



Do you recognise the signs of
NEGLECT

Hull Safeguarding Children Board
Multi-agency Neglect Strategy



Introduction and summary

About this strategy

Hull aspires to be a place where children feel safe and are safe. This document outlines our commitment to prevent children and young people from experiencing neglect and to intervene at the earliest possible stage to tackle its causes and reduce the impact on children when it happens.

Action plans have been developed as a result of this neglect strategy which identify priority areas of work that take into consideration the local context and the findings from Ofsted's thematic Inspections of Neglect 'In the child's time'

What is neglect?

Neglect is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 as "the persistent failure to meet a child's physical and / or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy e.g. as a result of parental substance misuse. During childhood and through childhood into adolescence, 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
- 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. It can occur at any stage in childhood, including teenage years.

Evidence of neglect can often present through signs, different aspects of which may be noticed by various agencies in relation to individual children in the family at different points in time. Agencies need to feel confident in recognising the signs and naming neglect. It is important that all agencies and community organisations identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs and seek to address them as early as possible. It is equally important that practitioners are alert to the drift, delay and the 'start again' syndrome which is a particular issue in relation to neglect.



Purpose of strategy

The overarching aim of this Multi-Agency Neglect Strategy is to promote the safety and welfare of children and young people and to improve their outcomes.

Who is this strategy for?

This strategy is for every child and young person living in and being cared for in Hull, their parents, carers, family members and members of the community and everyone who comes into contact in some way shape or form in their professional role with children, young people and their families.

Impact of Neglect

A child can experience neglect at any age. The impact of neglect can start before birth (epigenetics) – a mother may neglect her own (and therefore unborn babies) health during pregnancy which would affect the development in the womb. Once a baby is born, physical and emotional neglect during the early years of life can also have a profound impact on the development of the brain and the body.

Research tells us that neglect of children in very early childhood has a demonstrable effect on the biology of brain development. This can result in difficulty regulating emotions, reduction of 'cause & effect' thinking, difficulty in recognising emotions in others or an inability to articulate their own emotions, and after 2 years of age these deficits may be difficult to overcome.

Neglect by its nature is complex and difficult to address. The impact of neglect on children and young people is enormous. Neglect causes significant distress to children, leading to poor health, educational and social outcomes and is potentially fatal. Their emotional health and wellbeing is often compromised and this impacts on their success in adulthood and their ability to parent in the future. Children who have been neglected are more likely to experience mental ill health which could include depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The impact of neglect is not only widespread, affecting a wide range of developmental domains, it is also cumulative. Adolescents are often seen as more resilient to neglect and as professionals we are more likely to overlook issues that would concern us if the children were younger. However, it is important that we act appropriately and proportionately to adolescent neglect.



There is sufficient evidence to suggest that neglect of young people is associated with poor mental health and emotional wellbeing; risky health behaviours; risks to their safety which includes running away, becoming a victim of child sexual exploitation, poor conduct and low achievement at school. It can involve offending behaviours and anti-social behaviours, self-harm, suicide and death from other causes.

The impact of Neglect in childhood can be associated with a range of mental health problems in adulthood. Adults neglected as children are more likely to develop major depressive disorders (Widom et al., 2007) and post-traumatic stress disorder. Source DFE – missed opportunities

A child or young person may experience neglect in the following ways (this is not an exhaustive list)

- A lack of appropriate medical attention which includes physical, physiological, dental and emotional health needs or conditions
- Not having access to adequate and/or nutritious food and diet. For example, leading to obesity, malnutrition, oral health issues etc.
- A failure by the adults that care for them to recognise anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, self-harming or suicidal behaviours.
- A child may be abandoned by parents / carers or forced to leave home.
- A child may run away from home, may misuse drugs and alcohol, undertake risky sexual behaviours and be exposed to potential forms of exploitation eg. child sexual exploitation
- They may be stigmatised
- A child may be bullied or bully other children
- A child may experience a lack of appropriate supervision
- A child may experience poor academic achievement and /or show poor conduct in school
- A child may exhibit anti-social behaviours, criminal activity and/or violent behaviours



Adolescent neglect can be experienced as a combination of the following

- A lack of, or low level, parental control
- A lack of knowledge and monitoring by parents or carers of their child's activities and whereabouts
- A lack of boundaries
- A low level of warmth, love and acceptance.

Sometimes a lack of parental / carer engagement will mean that it is only possible to work with the child or young person in relation to the symptoms of neglect. In these situations, work around resilience provides some positive evidence that the child or young person is doing well, that they are able to make a positive contribution and achieve their goals.

Neglect often sits alongside a number of other presenting issues in families i.e. parental mental health problems, drug and alcohol misuse, and domestic abuse.





Context is key – Neglect Profile snap shot

- Nationally neglect is noted as a risk factor in 60% of all serious case reviews and domestic abuse, mental ill health and/or substance misuse were common in households where children were neglected. Source: Brandon, M. et al. (2013) –Neglect and serious case reviews: a report from East Anglia commissioned by NSPCC
- Neglect is the most common reason nationally for taking child protection action Source: NSPCC (2015) how safe are our children?

The Hull Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) is committed to ensuring we understand the local context of neglect across Hull both in respect of the prevalence and types of neglect in different areas of the City.

We will do this by exploring ways of collecting meaningful data about neglected children being supported in our early help world, those with child in need or child protection plans and those children who are looked after and where permanency arrangements have been made for those children who are unable to have their needs met by their birth parents.

