



Stockport Safeguarding Children Board

Neglect Strategy 2018-2020

Introduction to the Strategy

The impact of persistent neglect cannot be underestimated. It is well documented that children who are neglected over a long period will have their physical and emotional development restricted. They will have difficulties in establishing and maintaining relationships, in reaching their educational potential, in having confidence in themselves and their abilities, in relating to others appropriately, and in developing along their physical centiles according to their age. In extreme cases, persistent neglect can result in death.

Stockport Safeguarding Children Board and Stockport Safeguarding Adult Board identified neglect as one of the thematic areas for improvement across both children and adult services, as outlined in the 3-year Strategic Plan 2017-2020. Stockport partner agencies identified that an all-age neglect strategy would provide impetus to promoting a culture of addressing neglect across all ages. This was further reinforced by a recent significant joint Serious Adult Review and Serious Case review, which demonstrated clearly the need to focus on the family as a whole, and to assess and intervene when required.

Stockport Safeguarding Adult and Children's Boards developed the overall joint strategy in relation to neglect with the following aim:

'That Stockport is a place where children, families and adults can thrive, living free from neglect and supported by their families and communities'

<http://www.safeguardingchildreninstockport.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/All-Age-Neglect-Strategy.pdf>

This strategy is specifically intended to address the aspects of neglect of children and young people as part of that overall strategy recognising the particularly corrosive effect neglect can have on their outcomes.

Aim

This paper is to provide strategic direction in order to provide effective help and support to families in Stockport where there are emerging issues of neglect of children in order to avoid further escalation. We want practitioners to be able to identify early and provide support for families where there is a potential risk of neglect. When there are concerns that neglect is becoming harmful either to the individual or the family, we want to have skilled confident practitioners who know what to do to protect and prevent future harm. We want to have a sound overview of neglect through our data and performance mechanisms.

Definitions

There is no one characteristic of neglect, so defining it in an all-inclusive yet simplistic way that is meaningful is a challenge, and it must be defined in terms of the impact on a child. It must be remembered that two or more children in a neglectful household will have a different experience and outcome of being parented, and therefore there needs to be a layered approach to a definition.

This strategy does not intend to replicate definitions of neglect which can be found in the Greater Manchester Safeguarding Procedure:

http://greatermanchesterscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_neglect.html

Key Research Messages

‘Growing up Neglected – a multi-agency response to older children’¹ is the most recent guidance which raises to the fore the neglect of older children.

The key findings from this deep dive are:

- Neglect of older children sometimes goes unseen. Older children may present with risks such as going missing or offending behaviour and whilst these issues may be dealt with appropriately it is not always recognised that a child may go missing to escape a neglectful home.
- Work with parents to address the neglect of older children does not always happen. Older children still need parental care and support. Professionals are not always doing the work to tackle neglectful parenting.
- Adult services in most areas are not effective in identifying potential neglect of older children. Particular deficits were noted in adult mental health and substance misuse services, the National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies in identifying older children at risk of neglect
- The behaviour of older children must be understood in the context of trauma. Older children may be suffering from the cumulative effects of trauma and from more than one source e.g. domestic abuse, parental substance misuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, sexual and criminal exploitation and serious youth violence

¹ (Department for Education July 2018) is the most recent guidance which raises to the fore the neglect of older children. Older children are defined as aged between 7 and 15 years.

- Tackling neglect of older children requires a coordinated strategic approach across all agencies. This will result in shared understanding, improved practice and better outcomes for children.

In addition the following research messages are informative:

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and long-term impact: Neglect in the early years of life can be damaging, and development continues to be affected into adolescence. There are links between ACEs and poor health and social outcomes in adulthood. Early intervention, positive relationships and robust assessment are important in reducing the long-term impact of neglect.
- Diversity: Perceived cultural norms can prevent professionals from appropriately challenging non-compliance. This can also occur when professionals apply their own cultural norms to families of different cultural backgrounds to themselves.
- Disability and 'hidden' neglect: Disabled children are 3.8 times more likely to suffer neglect than a child without a disability. In addition, due to the presence of disability, the impact of abuse and neglect can easily be minimised by both parents and professionals.
- Parental needs vs children's needs: Reviews into serious case reviews featuring neglect, have found that assessments have focused almost exclusively on parental needs. When parents have additional needs, this can impact on parenting capacity and engagement with services; the parent becomes the primary client.
- Child Development and Attachment: Ofsted highlight the importance of social workers possessing an understanding of child development; this provides knowledge of how neglect can impact on the child over time and emphasises timely decision making. Children who have experienced neglect often exhibit behavioural problems. A lack of secure attachment to the primary caregiver has a significant impact on children, often as a result of issues inhibiting parental capacity. Up to 80% of children brought up in neglectful environments develop disorganised attachment styles.
- Neglect Baseline and Thresholds: Thresholds in neglect are difficult to establish due to variations in parenting styles, and perceptions as to what is 'good enough' makes it challenging to establish a 'baseline'. Neglect must be distinguished from poverty, especially in deprived areas. Effective assessment tools are vital to establish the family situation in relation to the child's well-being.
- Professional and Parental Rapport: Engaging caregivers in open discussion about the nature of concerns and changes expected can lead to positive outcomes. Frequently encountering neglect can lead to desensitisation. Conversely, disguised compliance, normalisation of neglect or fear to challenge can negatively affect intervention.

