



Bolton
Safeguarding
Children

BOLTON NEGLECT STRATEGY

A Collaborative Approach to Reducing the Impact of Childhood Neglect at the Earliest Opportunities

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D's EXPERIENCE OF LIVING WITH NEGLECT

D is a teenage girl living with her mother and three younger siblings. D's mother has misused alcohol and illegal substances for many years and is known to prostitute. D's father has recently died. The family home is dirty, cluttered and there are often strangers coming to the house. There is not always food available. D looks after her youngest sibling when her mum is out all night working. This makes her anxious, because people come to the house that she doesn't know and are often drunk or on drugs; she can't sleep because she feels anxious. D is also kept awake by chronic head lice making her scalp really itchy; she has taken action to fix this problem herself. D doesn't go to school because she feels too tired to concentrate and isn't going to get any qualifications anyway so doesn't see the point. She has felt increasingly sad since the death of her father and goes out with friends and drinks alcohol to feel better.

Context

The impact of persistent neglect cannot be underestimated. It is well documented that children who are neglected over a long period of time will have their physical and emotional development restricted.

Children who are living with neglect are likely to experience difficulties:-

- Establishing and maintaining healthy relationships both in the short and long-term;
- Reaching their full educational potential and being able to move on to education, employment or training
- Developing confidence in themselves and their abilities
- Developing good emotional health and strategies to cope with challenges in their life

While other types of 'complex safeguarding i.e. Child Sexual Exploitation, FGM, Child Trafficking dominate the media; it is important to remember that neglect remains the most common form of child abuse across the UK, and in this locality. Neglect is also a common feature which often underpins other abuse categories.

Neglect is also one of the forms of child abuse where there are opportunities to improve identification, make predictions about the likelihood of its continued occurrence and take more effective and earlier interventions to reduce the impact on a child. Research from Serious Case Reviews has shown that there are often a number of missed opportunities to

identify early or emerging patterns neglect, but sadly those opportunities are either not recognised or not responded to.

Bolton Safeguarding Children Board is clear and strong in stating that this strategy will work to ensure that no opportunity is missed and no opportunity ignored to respond to child neglect.

Where earlier and more effective responses to neglect can be made there will be benefits in the longer-term for children including reducing the risk of them being victims of Child Sexual Exploitation, engaging in anti-social behavior or criminal activity, experiencing substance use problems, mental health etc., as well promoting a positive transition to adulthood.

Definition

One of the greatest strengths in promoting effective work with neglect is having an agreed multi-agency definition of what neglect is. In Bolton while we use the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015¹ definition as a starting point:-

“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 maltreatment 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 and treatment*

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

It is important that we place this definition in the context of the child’s experience and local practice. When we are defining neglect it is essential that we recognise that for a child this means:-

- They do not have enough food or may be having too much of the wrong food
- They may not have adequate clothing, somewhere warm and safe to live and sleep
- They are not accessing appropriate education, whether in a nursery/school/college or at home
- They are not taken for routine or necessary health² appointments and any treatment is not being provided
- They are not being supervised and cared for by a consistent, available and safe adult or they are left on their own to fend for themselves
- They are absent or missing from home with no timely action being taken
- They are being ignored, scapegoated or excluded unreasonably from family activities

¹ Department of Education (2015), page 93

² This covers a range of health appointments including dental, ophthalmic, speech and language, emotional health etc.

In Bolton any child who is experiencing one or more of the above should be recognised as living with a level of neglect. It is also important to recognise that neglect may occur at any point in a child's life whether that is pre-birth, during the early years or adolescence.

The severity and impact of neglect will be unique to each child, as will the response required. However what is required for any child is action to be taken at the earliest opportunity. **A key priority of this strategy is to ensure Early Help Processes are used to identify and prevent persistent neglect from occurring.**

There are additional factors that need to be taken into account when considering the extent to which neglect is a factor in a child's life and these fall into three categories:-

The child may: have physical and/or learning disabilities
 have behavioural challenges
 have poor mental health
 start to go missing from home or education
 seek contact and develop relationships with inappropriate adults
 start to self-harm or talk about wanting to end their life

The parent may: have poor mental health
 have alcohol and/or drug issues
 have been/be in an abusive relationship
 have physical and/or learning disabilities
 have had a poor experience of being parented
 have involvement in/exposure to criminal activity
 have a limited income

The environment: be a poor/run down community
 instil a sense of high/low expectation on families
 be unsupportive/unsympathetic

Mission Statement

No opportunity is missed and no opportunity ignored to respond to child neglect.

Vision

Bolton Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) believes all children in Bolton should grow and develop in an environment that is nurturing, strengthens families and supports parents to ensure their child is healthy, safe and well cared for. To this end BSCB has committed to a strategy that will work with all partners over the next three years to:-

- Prevent neglect from occurring
- Reduce the impact of cumulative neglect
- Take effective action to protect children

Strategy Scope

This strategy addresses neglect in relation to children from conception to the age of 18.

