



Gloucestershire
Safeguarding Children
Board

Multi Agency Child Neglect Strategy for Gloucestershire 2016 -2018



Index

| Heading | Page Number |
|---|--------------------|
| 1.0 – Background and Introduction | 3 |
| 2.0 – Purpose and Scope | 4 |
| 3.0 - Strategic Aims | 4 |
| 4.0 – Strategic Objectives | 5 |
| 5.0 – Guiding Principles | 5 |
| 6.0 – Key indicators | 6 |
| 7.0 – Governance and Accountability | 7 |
| Appendix 1 – Definition of Neglect | 8 |
| Appendix 2 – Impact of Chronic Neglect | 11 |
| Appendix 3 – Local and National Picture | 11 |
| Appendix 4 – Early Help and Neglect; the role of early help in addressing neglect | 13 |

1.0 - Background and Introduction

This strategy has been developed in response to local knowledge as to the causes and effects of neglect, learning from local serious case reviews and from the Ofsted Thematic Inspection Report; In the child's time: professional responses to neglect (March 2014)

The neglect of children and young people is one of the most complex areas of identification and intervention within the child safeguarding field. Over the past decade, research on neglect and its impact on children (Farmer and Lutman 2012; Stevenson 2007; NSPCC.) has highlighted that neglect has emerged as the most prevalent type of harm experienced by children. It may also result in more profound cognitive, social and psychological deficits than many other forms of abuse.

The impact of neglect on children and young people is huge. Neglect causes great distress to children, can lead to poor health, poor social and educational outcomes and in some circumstances may affect the development of a child's brain which compromises the child's ability to make positive attachments. Children's emotional well-being is often affected and this could impact on their school attainment and also their ability to successfully parent in the future.

Department for Education (DfE) statistics show that neglect was the most common reason for children becoming subject of a CP plan, accounting for 41% of cases – year to march 2013. (DfE 2012, quoted in Ofsted 2014).

In Gloucestershire, there were 580 children and young people subject of a Child Protection Plan at the end of March 2016. This equated to a rate of 46.8 children and young people subject of a CP Plan per 10,000 population.

| | Number of Child Protection Plans | Number due to Neglect | % due to Neglect |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| End of March 2014 | 444 | 126 | 28.1% |
| End of March 2015 | 429 | 188 | 44% |
| End of March 2016 | 580 | 288 | 49.7% |

The % of children in England and Wales subject to care proceedings, giving neglect as the primary or contributory reason was 45% of the total (Action for children 2013)

Research from NSPCC in 2012 showed that in the UK 21,666 children were on a CP plan for Neglect. (1 in 7 secondary school age children and 1 in 20 children under 11 have been neglected at some point in their childhood).

Action for Children (Long et Al 2012) highlights a clear emerging theme where the

What does neglect mean to children and young people....

It's when someone is being ignored and it has a negative impact on them (Daniel, aged 13)

best results are achieved when intervention with families happens at the earliest possible opportunity, particularly in situations where the family is steadily declining into neglectful parenting.

The challenge for all professionals working with children, young people and their families is to develop a coherent, integrated and effective response to neglected children and young people.

2.0 - Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this strategy is to set out clear strategic aims and objectives in relation to how all partners can achieve a multi-agency co-ordinated approach when neglect is identified as a potential risk.

The development of this strategy is supported and endorsed by the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board and it is designed for use by all those who work with children and families in all local agencies and settings across Gloucestershire.

This strategy has been developed to ensure all partners working with children are able to recognise neglect and provide the right level of intervention at the right time, leading to improved outcomes for children, young people and families. At the heart of this strategy is the identification and engagement of families at the earliest opportunity by community based resources involved in early help, including effective assessment, planning and review processes.