- Neglect as a Continuum: Neglect is rarely displayed by a single occurrence, but rather a pattern of incidents and episodes over time with ebbs and flows in the levels of care given, parental engagement and risk faced by the child. Neglect should be understood holistically and historically in the context of the child and family.

Principles

- The child's welfare remains paramount throughout assessment, planning and intervention.
- Practitioners should be rigorous in assessing and monitoring children at risk of neglect to ensure they are adequately safeguarded over time.
- The views wishes and feelings of the child and their family are considered through the assessment, planning and intervention stages
- We work **with** families, not **to** families, and every effort is made to engage families in the process of change.
- An assessment of the features of neglect in its many guises is undertaken to identify the underlying problems and how these problems interact with the systems around the child and young person and the context of their lives.
- A strength- based focused approach to assessment, planning and intervention will be taken in order to empower families , focusing upon what is achievable. This approach will enable families to develop protective and resilience factors in order to take responsibility for improvements in their lives.
- Chronologies and the historical context of people's lives is fully taken into account in identifying patterns of concerns and strengths.

Objectives

Within this strategy, the SSCB child neglect strategy has three objectives:

Objective 1: To improve the recognition of neglect and the development of a skilled and professionally curious workforce through the provision of high quality single and multi-agency training.

- Agencies should ensure their workforce is properly skilled to be able to identify and act on indicators of neglect in the families they work with. Practitioners should be vigilant about neglect of the older child, and be alert to different forms of neglect and the behaviour that can manifest. Some varied examples include emotional neglect, when children present with eating disorders (to include morbid obesity), mental health problems, where parents are self-neglecting, or there are patterns of missed appointments developing. Training should also cover an understanding of the use of:

- Stockport Prevention and Early Help Strategy and Stockport Level of need Document: [Stockport Prevention and Early Help Strategy 2017 to 2020.pdf](#)
- Stockport Level of need guidance: <http://www.safeguardingchildreninstockport.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Stockport-Multi-Agency-Guidance-on-Levels-of-Need.pdf>
- Information to support work with neglect is made available on Stockport Safeguarding Children Board website.

Objective 2: All practitioners know what to do when they identify neglect and are part of an agreed early multi-agency response to neglect, escalating that response as required.

- Practitioners will have an understanding of the pathway into targeted services for early help via the Early Help Assessment and the coordination of multi-agency support through the Team around the Child (TAC). This results in a confident and skilled workforce knowing when and how to share concern over a child or young person's welfare when child protection concerns may be apparent.

All workers are required to:

- a. Think about the family as a whole and the context of their lives - to complete holistic assessments,
 - b. To be professionally curious, avoiding 'start again syndrome'
 - c. Have clear needs led plans to support improvement , and
 - d. Hold effective meetings to drive the plan for support or improvement forward.
- All agencies to take part in the roll out of Graded Care Profile 2 as the identified tool for supporting the assessment and improvement of features of neglect. The Graded Care Profile 2 will bring the issue of care to the fore for consideration, in the context of overall assessment. It is a useful tool to provide a benchmark for change, and also to identify with families the kinds of standards expected in care. Completing it with parents and carers can be a useful way to identify what they can do to make the change.
 - Supervision or managerial guidance to support effective practice is in place. Development of Partnership supervision model to support more effective working with when workers feel 'stuck'.

Objective 3: Develop effective mechanisms to have a sound oversight understanding of the prevalence of neglect in Stockport and mechanisms to measure improvement as a result of agency support.

- Outcome measures to demonstrate improvements for children, young people and families where there is neglect are developed. See appendix 1
- The effectiveness of the multi-agency response to neglect through is provided through audit, scrutiny of performance information, practitioner and family feedback.

Evaluation of the strategy

The impact of this strategy will be seen in the analysis of the data developed and reported through Objective 3. It is anticipated that our developing process of Success Reviews in relation to individual family journeys will also help to reinforce good practice and what works for families in Stockport.

References and resources for working with neglect can be found here:

- Greater Manchester Safeguarding Children Procedures:
http://greatermanchesterscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_neglect.html
- Graded Care Profile template:
www.safeguardingchildreninstockport.org.uk/policy&procedure/stockport
www.safeguardingchildreninstockport.org.uk
- Training pages for SSCB:
<http://www.safeguardingchildreninstockport.org.uk/practitioners/training/>
- Ofsted Joint Targeted Area Inspection – Children living with neglect
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/608794/Guidance_for_joint_targeted_area_inspections_on_the_theme_children_living_with_neglect.pdf
- Growing up Neglected –a multi-agency response to older children - Department for Education 2018
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/growing-up-neglected-a-multi-agency-response-to-older-children>

Appendix 1

Suggested data collection includes:

- Increase in the number of Early Help Assessments/CAFs completed to assess and intervene where neglectful caring/child's additional needs not being met by parents is identified,
- Increase in the confidence of practitioners to use Early Help processes/CAF processes to assess and intervene where neglectful caring is identified
- Reduction in the number of referrals to children's social care where neglect is a factor,
- Reduction in the number of re-referrals to children's social care where neglect is a factor,
- Reduction in the number of children where neglect is assessed as a factor within the social care assessment,
- Reduction in the percentage of children having a child in need plan for neglect for more than six months,
- Reduction in the percentage of children:
 - subject to an initial child protection plan for neglect,
 - subject to a child protection plan for more than twelve months for neglect,
 - subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time for neglect,
- Increase in the percentage of neglect cases stepped down with an Early Help plan/CAF in place to sustain change.