) and offers further insight into the issues identified in the review.

As shown in the table below, prior to the last Neglect Strategy in 2015, Northamptonshire was considerably below the England average for the % of children on a Child Protection Plan due (CPP) to Neglect. It is clear that the profile of Neglect has improved locally, however there are still statistical anomalies that show in 2016 we were in line with national average, but by end of March 2017, there were considerably more children on Child Protection Plans due to neglect than the England average (62% compared with average of 47%). This shows that there is still work to be undertaken in Northamptonshire regarding neglect and its assessment to ensure a clear and accurate picture is developed.

End of March	No. on CP Plan	No. due to Neglect	% due to Neglect	England Average %
2013	477	144	30%	41%
2014	777	178	23%	42%
2015	993	293	30%	43%
2016	968	424	44%	45%
2017	912	569	62%	47%

Many children subject to Child Protection Plans for neglect are in sibling groups. A concern for referral in relation to one child may result in all children of that family becoming subject to a plan. Neglect is also localised, within specific areas of the County.

A large proportion of children subject to Child Protection Plans for neglect live in deprived areas. In Northamptonshire, this is largely in areas of Northampton, Corby and Wellingborough some of which are among the 10% of most deprived areas of England.

Neglect continues to be an area of priority in Northamptonshire. As such, the Graded Care Profile was introduced as a multi-agency tool for practitioners in May 2015, along with associated documents as part of the Neglect Toolkit. The Toolkit was officially launched at the Safeguarding Conference in May 2016.

10. The role of Early Help

Early help has a key role to play in supporting parents and preventing children becoming at risk from neglect or abuse. In order to address neglect in Northamptonshire, it is important that all agencies work together in an integrated way, using the Early Help Assessment (EHA) and by co-ordinating work through the Team Around the Child or Family in order to assess and plan services for children and families.

It is also important to ensure that when specialist services are transferring a family for Early Help support that there is continued longer term co-ordinated support to enable parents to sustain the improvements in care that have already been achieved.

As part of the move to Children First Northamptonshire, a programme to redesign NCC's Targeted Early Help offer is underway and will provide more joined up services and support to include family interventions via *Incredible Years* and *Triple P* and the use of the *Family Outcome Star* to help families identify their needs and to understand the impact of changes they make. Targeted Early Help teams work with children and young people aged 0 – 19 and are based in children's centres across the county. The offer is integrated with support provided for families where school attendance or exclusions are an issue. The current thresholds document *Thresholds and Pathways*, is being reviewed and a simpler version is to be introduced later in 2018.

11. What do Multi-agency Case Audits (MACA) tell us about Neglect in Northamptonshire

Northamptonshire Safeguarding Board (NSCB) has carried out two multi-agency case audits (MACAs) into Neglect, the first in October 2015 (6 cases), and the second in August 2017 (5 cases). The key learning points are listed below:

- Despite significant promotion across the partnership the agreed Neglect Toolkit and associated tools including the GCP and Screening tool are not being fully utilised and used across the county;
- The Voice of the Child/Lived Experience of the child is not evident in many of the cases. Correspondingly, a lack of developed chronologies and information sharing across the partnership had resulted in 'hidden' pockets of information which would have built a bigger picture of family life and daily realities for these children facing significant neglect. This led to 'start again' syndrome resulting in delays for these children;
- There was a lack of professional challenge and acceptance of parent's views/comments;
- Learning from the October 2015 MACA audit was not implemented across the partnership;
- Detailed chronologies were not in place leading to gaps and 'start again' syndrome in some cases;
- Assessments are not thorough enough, using all information available across the partnership and driven on action; Child In Need/Child Protection Plans may become too focused on parents rather than driving actions for children; and
- Lack of use of the neglect toolkit fails to focus on evidence and impact of changes required.

12. Priorities for 2018 – 2020

To address the findings from Multi-agency Case Audits and other activities, we have identified the following priorities:

Priority 1 – A strategic Commitment to Neglect across all Agencies

Neglect will continue to be a priority for Northamptonshire. Significant work has taken place during 2015-2017 to improve the multi-agency response to neglect, but this has not had the desired impact, and this strategy sets out how this will be further improved and sustained from 2018-2020.

