



Warrington Safeguarding Children Board Neglect Strategy



“Every child and young person in Warrington should be able to grow up safe from maltreatment, neglect, bullying, discrimination and crime -receiving help when they need it in a timely and effective manner”

Our Vision: “To ensure that every child and young person in Warrington is safe and has the opportunity to reach their potential.”

1. Definition of neglect

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2014 describes neglect 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 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
- provide clothing or 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

In addition it is important to have regard to the specific needs of children who may suffer:

- medical neglect
- nutritional neglect
- emotional neglect
- educational neglect
- physical neglect
- lack of supervision and guidance

Neglect and emotional maltreatment are chronic conditions that persist over many years. These two types of maltreatment often overlap, but children who are singled out for emotional maltreatment and rejection are sometimes physically well cared for.



1. Introduction

All the recent research into neglect confirms the pervasive and cumulative harm on children and young people of living with neglectful parents and carers. Neglect is also a serious factor in the majority of serious case reviews (60%) and for children of all ages, not just younger children. In these cases, domestic abuse, mental ill health and/or parental substance misuse were common, resulting in neglectful parenting patterns that caused serious harm to children and young people living in these homes including for some contributing to death. The reviews also provide us with evidence that for professionals working with children, young people and families this is one of the most challenging areas of their work.

In Warrington we have prioritised tackling neglect in our Warrington Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) Business Plan 2014-2014 as we want to support improved services and outcomes for our local children and young people impacted by neglect. To support this work we are pleased to present the **Warrington Safeguarding Children Board Neglect Strategy 2014- 16** that establishes the strategic aims, objectives and priorities for Warrington's approach in tackling neglect and identifies a number of guiding principles underpinning all work around neglect. It is informed by

- research
- the Ofsted thematic review "In the child's time: professional responses to neglect: March 2014
- the Ofsted thematic review "What about the children? Joint working between adult and children's services when parents or carers have mental ill health and/or drug and alcohol problems: March 2013
- the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission thematic review "Protecting disabled children: thematic inspection: Aug 2012
- practitioner feedback (both from a practitioner event on neglect and an audit of 12 cases involving neglect that included practitioner forums and the WSCB Practitioner Group) and
- the views of children and young people and adults who were neglected, parents and carers (from home visits following the neglect audit).

The strategy identifies three strategic objectives to enable a focus the quality of practice in relation to neglect across early help, child in need and child protection interventions and the resultant outcomes for children and young people. The WSCB will monitor Warrington's response to neglect giving consideration to examining data and quality assurance information to evidence what improvements have been made.



2. Learning from research

Research has shown that children pre-birth, under 3 years and adolescents suffer the most significant, permanent damage as a consequence of neglect and emotional maltreatment. During these years there is significant brain development and growth that occurs in healthy children, which can be adversely affected if children are not nurtured.

Parental nurture of adolescents, in particular, is crucial. Research has shown that neglect and emotional maltreatment of adolescents is often misunderstood and misdiagnosed by professionals. This is of concern because new research evidence suggests that the damaging impact of this kind of maltreatment on teenagers can be extensive and lasting.

However, neglect and emotional maltreatment of children at other ages should not be underestimated which can result in poor social development with children being withdrawn, socially isolated and less socially competent than their peers.

3. Learning from Ofsted thematic reviews:

The Ofsted thematic review of neglect explored the effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard children who experience neglect, with a particular focus on children aged 10 years and under. The report draws on evidence from 124 cases and from the views of parents, carers and professionals from the local authority and partner agencies.

The Ofsted report found that practice was variable. It states “the findings from this thematic inspection present a mixed picture in respect of the quality of professional responses to neglect. Examples of good practice were identified and in some local authorities professionals have a range of methods and approaches to working with neglect that are making a positive difference for children. However, the quality of professional practice was found to be too variable overall, with the result that some children are left in situations of neglect for too long.”

The report noted the absolute necessity for proactive and skilled management oversight in the complex area of neglect. Professionals require visible and accessible managers so that they are supported to remain objective and to focus on the needs of the child. All staff working with families must be empowered to promote effective challenge in those cases where children’s need for support and protection is not in place.

The Ofsted thematic inspection of services for disabled children was commissioned to evaluate the effectiveness of work to protect disabled children and young people at all stages from early support to the identification of and response to child protection concerns. It identified delays in disabled children who were suffering neglect receiving appropriate services.

The thematic inspection “what about the children” explored how well adult mental health services and drug and alcohol services considered the impact on children when their parents or carers had mental ill health and/or drug and alcohol problems; and how effectively adult and children’s services worked together to ensure that children affected by their parents’ or carers’ difficulties were supported and safe. The report highlighted the lack of signposting to early help by adult services and particular delays in considering the impact of parental mental ill health on children and young people suffering neglect.