All members of Bolton Safeguarding Children Board, and in turn the services they commission, will be required to implement and contribute to the successful delivery of this strategy.

The work of this strategy will also contribute, complement and benefit from the parallel development of a Greater Manchester approach to tackling child neglect.

Strategic Objectives

- 1. Prevent neglect from occurring** - this element of the strategy will focus on the action required to prevent neglect occurring in families and we will:-
 - Improve our understanding of the prevalence and profile of neglect in Bolton
 - Increase public awareness of neglect and break down the stigma
 - Undertake focus groups with children, parents and carers who have experienced Neglect to better understand what works and learn from their experiences
- 2. Reducing the impact of cumulative neglect** – this element of the strategy will focus on the action needed to better understand how emerging patterns of neglect are impacting on a child both in terms of immediate and future harm should and we will:-
 - Early identification of those parents likely to struggle with meeting their children’s basic needs
 - Practitioners receive training that helps them to recognise and talk about neglect with children and parents and know how to intervene effectively
 - Make available to Bolton practitioners a range of evidence based tools and approaches to work with children and families to reduce the impact of neglect
 - Improve the use and quality of Early Help assessments and plans for children who are experiencing emerging patterns of neglect
- 3. Take effective action to protect children** - this element of the strategy will focus on the action needed to respond to children who are living with entrenched and multi-level experiences of neglect
 - Evaluate current multi-agency practice in working with entrenched neglect
 - Explore to what extent criminal proceedings are initiated in case of neglect in Bolton

Measuring Impact

The effectiveness of the strategy will be evaluated using both qualitative and quantitative data, including:-

- Increase in the number of Early Help Assessments completed to assess and intervene where neglectful caring/child’s additional needs not being met by parents is identified
- Increase in the confidence of practitioners to use Early Help processes to assess and intervene where neglectful caring is identified
- Reduction in the number of referrals to children’s social care where neglect is a factor
- Reduction in the number of re-referrals to children’s social care where neglect is a factor
- Reduction in the number of children where neglect is assessed as a factor within the social care assessment

- Reduction in the percentage of children having a child in need plan for neglect for more than six months
- Reduction in the percentage of children:-
 - subject to an initial child protection plan for neglect
 - subject to a child protection plan for more than twelve months for neglect
 - subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time for neglect
- Increase in the percentage of neglect cases stepped down with an Early Help plan in place to sustain change

Bolton Neglect Strategy 2017 – 2020

Working Together to Safeguard Children Living with Neglect

Our Mission

No opportunity is missed and no opportunity ignored to respond to child neglect

THEME	Prevent neglect from occurring	Reduce the cumulative impact of neglect	Take effective action to protect children
KEY TASKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve our understanding of the prevalence and profile of neglect in Bolton • Increase public awareness of neglect and break down the stigma • Better understand what works for children and families; learning from their experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early identification and co-ordinated responses to parents likely to struggle with meeting their children’s basic needs • Practitioners are well trained, confident and knowledgeable about neglect and know how to intervene effectively • Make available to Bolton practitioners a range of evidence based tools and approaches to work with children and families to reduce the impact of neglect • Improve the use and quality of Early Help assessments and plans for children who are experiencing emerging patterns of neglect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate current multi-agency practice in working with neglect • Explore to what extent criminal proceedings are initiated in case of neglect in Bolton • Support social workers to develop SMART plans to address neglect
RESPONSIBLE	Bolton Safeguarding Children Board Safeguarding Executive Bolton Neglect Task and Finish Group Early Help Steering Group BSCB Quality Assurance Group	Safeguarding Executive Bolton Neglect Task and Finish Group Early Help Steering Group	Safeguarding Executive Bolton Neglect Task and Finish Group

Mission	Prevent neglect from occurring		
Core Members	Bolton Safeguarding Children Board, Safeguarding Executive, Bolton Neglect Task and Finish Group		
Work streams	Improve our understanding of the prevalence and profile of neglect in Bolton	Increase public awareness of neglect and break down the stigma	Better understand what works for children and families; learning from their experiences
Additional contributors	Early Help Steering Group, BSCB Quality Assurance Group, Place based Teams	Public Health	Consultation Teams, Participation Leads, Corporate Parenting Board
Objectives	Develop and implement an annual multi-agency 'Neglect Strategic Profile' Develop a quarterly Neglect report for BSCB which will support the identification any emerging themes or trends which require a co-ordinated response	Work with partners in Public Health to develop and implement a neglect awareness campaign	Undertake focus groups with children, parents and carers who have experienced Neglect
Outcomes	BSCB can better understand local strengths, areas for development and offer challenge to partners to improve outcomes for children BSCB can monitor the impact of interventions and measure progress over time when children receive multi-agency support to reduce the impact of neglect	Break down the stigma attached to the term neglect Parents/carers recognise they need help and pro-actively seek their own support	BSCB understands what works locally and learns from the experiences of children Effective services and interventions are delivered to prevent, reduce and minimise the impact of neglect on children
Measurement Tools	Neglect quality framework implemented Annual multi-agency neglect audit completed Quarterly neglect report to Task and Finish Group	Stakeholders sampled report knowledge of the campaign and understand its message 100% of practitioners sampled report increased confidence in talking about neglect to children and carers	Focus groups held Findings reported to organisations and strategic leads and influence service development Children and parents tell us what makes a difference
Timescales	December 2017	March 2018	January 2018
Task and Finish Group Theme	Quality Assurance	Communication and Awareness	Quality Assurance
Task and Finish Group Lead	Christine Dixon Designated Nurse, Children Looked After, Bolton CCG	Mick Coleman	Christine Dixon Designated Nurse, Children Looked After, Bolton CCG

