



Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership

The Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership Strategy to Identify, Prevent and Tackle Neglect

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The appalling effects of chronic neglect are well-documented. Practitioners and academics are agreed that the cumulative nature of neglect can have a disastrous impact on all aspects of children's health and development. It impacts on children's learning, self-esteem, ability to form attachments and social skills in such a way that the effects can last into adulthood. Brandon therefore states that neglect 'needs to be treated with as much urgency as other categories of maltreatment.'
- 1.2 The Office of National Statistics ¹reported that at 31 March 2019, 25,330 children in England (21 per 10,000) were subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) for neglect. The small decrease seen in 2019 follows a steady increase seen in previous years. Neglect was the most common initial category of abuse for CPPs in England at 48%.
- 1.3 Neglect is overwhelmingly the most common category for children on Child Protection Plans in Norfolk. In the year ending 31 March 2020, neglect was the initial category of abuse in 63% of cases who became subject to a child protection plan.
- 1.4 In Norfolk there have been several Serious Case Reviews/Safeguarding Practice Reviews (SCRs/SPRs) in recent years where neglect has been a major theme. Despite this, cases of chronic neglect, where there has not been appropriate or timely intervention, are still being identified.
- 1.5 The Department for Education's *Triennial Analysis of Serious Case Review 2014 – 2017*² evidenced that neglect featured in nearly three quarters of the reports examined (208 of the 278, 74.8%), including 68% of fatal cases. Neglect was the category of abuse in 50 out of 84 children who were subject to a CPP at the time of or prior to the incident leading to the SCR.
- 1.6 In summer of 2020, Norfolk's independent scrutiny team undertook a discrete piece of work looking at adolescent neglect. The findings from that scrutiny have been incorporated into this strategy with relevant recommendations shared with Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership's Vulnerable Adolescent Group.

¹ ONN [Child neglect in England and Wales: year ending March 2019](#)

² DfE [Complexity and challenge: a triennial analysis of SCR's 2014 – 2017](#), published March 2020

- 1.7 Locally, Norfolk's Section 11³ safeguarding self-assessment process has also highlighted systemic challenges to identifying, preventing and tackling neglect. The findings from Section 11 show that we need to improve: capturing the voice of children and young people experiencing neglect; raising awareness and promoting the strategic approach at all levels; and building confidence in the workforce, particularly where concerns do not meet the threshold for statutory intervention. This strategy aims to address these issues.
- 1.8 The need to improve the safeguarding system to better identify, prevent and tackle neglect is one of the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership's top priorities. This strategy draws from local and national learning in relation to neglect and incorporates the recommendations from Norfolk's SCRs/SPRs.

2. Definition

- 2.1 For the purposes of this strategy, the national definition will apply:

'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 to Safeguard Children: A guide to Interagency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children. July 2018).

3. Principles:

- 3.1 The NSCP adheres to the following principles in the development and implementation of this strategy:
- We will maintain a clear focus on the child and understanding their lived experience
 - We will have whole system leadership in awareness raising and tackling neglect with all partner agencies taking responsibility for professional standards within their organisations.
 - We will have clear lines of accountability, roles and responsibility in cases of neglect

³ Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

- We will have a shared, multi-agency approach to identification of and interventions for neglect
- We will demonstrate commitment to equalities and diversity acknowledging that some children are at more risk due to their diverse needs
- We will be culturally competent in this area of work, recognising that neglect is present in all strata of society
- We will be competent and confident in recognising and managing the complexity and stigma attached to neglect, with a focus on unmet needs
- We will ensure that the complex nature of neglect and the impact on the workforce is acknowledged and that there is practical and emotional support in place for practitioners

4. Strategic Aims and Objectives

The NSCP's aspiration would be to eradicate neglect in whatever form it manifests itself. In acknowledging that some of the variables involved are beyond the Partnership's ability to control or alter, the strategic aim seeks to:

Minimise the risk of children experiencing neglect in the county of Norfolk and to support those that are experiencing or have experienced it.

As noted in the introduction, neglect is highly prevalent and has the potential to overwhelm, therefore this strategy has set some parameters to make our objectives achievable with three overarching aims. The objectives/ high level actions we will take to achieve the strategic aim and the rationale behind them are listed against each strategic statement below.

- 4.1 **We will engage communities and harness their resources to tackle neglect and build resilience in local areas.** Building on the community response to Covid19, our objective is to enable local communities to have open conversations with service providers on their experience and understanding of neglect. We recognise that communities are key to finding solutions to address neglect, building resilience and raising the aspirations of children and young people in their locality.

Rationale – excerpt from *The Triennial Analysis*: 'The family and wider community may be valuable partners and important sources of support and intervention. However, working with the family and wider community in preventive or protective intervention are often missed.'