4. Learning from practitioners

Practitioners have told us that working together across the professions is key to delivering high quality services to children and young people suffering from neglect. They also noted that opportunities for reflective practice, critical reflection and professional curiosity are keys tools to ensure that practitioners do not become overwhelmed by the needs of parents and so take their eyes of the child and to enable ongoing effective assessment of impact and progress for these children.

Practitioners also told us that it would be helpful to have an agreed tool that all partners used that supports effective measurement of the impact of interventions on reducing the risk of neglect. The WSCB Practitioner Group advised that the research on the effectiveness of Neglect Tools by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) should help to inform the Board on the best tool to use by the partnership. They also advised that the agreed tool should be piloted by the Partnership prior to full implementation to ensure any delivery difficulties are ironed out quickly.

The WSCB Practitioner Group considered the activity of the Public Law Outline and legal proceedings before the Courts locally with respect of cases for children and young people suffering neglect. Their view was that Courts were still to a large extent responding to precipitative events in such cases rather that considering the pervasive and cumulative impacts of neglect on children and young people. They reflected that the Neglect Strategy needed to consider this issue within the context of its objectives.

5. Learning from families

Parents told us they value being treated with respect by practitioners and that this enables them to hear hard messages and to face reality, including risks or harm to their children. Children and young people often felt protective of parents and yet felt it was very important that they were “seen” by practitioners and that their voice was listened to. Practitioners told us that trying to describe a day in the life of the child really helped them to “listen” to what the child’s life was like.



6. Principles underpinning the strategic framework

6.1. Children and young people at the centre

- Children young people and families are at the centre and are able to direct and challenge all we do. Warrington will promote practice that focuses on parents taking

responsibility and being empowered to make sustainable positive changes to their own and their children's lives

- The views of children and young people with regards to what works will inform development and implementation of interventions
- The voice of the child and young person must remain central and not get crowded out by parents who have overwhelming needs. We must not focus on the parents' needs so exclusively that we fail to analyse the impact of adult behaviours on children
- Partners must ensure that front line practitioners and managers recognise and tackle neglect early for children and young people with special needs and disabilities as well as for children and young people who may have additional and more acute vulnerabilities.

6.2. Partnership working

- Enabling a shared understanding of neglect and the pervasive and cumulative impact on the safety, well-being and development of children and young people by all partners including those in Adult Services
- Ensuring the early recognition and identification of the signs and symptoms of neglect and the importance of effective partnership working delivering the Warrington family support model
- Ensuring effective delivery of joined up interventions that protect children and young people when cases become chronic
- Ensuring a 'Whole-Family' approach is owned by all stakeholders
- Ensuring all agencies consider historical information to inform the present presentation preventing each new incident being considered in isolation
- Evaluating vulnerability, need, risk of harm or suffering harm requires information sharing to inform assessments
- Professionals must work together building productive relationships, valuing professional expertise because this is vital to ensure effective identification of neglect, a focused assessment of needs which results in the provision of the right help at the right time. This must include adult mental health services; drug and alcohol services; police and social work services working with families where there is domestic abuse; and services for adults with learning difficulties, working effectively together to assess and agree plans for children who experience neglect
- Partners must ensure front line practitioners and managers develop the ability to measure and quantify outcomes for children and the impact of neglect on their development
- Practitioners must be supported by effective management that enables reflective practice
- In Warrington we have clear and consistent thresholds for progression to care proceedings via the WSCB Threshold Document and the WSCB Escalation Policy so that decisions of partners including children's social care services are challenged where cases are not accepted for assessment or child protection investigation
- Early support should be of a kind and duration that improves and sustains children's and young people's safety into the future.

- Statutory action must be considered if insufficient progress is achieved, when other methods have been unsuccessful or the level of risk presented to the child becomes unacceptable

6.3. High quality neglect training

- Neglect training will ensure practitioners can make direct links between practice and training
- Front line practitioner and manager neglect training will support improved understanding of the early signs of neglect and the cumulative and pervasive impact of long-term neglect based on an understanding of child development and attachment and will include the recognition and management of parental non-compliance and disguised compliance
- Training for managers across the partnership will support the delivery of reflective supervision
- The training provided for front-line practitioners and managers will include the provision of outcomes from contemporary research and best practice in working with neglect

7. Strategic Aim

We want to ensure that early signs of neglect are responded to effectively and ensure the quality of our interventions when cases become chronic result in change and improved outcomes for our children and young people. We want to ensure that we provide a strong partnership response that effectively meets the assessed needs for those children and young people supported by child protection plans in Warrington including those impacted by neglect where Domestic Abuse is a key feature. We recognise that there is scope for improvement in our assessments and planning when working with neglect through listening to the voice of children and young people and reflecting on their lived experience.

To that end we will seek to provide focused strategic leadership to deliver this strategy and will monitor the effectiveness of work undertaken through the Board.



8. Strategic Objectives

8.1. To improve systematic analysis of the different aspects of neglect to effectively monitor the cumulative impact on children and young people living in neglectful situations (across the continuum) through the use of agreed analytical and monitoring tools.

