

Meeting: Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee

Date: 10 September 2018

Title: Neglect Strategy

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Service: Health, Education, Care and Safeguarding

Wards affected: All

Content Warning

The following report, by necessity, contains some difficult content, including images, which may be emotionally challenging to engage with and potentially triggering. The report contains reference to:

- Neglect of Children
- Photographic images of neglectful home conditions

a) Purpose:

To provide a report to the Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee on the subject of neglectful care of children and young people and the Local Safeguarding Children Board Strategy to ensure that multi-agency help and support is available to children and young people and their families.

b) Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that the Sub-committee:

- a) Note the information provided;
- b) Request further information if appropriate;
- c) Make such recommendations as the Sub-committee consider appropriate.

3. Information

3.1 Definition

The statutory guidance for the Authority in relation to neglect is contained within *Working Together* (2018). The guidance provides the following definition of neglect:

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:

- a. provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)*
- b. protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger*
- c. ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)*
- d. ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment*

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

3.2 Prevalence

Sadly, neglect of children and young people does occur with some frequency within the Borough.

At the time of writing some 48 children and young people are subject to a Child Protection Plan as a result of neglect.

Until recently, Neglect was the highest numerical category of Child Protection concern in the Borough. Recently, more children and young people have been subject to Emotional Abuse concerns – often related to domestic abuse – and Neglect has decreased as the primary safeguarding concern. Figure 1 reflects this relatively recent change.

Figure 1. Trend of Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan under the category of Neglect: 2014-2018



Source: North Tyneside LCS

Comparative data is available, regionally, nationally and in relation to statistical neighbours. This data (Figure 2 below) evidences some variance by North Tyneside in relation to the use of the category of Neglect which may be indicative of higher levels of neglect experienced by children and young people within the Borough.

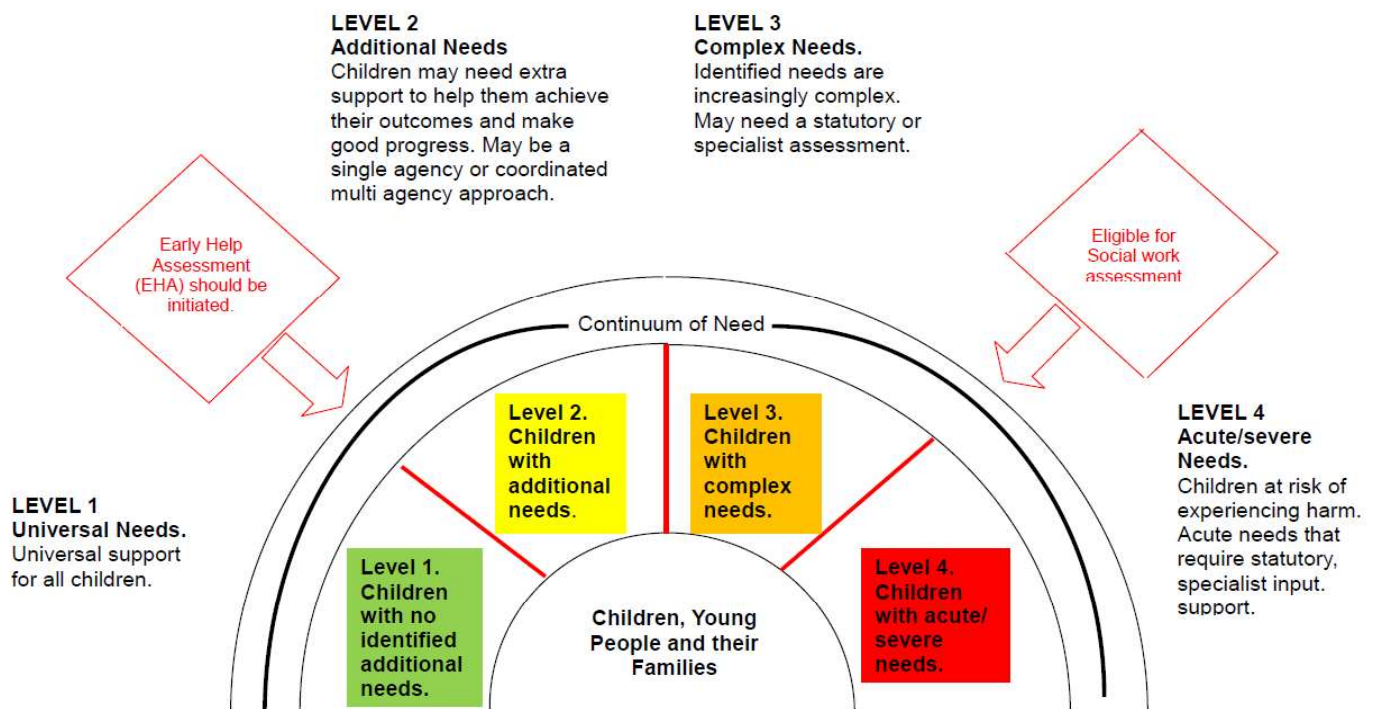
Figure 2. Proportion of Child Protection Plans under the Category of Neglect: 2014-2017

