



Neglect Strategy **2017 - 2020**

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Wakefield for their contribution to this document

Date of Approval -

Policy to be reviewed yearly or at the discretion of the SAPP sub-group

Definition

Neglect is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government 2015; p 93) as;

“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 and 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 as children from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care givers
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- Neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.”

Parental factors may be present which impact on their ability to provide an appropriate level of care to their child/children without additional support for example experience of poor parenting in their own childhood, mental health issues, substance misuse, living with DA or having a learning difficulty. Determining what constitutes persistent failure to meet a child’s needs remains a matter of professional judgement. (NSPCC 2015)¹

Research shows (Davies and Ward 2011)² (Turnball, 2015)³ that children suffering from neglect are unlikely to receive the help from agencies quickly and many professionals lack confidence in identifying and responding to child neglect compared with other types of abuse. While the signs of neglect can seem obvious, in isolation the symptoms can be harder to spot, and even harder for people to feel justified in reporting. Neglect is usually – but not always - something that is persistent, cumulative and occurs over time. It can continue without a critical event, or incidents may be widely spaced, but it can impact upon a child’s development. Its presentation as a “chronic condition” requires the collation and analysis of sometimes small and seemingly insignificant events that only when viewed together provide evidence that neglect is an issue of concern.

Neglect is complex and can be difficult to clearly define. It often co-exists with other forms of abuse and indeed is often a precondition to allowing other abuse to take place. Increasingly, the psychological impact of neglect is being recognised. Being clear about what the child experiences and the possible harm that may arise will allow for preventative safeguarding, rather than waiting for the impact on the child to become irreversible.

1. NSPCC(2015) How safe are our children, London; NSPCC
2. Davies, C& Ward, H (2011) Safeguarding Children Across Services: messages from research on identifying and responding to child maltreatment. London; Jessica Kingsley Publishers
3. Turnball, M9 2015) Hurting Inside; An NSPCC report on learning from the NSPCC Helpline and Child Line on Neglect. London; NSPCC

Background and Introduction

Child neglect is the most common category of child abuse, but difficult to identify and evidence particularly at the early stages. In 2016-17 in England 47% of all new child protection plans were for Neglect. Approximately one in five children who became subject of a child protection plan in England had been the subject of a child protection plan at least once before.

NSPCC information regarding neglect indicates that nationally one in 10 children has experienced neglect. In the year ending March 2017, 24,590 children were identified as needing protection from neglect; this was 48% of all children subject to a child protection plan in that year (Department for Education characteristics of children in need 2016 – 2017).

The number of children who were the subject of a Child Protection Plan in Bradford at 31st March 2017 was 559. This was a rate of 39.6 per 10,000 child population. In comparison, the national rate was 42.9 and the statistical neighbour rate was 54.2 (March 2016). Neglect (38%) was the second highest Child Protection Plan category for children being the subject of a Child Protection Plan in Bradford. Emotional abuse was 48%; sexual abuse (9%); and physical abuse (5%).

A review of neglect and serious case reviews (SCRs) in March 2013 showed that neglect was present in 60% of SCRs from 2009-11. (Brandon et al 2013)⁴ The study concluded that neglect can be life threatening and needs to be treated with the same level of urgency as other forms of maltreatment and that neglect with the most serious and fatal outcomes is not confined to just young children but includes all ages including adolescents. Published case reviews also highlighted that professionals face a big challenge in identifying and taking timely action on neglect

The findings of Ofsted's Thematic inspection (In the child's time: Professional responses to Neglect March 2014) presented a mixed picture in respect of the quality of professional responses to neglect. The quality of assessments in neglect cases overall was found to be variable. Almost half of the assessments reviewed either did not take sufficient account of family history or did not sufficiently convey or consider the impact of neglect on the child. The local authorities providing the strongest evidence of the most comprehensive action to tackle neglect were more likely to have a neglect strategy; use evidence based theoretical models and frameworks for assessing neglect and has a systematic improvement programme addressing policy, thresholds for actions and professional practice at the front line.

In Bradford we are striving towards early identification and recognition of neglect. Our Journey to Excellence change programme will enable all professionals working with children offer effective support to children, young people and their families. The BSCB/Local Authority have committed to the Signs of Safety initiative, which will provide a structured framework to work with families based on trust, honesty, relationship and responsibility. We strongly believe in getting it right the first time by avoiding drift, start again syndrome and by focusing on positive outcomes for children.

Assessments are on- going and this forms the basis of a robust plan, which is owned and reviewed. We have a strong emphasis on partnership working with children and their families which involves professionals empowering and enabling families to achieve positive outcomes for children and strong and resilient families in the Bradford District.

4. Brandon, Bailey, Belderson and Larson. Neglect and Serious Case Reviews, NSPCC (2013)

Strategic Aim

The strategic aim in Bradford is to ensure effective prevention, early recognition and an appropriate response to neglect and its potential devastating impact on children's lives. From an early help and prevention stage to statutory intervention; there should be appropriate, consistent and timely responses across all agencies working together. Work with children and families should be positive and empowering by utilising the Signs of Safety model whilst keeping a clear focus on the impact of neglect on the child.

All those who have contact with children and families have their role to play in the recognition of potential neglect.

