Haringey Safeguarding Partnership

Haringey Children & Young People Neglect Strategy

2023-2025

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HSCP
Haringey Safeguarding Children Partnership

Introduction

A strategic approach to neglect is critical to all professionals and agencies with responsibility for safeguarding. We know from national research, as well as local experience, that when children are neglected not only does this impact on their development through childhood, but that it will also have an enduring effect on achieving a safe, happy, secure and successful adult life.

The objective of this strategy, therefore, is to strengthen the partnership approach to the challenge of responding to the neglect of children in Haringey.

This strategy seeks to promote a shared understanding of neglect, how it impacts upon children and how multi agency partners' work with families to identify, intervene and support children and families that is consistent across Haringey. The strategy will inform how practitioner skills and systemic processes will be developed to recognise neglect at the earliest opportunity and provide the most appropriate, timely and joined up response to support early intervention and long-lasting change.

The Haringey Mission is:

- To tackle neglect at the earliest opportunity
- To prevent Neglect having a long-term impact and
- To improve the lives of children and young people who are at risk of or have experienced neglect.

The successful implementation of this strategy will organise practitioners from across Haringey to work to protect children who are currently at risk of neglect whilst also anticipating and avoiding a wide range of health and social impacts for future generations of adults and their children.

Defining Neglect

For the purpose of this strategy, Neglect is defined as the persistent failure to meet a child's physical and/or emotional and psychological developmental needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

All professionals need to be knowledgeable, confident and competent in identifying and naming neglect. Neglect in children presents itself through a range of indicators many of which relate to their parents/carers. It is therefore key that this strategy applies to both the children's and adults' workforce across Haringey.

Neglect is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 as: "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 can 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".

Six classifications of neglect outlined by Horwath (2007) include:

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

Ages and Stages

Horwath also noted that children and young people experience the impact of neglect differently at different ages, categorising stages as infancy (0-2), pre-school (2-4), primary age (5-11), adolescence (12-18). It is important to remember that neglect should be seen in the context of each child's individual experiences, and consideration should be given to whether the neglect began in this age group or has in fact been ongoing for several years. All professionals with responsibility for safeguarding children should make themselves familiar with the classifications of neglect and the key indicators and how these impact on children. Given the significance of neglect across the work of the safeguarding partnership, each agency should encourage their workforce teams to dedicate time regularly to refreshing and updating knowledge of neglect.

Why a strategy is needed

Experience of neglect during childhood represents the highest incidence of child abuse both locally and nationally and the science is clear that experiencing neglect may lead to consequences throughout the life course. When children experience neglect, they may also experience:

- cognitive developmental delay which impacts on educational achievement and life chances
- diminished emotional wellbeing, and increased behavioural difficulties
- difficulty in making and keeping relationships
- limitations on parenting skills that perpetuates inter-generational cycles of neglect
- increased exposure to other forms of child abuse because neglect rarely occurs in isolation and by its very nature increases the risk of other forms of abuse to children
- emerging picture of affluent neglect

From a public health perspective neglect in childhood can have long lasting effects which is evidenced through compromised mental health, substance misuse and criminality. The research around adverse experiences in childhood clearly demonstrates the potential for developmental trauma. In turn, may lead to long-lasting impact for how the child is able to learn, their social interactions, develop their sense of self and can have possible life-long impact for a person's health and wellbeing. The Commons Select Committee report Evidence-Based Early Years Intervention (2018) cited that whilst there is no universally agreed definition of an adverse childhood experience (ACE), studies addressing the issue have mostly converged on a similar set of experiences and neglect is included in that.

It follows from the above that early intervention when neglect is identified presents a clear opportunity to safeguard children and improve their life chances into adulthood.

Nationally, we know that:

It is estimated

1 in 10

children experience neglect

48%

of children subject to a child protection under the category of neglect

The percentage of Serious Case Reviews where neglect is a key factor is

60%

Commonly occurring in households where children are neglected is:

Mental Health
Substance Misuse
Domestic Abuse

In Haringey, we know that:

Neglect is identified as a factor in

12%

of all assessments

65%

of children becoming subject to a child protection under the category of neglect in 2022

37%

of children becoming looked after did so due to abuse or neglect, compared with 59% nationally

Concerns about neglect are related to issues of parenting, in particular the impact of :

Substance Misuse

779, or 6%

of contacts made to Children's Social Care in 2022 recorded neglect as a key worry

The proportion of children where neglect is cited as a key factor tends to reduce with age, with most concerns for younger children and infants

14%

of assessments for children under 5 year olds

13%

of assessments for children aged 5 to 10 years old, and...