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
North Tyneside	44.2%	55.4%	53.6%	59.2%
North East	60.4%	60.2%	61.0%	63.5%
Statistical Neighbours	52.3%	48.7%	51.4%	49.8%
England	42.0%	43.2%	44.8%	46.7%

3.3 Safeguarding Response

Where a referral is received by the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) that a child or young person has suffered and is likely to suffer neglect, the response will be based upon the seriousness and severity of the reported neglect, based upon the Thresholds of Need established by the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board.

Figure 3. Threshold of Need



The most serious cases of neglect ordinarily result in a multi-agency Strategy Discussion being convened. This will involve Police, Health and Social Care colleagues meeting together to plan the safeguarding response to the referral.

One part of the response may be to undertake a Forensic Medical Examination of the child or young person by specially trained Consultant Paediatricians. This work is undertaken to establish whether the child or young person's health or development has been impacted by neglectful care.

The response may also involve Police Scenes of Crimes Officers recording the home conditions. This may result in criminal prosecution.

3.4 Anonymised Case Example

In the past 24 months, a young person was found to be living in the Borough in the care of his parents in chronic neglectful home conditions. Police attended the home and recorded the conditions by photograph (below). The young person was immediately safeguarded and removed from the home environment and accommodated in Local Authority Foster Care. The young person continues to reside out of the family home.

Figure 4: Neglectful home conditions found within the Borough



Lounge



Kitchen area



Bedroom

3.5 LSCB Multi-Agency Neglect Strategy

In May 2016, the Authority and its safeguarding partners established a strategy to:

Set out how in North Tyneside we understand neglect and how this can be recognized alongside what this means for people and organisations in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities to protect children and young people. NTCSB will make sure that neglect is widely and consistently recognised and acted upon in an appropriate and timely way.

This strategy also identifies key principles under which work around neglect should be undertaken. North Tyneside is committed to improving the attempts to effectively tackle neglect and it is a relevant issue for all, including the Health and Well Being Board and the CYPL Partnership.

The Strategy established a number of *key principles*. These are as follows:

- a) Ensuring a shared understanding of neglect and the safety, well-being and development of children and young people is the overriding priority;
- b) Promoting the early recognition and identification of the signs and symptoms of neglect and the importance of effective collaboration amongst agencies coordinated through the Early Help Assessment (EHA)
- c) Early help needs to be of a kind and duration that improves and sustains the safety of children and young people into the future
- d) Children with additional needs such as special education needs and disabilities are potentially more acutely vulnerable
- e) Beneficiary engagement is critical therefore the views of children and young people and their families with regards to 'what works' will inform the development and implementation of effective interventions
- f) Ensuring a 'whole-family' approach is owned by all stakeholders
- g) All agencies need to consider historical information to inform the present position and identify families at risk of inter-generational neglect
- h) Ensuring effective information sharing to inform assessments and evaluations of risk
- i) Agencies need to challenge each other about improvement made by families and its sustainability
- j) Work with children and young people needs to be measured by its impact on Outcomes
- k) Suitable statutory action needs to be taken if insufficient progress is achieved and interventions have been unsuccessful in addressing levels of risk present
- l) Significant regard needs to be given to the overlap between neglect and other forms of child maltreatment such as domestic abuse and substance misuse etc.