Mission	Reduce the cumulative impact of neglect			
Core members	Bolton Safeguarding Children Board, Safeguarding Executive, Bolton Neglect Task and Finish Group			
Work streams	Practitioners are well trained, confident and knowledgeable about neglect and know how to intervene effectively	Early identification and co-ordinated responses to parents likely to struggle with meeting their children's basic needs	Bolton practitioners have a range of evidence based tools and approaches to work with children and families to reduce the impact of neglect	Improve the use and quality of Early Help assessments and plans for children who are experiencing emerging patterns of neglect
Additional contributors		Early Help and Complex Families Hub		Early Help and Complex Families Hub Early Help Steering Group
Objectives	Develop a Bolton Neglect Handbook Develop and deliver an effective multi-agency 'Tackling Neglect' training programme across Bolton	Develop a vulnerable families pathway with responses that are compliant with FFA processes	Develop and agree the evidence based models of intervention that practitioners in Bolton will use to work with children and families experiencing neglect	Work with the Early Help Steering group to ensure neglect is integrated within the Early Help Strategy and the Complex Families Hub
Outcomes	Children and families tell us that practitioners worked well with them and listened to their views Practitioners are confident to talk about neglect with children and families and deliver interventions Assessments consider family history and they recognise the impact of neglect on children's daily lives in the short and long-term should change not occur Practitioners know when to escalate their concerns about child neglect; practitioners can challenge agency decision making when required	Reduce the likelihood that these children will experience significant harm as a consequence of neglect Children will be school ready and be successful as they move through education and into employment	Root causes of neglect are addressed in all assessments, plans and interventions Interventions are child-centred and delivered within timescales based on the child's needs; drift and delay in cases of neglect are reduced Interventions tackle non-compliance and support parents to address their own complex needs	All BSCB partners, and the services they commission, have effective systems in place to identify and provide Early Help to children where there are indicators that neglect may be a factor in the child's life Partners will be able to report to BSCB how many Early Help assessments and plans they have developed to respond to neglect Partners will be able to report on the outcomes of these assessments and interventions
Measurement Tools	Neglect Handbook published Practice audits evidence use of resources	Pathway endorsed Practitioners recognised and implement the pathway	Tools endorsed Practice audits evidence use of tools	Quarterly neglect report will include impact of Early Help
Timescales	November 2017 March 2018	January 2018	November 2017	March 2018
Task and Finish Group Theme	Guidance and Policy Training and Staff Development	Guidance and Policy	Guidance and Policy Training and Staff Development	Communication and Awareness
Task and Finish Group Lead	Jacqui Hardman Sarah Oxley	Jacqui Hardman	Jacqui Hardman Sarah Oxley	Mick Coleman

Mission	Take effective action to protect children	
Core members	Bolton Safeguarding Children Board, Safeguarding Executive, Bolton Neglect Task and Finish Group	
Work streams	Evaluate current multi-agency practice in working with entrenched neglect	Explore to what extent criminal proceedings are initiated in case of neglect in Bolton
Additional contributors	BSCB Quality Assurance Group	Greater Manchester Police
Objectives	Complete a multi-agency case audit or learning review for children currently child in need/child protection where neglect is a factor Develop and implement a multi-agency neglect peer review process	Review a cohort of neglect cases with Greater Manchester Police to better understand how and when criminal proceedings relating to neglect should be considered
Outcomes	BSCB and its partners understand the strengths within current practice and areas for development Action is taken to address the areas for development	Practitioners, families and children recognise the seriousness of neglect and places neglect on an equal footing to other types of abuse
Measurement Tools	Annual multi-agency audit of Neglect cases completed and findings report to BSCB Organisations track and report on how service improvements made in response to audit learning One peer review completed in 2017-2018 and finding reported to BSCB	Review completed and findings reported to BSCB Action plan developed to address any development areas
Timescales	March 2018	March 2018
Task and Finish Group Theme	Quality Assurance	Quality Assurance
Task and Finish Group Lead	Christine Dixon Designated Nurse, Children Looked After, Bolton CCG	Christine Dixon Designated Nurse, Children Looked After, Bolton CCG