



LSCB

Bath & North East Somerset
Local Safeguarding Children Board

Bath & North East Somerset Multi Agency Neglect Strategy 2017

Date approved by LSCB	March 2017
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Date for review	March 2020
Detail of review amendments	N/A



1.0 Introduction

This multi-agency strategy has been developed in response to local knowledge, regional serious case reviews and the Ofsted Thematic Inspection on neglect 'In the child's time: professional responses to neglect' (March 2014). The Ofsted Thematic Inspection on neglect explored the effectiveness of the arrangements to safeguard children who have experienced neglect, with a particular focus on children 10 years and older. Whilst the Ofsted report



focuses on younger children this document also recognises the significant impact of neglect on older children, who are in receipt of services such as the Youth Offending Service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Children's Social Care and the Police. The report presented a mixed picture in terms of the quality of the professional response to neglect. It placed the challenge to local authorities and partner agencies to 'learn lessons'

from those case whereby professional responses to neglect have been timely and effective, thereby providing families with the early help they need.

Prevalence of neglect:

- Since 2002 neglect has consistently been the most common reason for being subject to a child protection plan (CPP) in England and Wales as reported by the NSPCC (How safe are our children, 2016). For 2015, 45% of CPPs in England were under the category of neglect, this has shown a general upward trend from approximately 35% since 2002.
- In 2015-16 59% of child protection plans in Bath & North East Somerset were due to neglect. Similarly, at the end of Oct 2016, 55% of CPPs were due to neglect.
- Neglect is also commonly seen as a feature of children's serious case reviews (SCRs); there was evidence of neglect in 62% of recent SCRs (Pathways to harm, pathways to protection: A triennial analysis of serious case reviews 2011 to 2014, 2016). In a small number of these SCRs, extreme neglect can be directly linked to the death of children.

2.0 Why we need a Neglect Strategy

This document sets out the strategic approach to tackling and reducing the impact of neglect and identifies the key principles under which work around neglect should be undertaken. The strategy identifies key priority areas of work in order to improve our collective response to neglect.

This strategy provides a coordinated approach to delivering services for children and young people and is guided by the vision and key outcomes of the Bath & North East Somerset's Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2014-17, which are:

'We want all children and young people to enjoy childhood and to be well prepared for adult life.'

- **Children and Young People are Safe**
- **Children and Young People are Healthy**
- **Children and Young People have Equal Life Chances.**

There are an increasing number of children who are subject to child protection plans due to neglect, both nationally and in Bath & North East Somerset. Children and young people being offered Early Help with indicators of neglect are not always clearly defined and recognised as neglect.

Universal and early intervention services have a critical role in identifying and addressing the safety needs of the child, alongside partner agencies and children's social care. This strategy has been developed in conjunction with multi-agency partners working with children, young people and their families within Bath & North East Somerset. By having a shared understanding of what neglect means across all services and for parents, there will be a timely and consistent approach to identifying neglect and reducing its impact.

The impact of neglect on children and young people can be immense. Neglect is likely to cause distress to children and young people leading to poor health, educational and social outcomes and is potentially fatal. Children's abilities to make secure attachments can be affected and their attendance and attainment at school reduced. Their emotional health and well-being is often compromised and this impacts on their success in adulthood including their ability to parent in the future. In some cases neglect is a contributing factor in the death of children.



3.0 Definition of Neglect

The statutory definition of neglect is:

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); or*
- *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 to Safeguard Children, 2015)

As well as the statutory definition, it is important to have regard to the specific needs of children that are often subsumed under the term 'failure to meet basic needs'. Professor Jan Horwath (Child Neglect: Identification and Assessment, 2007) identified additional categories to consider. These include, but are not exhaustive of:

- Medical neglect
- Nutritional neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Educational neglect
- Physical neglect
- Lack of supervision and guidance

4.0 Risk Factors

There are different categories of risk factors that increase the likelihood of neglect in some families. These may be one or a combination of factors below (this is not an exhaustive list and professional judgement should always be applied):

Child risk factors

- Special educational needs and disability
- Behavioural problems
- Chronic ill health
- Young carers



Parental risk factors

- Poor mental health, especially maternal mental health difficulties
- Drug and alcohol (substance misuse)
- Domestic abuse
- Parents' own exposure to maltreatment
- Lack of experience of positive parenting in childhood

Wider Risk Factors

- Poverty
- Unemployment
- Poor social support

NSPCC research identified that some children are especially vulnerable to neglect, amongst them are:

- Babies under one
- Children who were born prematurely, or with very low birth weight
- Children missing from home
- Children missing from education
- Children in care
- Asylum seeking and/or refugee children
- Adolescents (year 6 upwards)



5.0 Measures of success



A range of qualitative and quantitative measures will be used to verify the success of the strategy over the next 3 years:

Quantitative:

- Reduction in number of child protection and child in need plans for neglect
- Reduction in repeat child protection plans for neglect
- Increase in CAFs and early help assessments which consider and identify neglect, and plan appropriately.

Qualitative:

- LSCB and multi-agency audits of neglect cases show effective practice and a positive impact for children, young people and families.
- Early help and children's social care quality assurance of neglect cases demonstrates effective practice and a positive outcome for children, young people and families.
- Positive feedback from children, young people and families who have been supported to reduce neglect.

6.0 Guiding Principles

- **CHILD FOCUSED** – the safety, well-being, health, vulnerabilities and additional needs of children is the overriding priority.
- **CHILD / YOUNG PERSON'S VOICE** – Practitioners know the children and young people they work with well and advocate for them. Where children cannot voice their views, practitioners have the skills and insight required to consider the child's experience of daily living and to advocate on their behalf.
- **OUTCOME FOCUSED** – to ensure we understand the difference that is being made, the work with children and young people needs to be measured by its impact on outcomes.
- **EARLY HELP** – Ensuring the early recognition and identification of the signs and symptoms of neglect.
- **STRENGTHS BASED APPROACH** – By building on strengths, practitioners act as agents of change to support families and create sustainable change to make a difference to children and young people's lives.
- **WHOLE FAMILY APPROACH** – Practitioners will work alongside the entire family to identify support needs and to facilitate change.

7.0 Next Steps

To support the range of professionals who work with families where neglect is an issue, a practitioner toolkit will be released providing a suite of tools to aid identification and assessment in Spring 2017 at a launch event. Additionally, the LSCB Neglect training is currently being reviewed and will be refreshed for 2017-18.

8.0 Acknowledgements

The LSCB would like to thank the following who were invited to consult for this strategy: Children's Social Care, Principal Social Worker, Child Protection Chairs, Voluntary Sector, Sirona, Family Nurse Partnership, Health Visitors, Community Safety, Public Health, Early Help & Preventative Services, Childrens Centres, LSCB Training.