The strategy links with the vision of the Gloucestershire Children's Partnership "to ensure our children and young people thrive and reach their full potential; supporting when we are needed most". The Early Help and Children and Young People's Partnership Plan 2015 – 2018 identifies what organisations are going to do to deliver services to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable, and how they are going to do it, focusing on areas where better partnership working will really make a difference to the outcomes for our vulnerable children and young people

3.0 - Strategic Aims

The aim of the strategy is to:

- Improve the early recognition of neglect to ensure the risk of harm is reduced promptly, leading to increased life chances for children, young people and families;
- Improve the collective multi-agency response to providing support to children and young people who may be at risk of neglect at the earliest possible stage, leading to a reduction in the number of children who require a statutory intervention
- Ensure that Gloucestershire's response to children who are suffering from neglect is timely, robust and consistent

4.0 – Strategic Objectives

This strategy has 4 core objectives to meet these ends:

1. To improve the awareness and understanding of neglect, both within and between agencies working in Gloucestershire, including Adult Services, children, young people and families and the wider general public. This means a common understanding of neglect and the thresholds for access to agencies. Each agency is responsible for ensuring their workforce has access to relevant training and development opportunities and supporting practitioners by signposting them to GSCB multi-agency neglect tools and appropriate training to help with the identification of neglect.

2. To improve the recognition, assessment and response to children and young people living in neglectful situations, which prevents the need for statutory intervention. This includes the use of the early help assessment process (My Plan, My Assessment/My Plan+), appropriate information sharing and agreed thresholds of intervention.

3. To secure and sustain a collective commitment to addressing neglect across all partner agencies and to demonstrate effective leadership in driving the appropriate system, culture and process changes forward.

4. To ensure the effectiveness of service provision:

- Evidence based practice will be developed and promoted
- Work with children and young people will be measured by its impact on outcomes.
- The views of children and young people and their families will inform the development of effective interventions.
- Single and Multi-agency audits will be undertaken by all partners and by GSCB to monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This process will seek evidence that the voice of the child has been taken into account in all assessment, planning and reviews.

5.0 - Guiding principles (as a strategic framework)

This strategy relies on key principles which provide a strategic framework:

- A shared understanding of neglect and the safety, wellbeing and development of children is the overriding priority for all partners in Gloucestershire.
- Collaboration amongst agencies is crucial to ensure effective identification, assessment and support.
- An identification of signs and symptoms of neglect at the earliest stage is a priority for all partners and the right support is coordinated through the early help process.

- Early Help should improve and sustain children’s wellbeing and safety for the duration of their childhood and beyond. It should also help build strength and resilience within families rather than creating dependency.
- All children regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, special needs and caring responsibilities should have an equal right to be protected from neglect¹
- Agencies must ensure that practitioners are sufficiently and regularly trained to recognise and tackle neglect.
- Any learning and future developments should involve families’ own feedback and their own personal experience
- Practitioners will continually question hypothesis and assumptions made in relation to each child’s case
- Work with children and young people will be measured by its impact, i.e. improved outcomes.
- Historical information is considered to inform new assessments and to identify families at risk of inter-generational neglect.
- Information sharing and consideration of a wide range of indicators and outcome areas are key to evaluating vulnerability, needs, risk of harm or suffering harm. Effective safeguarding of children requires professionals to be curious about family circumstances and events. It also requires professionals to be challenging of each other about improvements made by families and their sustainability.
- Appropriate statutory action is taken if sustainable progress is not achieved to reduce risk.
- Neglect often co-exists with other forms of abuse and risk factors, therefore this strategy must link with other work streams for example domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental ill health, child poverty and youth homelessness. This is to ensure that children and families are able to benefit from all developments as appropriate to their needs.

6.0 - Key indicators:

The following are short, medium and long term indicators which will evidence the effectiveness of the strategy:

Short term:

- The number of staff trained around issues of neglect and on the Gloucestershire Quality of Care neglect toolkit
- Develop a baseline of the understanding of neglect through a questionnaire shared at the GSCB Roadshows in 2016

¹ Ofsted thematic inspection “Protecting disabled children” identified delays in disabled children who were suffering from neglect in receiving appropriate services. (Protecting disabled children 2012.)