Significantly the Strategy also established three *strategic objectives* for the Borough's safeguarding partners. These are as follows:

1) To improve awareness and understanding of neglect across the whole partnership. This includes a common understanding of neglect and the thresholds for intervention.

- The NTSCB Thresholds of Need procedure has been designed with partners to ensure that children's needs are responded to at an appropriate level and in a timely way. The guidance provides clear and robust thresholds.
- Staff across the children's workforce will be expected to undertake training so that there is consistency of practice and application of thresholds. Each agencies' lead for safeguarding will be expected to ensure that staff within their agency has accessed the training.

2) To improve the recognition, assessment and response to children and young people living in neglectful situations before statutory intervention is required, including the appropriate use of assessment tools.

- The EHA should be used in order to draw agencies together to identify needs and early support for a family. The assessment process for children and young people living in neglectful situations should be timely, robust, multi-agency, child focused and incorporate the views of the child/young person and family. Support should be coordinated by a practitioner (lead professional) with whom the family has an effective relationship.
- Information will 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 voluntary sector organisations.
- Children and young people requiring Children's Social Care involvement will have their needs comprehensively assessed using the Single Assessment process to which relevant agencies will contribute and in which historical information will be fully considered
- Practitioners will be provided with multi-agency and single agency training that will equip them with the knowledge and skills to effectively recognise, assess and respond to concerns of neglect.

3) To ensure the effectiveness of service provision.

- Evidence-based practice will be identified and promoted to ensure the use of effective interventions that work for children, young people and their families.
- Work with children and young people will be measured by its impact on outcomes. The views of children and young people (the Voice of the Child) and their families with regard to 'what works' will inform the development and implementation of effective interventions.
- Develop performance and quality assurance systems that enable NTSCB to monitor the effectiveness of interventions delivered within the EHA and statutory Assessment Frameworks. To ensure the 'Voice of the Child' has been considered in all assessment, planning and review processes.

3.6 What to do if you are worried about the possible neglect of a child or young person

If anyone is worried that they know a child or young person who may be suffering or likely to suffer neglectful care, please contact the North Tyneside Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub on 0345 2000109.

4. **Conclusion**

Neglect of children is difficult and challenging subject. It is however, an area of work with which the Authority and its partners must engage under its statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in the Borough. The NTSCB has an established a Strategy with three specific objectives:

- 1) To improve awareness and understanding of neglect across the whole partnership. This includes a common understanding of neglect and the thresholds for intervention.
- 2) To improve the recognition, assessment and response to children and young people living in neglectful situations before statutory intervention is required, including the appropriate use of assessment tools.
- 3) To ensure the effectiveness of service provision.

5. **Appendices**

- NTSCB Multi-Agency Neglect Strategy.

6. **Background Information**

A range of documentation and supporting materials relating to the subject are available upon request to the author of this Report.



Multi Agency Neglect Strategy 2016

May 2016

1. Background and Introduction

1.1 The impact of neglect on children and young people is enormous. Neglect causes great distress to children, leading to poor health, educational and social outcomes and is potentially fatal. Children's abilities to make secure attachments are affected and their ability to attend and attain at school is reduced. Their emotional health and well-being is often compromised and this impacts on their success in adulthood and their ability to parent in the future.

1.2 Neglect is a feature in a significant number of child protection plan (CPP) cases and the neglect category accounts for the largest number of plans both in North Tyneside and nationally.

