

City of York

Safeguarding Children Partnership



City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership

Neglect Strategy

2021 - 2023



Introduction

All children deserve the best possible start in life¹ that is why the City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership are delighted to share our revised Neglect Strategy which outlines our ambition to improve, how we will collectively work together with families to support them in meeting their child/ren's needs and reduce the risk of harm for those children and young people who may experience or be experiencing Neglect.

Neglect is the most common form of child abuse and is the most common reason for a child or young person to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan in England. In 2020, the total number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan for Neglect was 26,010 out of a total number of 51,510; this equates to just over half (50.5%)² of all children in England on a Child Protection Plan for Neglect. Locally, this is similar to the national picture with half of the total number of children in the City of York subject to a Child Protection Plan for Neglect.

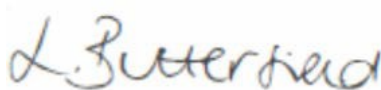
Through this strategy we want to secure a better understanding of how as a partnership we will work together in the City of York to address neglect in order to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families as we know from research, national learning and audits the impact that Neglect has on all children at any age, now, in their future and into adulthood.

This revised strategy focusses on ensuring that we identify and address unmet needs and prevent these needs from escalating and do so through our adopted strength based practice model: **'Systemic Practice'** which provides a framework for our partners to work collectively and collaboratively across all organisations and systems to ensure that families are supported as a whole rather than individuals. We will look to achieve this through our mission statement **'every conversation starts with the child'**.

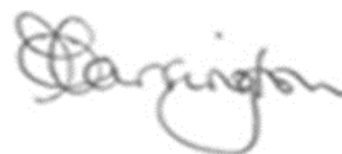
This strategy has been launched alongside the new multi-agency City of York Safeguarding Partnership (CYSCP) **Early Help Strategy 2021-2023** to **'ensure that children, young people and their families receive the right help at the right time'** (**Working Together, 2023**) in order for the children and young people in the City of York to have the best possible start in life.



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¹ <https://www.eif.org.uk/why-it-matters>

² <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/characteristics-of-children-in-need/2020>

What is Neglect?

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) defines Neglect³ as the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

It is noted that neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse and 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 caregivers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs

Types of Neglect

Howarth (2007) has identified that there are six categories of Neglect. These are:

- Medical Neglect
- Nutritional Neglect
- Emotional Neglect
- Educational Neglect
- Physical Neglect
- Lack of Supervision and Guidance

Neglect can affect children of all ages. Neglect can start pre-birth in the womb i.e. through maternal substance misuse, throughout childhood and in some circumstances through to adulthood. Long Term impact on children and young people who may have experienced Neglect through childhood can include: Substance use, Eating and sleeping disorders, Mental health difficulties/self-harm, Criminality and violence, Anti-social behaviours, Problems with intimacy and separation, Self-Neglect Suicide⁴.

If children do not have a positive early start in life this can lead to poorer outcomes, in early health and development throughout childhood, adolescence and in some circumstances, we know this could potentially cause Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) in adulthood.

'ACES are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years) such as experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect; witnessing violence in the home; and having a family member attempt or die by suicide' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019).

Furthermore, Howarth (2007) also identified that children and young people's experiences of Neglect will impact them differently at different stages in their life⁵. It is therefore, important that children, young people and their families are supported at the right time in order to achieve positive outcomes through life.

3 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669e7501ab418ab055592a7b/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023.pdf (page 160)

4 <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/advice-and-info/neglect-matters.pdf>

5 Infancy (birth to two years) Pre-School (two to four years) Primary (five to eleven) Adolescence (twelve to eighteen)

Further Considerations of Neglect

Emotional Neglect

Emotional neglect can be defined as a relationship pattern in which an individual's affectional needs are consistently disregarded, ignored, invalidated, or unappreciated by a significant other. People in neglectful families are emotionally disconnected from one another. Parents may struggle to understand their children's needs for love, affection, closeness, and support, or they may feel too overwhelmed or powerless to meet these needs on a consistent basis⁶.