Objectives and high level actions:

- Communications campaign on Covid-19 and a public survey to open the conversation specifically around neglect in local areas
- Established pathways to better engage with local community groups to support with early help and prevention, including raising aspirations and promoting Norfolk's Social Mobility agenda

- Agencies proactively address stigma of neglect and agree shared language with the communities they serve to address and prevent neglect
- Work with families to develop a family friendly technology to monitor their progress against plans (FSP, CiN, CPP) in real time
- Family Networking further embedded to maximise support systems
- Consulting with children and young people involved in existing advisory or commissioning groups, in recognition of those groups as discrete communities

4.2 We will establish a better understanding of factors which contribute to the risk of neglect so that we can address the needs of parents, children, families and communities. The workforce and communities have a more holistic understanding of contributory factors – including domestic abuse, substance misuse, parental mental health, incarceration, parental experience of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), intergenerational neglect and impact of poverty – resulting in improved risk assessments and more transparent conversations.

Rationale – excerpts from *The Triennial Analysis*:

- ‘We identified the cumulative risk of harm to a child when different parental and environmental risk factors are present in combination or over a period of time and, in particular, the impact of poverty on the lives of children and their families.’
- ‘A good relationship with families is the primary vehicle for protective practice when it is based on a sound grasp of the family context, circumstances, and roles and relationship as an effective 2way of managing the complexity of compound and cumulative risk over time...[However] professionals have to be both robust and compassionate in addressing the strategies parents use to defend themselves and their family from scrutiny.’

Objectives and high level actions:

- Training/awareness raising on impact of ACEs across the partnership, including resilience factors
- Data overlay of contributory factors
- Early intervention and prevention where risks are identified
- Development of and training in neglect assessment tool
- Interface between the Neglect Strategy and Norfolk’s Social Mobility Agenda

4.3 Staff and families will have space to reflect on the emotional impact of neglect on themselves and develop resilience, perspective and a shared language to manage that impact. The safeguarding system, workforce and families they are working with are supported to develop a share understanding

of the neurological, psychological, emotional and physiological impact of toxic stress and are solution focused when addressing the complexities of neglect

Rationale – excerpt from Norfolk SCR Case AF⁴: ‘Safeguarding children is a human service, the emotional content of the work has a bearing on how children are safeguarded. The psychodynamic aspects (including how defences are constructed against the inherent anxiety) need greater attention and ways found to acknowledge the impact and mitigate the risks to enable the workforce to think and act.’

Objectives and high level actions:

- Agencies invest in becoming more trauma aware/trauma informed to enable the frontline to actively deliver early intervention and prevention services with the support of strategic leadership
- Systemic and clinical supervision offered
- Multi-agency reflective practice sessions offered across the partnership, including schools and early years
- Dissemination of learning from Norfolk SCR/SPRs on neglect through a trauma informed lens in tailored SCR/SPR roadshows

- 4.4 **We will disseminate learning from Serious Case Reviews/Safeguarding Practice Reviews (SCRs/SPRs) and other independent scrutiny reports and act on the recommendations.** This Neglect Strategy incorporates those recommendations, aligning them where appropriate with the overarching strategic statements above (4.1 – 4.3). The recommendations are summarised as Appendix 1. NB Adolescent neglect will have some crossover with the other NSCP priority, Child Exploitation, and activity will be co-ordinated with the Vulnerable Adolescent workstream.

Threaded throughout all NSCP activities is a proactive approach to capturing the voice of the child. This includes providing case studies to demonstrate how learning from local and national SCR/SPRs is translated into good practice as well as how we involve services users (children and families) in service development. Direct links will be made between the NSIG, the NSCP Business Unit and children and young people’s groups, with the support of Norfolk County Council’s Participation Team.

5. Measuring Impact

- 5.1 This strategy will have a detailed action plan sitting underneath it to monitor progress against the objectives, including key milestones.
- 5.2 Quantitative and qualitative measures are included against this priority are in the NSCP Business Plan.

⁴ Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership SCR, [Case AF](#), published January 2020.

- 5.3 The strategy and working group, specifically the working stream responsible for understanding contributory factors, will develop and monitor an iterative data dashboard to evidence the direction of travel as a result of strategy implementation.
- 5.4 As an NSCP priority, mechanisms are in place to ensure that the strategy implementation is timely and monitored for impact.

6. Leadership and Governance

- 6.1 As a priority area, Norfolk's Neglect Strategy will be governed by a discrete multi-agency NSCP subgroup, chaired by Children's Services Director of Commissioning, Resources & Partnership.
- 6.2 The Neglect Strategic Implementation Group (NSIG) has clear Terms of Reference and representation from strategic leaders from across the partnership. NSIG reports to the NSCP Partnership Group.
- 6.2 The Neglect Strategy Implementation Group (NSIG) is strategic and is supported by three subgroups with identified leads to deliver against the strategic statements set out under Section 4. The NSIG is responsible for improving multi-agency practice and the subgroup leads will support specific developments against their areas of responsibility, as detailed in the action plan.