9%

of assessments for children aged 11 years and above

Learning from Reviews Nationally and Locally

Learning from Haringey children and adult practice reviews, alongside the key findings from DfE Challenge and Complexity: A triennial analysis of Serious Case reviews 2014 –17 outlines the following issues that this strategy seeks to address:

- Poverty blindness—the impact on professionals if they become 'accustomed to working in areas with large numbers of children and high deprivation'. As a result, there may be a normalisation and desensitisation to the warning signs of abuse and neglect. Parents living in poverty often have fewer social, emotional and physical resources; feelings of shame and hopelessness can be a barrier to accepting help. Working with parents and families is an important principle that must be actively promoted through all activities. In line with the Haringey Golden Thread of Practice *'Doing with and Not To'*.
- The approach to achieving lasting change**,** requires clear thinking and understanding that the links between domestic abuse, substance misuse and poverty are complex and often inter-dependent. Addressing a single issue in isolation will not solve the underlying cause or other issues present.
- Short-term solutions followed by non-interventions often leaves children at risk of further harm. Rectifying the physical manifestations of poverty and a chaotic lifestyle does not equate with children being safe. Multi-agency professionals need to undertake assessments through applying a theoretical model of change to be confident that change will be enduring. Understanding the impact of neglect of a child has to come through hearing their voice and focussing on the lived experience through the eyes of the child.
- Information sharing between adult and children's services is critical to the development of realistic plans to safeguard children and support parental change.
- Tools could be implemented more effectively e.g. inconsistent use or misunderstanding of the Haringey multi-agency Neglect Guidance, Toolkit and Checklist.
- Insufficient identification of adolescent neglect and the link with complex adolescent behaviour. Thresholds for safeguarding are applied less clearly especially in the 16-18 age group. Adolescents living in situations of neglect may be particularly vulnerable to having their needs and the risks they face overlooked.

Impact of Covid-19

COVID-19 has altered family dynamics in ways that threaten to put already vulnerable children at increased risk of abuse and neglect. It is important that as a partnership we recognise the impact that the pandemic had on Haringey's children and families. We can identify the additional risks into 3 broad categories.

This requires us to be cognisant of the need for providing practical support to parents to reduce stressors caused by financial insecurity, lack of family or professional support and to recognise the additional victimisation, ensuring that their voice and experience is heard and understood to inform our response.

Increased stressors to parents and care givers

The research review confirms that the risk of child abuse is higher when caregivers become overloaded by the stressors in their lives. There are indications that-the COVID-19 pandemic increased a range of stressors on parents and caregivers.

Increase in children and young people's vulnerability

There are indications that the conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have heightened the vulnerability of children and young people to certain types of abuse, for example online abuse, abuse within the home, criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation, some of this stemming from family situations where parents are neglectful.

Reduction in 'normal' protective services

There is evidence that the 'normal' safeguards we rely on to protect children and young people have been reduced during the pandemic. However social connections and social support can provide a protective effect for children's safety and wellbeing

Scope

We have developed this strategy in conjunction with multi-agency partners working across the Haringey Partnership and it should be considered alongside other key strategies and plans including:

- Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Obesity strategy tool and pathways
- Haringey's Multi-Agency Levels of Need Framework
- Haringey Reducing Infant Mortality (2019-2024)
- Haringey ACEs Trauma Informed Strategy (2019/25)

Haringey is ambitious for its children and young people, placing children at the heart of its vision for the borough with the aim for Haringey to be the UK's youth capital through increased educational attainment, increased work opportunities, a radical improvement in health outcomes and more resilient communities to support people with complex challenges.

All young people have a voice which deserves to be heard. Young people with special educational needs may face additional barriers to communicating and influencing decisions made about their lives. This may include those with:

- Speech, language and communication needs
- Communication and interaction difficulties associated with severe and profound learning difficulties
- Sensory challenges
- Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

Central to this ambition is to ensure that all children and young people in Haringey are safe from harm, happy, healthy and successful. This implementation of the Neglect Strategy will be underpinned by an informed by a range of ideologies that are instrumental in the multi-agency approach to working with children and families in Haringey, this includes Think Family, Signs of Safety and the Haringey multi-agency Neglect Guidance, Toolkit and Checklist. Commonly, neglect in children presents itself through a range of indicators which relate to their parent/carer, it is therefore key that this strategy applies to both the children's and adults' workforce across Haringey.

All agencies – including children's social care, adult social care, health, schools / education, police, probation, housing, voluntary and community organisations - need to be alert to the signs of neglect. This includes alertness to the dangers of 'start again syndrome' and 'parental non-compliance' in order to effectively address neglect and improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

This strategy recognises the potential added vulnerabilities faced by children with additional needs and expects that when considering neglect of children, practitioners will know their agency policy on SEND, which will refer to the SEND Code of Practice 2015. Agencies will ensure their practitioners adopt effective communication strategies to ensure the voices of young people with SEND are heard.