It is important to note that different professional definitions of neglect can affect the way in which it is understood and responded to. When assessing Neglect it is important to recognise the emotional aspect of this and not just the physical aspects.

Pre-Natal Neglect

It is also important to recognise that the definition of Neglect as cited in *Working Together* (2023) also extends to prenatal Neglect of a child as a result of maternal substance misuse. However, other factors which may also contribute to pre-natal Neglect should also be considered. Some further examples, include:

- Parental mental ill health
- Domestic abuse in pregnancy
- Failure to attend medical appointments during pregnancy

We know from research that the first 1,001 days which begins in pregnancy and for the first two years following birth is a critical period in their life⁷.

Chronic Neglect

Tanner and Turney (2003) define Chronic Neglect as the sustained and chronic breakdown in the relationship of care. It occurs when a caregiver repeatedly fails to meet a child's basic physical, developmental, and/or emotional needs over time, establishing a pattern of harmful conditions that can have long-term negative consequences for health and well-being.

Neglect differs from other forms of abuse in that there is rarely a single incident or crisis that draws attention to the family. It is repeated, persistent neglectful behaviour that causes incremental damage over a period of time.

It is important to avoid 'start again' syndrome. Neglect should not only be measured by the most recent set of events but should be judged by the cumulative impact on the child of any previous incidents⁸.

6 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/emotional-neglect#:~:text=Emotional%20neglect%20can%20be%20defined,unappreciated%20by%20a%20significant%20other.>

7 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/973112/The_best_start_for_life_a_vision_for_the_1_001_critical_days.pdf

8 https://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/cornwall_scilly/p_neglect.html

Dental Neglect

Dental Neglect is defined by the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry as: ‘...the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic oral health needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of a child’s oral or general health or development.’⁹

Dental Neglect may be an indicator of a wider picture of child maltreatment. Furthermore, Dental disease in cases of suspected neglect should be assessed in the context of the overall child’s medical, social and developmental stages.

The British Dental Association report that features that give particular concern include:

- severe untreated dental disease, particularly that which is obvious to a layperson or other non-dental health professional
- dental disease resulting in a significant impact on the child
- parents or carers have access to, but persistently fail to obtain treatment for the child, as may be indicated by:
 - irregular attendance and repeated missed appointments
 - failure to complete planned treatment
 - returning in pain at repeated intervals¹⁰

Medical Neglect

Medical neglect involves a failure to seek timely appropriate medical care or treatment for a child. It may include minimising or ignoring a child's illness or health need. It may also include failure to administer medication or treatment regularly/according to instruction and can lead to serious impact on child’s health or development.

Failure to access medical care and treatment can affect all area of a child’s life and development including:

- Risk of serious and potentially life threatening/ life limiting complications such as diabetes or asthma
- Risk of pain and suffering due to untreated conditions such as dental decay
- Impact on development and access to education because of hearing loss or vision problems
- Frequent and/or avoidable emergency treatments (including ED attendances) due to lack of regular/prescribed care

This list is far from exhaustive and in considering the impact of possible medical neglect practitioners must consider

‘what is the impact on this child of not receiving this care/treatment now and in the future’

NICE guidance <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng76> states :

- Consider neglect if parents or carers fail to administer essential prescribed treatment for their child.
- Consider neglect if parents or carers repeatedly fail to bring their child to follow-up appointments that are essential for their child's health and wellbeing.
- Consider neglect if parents or carers persistently fail to engage with relevant child health promotion programmes, which include: immunisation, health and development reviews, screening (see below section on immunisations / vaccinations)
- Consider neglect if parents or carers have access to but persistently fail to obtain treatment for their child's dental caries (tooth decay).
- Suspect neglect if parents or carers fail to seek medical advice for their child to the extent that the child's health and wellbeing is compromised, including if the child is in ongoing pain.