Appendix 1**SCR/Scrutiny recommendations cross referenced with Neglect Strategic Aims**

Recommendation	Cross Ref
Source: Triennial Analysis of SCRs 2014 – 2017 (DfE, pub. March 20)	
Adolescents are discussed in the review in some depth <i>“Adolescents living in situations of neglect may be particularly vulnerable to having their needs, and the risks they face, overlooked”</i>	4.4
<i>“Assessment and planning tools need to be evidence-informed, rigorously designed, tested and disseminated to ensure they are fit for purpose and appropriately used”.</i>	4.2 & 4.3
<i>“The current service landscape with fragmentation and outsourcing of services, service cuts and corresponding high caseloads and high staff turnover, has profound practical and emotional impacts on staff who are struggling to work effectively with families in complex circumstances. Managers and commissioners need to recognise these impacts and put in place structures to provide support, time and guidance for front-line practitioners.”</i>	4.3
<i>“The family and wider community may be valuable partners and important sources of support and intervention”</i> (with a particular mention of <i>“the perspectives and role of fathers”</i>).	4.1
Supervision is a consistent theme running throughout the review chapters on neglect	4.3
Source: Norfolk Serious Case Reviews	
The strategic leadership of NSCP should review the effectiveness and ability of all partners to deliver the neglect strategy and identify any barriers that may prevent this.	All
Conduct an interagency review of current frontline practice with children who are subject to significant harm through neglect, where parental behaviour is hostile or uncooperative	4.2
In cases of neglect, the children’s voices and views of their family’s strengths and weaknesses must be evidenced through the use of existing tools, e.g. Signs of Safety	4.2 & 4.3
Risk assessment tools to assess neglect should be reviewed to ensure that there is a common language and understanding of levels of concern over time. For example, the Graded Care Profile could be strengthened with photographs adapted from the Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Self Neglect and Hoarding Strategy, to better assess and share the views of professionals about the living conditions of children	4.2 & 4.3
Norfolk’s Family Networking training should be promoted across the partnership to encourage all frontline professionals to attend	4.1
Develop a model for interagency practitioner supervision for complex cases where working together closely and consistently is of paramount importance.	4.3
NSCP to evaluate the recent multi-agency supervision pilot and implement a multi-agency supervision forum for front line staff that is; adequately resourced to consider a full range of cases, consistently available and sufficiently promoted.	4.3

Source: Norfolk Serious Case Reviews, cont.	
NSCP as part of a workforce development plan, identify and equip all staff with the confidence and skills to work with clients who have, or may have a 'learning difficulty' including the use of visual aids in order to communicate effectively.	4.2 & 4.3
NSCP requires assurance that social workers and frontline practitioners working with children are equipped to make full use of the Mental Capacity Act to test both an adult's understanding of the required changes, and probability of being able to successfully achieve these required changes.	4.2
CSC and CCS Health are to provide assurance to NSCP that working relationships within the east of the county continue to improve and provide a positive safeguarding impact are not in danger of compromising outcomes for children.	4.3
Source: Norfolk Independent Scrutiny of Adolescent Neglect <i>NB: Some of the specifics picked up by Vulnerable Adolescent Group (VAG)</i>	
NSCP to continue to develop an appropriate data set to afford the Partnership opportunity to consider statistical evidence when making decisions.	4.2
As part of the ongoing work to develop a Partnership data set, strategic leads consider the gaps outlined above and put measures in place to ensure the information is collected and utilised in strategic planning.	4.2
As part of the strategic response to this paper the Partnership reviews all available data and assures itself that measures are in place to record, monitor and respond to information presented. This should include seeking out examples of exceptional performance by statistical neighbours and nationally, ensuring opportunities to learn are maximised	4.2
The Partnership reviews training provision and considers ways of improving skills / knowledge in the key area of relationship building.	4.3 (VAG)
The partnership seeks assurance from strategic leaders that plans have been created ensuring that practitioners will be supported to develop trusting relationships with adolescents.	4.3 (VAG)
The Partnership creates a specific strategy for adolescent neglect. This strategy forms part of the overarching neglect strategy.	All
One of the three statutory partners should perform the role of strategic lead. This individual will have responsibility for overseeing an effective action plan to improve practice / outcomes. This will provide focus and accountability in this key area.	All
The development of an adolescent neglect strategy has consultation with young people and families at the heart of it.	All
The Partnership seeks assurance from the Independent Scrutineer that learning is being captured from reviews. This should be a standing item for Strategic Partners meetings.	All
The contextual safeguarding course is reviewed in light of this report and consideration is given to developing skills that would provide greater confidence in communicating with adolescents. Additional input into recognising neglect when confronted with other behaviour patterns should also be considered. This recommendation links directly with recommendation 4.	4.3 (VAG)