1.3 While Child Sexual Exploitation is dominating the media, we must not lose sight of neglect. Neglect remains the most common form of child abuse across the UK and is usually the most common cause for being subject to a child protection plan(1). Numbers of recorded cruelty and neglect offences in England and Northern Ireland are now the highest they have been for a decade.

1.4 At the same time, all agencies in North Tyneside are facing pressures from significant reductions in funding; In this context, the early recognition of neglect and timely and effective responses to neglect is vital in providing families with the help they need (2).

1.5 The findings of Ofsted's thematic inspections of neglect (3) present 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 too variable. Almost half of 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 LSCBs providing the strongest evidence of the most comprehensive action to tackle neglect were more likely to have a neglect strategy and a systematic improvement programme addressing policy, thresholds for actions and guidance for professional practice at the front line.

2. Purpose and Scope

2.1 The strategy sets out how in North Tyneside we understand neglect and how this can be recognized alongside what this means for people and organisations in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities to protect children and young people . NTCSB will make sure that neglect is widely and consistently recognised and acted upon in an appropriate and timely way.

This strategy also identifies key principles under which work around neglect should be undertaken. North Tyneside is committed to improving the attempts to effectively

tackle neglect and it is a relevant issue for all, including the Health and Well Being Board and the CYPL Partnership.

2.2 The Neglect Strategy should be read alongside other key strategies, policies and procedures such as NTSCB Thresholds document, NTC Early Help Strategy, and NTSCB Child Protection Procedures. Agencies internal procedures or delivery plans in relation to neglect should work within the same strategic objectives and adhere to the definition and guiding principles contained within the strategy

3. Definition of neglect

3.1 The term neglect can potentially be interpreted differently by people. It is therefore important that there is an agreed understanding of the definition. The definition of neglect from statutory guidance Working together to Safeguard Children' HM Government (2015) 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.”

3.2 Determining what constitutes a ‘persistent failure’, or ‘adequate clothing’ or ‘adequate supervision’ remains a matter of professional judgment. Even when professionals have concerns about neglect, research indicates that they may be unlikely to consider how they can help or intervene, apart from referring to Children’s Social Care. Research also indicates that social workers knowledge of child development is not always well developed and that as a result they are less likely to understand the impact of neglect and the importance of timely decision making to avoid significant harm. These factors contribute to neglect not being well recognised and its impact not well understood.

3.3 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 of ‘failure to meet basic needs’

These include:

- Failure to access appropriate medical care or treatment
- Nutritional neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Educational neglect
- Physical neglect
- Lack of supervision and guidance

3.4 These provide practitioners scope for support and early help before thresholds for statutory interventions are met. There is an overlap between emotional abuse and many forms of harm and this is especially true of neglect. So when practitioners are working with children who are experiencing neglect an understanding of emotional abuse is also important.

4. Prevention of Neglect

4.1 A number of factors (social determinates) increase 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
- Disability (Parental emotional and physical fatigue)

Parental risk factors

- Poor mental health, especially maternal mental health difficulties
- Chronic ill health and disability, including sensory loss (young carers)
- Drug and alcohol (substance misuse)
- Domestic abuse
- Parents' own exposure to maltreatment
- Lack of experience of positive parenting in childhood

Wider Determinants of Health

- Poverty
- Unemployment
- Poor social support

4.2 The above underlines the importance of a preventive public health approach that focuses on reducing the risk factors that cause neglect.

5. The role of early help in addressing neglect

5.1 As previously stated, the impact of neglect of children is often accumulative, advancing gradually and imperceptibly and therefore there is a risk that agencies do not intervene early enough to prevent harm. It is important that all agencies (Health, Schools / Education, Police, Probation, Housing, Voluntary and Community Organisations), identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs and seek to address them as early as possible. The need for practitioners to be alert to the danger of drift and 'start again' syndrome cannot be over emphasised.