To address this, the NSCB/Safeguarding Partnership will:

- Relaunch the revised Northamptonshire Neglect Strategy v2;
- Drive neglect as a key priority with a whole family approach;
- Hold partners to account and ensure the application of the neglect screening tool and Graded Care Profile is embedded across the partnership;

- Recommend that a Neglect Working Group is formed to carry forward the work of Neglect on behalf of the NSCB/Safeguarding Partnership;
- Ensure neglect is embedded in the quality assurance framework;
- Consider developing a neglect scorecard to highlight areas of concern and to measure success;
- Ensure that Neglect is captured in the ongoing development work around Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs);
- Ensure the identification of neglect links clearly to the implementation of the Signs of Safety model; and
- Continue to raise awareness and collaboration around neglect with other local partnership boards such as the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB), Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board (NSAB), Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and the Chief Executives Group.

Priority 2 – Improve Awareness, Understanding and Application

This is a priority because frontline practitioners are still telling us that neglect is difficult to recognise. Our audits also suggest that the assessment tools currently available are not yet fully embedded into practice and routinely used. In some cases it can be seen that some children and young people need to step up more quickly from child protection to court proceedings. We believe that adolescent neglect is overlooked or misinterpreted by professionals. To address this, we will:

- Work with young people to get a better understanding of neglect from their perspective;
- Launch a digital Neglect Campaign promoting the different Neglect tools available to practitioners;
- Review and refresh the NSCB website, including procedures on neglect;
- Improve communication channels and the engagement of colleagues in the partnership to promote awareness, understanding and recognition of neglect, including newsletters, bulletins, twitter etc., team meetings;
- Evidence the application and use of the Toolkit and the Graded Care Profile and the screening tool across the partnership;
- Continue to provide GCP training for the partnership to ensure the use of the tool is embedded as business as usual; and
- Develop Neglect Champions in each partnership agency.

Priority 3 – Prevent Neglect through Early Help

This remains a priority because the impact of neglect is often gradual and therefore there is a greater risk of long term harm if agencies do not intervene early enough and as soon as indicators of neglect are present.

Working Together (2018) requires local agencies to have in place effective assessments of the needs of children who may benefit from early help services. In Northamptonshire, agencies should effectively utilise the Early Help Assessment (EHA) to assess unmet need and co-ordinate appropriate support. The neglect screening tool and Graded Care Profile are tools that have been introduced in Northamptonshire to support both the identification of and the provision of support for cases of neglect, but we know there is room for improvement in its application amongst practitioners. To address this, we will:

- Ensure partners are held accountable for the use of the neglect screening tool and Graded Care Profile with families and that they are embedded across the partnership;
- Continue to promote the importance of the screening tool and GCP;
- Carry out EHA audits to check the use of the neglect screening tool and GCP; and
- Develop good practice case studies to share learning.

Priority 4 - Improve Effectiveness of Interventions to Reduce the Adverse Effects of Neglect

We have identified that our interventions have not made a consistent difference to improve the lived experiences of our children and young people suffering from Neglect. To address this, we will:

- Embed the Graded Care Profile and screening tool across Northamptonshire;
- Embed Signs of Safety model across Northamptonshire;

- Revise the guidance and procedure for neglect screening and GCP;
- Revise the Neglect Toolkit;
- Ensure practitioners can share concerns, good practice and advice on neglect cases via the Neglect Working Group;
- Improve our responses to specific target groups, e.g. children with disabilities; and
- Improve the quality and timeliness of parenting assessments for children on a child protection plan/ pre proceedings.

13. Making Our Priorities Happen

Action Plan

The action plan at Appendix 2 sets out the key actions needed to achieve our priorities. Initially, this will be reviewed and updated quarterly to ensure delivery of this strategy is embedded across the partnership and that partners are held to account.