Currently there is only limited neglect-specific data available from children's social care systems: referrals for 'abuse and neglect' do not differentiate between different types of abuse; and, not all social work assessments capture the various factors (including neglect) which feature in children's lives. We do know though that, at 31 March 2017, 94 children were subject of child protection plans under the category of neglect. This was only 22.8% of the total number of children subject to child protection plans, compared to an average of over 47% under this category nationally. Further work is needed, via child protection conference chairs, to better understand and address this apparent anomaly.



Making an Impact

One of the five key priorities of the HSCB is to reduce the harm from neglect suffered by children in Hull. We are committed to reducing the impact and prevalence of neglect across the spectrum of need for all children and young people in our area.

We will do this by:

- **Ensuring the child's voice is heard and Lived experience is understood** –

by providing the means for children and young people living with neglect to let us know what life is like for them and tell us how well we did and what we could do better to improve how we help and support them. We will aim to have a clearer understanding of their 'lived experience' in order to have a picture of their day to day lives and those of their parents/carers. Greater attention needs to be given to talking with children and those who know them and to observing the behaviour of children of all ages. This will help inform assessments of parents' ability and their desire to change. It will be important to make sure that each child in the family is visible. We will develop a system and process for collecting this feedback which will be used to refresh this strategy. For pre-verbal children, we will ensure that professionals use their professional knowledge and judgement to be able to accurately reflect and represent what life is like for those children.

- **Supporting the development of consistently effective practice** –

we will work to ensure that everyone who works with children, young people and families is aware of the signs, symptoms and impact of living with physical and emotional neglect. We will evaluate the effectiveness and impact of assessments, interventions and family plans to ensure we are getting it right for children and are mindful of the impact of diversity. We will build on the existing tools already used in working directly with children, young people and families through the use of a locally developed neglect assessment toolkit and guidance at every stage of the threshold framework. This means ensuring that professionals at all levels are equipped to recognise the indicators of neglect and that those undertaking assessments understand the child's history of being parented through the compilation of chronologies, recognition of patterns of responses to past help and support and that there is a clear focus on what meaning this has had and does have for the child. We will monitor its use and promote it as an aid to assess and review circumstances to manage change and improvement.

- **Strengthening early help and prevention** –

the impact of neglect is often cumulative, advancing gradually and imperceptibly and therefore there is a risk that agencies do not intervene early enough to prevent harm. A key message within this strategy is that neglect is preventable and can be tackled and this strategic vision supports the case for ensuring that all agencies work together to develop the range of responses required, intervening at a number of levels.

As with all presenting needs, the earlier neglect is identified and responded to, the better the outcome for the child. Early help is about taking action as soon as possible to tackle problems for children and families before they become more acute, and more difficult to address. It involves identifying children and families that may be at risk of running into difficulties and providing timely and effective support.

This involves practitioners being aware and responding via an early help approach whereby concerns are identified through conversations and action early in the life of the problem. The challenge for practitioners is to know when, with whom, and how, to intervene and with what degree of urgency. Recent learning from serious case reviews has reinforced the need to treat neglect as seriously and as urgently as any other form of maltreatment.

- **Developing awareness of neglect across the community** – we recognise the importance of raising awareness of neglect across all communities in Hull.

This will be achieved by highlighting key information for community leaders, faith organisations, in venues such as GP surgeries, libraries and supermarkets and anywhere where the public can have information of who to turn to when they have concerns about a child.

By speaking up and reporting suspicion of neglect, community members,





neighbours and extended family are giving a voice to those who often cannot speak for themselves.

Community members will need to know what neglect of children is, and how they can recognise it; why neglect happens; the impact of neglect upon children and young people and, most importantly, what they can do.

It will be important to recognise the barriers to community members identifying and sharing their concerns. These commonly include: fear of repercussions, not knowing who to contact for help, not recognising signs and symptoms and the fear of children being removed. Therefore any awareness raising campaign requires an understanding of these issues and measures to alleviate these barriers will be addressed.

- **Providing effective training and development –**

ensure that training across the workforce is provided at the appropriate level across the whole workforce to ensure neglect can be recognised, responded to confidently, swiftly and effectively and that practitioners are professionally curious. We will ensure that neglect training and development programmes are responsive to learning from research, serious case reviews and case audits.

Our training programme will enable practitioners to explore and understand the impact of neglect on children and to confidently use the locally developed evidence-based neglect tools. We will also monitor the impact of neglect training and development on practice.

- **Promoting robust management oversight and supervision** - neglect by its nature is complex and difficult to address. Professionals need to receive effective supervision / engage in reflective discussions to help them test, challenge and reflect upon their analysis of risk to children and young people.

Where there are professional differences between agencies they need to have the confidence to challenge each other and escalate as appropriate. The HSCB - Resolving interagency Disagreements Guidance provides a clear mechanism for the timely resolution of inter-agency disagreements in the best interest of children and families.

- **Quality assuring practice and monitoring outcomes for children** -

we will continue to periodically jointly evaluate practice in neglect cases, to assess the quality of practice and its impact on the lives of children affected by neglect.

We will also work with practitioners across the partnership to assess the helpfulness of the neglect tools which have been developed locally.

We will also develop a small number of meaningful and measurable neglect activity and performance indicators to help assess progress.

The neglect working group will report directly to the Hull Safeguarding Children Board Business Group.





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