The term '**Was not brought**' (**WNB**) as opposed to 'Did not attend' is preferred and used by health professionals across the City of York as it encourages us to:

- think about the situation from the child's perspective:
- consider how the parents/ carers are responding to the child's health needs
- identify any impact on the child's health and development
- consider what support would help the parents to provide the health care their child needs

Immunisation/Vaccination

There is no requirement in law for parents/carers to provide their child with any form of preventative health care including developmental assessment and immunisation/vaccination. Where parents do not access these services based on informed choice this would not meet the definition of neglect. However, in many instances parents' failure to access these services for the child is not based on informed choice but instead is a result of other factors in their life. In this situation it is important that this is considered as a possible indicator of more pervasive neglect of a child's needs

Actions to take when concerned about possible medical neglect

In order to determine whether a child is being medically neglected, professionals need to consider:

- How much harm has or is being caused, is it mild discomfort or are there severe consequences to the child?
- Is the impact of harm physical or psychological, short- or long-term impact?
- Is it an isolated issue or a regular recurrence?
- Is there imminent danger/impact to the child?

Specific actions will depend on the role of the individual practitioner, but general considerations include:

- Confirm that appointments are being sent to the correct address
- Are there any literacy / communication difficulties? Are interpreters used where needed for both in person and written communication?
- What do the parents/carers know/understand about the child's condition and the prescribed treatments. Are there unsupported learning needs for the parents that impact on this? Can these be supported and addressed?
- Are parents or carers refusing medical treatment due to mistrust of medical professionals / diagnosis or firmly held beliefs in alternative practices.
- Have any barriers to attending appointments been explored sensitively with parents? These may include financial barrier, practical issues, conflicting appointments, parents own experience of health care.
- Are there other indicators of neglect or abuse known? What are the experiences of siblings?
- Is there information on the child or family available from other health professionals such as GP or Healthy Child Service which is relevant?
- Does the child already have an early help, child in need or child protection plan? If so liaison with the lead professional at the earliest point is indicated
- Professional curiosity with an exploration of barriers and early support options is needed before deciding if parental omission in the care of the child is a valid reason for referral to children's services.

Adolescent Neglect

‘Neglect is often thought to become more complex to discern or define as young people develop, enter adolescence and reach maturity. The life stages and transitions involved bring into play dimensions linked to identity formation, greater independence from carers, peer group involvement, and developing autonomy – or emerging adulthood’

Adolescence is generally defined as being from the onset of puberty to the time when a young person becomes independent from their parents, however it is recognised that adolescence is a period of change and can happen at different times for different young people (e.g. there is evidence that children may now be starting puberty earlier than in previous generations - e.g. see de Muinck Keizer-Schrama and Mul, 2001).

The University of York, Neglect matters research suggests that there are significant links between neglect and the family and environmental factors.

‘Understanding adolescents’ experiences, including their family lives, local community and wider social networks, is necessary in understanding adolescent risk and harm’ (Brandon et al, 2020). The recently published review by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel: ‘It was hard to escape safeguarding children at risk from criminal exploitation’ (2020), understanding the nature and level of risk faced by all children (particularly adolescents) is key to determining what services should be provided and when.

Further information regarding adolescence can be within the [City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership Adolescent Strategy](#).

Levels of Need

The City of York Safeguarding Partnership (CYSCP) multi-agency [‘Threshold Document: Level of Need Descriptors’](#) provides a more aligned multi-agency framework for assessing and responding to need and risks of children and young people. This document is a guide and a starting point to assist practitioners to come to a common understanding. It provides help and guidance to practitioners at all levels, working in the statutory, public, voluntary and independent sectors who work with children and their families. It allows practitioners to identify levels of need and risk through the use of indicators related to outcomes. It also supports practitioners in determining how their service can best support and work alongside children.



Our Vision to reduce those Children and Young People who may experience Neglect

Our overarching vision is to **‘ensure that children, young people and their families receive the right help at the right time’ (Working Together, 2023).**

This strategy rests on the following principles, which provides a strategic framework for professionals across the City of York:

- Every Conversation Starts with the Child
- Early Years and Unborn's
- Early Help
- Adolescence
- Multi-Agency shared Understanding and Approach/Response

Our guiding aims of how we will achieve this is based on the Scott and Daniel's 2018 rapid review of the literature on intervention for the Scottish Government¹¹.