- The number of Alerts sent out during 2016/17 in relation to the neglect strategy and the introduction of the neglect toolkit
- The number of hits to the dedicated neglect pages on the GSCB website.

Medium term:

- The effectiveness of the strategy will be demonstrated through the monitoring of neglect cases by incorporating a prompt question on the relevant IT systems.
- Evidence of impact on practice and sustained behaviour change through a MA neglect audit in 2017/18
- Analysis of distance travelled in relation to understanding of neglect by repeating the questionnaire shared at the 2016 GSCB Roadshows in 2017

Long term:

- Increase in the number of early help assessments completed by all professionals, where neglect has been identified as a risk factor.
- Reduction in the number of initial, review and subsequent child protection conferences where neglect has been identified as the risk factor.
- Reduction in the number of repeat child protection plans where neglect has been identified as the risk factor.
- Reduction in persistent absenteeism from school and pre school settings.
- Increased attendance to dental and medical appointments, health and developmental reviews for all Gloucestershire children; as evidenced by partners in Health.
- Reduction in the number of child and family (psychological) assessments completed where neglect is the risk factor.
- Children and young people report that services have enhanced their wellbeing.
- Engagement with service users that has demonstrated a sustained change in their behaviours

It should be acknowledged that in the short and medium term there may be an increase in some of the above indicators as a result of there being an improved recognition of neglect across the workforce.

7.0 - Governance and Accountability

Governance will be provided by the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board who will monitor progress against the strategic objectives and delivery plan on a quarterly basis.

The GSCB will also provide challenge on the effective delivery of the strategy via regular outcome indicator progress reports on a quarterly basis.

Appendix 1 - Definition of Neglect

The definition of neglect from statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015² 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.

Neglect is characterised by the absence of a relationship of care between the parent/carer and the child and the failure of the parent/carer to prioritise the needs of their child. It can occur at any stage of childhood, including the teenage years.

There are other factors that need to be considered to enable early identification of neglect by partners. This strategy covers the range of needs across the continuum, including the provision of support to families as early as possible to prevent significant harm to children and families.

A number of factors contribute to increasing the likelihood of neglect in some families. Vulnerable families may have a combination of the following risk factors:

Child risk factors

- Disability
- Behavioural problems
- Chronic ill health

Parental risk factors

- Poor mental health, especially maternal mental health difficulties (e.g. post natal depression)
- Drug and alcohol (substance misuse)
- Domestic abuse
- Current illness and previous health experience
- Parents' own exposure to maltreatment which might include a lack of experience of positive parenting in childhood

² [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015](#)

Wider determinants of Health

- Poverty
- Unemployment
- Poor social support

The above really underlines the importance of having a multi-agency preventative approach that focuses on reducing the risk factors that cause neglect.

"Neglect means to me that you aren't meeting the basic needs of someone who is dependent on you. For instance, not having enough food or shelter/warmth. I guess there is a very physical need but it can also affect people mentally by not meeting these simple physical needs. For instance, a child won't be able to contribute well in school and could start playing up. Formal neglect is not loving someone, bullying them and not looking after them such as never showing affection which could impact on them socially" (Esme, aged 18)

Types of Neglect

There are three overarching types of neglect that may be experienced by children and young people (Jones, R, 2016). These are:

Passive neglect – where parents/carers are often exhausted and may be suffering from poor mental health

Signs/Indicators of passive neglect

- Chronic poverty
- Poor housing/financial difficulties
- Alcohol use
- No boundaries and no care for the children/school attendance issues/young carers
- No extended family support

Working With Families

- Create space and structure
- Identify the most pressing issues and offer support over time
- Enable the parent whilst keeping a clear focus of the impact on the children
- Early help is crucial

Chaotic neglect – where parents/carers may have poor parenting skills or be centred on their own needs

Signs/Indicators of chaotic neglect

- Poor parenting
- No good parenting models
- Parent focussed on their own needs
- Parents who are active and demanding but also chaotic and unpredictable

