

**Salford Neglect
Strategy for
Children, Young
People and Families
2016-2018**

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Foreword

Over the past decade research has shown that neglect has been recognised as the most prevalent type of harm children experience. Our challenge is to develop a coherent, integrated and effective response to neglected children and young people. Neglect is not confined to young children and occurs across all ages. Early help is providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life.

To effectively safeguard children requires professionals to be curious and inquisitive about family circumstances and events. Child neglect can be multifaceted and enduring; it often involves a broad set of circumstances which can only be pieced together through the accumulation of evidence.

Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm.

The aim of this strategy is to improve the recognition of neglect in families across universal and specialist services and achieve a multi-agency coordinated approach where neglect is an issue.

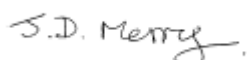
We want all agencies to focus on building strength and resilience within families rather than promoting dependency and ultimately this will increase positive outcomes for children, young people and families.

I hope you will play your part to achieve this for all children in Salford.



Simon Westwood

Independent Chair of Salford Safeguarding Children Board



Cllr John Merry

Deputy Mayor – Services for Children and Young People

Chair of Salford Children and Young People's Trust board

Introduction

The neglect of children and young people is one of the most difficult areas within the child care and protection field to identify, assess and intervene in. Increased research over the past decade (Farmer and Lutman, 2012; Stevenson, 2007) has shown that neglect has emerged as the most prevalent type of harm children experience and results in more profound cognitive, social and psychological deficits than many other forms of abuse.

Neglect is the most common reason for a child to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan in the UK. 43% of all children subject to a Child Protection (CP) Plan in England in 2015 were under the category of neglect which corresponds with the figure in Salford (April 2016).

Neglect is the most frequent reason for a child protection referral to social services and features in 60 per cent of serious case reviews into the death or serious injury of a child.

Research from the NSPCC (2012) shows that in the UK 21,666 children were on a CP plan for neglect and 1 in 7 secondary school age children and 1 in 20 children under 11 have been neglected at some point.

Work undertaken by Action for Children (Long et al 2012) highlights a clear emerging theme where the best results are achieved when intervention with families happens at the earliest possible opportunity, particularly in cases where the family is steadily declining into neglectful parenting.

In the child's time: Professional responses to neglect (Ofsted 2014) explores the effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard children who experience neglect with a particular focus on children aged 10 years and under drawing on case evidence and views of parents, carers and professionals.

The challenge for all children's services is to develop a coherent, integrated and effective response to neglected children and young people.

This Salford neglect strategy has been developed to ensure our children's workforce are able to recognise neglect and provide an effective response which will improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. Integral in the strategy is the identification and engagement of families at the earliest opportunity by preventative services including effective assessment and development of a clear action plan.

Purpose and Scope

The development of the Strategy is supported and endorsed by the Salford Safeguarding Children Board and its Multi-Agency Partners and it is designed for use by all those who work with children and families in all Agencies and settings.

The purpose of the strategy is to set out clear strategic aims and objectives with clear priorities for how all partners can develop and achieve a Multi-agency co-ordinated approach where neglect is an issue.

The strategy identifies both the statutory definition of neglect and other factors to consider which will enable early identification of neglect issues at practitioner level. It also covers the range of need across the continuum, including supporting families as early as possible to prevent significant harm to children and family breakdown.

The strategy is to link closely with the Salford City Partnership Early Help Strategy for Children, Young People and Families to align with key drivers for change at a city and regional level – as we work to establish more integrated locality based services through our 0-25 project as part of our approach to public sector reform.

Definition

The definition of neglect from statutory guidance states:

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)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

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

However, specific needs which are often subsumed under the banner of failing to meet 'basic needs' include:

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

These provide practitioners scope for support and early help, before thresholds for statutory action are met. There is an overlap between emotional abuse and many forms of child maltreatment. This is especially true of neglect; therefore, when working with children subject to neglectful situations an understanding of emotional abuse is also necessary.