As a CYSCP we want to:

Every Conversation Starts with the Child

We want to have a clear understanding of the issues and of the quality of the parent/child relationship. We want to understand what life is like for the child or young person by listening to them and taking notice of their views and opinions. Even if the child or young person is pre-verbal or non-verbal giving consideration regarding their lived experience and what life is like for them living with Neglect is essential.

A Whole Family Approach

We want to provide support that responds to the needs of the whole family. Support will recognise the strengths of families and work alongside them to build resilience. Children and families will be engaged at every stage and their experiences will help shape and improve services.

Build on positive interventions

It may be necessary to focus on addressing contextual problems before it is possible to embark meaningfully on tackling neglect. Practitioners need to explore the reasons behind the lack of care, or to consider how structural socio-economic factors affect family functioning (Johnson and Cotmore, 2015).

Better Understand Parenting Capacity

Parents of neglected children have often been neglected or have suffered maltreatment in their childhood. Their child's expressions of stress can evoke powerful feelings related to past experiences. Some parents of children that experience neglect require nurturing and 're-parenting' themselves, though this should be approached with caution and respect for the fact that parents may be fragile and not ready to receive support.

Build a comprehensive, multi-layered and flexible response

Successful early intervention and prevention programmes include: clear objectives, regular monitoring, clear achievable goals and modifying the intervention based on family need.

We want all children to get the best start in life. Our universal approaches start by supporting all families from before birth of the child. As a basic principle, the first person to offer support to a child or young person and their family should be the professional identifying the issue; this person should complete an assessment that is a whole family assessment using the partnership agreed assessment tool and provide either a single agency response or co-ordinate a team around the child and family. The assessment should be able to be shared with other agencies if there is a need to co-ordinate further support from other agencies.

A strong community offer that builds resilience:

Some parents of children that experience neglect may have poor social skills that make it difficult to maintain relationships. Sustained change will only be brought about if attention is given to a family's social support networks in addition to more individualised interventions. Responses should identify existing social supports and assist with developing new ones.

11 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/tackling-child-neglect-scotland-2-rapid-review-literature-intervention/>

The City of York Council have created a Customer and Communities Directorate with an emphasis on supporting customers, building resilient communities, recognising that local people are best placed to understand and find solutions to the particular needs of their communities.

There will be an increased focus on prevention, early help and asset-based community development working across all life stages. This approach also means creating a wide-reaching Early Help network within communities which will also involve working with those people who are already supported by services to connect them to their communities.

The Customer and Communities Directorate will promote early help for vulnerable families through the co-design of Family Hubs, linked to the Supporting Families agenda to meet the needs of local communities.

How will we support services in delivering effective Interventions when identifying and responding to Neglect in York?

In order to support effective interventions when identifying and responding to Neglect within the City of York, the CYSCP has adopted the Graded Care Profile (GCP2) as their preferred tool when identifying, assessing and responding to Neglect. GCP2 is an evidence-based assessment tool that helps professionals measure the quality of care provided by a parent or carer in meeting their child's needs, particularly where there are concerns about neglect and identify areas where the level of care children receive could be significantly improved.

During 2022, the CYSCP aims to re-launch GCP2 across the partnership to ensure that more professionals are equipped in using the tool.

In addition, the CYSCP have also developed a multi-agency Neglect Screening Tool which can be accessed by all professionals.

What is our collective approach to working with families within the City of York?

The City of York is implementing a strengths based practice model which is centered on **Systemic Practice**. Systemic practice seeks to make sense of the world through relationships, focusing on the whole family system rather than individuals. Through a systemic approach, change can be achieved through exploring relationship patterns and how they impact on children. The practice framework sets out City of York's ambition for the way in which we work with children, young people and families.