Governance

The Strategic Manager for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance will lead a the Working Group for Neglect and report to The Assistant Director of Early Help and Safeguarding will be responsible for ensuring the Neglect Strategy, the screening tool and GCP is embedded across the partnership. In order to do this, a Neglect Working Group will be established to meet and monitor the implementation of the strategy. A Chair's report outlining progress and any issues or risks will be regularly presented to the NSCB/Safeguarding Partnership. Performance reporting and impact will be scrutinised by the Quality Assurance Sub Group, including the proposed key outcomes detailed in the proposed neglect scorecard.

As a key priority of the NSCB/Safeguarding Partnership, the Chair of the Working Group will provide updates on a regular basis and the Safeguarding Partnership will hold partners to account for the delivery of the strategy. Progress and impact will also be included in the Partnership Annual Report, which is shared and scrutinised by the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Local Authorities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Measuring Success

The success of the strategy will be measured based on a range of quantitative and qualitative measures set out below:

Qualitative Measures

A number of qualitative measures will be monitored and reported through the governance arrangements. These include:

- Multi-agency audits of neglect - Child Protection Plans show good impact of the plan and use of Graded Care Profile (GCP) and/or the screening tool;
- Early Help Assessment (EHA) and Children's Social Care audits – Audits show good use of screening tool and GCP;
- Feedback from parents - Collected at Children in Need, Initial Child Protection Case Conference, Child Protection Case review meetings and at case closure;
- Young people's views of neglect - Feedback from Children in Need, Initial Child Protection Case Conference, Child Protection Case review meetings and at case closure and specific work as part of the neglect strategy; and
- Feedback from frontline staff – Including frontline visits, audits, staff surveys and training questionnaires.

Quantative Measures

A proposed neglect scorecard containing 10 key objectives has been developed and will be produced quarterly and reported to the Neglect Working Group and Quality Assurance Sub Group. This is attached at Appendix 1.

PI	Measure	England Average	Stat Neighbour	Year End 16/17	Year End 17/18	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Comments
1	Number of Referrals where Neglect is a factor									
2	% of Referrals for Neglect with an accompanying GCP or Screening Tool.									
3	Number on CIN plans for Neglect									
4	% of Initial Child Protection Conferences for Neglect									
5	% of Initial Child Protection Conferences for Neglect where GCP was completed									
6	Number of children on child protection plans due to Neglect									
7	% of children on children on child protection plans due to Neglect									
8	% of children on child protection plans due to Neglect for 12 months or more									
9	% of these where the plan is for neglect for a 2 nd time (i.e. 1 st plan was neglect and 2 nd plan was neglect)									
10	% of children entering care for Neglect									

Neglect Strategy and Working Group Action Plan for 2018 - 2020					
Accountable Lead: Neglect Working Group					
No.	Action	By When	Delivery Lead	Progress Update	RAG
Priority 1 - A strategic commitment to Neglect across all agencies					
1.1	Ensuring the Neglect Working Group drives the implementation of the neglect strategy by reporting on impact to the Safeguarding Partnership.				
1.2	Carry out an annual multi-agency auditing of practice and report the findings to the Safeguarding Partnership				
1.3	Launch revised strategy				
1.4	Present the Neglect Strategy to the key Partnership Boards and seek inclusion in the priorities of the relevant partnership boards.				
Priority 2 – Improve Awareness, Understanding and Recognition					
2.1	Launch a neglect campaign, focussed on tools available.				
2.2	Develop a young person’s definition of neglect				
2.3	Roll out Graded Care Profile / neglect workshops aiming to have staff trained across the partnership.				
2.4	Develop Neglect Champions to share the neglect screening tool and the delivery of single agency neglect training, where appropriate.				
Priority 3 – Prevent Neglect through Early Help					
3.1	Review all neglect training to ensure that it promotes use of the Neglect screening tool.				
3.2	Introduce EHA audits that include a check on the use of the neglect screening tool and GCP.				
3.3	Develop case studies around preventing neglect through early help.				
Priority 4 - Improve Effectiveness of Interventions and reduce the impact of neglect					
4.1	Support staff who have completed GCP to share the good practice associated with the assessment and planning following use of the tool.				
4.2	Produce guidance and procedure for neglect screening and GCP.				