Working With Families

- High challenge
- High support
- Focus on the children and their lived experience!
- Seek to build up self esteem of parents but be very mindful of disguised compliance
- Appropriate parenting programmes/coaching and mentoring/intensive family support
- A well coordinated and thorough early help response is crucial. Timescales and a contingency plan must be included in the plan of support.
- Involvement of Early Help Coordinators, Family Support Workers and Community Social Workers
- Escalation to social care where necessary

Active neglect – deliberate and intentional

Signs/Indicators of active neglect

- Power and control
- Associated with domestic violence
- May be linked to jealousy
- Danger of escalating to abuse and violence

Working With Families

- Confront and protect – raise immediate safeguarding concerns
- May involve criminal as well as care concerns and investigations
- Focus on risk and minimisation of the risks
- Urgency and action

Evidence highlights that the best results are achieved when intervention with families happens at the earliest possible opportunity, particularly in situations where the family is steadily declining into neglectful parenting (Action for Children, Long et al, 2012). The challenge for all practitioners working with children, young people and

their families is to develop a coherent, integrated and effective response to neglected children and young people.

Appendix 2 – Impact of Chronic Neglect

The impact of chronic neglect on children and young people is huge and often underestimated. Children who have been neglected may experience both short-term and long-term effects that can last throughout their lifetime.

Children who don't get the love and care that they need from their parents/carers, especially a lack of stimulation early on in their lives, may find it more difficult to maintain healthy relationships with other people later in life, including their own children.

Children who have been neglected are more likely to experience mental health problems, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

When children are neglected they don't usually have a good relationship or bond with their parents/carers. Psychologists would describe this as poor attachment. Poor attachment can significantly affect the relationships that people have throughout their lives, including how they interact with their own children. Early intervention can change attachment patterns, reducing harm to a child and helping them to form positive attachments in adulthood³.

"I'm not sure but I think
it's around me"
(Chelsea, aged 16)

Appendix 3 - Local and National Picture

The Government's education select committee reviewed the child protection system in 2012. They concluded that the needs of children and the importance of acting quickly to provide an early intervention service for children are all too often not given enough priority. In response to this review, Ofsted undertook a thematic inspection of 11 local authorities and published its report in March 2014⁴, summarising findings and making recommendations to both local authorities Children's Services and local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs). Findings from inspections and research evidence the following aims:

"Happens all the time but it's
rarely easily noticed or dealt with"
(Victoria, aged 18)

- Early recognition

³ Howe, 2011

⁴ [In the child's time, professional responses to neglect \(Ofsted, 2014\)](#)

- Robust management oversight and supervision
- Specialist training
- Acknowledgement of complexity
- Effective and timely professional responses both for help and protection

One of the recommendations from the thematic inspection was for all LSCBs to develop a multi agency neglect strategy to increase their local understanding of the prevalence of neglect and to improve the identification of, and responses to neglect leading to an improvement in outcomes for children.

A Serious Case Review was undertaken in Gloucestershire during 2013/14 in relation to a 3 year old girl “Abigail” who was neglected by her parents. In 2014 the full extent of the neglect was laid before a judge after an extensive criminal investigation. Abigail’s parents were convicted and received a custodial prison sentence in June 2014.

The Serious Case Review helped inform how the local safeguarding system functions and has provided a focus for improvement to practice. The findings highlighted the complexities when working with cases of neglect. Although the review did highlight areas of good practice, it also highlighted factors that made working with the case difficult. These included:

- Understanding the nature of neglect
- Peaks and troughs, in the context of ‘disguised compliance’
- Barriers to focusing on the child
- Sharing information
- Start again syndrome
- Lack of healthy challenge

A response plan to the findings and recommendations from the review was undertaken by the GSCB which clearly identified the need to do more to raise the level of knowledge and skills across the workforce and to provide tools to enable professionals to identify neglect at the earliest possible stage.