Principles

There is insufficient understanding of adolescent neglect and the link with many of the above risks. These risks require a range of mitigations which will be achieved through working in a culture of high support and high challenge, professional and purposeful supervision, and working to eliminate behavioural biases, to support professionals to achieve the very best standard of thinking. We know that the best outcomes will however only be achieved by ensuring the partnership has a strategy in place. The principles for successful multi-agency working to achieve the vision for Haringey's children and young people can be defined as:

- Child centred practice - our approach to helping the most vulnerable children, young people and families in neglectful situations needs to reflect that the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person is paramount, and they must be kept at the centre of all of our work;
- Voice of the child – in all of our work on neglect, it is vital to hear the child's voice, and to focus on their experiences and understand the impact neglect has had, and is having, on their lives.
- Strength based practice – our approach to working with families is strength based, and our work with families to address neglect must maintain a focus on investing in the relationships we have with children, young people and their families, and with colleagues and partners to improve outcomes, prevent or resolve harm. Practitioners and agencies have a responsibility to offer both support and challenge to families and to each other in order to respond robustly to neglect, whilst appropriately utilising the strengths of the families and using restorative language.
- Participation of parents and carers – as with hearing the voice of the child or young person, so is it equally important that parents and carers are involved in discussions and decision making which impacts on them. Participation of parents and carers supports the restorative approach and ensures that they are able to contribute meaningfully to assessments and plans in relation to them and their families.
- Right conversations, right people, right time – we want children, young people and families to receive the right support and help at the right time, as early as possible. Preventative and early help responses to neglect are critical to avoid issues from escalating and children experiencing further harm;
- Think Family, Work Family – children live in families, and the neglectful environments that some children and young people live in are often linked to the chaotic lives, needs and difficulties of their parents and/or carers. Our approach to neglect must recognise and respond to the needs of all family members holistically; we cannot lose sight of the child in addressing the needs of their parents and carers, or provide children and young people with short-term responses to neglect without addressing the root causes;
- Outcomes based accountability - OBA will support our practice in Haringey to take a step-by-step approach to make an impact on conditions of wellbeing. Practitioners will need to understand how we want those conditions to look and feel, how to measure if this is happening and why; decide who needs to be involved and what practical steps need to be taken.

4 Priorities

1: Strategic commitment across the safeguarding partnership to address neglect

Leadership to drive neglect as a key priority through Haringey's Safeguarding Partnership with neglect as a focus for the Quality, Performance and Outcomes sub-group.

Leadership across the partnership actively promote awareness and identify opportunities to support practitioners' skills development and ability to respond effectively.

2: All Safeguarding partners and professionals to be equipped to recognise and respond to neglect

Training in the use of the Haringey multi-agency Neglect Guidance, Toolkit and Checklist across the partnership to enable best practice.

Promote in Haringey our ways of working that have a strong focus on the voice of the child and working through adaptive partnership with parents, promoting a whole family approach.

Understanding specific vulnerabilities and have appropriate pathways for addressing neglect for children with more complex vulnerabilities (e.g. disabilities, obesity)

Ensure there is consistency in assessing thresholds by which to take action.

Adopt a partnership approach to assessing change that is used in systematically evaluating the impacts of interventions.

3: Prevent neglect and respond at the earliest opportunity

Consistent use of the Early Help Assessment Framework across Early Help to co-ordinate support to children and families.

Ensure through early help communications that families know how to access services at the earliest opportunity.

Consistently using the Signs of Safety model approach across the partnership

Implementing the Haringey multi-agency Neglect Guidance, Toolkit and Checklist as our partnership assessment tool for children subject to Child in Need and above threshold

Professional activity to be focussed on building strength and resilience in families to cease and prevent their children being impacted by neglect.

4: To evaluate our multi agency practice and continually improve its effectiveness so we can reduce neglect of children

Knowing what we have done, how we have done it and how well and in what ways it has made a difference to the lives of children and their families.

Seeing evidence of strengths-based approach across the partnership, which assures we are working with families, with a clear focus on the child's lived experience to inform interventions and decision making.

Continuous reflection and learning to drive our practice and innovation in addressing neglect.

Making Priorities A Reality

This strategy is owned and overseen by the Haringey Safeguarding Children Partnership, who will monitor progress against the strategic objectives on a quarterly basis. A Chair's report on the progress will be presented to the Leadership Group. The success of the strategy will be measured by a range of established and agreed indicators. Anticipated outcomes will include:

- Multi-agency audits of CIN and CP plans for neglect that show good impact of the plan, evidence that the Haringey multi-agency Neglect Guidance, Toolkit and Checklist has been utilised to assist in the decision making to achieve outcomes which are in the child's best interests
- Feedback from parents about their experience of working with agencies in a collaborative manner
- Feedback from children about the impact of being subject to a plan for neglect
- Reduction in the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan under the category of neglect for a second time or more over a 12 month period
- Increase in children supported through Early Help that results in a reduction in referrals to Children's Social Care for neglect

The relaunch of the neglect strategy will be owned, implemented and supported by an action plan drawn up by the multi-agency partnership.