Neglect Matters: Our Shared Ambition

Norfolk Multi – Agency Practice Week

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The National Picture

- As of 31 March 2025, neglect was the primary concern for just over half of the 49,400 children in England subject to child protection plans.

- Neglect was present in 60% of rapid reviews in 2024-25

  Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, Annual Report 2024-2025).

- Neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment in England, often co-occurring with other harms.

- Child neglect's widespread prevalence, the potential for long-term harm to children's physical, emotional and social development and the challenges it presents for effective intervention make it one of the most pressing national safeguarding issues.

An Overview of Neglect in Norfolk
what we know

- Previous NSCP priority
- Continued practice focus across the Norfolk Partnership
- Focussing on early identification and support and understanding cumulative impact
- As a partnership, acknowledging that neglect has not and will not be eradicated. However, our Multi-Agency approach and commitment to best practice remains central
- Snapshot in Norfolk – data shows that there are currently 223 Child Protection cases with a category of neglect. 534 with neglect as a factor in their latest assessment.

Enhanced Family Help team – Now and Future

Why and when

- Established in **2024**, responding to the **2022 Ofsted findings on prolonged neglect**.
- Intensive support for families facing chronic neglect and repeated Child Protection escalation.

Successes and learning

- **Children and families supported to safely remain at home/within their networks**, families' home circumstances improved.
- Trusted relationships, clinical expertise and practical help support lasting change.
- Lower caseloads enable intensive work, but limit reach; continuity remains important as families step down.

Why expand?

- Meet unmet need and provide **equitable access across Norfolk**.
- Help more children remain safely at home through stronger Child Protection and edge-of-care support.

What would it look like?

- **Three local teams:** North, East and Broadland; West and Breckland; City and South.
- Expanded social work, family practitioner, clinical and home-based support under **one countywide practice model**.
- Primarily Child Protection-focused, with continued step-down support and scope for earlier intervention; evaluated over **two years**.

Local Learning – What We Find

Neglect is multi-faceted and complex - There is usually a combination of factors such as trauma, domestic abuse, substance misuse and addiction, mental health, unrecognised adult learning needs, physical health needs.

Patterns from the past – the history is a good indicator for why we are seeing what we see now. Understanding the root cause is essential

Seeing below the surface - curiosity and networking can show us the bigger picture.

Trust is low, shame is high- Families are scared of what may happen or fearful based upon past experiences. Families want to be involved and plans progress more effectively when the whole network is supporting realistic plans.

A focus on the basics is needed - Basic needs such as adequate shelter, finances, food impact the ability to move forward with intervention. We must support these areas first to see the path forward to longer term change.

Involving the child's network – Everyone's role



National Learning



childsafeguarding.independent-panel.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/CSPRP_Animation_3_Neglect_V4_WEBM_AV1.webm

National Learning

Safeguarding reviews show that neglect is common, complex and can be missed.
Understanding these recurring issues can help improve practice:

- **Child neglect can affect babies, children and adolescents** but can be missed, especially when concerns relate to poverty, parental challenges, or chronic low-level issues that build gradually
- **Delays in identification are frequently linked to unclear definitions**, inconsistent thresholds, and reliance on terms such as ‘persistence’ and ‘serious impairment’.
- **Many responses to neglect are episodic and fragmented**, resulting in missed opportunities to understand cumulative harm
- **Children’s voices and lived experiences are not consistently captured**, and home conditions are often not seen or explored in enough depth
- **Early help and coordinated support are frequently hindered** by consent barriers, capacity pressures, and inconsistent multi-agency working
- **A more proactive, child-centred and trauma-informed approach is needed** – one that names neglect clearly and responds early
- **Strong practice requires shared chronologies**, structured tools, multi-agency information sharing, and a clear focus on the child’s daily life, safety, and wellbeing

What to take away from today

- **Act early and stay curious**
  Notice small, repeated concerns — neglect is usually cumulative, not a single event.
- **Name neglect clearly**
  Avoid vague language; being explicit helps trigger timely action and shared understanding.
- **See the child's lived experience**
  Focus on what daily life feels like for the child, not just parental explanations or isolated incidents.
- **Work collaboratively**
  Share information, use neglect tools consistently, and build a holistic, multi-agency picture of risk and need.

What next in Norfolk – Your ideas



Resources

THE CHILD SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEW PANEL
childsafeguarding.independent-panel.uk

[Neglect | Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel]

Take a look at key resources such as:

- Recognising the signs of neglect poster
- Multi-agency role specific guidance – what you need to know in your role

Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership

[Useful Resources & Guidance page for People working with children | NSCP | PWWC]

[Information on Neglect for Parents and Carers | NSCP | PC&TC]

[the-role-of-neglect-champions-august-2022.pdf]