

# **NEGLECT STRATEGY**

## **2017 – 2018**

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# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Definition of Neglect.....	4
Impact of Neglect on Children and Young People .....	5
Guiding Principles .....	7
Strategy and Objectives .....	9
Measuring impact .....	12
How we will achieve our objectives.....	13
Governance .....	14
Key Reference Documents.....	15

## Introduction

This strategy has been developed in order to provide a strategic framework to support Haringey's approach to working with and tackling neglect across the borough.

This is because we know that the impact of neglect on children and young people is significant and can be long lasting, including a multi-generational effect of neglect. Neglect causes substantial distress to children and young people, often leading to poor health, education and social outcomes and potentially, can be fatal.

Neglect is the most common form of maltreatment in the UK (NSPCC 2014) and can be both challenging and complex. It is also a factor in the majority of Serious Case Reviews.

Neglect affects children of all ages and can involve a single event, or more usually is the persistent failure to meet a child's needs over time, resulting in the cumulative effect of neglect. In 2016/17, 18.3% of referrals to children's social care were for Neglect.

Neglect is directly linked to the parent or carers capacity to recognise and respond to the child's needs and can also be compounded by poverty, poor housing and economic deprivation which can undermine parental resilience.

This strategy is aimed at supporting practitioners and managers, as well as those with responsibility for commissioning services for children and parents and carers.

## Definition of Neglect

Neglect is defined in **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015** as *"the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional 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. When the child is born, neglect may involve the parents or carers failing to:*

- *Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);*
- *Protect the 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.*

*Neglect is characterised by the absence of a relationship of care between the parent/carer and the child and the failure of*

*the parent/carer to prioritise the needs of their child. It can occur at any stage of childhood, including the teenage years".*

## **Impact of Neglect on Children and Young People**

The impact of Neglect during the first two years of a child's life can have profound and lasting effects on the development of the brain, leading to later problems with self-esteem, emotional regulation and relationships.

Neglect during the first five years of a child's life is likely to damage all aspects of the child's development. A neglected child is likely to have difficulties with:

- Basic trust;
- Self-esteem;
- Ability to control their behaviour;
- Social interaction;
- Educational attainment; and
- Problem-solving.

Neglect in childhood is also likely to lead to problems with aspects of adult life such as:

- Independent living in the community;

- Accepting adult responsibilities;
- Anti-social behaviour such as criminality, substance misuse;
- Increased vulnerability to being in abusive relationships (including the risk of sexual exploitation and being trafficked);
- Life chances and opportunities such as employment and education;
- Parenting - children who experience neglect lack a role model for good parenting, and so are vulnerable to becoming neglectful or abusive parents; and
- Self-care - for example nutrition, general health, risk-taking behaviour.

## Guiding Principles

Haringey's strategy is based upon some guiding principles which frame a shared recognition and response to neglect for our workforce and provide the strategic framework.

- i. **A shared understanding of neglect and its impact upon children.** It is essential that practitioners working in Haringey with children and families have a shared understanding of neglect and its impact. It is an expectation that all practitioners will have read and understood this document, as well as Working Together in Child Protection (2014).
- ii. **Working together as a system.** It is recognised that in order to safeguard children and young people from abuse, including neglect, it is crucial that agencies work together by sharing information and understanding their roles and responsibilities and work together to meet the needs of children.
- iii. **Rights of the child.** We promote the rights of the child in all our work, as set out in the UN Convention and all agencies have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Our workforce will work in a timely and proportionate way in order to protect these rights.
- iv. **Supporting and promoting good parenting to meet the needs of children.** We will use a strengths based approach when working with families to promote good

parenting through support and interventions, in order to tackle the indicators of neglect.

- v. **Early recognition and identification.** We will enable the earlier recognition and identification of the signs and symptoms of neglect, through a focused approach of our Early Help offer with partner agencies. This will mean that early help is of a kind and duration that improves and sustains the safety of children and young people so that it does not reoccur.
  
- vi. **Timely assessment and interventions.** We will ensure that our work with children and families puts the child's needs at its heart, by ensuring that assessments and interventions are provided in a timely and effective way that meets the needs of the child and does not allow persistent and chronic neglect.
  
- vii. **Strong understanding of increased vulnerabilities.** We acknowledge that some children and young people are at an increased vulnerability of neglect and the impact of the neglect such as children with special educational needs and disabilities.
  