Key Principles

1. Early indications of neglect must be recognised if early assessment and intervention is to be achieved.
2. There must be a shared understanding of the impact of neglect on a child's health, safety and development, including the impact of emotional neglect, experience recognises the cumulative effect that identifies neglect.
3. Early assessment and intervention will be promoted and supported where sufficient progress is seen to be possible within a child's timescale. Where there is insufficient progress, interventions on a statutory basis will take place appropriately and without delay.
4. Children and their families should be able to expect consistency from the practitioners they work with and the support they are offered.
5. Partner agencies need to ensure that practitioners are trained to be aware of, prevent, identify, assess and deal with neglect for children who may be vulnerable.
6. Neglect must be understood within a context which may include other forms of abuse. It is therefore important that those in strategic roles ensure that strategies and initiatives link and complement each other, including the journey to excellence, the early help strategy and the use of Signs of Safety methodology.
7. Professionals must be curious and inquisitive about circumstances and events with an understanding of the child's lived experiences. They need to feel confident to challenge families and each other and work collaboratively to ensure sustainability of any improvements required. Historical information and the voice of the child must always be considered.
8. Clear models of assessment and evidence based approaches will be used (see practice guidance and policy http://bradfordscb.org.uk/?page_id=107), promoting good practice in the recognition, assessment of neglect and interventions to support positive change and improve outcomes for children in neglectful situations.

Core objectives and evaluation:

1. To ensure that the children's workforce is skilled, competent and resilient when identifying and working with neglectful families.
2. To promote a wider understanding of the long term impact of neglect and raise awareness of the key indicators
3. Bradford Safeguarding Board will monitor the effectiveness of the strategy and the impact of the multi-agency responses and intervention with neglect cases.

Multi Agency Working

This strategy should be read alongside the Early Help approach in further information can be found on the BSCB website http://bradfordscb.org.uk/?page_id=772

BSCB Multi agency Threshold of Need guidance is for practitioners who work with or are involved with children and their families it is to assist practitioners and managers alongside the Practice guidance identifying and assessing and working with neglect (see the above link):

- in assessing and identifying a child's level of need
- parent / carer factors
- what type of services or resources may meet those needs
- what processes to follow in moving from an assessment to a provision of services

Thresholds

The Threshold of Need guidance specifies the criteria for when a case should be referred to local authority children's specialist services for assessment and for statutory services. The guidance will emphasise that while it is not unusual for parents to be suspicious or unwelcoming of agencies seeking to offer help, a parent's initial resistance should not be seen as unchangeable by those staff who work in universal services. This document can be found on the BSCB website at

<http://bradfordscb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Threshold-Guidance-final-Jan-2017.pdf>

The guidance will also highlight how neglect rarely presents with a clear, unequivocal picture that multi layered issues and patterns are not obvious through limited contact and observation. There are occasions when families disengage from services and risk to the child is uncertain where parental refusal to engage with services prevents adequate assessment. In such situations of unknown or emerging risk, emphasis is therefore placed on the professional responsibility to liaise with other agencies, share information and move to more assertive forms of early help as set out in the Non Engaging Pathway launched by BSCB in November 2014. The Non Engaging Pathway contains guidance on the stages of information-gathering and analysis to be followed, the stage at which multi-agency meetings should be convened and action plans formed. The guidance and documents for the Non Engaging Pathway can be found on the BSCB website Documents and resources section http://bradfordscb.org.uk/?page_id=107

Joint Planning

Bradford Safeguarding Children Board will work with the Bradford Children's Trust Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure a co-ordinated approach across the relevant strategies.

Five Stranded Approach

- Improving Prevention
- Improving, Recognition and Assessment
- Improving Response to Children, Young People and Families
- Improving Communication and Awareness
- Monitoring and Evaluation

Improving Prevention

- Identify the key underlying causes and risk factors for neglect in the district and take a co-ordinated approach to targeting and addressing these causes.
- Take a strategic approach to identifying measures that can be undertaken across partners to minimise the incidence of neglect and address the underlying causes of neglect
- Build on the range of assets across partners to develop a joined up approach to preventing and minimising the incidence of neglect

Improving Recognition and Assessment

- Prevention, early recognition and accurate assessment is at the heart of the strategy
- To understand the importance of looking beyond single incidents (cumulative harm) and ensure effective information sharing between partners to understand the full picture.
- Agencies will be required to ensure that practitioners and their managers access appropriate training which reflects the clear agreed threshold document
- Specific models (Signs of Safety and Early Help assessments) will be endorsed and set out in a practice guide for all staff and will form the basis of multi agency training which is provided by the BSCB
- The models will link as appropriate with other models of assessment and planning processes used by children's professionals

Improving Response to Children, Young People and Families

- Practice guidance and training will be developed in respect of interventions that work with children and families where neglect is prevalent,
- In order that children's plans effect positive change, all plans will be reviewed to ensure all stakeholders work collaboratively and maintain commitment and focus towards good outcomes for children.

Improving Communication and Awareness

- In order to improve awareness around the significance of neglect the BSCB will ensure the business plan reflects the development and roll out of this strategy
- To develop and advertise web information, guidance and research to support practice
- To raise public awareness of how to recognise and what to do if neglect is suspected by members of the public.
- To raise awareness of elected members, other relevant governing bodies and executive managers of the prevalence, impact and outcomes for those children living with neglect in the Bradford District.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- The BSCB Performance Framework will be used to develop outcome based measures which are reported to the BSCB.
- The BSCB Performance management Audit and Evaluation (PMAE) sub group will monitor and evaluate the progress of this strategy.
- To research and develop a business case for specialist services deemed necessary, based on an understanding on unmet needs.

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