Guiding Principles

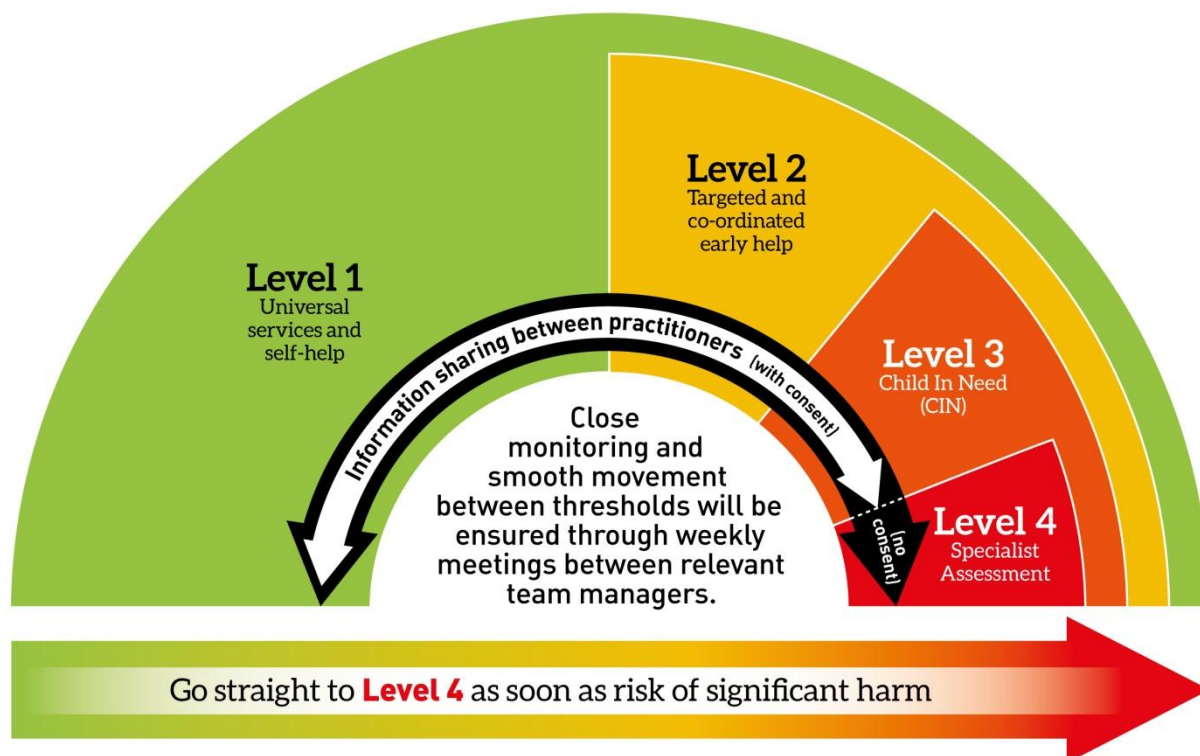
The strategy is underpinned by a number of key principles signed up to by all SSCB partners, which provide a strategic framework:

- Early help and support should improve and sustain children's well-being and safety into the future. It should also build strength and resilience within families rather than promoting dependency;
- Early assessment and intervention will be promoted and supported in the first instance;
- Work with children and young people will be measured by its impact, i.e. improved outcomes. A graduated response is also needed wherever possible, with more intrusive and costly statutory interventions being the last resort where the level of risk to the child makes it a requirement;
- There should be a shared understanding of neglect and the safety, wellbeing and development of children;
- There should be collaboration amongst agencies to ensure effective identification, assessment and support within families;
- Children and young people should expect consistency from practitioners, including the level and type of support offered;
- Children with special needs and disabilities have equal rights to protection from neglect and agencies must ensure that practitioners are trained to recognise and tackle neglect for this vulnerable group of children;
- Causal factors and early indicators of neglect should be recognised so support can be arranged as early as possible;
- Any learning and future developments should involve families' own feedback and their own personal experiences;
- All services must consider/ research historical information to inform the present position and repeat at times of significant change as well as review at regular intervals;
- Evaluating vulnerability, need, risk of harm or suffering harm requires information sharing and consideration of a multi-faceted array of indicators and outcome areas. To effectively safeguard children requires professionals to be curious and inquisitive about family circumstances and events and also requires different professionals to be challenging of each other about improvement made by families and its sustainability;
- Neglect often co-exists with other forms of abuse or risk factors so this strategy must link with other work streams; for example domestic abuse, substance misuse and adult mental health, child poverty and youth homelessness. This will help ensure that children and families are able to benefit from all developments as appropriate to their needs.

Our threshold of need model

We have successfully used a 'threshold of need' model to help us decide how much help a child may need. We published a new version in October 2015 which emphasises Early Help.

Salford Thresholds of Need and Response



If you are worried about a child contact The Bridge Partnership on **0161 603 4500** or email worriedaboutachild@salford.gov.uk

Neglect and Serious Case Reviews

In March 2013 the NSPCC commissioned the University of East Anglia to explore the circumstances in which neglect can be catastrophic and have a fatal or seriously harmful outcome for a child. The work was carried out by reviewing and conducting a systematic analysis of neglect in 139 serious case reviews in England, between 2009 and 2011. The published report identified how risks of harm accumulate and combine, and highlighted the points at which intervention might successfully have helped contained risks.

Key messages from the research:

- Neglect is much more prevalent in serious case reviews than had previously been understood (neglect was present in 60% of the 139 reviews from 2009-2011)
- Neglect can be life threatening and needs to be treated with as much urgency as other categories of maltreatment.
- Neglect with the most serious outcomes is not confined to the youngest children, and occurs across all ages
- The possibility that in a very small minority of cases neglect will be fatal, or cause grave harm, should be part of a practitioner's mindset. Practitioners, managers, policy makers and decision makers should be discouraged from minimising or downgrading the harm that can come from neglect and discouraged from allowing neglect cases to drift.
- The key aim for the practitioner working with neglect is to ensure a healthy living environment and healthy relationships for children.
- Provision of services at an early stage can be a key factor in addressing issues of neglect as referenced in the Salford Early Help strategy.