- viii. **Ensuring improved outcomes.** We will work together towards improving outcomes for children and young people who have been subjected to neglect through a range of support and interventions.

## Strategy and Objectives

This document supports the Council's strategic objectives, as set out in the corporate plan (2015-2018)

**Priority 1 Best Start in Life** objectives are:

1. All children will have the best start in life
2. Children and young people across Haringey excel at school, making the most of their potential
3. All young people will have access to excellent employment or higher education opportunities
4. Children and young people will be healthier, happier and more resilient, and those who need extra help will get support at the right time
5. Children and families who need more support will be helped earlier before issues escalate
6. All children and young people will be safeguarded from abuse

It is important to understand the local picture in the context of neglect in order to develop a strategy to address the challenges.

There are a number of common features in families where children are neglected which may act as proxy indicators for potential abuse and should support the identification of neglect. These include:

- Substance misuse

- Mental Ill Health
- Domestic Abuse
- Combination of the above

Haringey itself has very high levels of deprivation (6<sup>th</sup> most deprived in London) which often compounds issues like mental health and domestic abuse. Data in the most recent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2015) highlights that Haringey has the 10<sup>th</sup> highest diagnosed prevalence of serious mental health conditions in London. In 2015/16, Haringey had the 5<sup>th</sup> highest rate of recorded domestic abuse in London.

In this context, NSPCC research has identified that some children may be more vulnerable to experiencing neglect, or indeed the impact of neglect, including:

- Children in Care
- Children with disabilities
- Adolescents
- Children under one
- Children born prematurely or with a low birth weight
- Runaway and missing children
- Asylum seeking and refugee children

The impact of neglect is often cumulative, with a gradual deterioration in parenting which is often difficult to identify swiftly enough to prevent harm. It is imperative that all agencies (including health, schools, police, housing and the third sector)

are able to identify emerging problems and provide/seek the support required in order to protect children and safeguard them from harm as early as possible.

The early help offer will also contribute significantly to identifying and supporting families and children who are in circumstances which make them more vulnerable to neglect. This early work will also ensure that where issues emerge, families are supported at the right time so that issues do not escalate and children are not at risk of significant harm, including neglect.

Practitioners should also ensure that family histories are captured and understood so that assessment, support and interventions are timely and effective and do not result in drift and delay.

## Measuring impact

We will measure the success of our strategy upon the following indicators and will monitor them regularly through performance governance.

- Reduction in number of CP Plan re-registrations for Neglect
- Increased service requests to Early help where neglect is an identifying factor
- Increased step-downs from social care to Early Help where neglect is a factor
- Decrease in re-referrals where neglect had been the identifying feature.
- Decrease in children being brought into care due to neglect.
- Decrease in school exclusions and absenteeism.

## How we will achieve our objectives

- We will ensure that all practitioners have access to training and development opportunities to promote the understanding and identification of neglect.
- We will ensure that as part of our Quality Assurance Framework, neglect will be included within our audit plan as well as being embedded within our learning and development offer.
- We will disseminate this strategy to our workforce so that all practitioners understand their role and responsibility in identifying and tackling neglect.
- We will ensure that managers are well equipped to identify common practice 'risks' around neglect (i.e. Drift and delay) and manage these through effective supervision and management oversight.
- We will promote the use of evidence-based tools to identify and tackle neglect. The neglect tool kit should be used to reflect on the child's circumstances, identify the presenting strengths, what we are worried about and what resources can be coordinated. The

toolkit can be used to inform decision making, assessments and planning as well as to track improvements, deterioration and or drift.

- We will ensure that the strategy is robustly monitored through our established governance mechanisms, including an annual report to the LSCB.

## **Governance**

The governance and challenge of this strategy will be provided by the Local Safeguarding Children Board, supported by the Neglect annual report to LSCB and the success measures set out within this strategy.

In addition, Haringey Children and Young People's service will monitor progress around tackling the issue of neglect in Haringey by regularly reviewing success measures as part of the Quality and Performance Network monthly meeting.

## **Key Reference Documents**

[London Child Protection Procedures \(updated 2017\)](#)

[Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2015\)](#)

[Professional-responses-to-neglect-in-the-childs-time \(Ofsted 2014\)](#)

[NSPCC: Preventing Neglect](#)