

North Somerset Local Safeguarding Children Board Neglect Strategy 2016 – 2018



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Vision

“Children and young people of North Somerset will be seen, listened to and valued to ensure they are safe, thriving and reaching their full potential.”

‘Sometimes no-one believes you or no-one comes to your house to see what’s going on so no-one might know or can tell from the outside.’

‘If you see an unhappy kid you need to ask them what is wrong....’

‘Children need parents to take care of them, give them cuddles and enough food; I was always hungry – I never knew what a chocolate biscuit was until I went into foster care.’

‘Some children don’t know they are being neglected and not ever getting a hug is being neglected. If you’ve never had one, you just don’t know.’

Action for Children, 2014

“When seen from the perspective of the child, neglect is quite simply the experience of needs not being met and for some children this simple fact can lead directly or indirectly to their death” Sidebotham et al 2011, Brandon et al 2012

“Keanu died because there was failure across every agency to see, hear and respond to him in the context of what he was experiencing at any one point in time.” (Chair Birmingham LSCB, 2013)

1. North Somerset Context

Tackling neglect has been identified as a key priority for North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board in 2016/17. Neglect is a priority having been identified as an increasing social issue impacting on the wellbeing of children and young people both locally and nationally. Our Serious Case Review 'Holly' undertaken in 2016 and other local Serious Case Reviews for example 'Philip' have highlighted the need to improve multi-agency recognition, assessment and intervention where children and young people are identified as living in neglectful households at a stage where the need for Early Help is first identified. Learning from these serious case reviews highlights again the importance of sharing information effectively between agencies through Early Help in order to ensure that a full picture of what is happening for the family is known by everyone.

This Neglect Strategy incorporates the learning from recent Serious Case Reviews.

In January 2017 there were 176 children subject to child protection plans in North Somerset. 101 of these children had plans as a result of neglect and 51 as a result of emotional abuse.

The NSSCB partnership is determined to improve recognition and understanding of the impact upon children's wellbeing to ensure early identification occurs so that a timely and proportionate response is provided for children who are at risk of and/or suffering neglect.

2. Introduction

This strategy has been developed in partnership and collaboration with the sector led improvement strategy for neglect led by the ADCS. The South West Principal Social Worker network have shared knowledge and expertise to drive forward the commitment and resources to improve working across the region. This will mean there is a consistent approach across the South West to identify and respond to children and young people experiencing neglect.

Neglect often co-exists with other forms of abuse or risk factors, therefore this strategy and the focus on neglect must link with work undertaken in other areas such as CSE, children missing, domestic abuse, substance misuse, adult mental ill health, etc.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this Neglect Strategy is to set out the strategic aims and objectives of the North Somerset Local Safeguarding Children Board's approach to tackling and reducing the impact of neglect.

This strategy also identifies key principles under which work around neglect should be undertaken and identifies key priority areas of work in order to ensure continual improvement within North Somerset's response to neglect.

4. What is neglect?

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 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'. These include:

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

Although many families live in poverty and face adverse circumstances they are still able to meet their children's needs.

5. The aim of the strategy is to:

1. Improve the awareness and understanding of neglect, both within and between agencies working in North Somerset; including Adult Services, children, young people and families and the wider general public.
2. Improve the recognition, assessment and response to children and young people living in neglectful situations, to reduce the impact upon children and young people's wellbeing thereby preventing the need for statutory intervention.
3. Secure and sustain a collective commitment to addressing neglect across all partner agencies and to demonstrate effective leadership in driving forward the appropriate systems, culture and process required.
4. Ensure the effectiveness of service provision to the children and young people of North Somerset.

6. How will we do this?

The following key principles provide a strategic framework.

We will:

- Embed a shared understanding of neglect and the safety, well-being and development of children across the whole partnership. The need to assess, share, do and review and the need to persist in the face of resistance.



- Create and drive a learning culture that ensures all practitioners improve their knowledge base so they can identify, assess and respond to neglect at the earliest stage, before statutory intervention is required.
- Promote and assist early intervention through the early help process with the appropriate use of assessment and tools such as the 'Jane Wiffin Neglect Profile' tool (similar to the Graded Care Profile).
- Recognise and understand the lived experience and voice of children and young people at all times.
- Use a 'Think Family' approach across the Partnership because beneficiary engagement is critical to the development and implementation of effective interventions.
- Work with adults and children together and share information effectively to inform assessments and evaluations of risk and challenge where necessary. Collaboration amongst practitioners from all agencies is vital to ensure the early recognition and identification of the signs and symptoms of neglect and to inform assessments and evaluations of risk and positive interventions.
- Be mindful of diversity, and additional/special needs and disabilities, particularly because children with additional needs such as special education needs and disabilities are potentially more acutely vulnerable.
- Always consider historical information to inform the present position and identify families at risk of inter-generational neglect including a genogram and a chronology.
- Ensure the assessment process for children and young people living in neglectful situations will be timely, robust, multi-agency, child focused and incorporates the views of the child/young person and family. Their support will be coordinated by a practitioner (lead professional) with whom the family have an effective relationship.
- Allow information to be effectively shared across partner agencies in order to build up a full picture of the needs of the child or young person and their family, including historical information. This process will also help to identify areas of support which can be accessed at an early stage, for example community and third sector organisations.
- Introduce the Jane Wiffin Neglect Toolkit into practice via a multi-agency training programme. It will help identify risks and what has changed in a family over a period of time, and (as appropriate) providing evidence for statutory interventions. This tool will help practitioners to effectively recognise, assess and respond to concerns of neglect agencies need to challenge each other about improvement made by families and its sustainability.
- Ensure that our work with children and young people is measured and outcome focused, this work will be supported by ensuring we are working effectively in partnership with parents to set clear SMART goals for parents and carers and being transparent about the need for and level of change required.
- Have honest and open conversations with families clearly identifying the behaviours we are concerned about and what needs to change.
- Ensure that there is clarity and understanding that the impact and effects of neglect are cumulative. Recording and collecting evidence is crucial and everyone's responsibility.