5.2 Working Together (2015) requires local agencies to have in place effective assessments of needs of children who may benefit from early help services. In North Tyneside, agencies must effectively utilise the Early Help Assessment framework (EHA) to assess unmet needs and co-ordinate appropriate support. The delivery of an effective Early Help offer is not the responsibility of a single agency - it requires a 'Whole-Family' approach owned by all stakeholders working with children, young people and their families.

5.3 In order to address neglect it is important that all agencies effectively use the EHA to assess, plan and review services for children and their families. Likewise, it is important that there is continued longer term co-ordinated support, post involvement of Children's Social Care and other statutory agencies in order to enable parents to sustain the change in the care given to their children.

6. Principles of the strategy

6.1 This Strategy rests on key principles which provide a strategic framework:

- a) Ensuring a shared understanding of neglect and the safety, well-being and development of children and young people is the overriding priority
- b) Promoting the early recognition and identification of the signs and symptoms of neglect and the importance of effective collaboration amongst agencies coordinated through the Early Help Assessment (EHA)
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- e) Beneficiary engagement is critical therefore the views of children and young

people and their families with regards to 'what works' will inform the development and implementation of effective interventions

f) Ensuring a 'whole-family' approach is owned by all stakeholders

g) All agencies need to consider historical information to inform the present position and identify families at risk of inter-generational neglect

h) Ensuring effective information sharing to inform assessments and evaluations of risk

i) Agencies need to challenge each other about improvement made by families and its sustainability

j) Work with children and young people needs to be measured by its impact on outcomes

k) Suitable statutory action needs to be taken if insufficient progress is achieved and interventions have been unsuccessful in addressing levels of risk present

l) Significant regard needs to be given to the overlap between neglect and other forms of child maltreatment such as domestic abuse and substance misuse etc.

7. Strategic objectives

7.1 NTSCB aims to promote early recognition of neglect and improve agency responses to children and young people affected by neglect and this strategy has 3 objectives. These are:

1). To improve awareness and understanding of neglect across the whole partnership. This includes a common understanding of neglect and the thresholds for intervention.

- The NTSCB Thresholds of Need procedure has been designed with partners to ensure that children's needs are responded to at an appropriate level and in a timely way. The guidance provides clear and robust thresholds.
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and family. Support should be coordinated by a practitioner (lead professional) with whom the family has an effective relationship.

- Information will 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 voluntary sector organisations.
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- Develop performance and quality assurance systems that enable NTSCB to monitor the effectiveness of interventions delivered within the EHA and statutory Assessment Frameworks. To ensure the 'Voice of the Child' has been considered in all assessment, planning and review processes.

8. Performance and Improvement

8.1 Performance and improvement in the area of neglect will be measured by a whole systems approach as it has already been identified that this is a complex area with many facets. Some measures will be linked to the Early Help and Prevention Strategies or the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (and the plans that sit underneath it) while some will be included and monitored as part of the NTSCB performance management framework.

8.2 Easily identifiable indicators will be the:

1. Increase in the number of EHA's completed by a range of partners where neglect is a concern
2. The number of child protection plans as a result of neglect.
3. Reduction in the number of looked after children

4. Reduction in the number of repeat referrals post Single Assessment
5. Take up of single and multi agency neglect training and impact on practice

References

1 At 31 March 2015 the breakdown was as follows: 44.7% neglect; 33.5% emotional abuse; 8.8% physical abuse; 8.3% multiple reasons; and 4.7% sexual abuse. Department for Education; Characteristics of children in need: 2014 to 2015

2 A report commissioned by three leading children's charities projected that the number of children living in extremely vulnerable families is set to almost double by 2015 (H Reed, In the eye of the storm; Britain's forgotten children and families, Action for Children, 2012; <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/resources-and-publications/reports/in-the-eye-of-the-storm-britain-s-forgotten-children-and-families/>

3 In the child's time: professional responses to neglect (March 2014) Reference no: 140059 <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/chilids-time-professional-responses-neglect>