Appendix 4 - Early Help and Neglect

'Working together to safeguard children' March 2015 (p12-14) is clear about the importance of early help and states:

- Local agencies should have in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs for individual children and families. This requires all professionals, including those in universal services to understand their role in identifying emerging problems and to share information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment.
- Local agencies should work together to put processes in place for the effective assessment of the needs of individual children who may benefit from early help services.
- Children and families may need support from a wide range of local agencies. Where a child and family would benefit from coordinated support from more than one agency (e.g. education, health, housing, police) there should be an inter-agency assessment. These early help assessments, such as the Common Assessment Framework, should identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating to statutory intervention.
- Professionals working in universal services have a responsibility to identify the symptoms and triggers of abuse and neglect, to share that information and work together to provide children and young people with the help they need. Practitioners need to continue to develop their knowledge and skills in this area. They should have access to training to identify and respond early to abuse and neglect, and to the latest research showing which types of interventions are the most effective.

Early Help in Gloucestershire

In Gloucestershire, our ambition for early help and preventative services is to ensure that:

“Everyone is working together to offer an early, timely and coordinated intervention to improve the well being and outcomes of children, families and communities, promoting positive life opportunities”.

Early help is about providing support to potentially vulnerable children, young people and their families as soon as problems begin to emerge or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will start in the future. It is also about providing support at any and every stage of a child's life; pre-birth, during pregnancy, childhood or adolescence.

Children and families are entitled to early help if and when they need it. It may also be provided through an increase in the levels of universal services, or services provided or commissioned in localities.

Information, advice and support for parents, children, careers, professionals and partners is available from:

Family Information Service (FIS)

The Local Offer

The Children and Young Person Services (CYPS)

When a family or a practitioner who is helping them, needs more support, this can be requested from the Early Help Partnership. Early Help Partnerships have been developed within each locality across Gloucestershire. This is not a new service but builds on existing arrangements and services already in place, working to share resources and reshape service delivery to meet the local needs of children, young people and their families.

Each Partnership operates a fortnightly Allocations Group that is administered by locality Family First Plus teams. These are made up of representatives of services across the locality who use their expertise to identify early help interventions to meet the needs of a child and/or family and offer advice, guidance and support.

The role of Early Help in addressing Neglect

The impact of Neglect is often cumulative and progresses covertly and gradually. There is therefore a risk that agencies do not intervene early enough to prevent harm. It is essential that all agencies; Health, Education /schools, Police, Early Years professionals, Housing, Voluntary and community based services identify emerging problems and possible unmet needs in collaboration and seek to address them before they become more severe. It is equally important that practitioners remain vigilant to the negative impact of drift and delays and 'start again' syndrome.

Within Gloucestershire the 'Graduated Pathway – Early Help and Support for Children, Young People and Families is being developed to ensure a single holistic early help pathway which can be used across agencies to provide a consistent approach to identifying and co-ordinating support.

Where a practitioner identifies a need they will consider whether a simple 'My Plan' or a My Assessment/My Plan+ is required to understand and meet need to achieve positive sustainable outcomes for the child, young person or family.

The 'My Plan' is a way of recording and coordinating support where the needs of the child are clear and involved practitioners understand what and who might help to achieve the identified outcomes.

The 'My Assessment/My Plan+' would be completed where needs are unclear; impact unknown; difficulties are already having a significant impact which is likely to escalate or it is unclear what or who may help.

"It is the most common form of abuse that children are subjected to" (Dylan, aged 15)

Sources of Research

- In the child's Time – Professional responses to neglect (Ofsted 2014)
- The State of child neglect in the UK – Recommendations for the UK Government (Action for Children and University of Stirling 2013)
- Neglect matters – a multi agency guide for Professionals working together on behalf of teenagers (Lesley Hicks and Mike Stein 2010)
- When to suspect Child maltreatment, NICE guidelines (July 2009)
- Brando et al. (2013) Neglect and serious case reviews, NSPCC and University of East Anglia
- A day in the life of a neglected child (from SCR review reports)
- NSPCC, Neglect Matters - a guide for young people about neglect.