This approach links to the broader initiatives of the '**Good Help Model**'

- which focusses on early intervention and prevention, enabling the growth of a wider movement of professionals beyond the existing network
- practitioners know what is happening locally
- families are directed to community resources
- positive change within the community is supported

These principles resonate within the [City of York Practice Framework](#) in encouraging all professionals to come together under a shared 'umbrella' and speak with the same voice.

Priorities

We have developed six key priority areas which this strategy will focus on:

Priority Area 1: Better Understand Neglect across the City of York through development of a data set, learning from audits and through research

Priority Area 2: To re-launch the Graded Care Profile (GCP2) across the CYSCP

Priority Area 3: To systemically review the Neglect Screening Tool

Priority Area 4: Development of a CYSCP multi-agency home conditions tool and practice guidance

Priority Area 5: Equip our safeguarding workforce to respond to training and development needs in respect of Neglect

Priority Area 6: To continue to raise awareness of Neglect and support relevant campaigns.

How will we measure our success?

The CYSCP have identified a number of key objectives in order to measure the effectiveness of this strategy. These are outlined below:

- a) Increase the number of multi-agency practitioners trained in understanding Neglect in the context of York
- b) Increase the numbers of multi-agency professionals trained in GCP2 and confident in using the neglect screening tool to assist early identification of neglect;
- c) Increase in the number of families supported with a multi-agency whole family early help plan
- d) Reduction in the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan under the category of neglect
- e) Reduction in the number of children needing to become looked after as a result of neglect
- f) Increase numbers of children who are school ready
- f) Improve school attendance for children from Early Years through to Secondary School
- f) Reduction in the number of missed medical appointments both prenatally and postnatally. See a reduction in children who were not brought to medical appointments including dental appointments.
- g) Number of multi-agency Neglect audits within the partnership regarding early help/child protection assessment, and plans carried out where the outcome is 'Good Practice'

How will the strategy be monitored?

The CYSCP will develop an action plan in response to those objectives, the CYSCP will also rigorously monitor and evaluate Neglect to establish how effective it is, through various methods such as audits and feedback. This action plan will be monitored by the multi-agency Neglect Task Group which reports to the Safeguarding Professional Practice Subgroup.

The CYSCP will also provide feedback on outcomes and the difference it makes to our stakeholders, including children, young people, and families, to ensure that our partners continue to deliver effective interventions in addressing Neglect in the City of York.

Further Support/Information

If you need information regarding services available to a child and family in their local area, please contact the Family Information Service: fis@york.gov.uk

If you need to make a referral to the local area targeted support service send your completed early help assessment to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub in York (MASH).

If you have a concern that a child is vulnerable or at risk of significant harm please contact the MASH.

The MASH is a multi-agency team made up of representatives from a range of services, including Social Care, Early Help, Police and Health Professionals and is a single point of contact for all concerns about children.

Phone: **01904 551900**

Email: MASH@york.gov.uk

Outside office hours, at weekends and on public holidays contact the emergency duty team telephone: 01609 780780

If you are a member of the public contacting about your own family or a family you know, you can contact the MASH via the telephone number or email address above.

Further information can be found in the early help practice guidance and the CYSCP website: www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk/concerned-about-a-child-or-young-person.htm

Links to Useful CYSCP Multi-Agency Resources

- [Early Help](#)
- [Adolescent Strategy](#)
- [CYSCP Practice Guidance](#)
- [One Minutes Guides](#)
- [Multi-agency Tools](#)
- [CYSCP documents](#)
- [City of York Services for Children and Young People](#)
- [Multi-Agency Training](#)

Links to Other National Resources/Tools

- [NSPCC GCP2 Video](#)
- [NSPCC Graded Care Profile](#)
- [Nice Guidance: Child abuse and neglect](#)
- [Research in Practice: Neglect - mapping resource](#)
- [Ofsted: A professionals response to neglect](#)
- [NSPCC: Child abuse and neglect](#)
- [Action for Children](#)
- [Children's Needs - Parenting Capacity](#)
- [The Children's Society - understanding adolescent neglect](#)
- [DfE: Adolescent neglect - a guide for professionals](#)