- Supporting all professionals who work with children to take action to address the neglect children are experiencing as well as collect the information and support families.
- Not allow parents to distract professionals by always putting their own problems and initiating crisis so that neglect is not addressed and action not taken to prioritise the needs of the children.
- Our development and planning of the multi-agency One Front Door will support us in planning how we identify and respond to neglect.
- Where there is multi-agency disagreements we will be confident and open to challenge and support colleagues to use the tool to describe their concerns and the level of need of the family.

7. Outcomes

The following outcome indicators will provide an insight into the effectiveness of the strategy:

- Practitioners across all partner agencies will recognise and understand the need for an effective assessment and recognise and understand the impact of neglect on children.
- Families need to be listened to and engaged and offered a clear intervention plan and support to make the changes so they can meet their children's needs. The plan is reviewed on a multi-agency basis and monitored with the family to ensure the child's needs are met and that the changes are sustained.
- Recording is essential to evidence concerns and progress.
- To have access to the Jane Wiffin Neglect Toolkit.
- This Toolkit is used in practice to offer a structured judgement approach to the identification of child and adolescent neglect and will assist decision making and decisions in supervision.
- The use of the Toolkit will help practitioners to feel confident in early identification, recognition and response to neglect **and** will justify the decision and provide the evidence base for referrals.
- Adult and Children's Services will work together (in multi-agency processes) to improve outcomes for children, where neglect is present.
- Individual Plans for children and young people will demonstrate involvement and information sharing between Adult and Children's Services where children are identified as experiencing neglect.
- The Toolkit will be embedded into the NSSCB safeguarding training programme.
- Children and young people's record will reflect the voice of the child and their lived experience.
- We might see/will expect to see an increase in the number of children and young people subject to a child protection plan under the category of neglect due to practitioners' increased awareness and knowledge around.

8. Assurance

To ensure that the NSSCB Neglect Strategy is embedded into practice we will monitor it through audit and sampling of cases and referrals:

- **Auditing/Sampling of Cases**
 - We build honest and effective relationships with families and ensure children's voices are heard and acted upon.
 - We are getting the basics right and using assessment, recording and interventions effectively with families to address neglect at every tier of need.

- An evidence based toolkit is being used such as the Jane Wiffin Tool by all practitioners.
- An Early Help assessment will accompany referrals where neglect is identified as an issue.
- **Referrals:**
 - Recording on EHM and LCS and multi-agency sharing of information will mean the quality of referrals is improved.
 - Concerns about neglect will be clearly evidenced at the point of referral.
 - Parents will be aware of professionals concerns escalating to the point of referral to Children's Social Care.
- The use of the toolkit may support evidence of the level of neglect.
- The Think Family model is being used and evidenced through the involvement of adult services; for example mental health services, drug and alcohol, learning disabilities and domestic violence.
- Practice includes understanding of the whole family, history and measures of progress.
- The child's voice is central and the whole family participating in solutions.
- Assessments, recording and evidenced based tools are being used in supervision to evidence that outcomes for children are improving or if not that an action plan is in place.

9. Governance

Governance and challenge will be provided by the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board, its subgroups and a Short Life Working Group to support the work of delivering the actions to support this Strategy. All Board Members are responsible to ensuring proactive support of the Action Plan, and delivery as required. The Board will hold all members to account.

All Board members are responsible for ensuring proactive support and delivery of the Strategy, and holding Board members to account.

Board members are responsible for cascading the Strategy to all practitioners and leaders in their organisations.

Staff across the children's workforce will be expected to undertake training, (basic and advanced level), so that there is consistency of practice and application of thresholds. Each agency's lead for safeguarding will be expected to ensure that staff within their agency has accessed the training.

10. Key indicators for measurement of the effectiveness of the strategy

It is important that measures of success are established and agreed. The following outcome indicators will demonstrate the effectiveness of the strategy and its implementation:

- a) Reduction in the number of repeat child protection plans under the category of neglect
- b) Reduction in the number of repeat referrals post single assessment;
- c) Reduction in persistent school absenteeism
- d) Reduction in the number of looked after children
- e) Increase in the number of 'open' EHAs completed per agency.

It should be acknowledged that in the short to medium term, through improved recognition of neglect etc. there may be an increase in some of the above indicators.