Working with Children and Families

Working with families in need is invariably very complex and research into families where neglect is a significant feature show that simple interventions are unlikely to be successful.

Action for Children conducted a 4 year longitudinal evaluation of neglect, ‘Outcomes for children, families, Action for Children and the UK’, 2012, and described a ‘bulging threshold’ phenomenon where levels of intervention have not escalated despite significant deterioration in the child’s situation.

Neglect can overlap with other forms of abuse, such as physical or sexual, which makes it particularly hard to focus on one area of problems. Assessing neglect therefore requires measuring a complex series of acts of parental omission - provision, protection and emotional availability. Thresholds for intervention by local authorities are geared to investigating incidence and as neglect does not always present in this particular way it is challenging to then gauge the impact on the child from the absence of parental basic care.

The true impact does not always become evident until much later in a child’s life.

Another significant challenge to helping and supporting children and families is that interventions are geared to short-term interventions and not to longer term inputs. Combating neglect often requires repeated inputs and sometimes with long term support.

Strategic Aims

The aim of the strategy is to improve the recognition of neglect in families; to improve Agencies' responses to these families; and to ultimately improve positive outcomes for children, young people and families.

This will be achieved by ensuring the children's workforce is sufficiently skilled to recognise and effectively act on neglect issues and to positively engage with families at the earliest opportunity, thereby promoting their resilience and willingness to engage with agencies.

Strategic Objectives

Within this aim the SSCB neglect strategy has three objectives:

One - To improve the awareness and understanding of neglect, both within and between agencies working in Salford and including adult services. This includes a common understanding of neglect and the thresholds for access to services.

- a) A common understanding of neglect between and within agencies is crucial to allow effective identification and a common language. This aim will be supported by a clear strategy, effective guidance and the development of a skilled workforce through the provision of high quality single and Multiagency training.
- b) Understanding of the Salford Early Help Strategy and Thresholds of Need and Response for intervention will help to ensure that the right help from the right agency or agencies at the right time is given to children, young people and families.
- c) Working effectively between services working with children and adults via a holistic family approach.

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

- a) Agencies should ensure their workforce is properly skilled to be able to identify and act on indicators of neglect in the families they work with. This includes an understanding of the pathway into targeted services for early help via the Common Assessment Framework and the coordination of Multi-agency support through the Team around the Child (TAC). It also means a confident and skilled workforce knowing when and how to share concern over a child's welfare when child protection concerns may be apparent.
- b) This assessment process should be complemented by the use of appropriate, assessment tools specifically developed in relation to neglect. **The Graded Care Profile (GCP)** is the agreed Multiagency tool for use by practitioners with families in Salford <http://www.partnersinsalford.org/sscb/gradedcareprofile.htm>. Completion of the Graded Care Profile across agencies will be supported by the identified agency leads.

Where there is suspicion that a child is subject to neglect, lead Professionals should use the GCP to help with the identification of the present situation in a dynamic way, to ensure that progress can be measured over time to inform appropriate actions for the family and to provide a structured approach to measuring progress. This is equally applicable for families being managed in targeted or specialist services and consequently all practitioners who act as lead professional should be familiar with the GCP.

c) Through the use of the CAF/TAC process, complemented by the GCP, information should be shared effectively across partner agencies in order to build up a full picture of the needs of the child or young person and their family. This process will also help to identify additional areas of support which can be accessed through the CAF process. This should also include identifying positive support which can be provided through the extended family and friend's network.

d) Clear and robust thresholds identified (including neglect indicators on the Salford Thresholds of Need Model), and effective communication between all agencies is essential to sharing information to establish that needs are identified and met.

Three - Developing and sustaining an agreed, early Multi-agency response to neglect.

a) SSCB through its Learning and Improvement subgroup will monitor the effectiveness of the Multi-agency response to neglect through audit, practitioner and family feedback and scrutiny of performance information. Findings from the monitoring will be presented into the SSCB board for dissemination to inform future development of the strategy.

b) Relevant developments in service provision are promoted and clear for practitioners on a multi-agency basis.

c) Agencies to hold responsibility for ensuring their workforce has access to relevant training and development opportunities and to support practitioners by signposting them to relevant SSCB Multiagency training for neglect and how to use the GCP.

d) Providing practitioners with effective skills and tools to work with families experiencing neglect.

e) Supporting practitioners to resolve common problems when working with families experiencing neglect.

Measuring success - How will we know if the strategy is working?

It's important that we agree success measures from the beginning..

Performance and impact will be monitored quarterly by the SSCB Learning and Improvement group through a revised group of performance measures which will also align with the GM Neglect Strategy and will be reported to the Safeguarding Children Board. A number of these will be indicators which are shared with the Early Help strategy.

Qualitative measures

We will make quality the centre of our approach and will strive to ensure every child, young person and family receives a high quality service; we will use outcome measures to demonstrate that quality and look at distance travelled for families as a measure.

Success should be directly measured against the outcomes experienced by children, young people and their families. We have identified a number of key performance indicators to measure our success.

We will also use person centred stories to bring meaning to the work we are relaying.

We will include quality measures and feedback from thematic audit work to measure our progress and success.