We recognise that assessments are essential to ensuring risks in neglect cases are identified and reduced. In Warrington we will use the Common and Family Assessment Frameworks to ensure neglect is identified early as well as the use of the Combined Assessment when statutory intervention is needed.

- Assessments must recognise the importance of chronologies
- Assessments must give sufficient consideration to the parent–child relationship, attachment behaviour and attention to the child’s emotional and physical development.
- Assessments must evidence understanding of children’s presenting behaviour within the context of neglect.
- Assessments must clearly evidence the child’s views, wishes and feelings including in families with large sibling groups, so that the individual needs of children and the impact of neglect on each child is properly identified and explored in the assessment
- Assessments must address the cumulative impact and likelihood of sustained change

Research evidences that practitioners that use theoretical models, standardised approaches and comprehensive frameworks to support robust assessments of risk in neglect cases in order to systematically monitor change over time achieved the best outcomes.

Therefore assessments should be strengthened by the use of methodologies that assess key areas of risk in relation to neglect to enable practitioners apply structure and systematic analysis to very complex situations. Having a clear focus on different aspects of neglect enables practitioners to effectively analyse the cumulative impact, which in turn informs better planning of intervention to support and protect the children and young people. We will therefore give consideration as to which standardised approaches and comprehensive frameworks (such as the Graded Care Profile or Signs of Safety) we will promote to assess risk in neglect cases to achieve consistency in standards of practice.

The Strategy supports the use of these tools to provide evidence to Public Law Outline (PLO) and Court Proceedings of the cumulative and pervasive impact of neglect in cases where interventions are not reducing risks.

The effectiveness of this evidence to secure legal interventions that recognise the cumulative and pervasive impact of neglect should be monitored by the Board.

The Graded Care Profile was developed as a practical tool to give an objective measure of the care of children across all areas of need by Drs Polnay and Srivastava. The profile gives an indication of care on a graded scale.

www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/resourcesforprofessionals/neglect/graded_care_profile

A sign of safety is a strengths-based and safety organised assessment and planning framework by Turnell and Edwards. www.signsofsafety.net

8.2. To improve understanding of neglect across the whole partnership, including a common understanding of the impact of neglect on child development and the thresholds for intervention.

Staff across the children's workforce will be expected to undertake training, so that there is consistency of practice and application of thresholds. The training will deliver a focused understanding of the impact of neglect on child development and attachment. The training will also include a working understanding of the WSCB Threshold Document and the WSCB Escalation Policy. Each agencies' Board Member will be expected to ensure that staff within their agency has accessed the training.

Training will include

- recognising early signs of Neglect
- supporting families with the right help
- focusing on child's timeframe
- monitoring impact of interventions on reducing risk.
- reflective supervision training for managers across the partnership.

8.3. To improve the way practitioners and their managers engage with parents whilst maintain a focus on the child and young person.

It is difficult when working with neglectful parents to help them make sustained changes and to make these changes quickly. Effective work with parents can take time. However it is critical that practitioners consider all work with parents within the context of the child's timeframe. It may be that change can be made by parents, but if this cannot be made within a timescale that ensures the child or young person is not harmed, the child's needs must come first. Professionals must always maintain a focus on the child or young person's timeframe. There is only a short timescale in which changes to parental behaviour can be achieved if there is not to be potential lifelong damage to children and young people.

Professionals must undertake assessments that appropriately assess neglect, provide the right supports to parents to make the necessary changes whilst making sure the child or young person safety and well-being is not compromised by long periods exposed to neglect.

Evidence shows that there is a close relationship between improved outcomes for children and young people and the effective engagement of parents. In Warrington we will support a range of approaches to work with parents, provided professionals are consistent and clear with parents, with frank and open discussions about the nature of professionals' concerns and the changes that professionals' expect, including timeframes that will protect the child or young person.

We know that a common feature of neglectful parents when working with professionals is using techniques of non-compliance or 'disguised compliance'. We want to ensure professionals demonstrate clear strategies to manage this behaviour. For example professionals must act assertively and in line with written agreements escalating cases or using Public Law Outline arrangements when parents have not followed through with actions agreed. Professionals

must be alert to being manipulated by parents or to giving them too many chances or ending and then resuming interventions.

Therefore in Warrington we will seek to ensure that practitioners and managers use reflective practices, reflective supervisions, the use of chronologies and centile charts and careful monitoring of timescales to ensure that there is not drift. We will also seek to ensure that practitioners have the skills and resources to engage and support parents to make the changes needed.

9 Key indicators for measurement of the effectiveness of the strategy

It is important that measures of success are established and agreed. The following outcome indicators will demonstrate the effectiveness of the strategy and its implementation:

- increase in the number of early help assessments
- Effective joint working between the WSCB and Warrington Safeguarding Adult Board to influence the delivery of services to work together to support parents and to ensure risks to children and young people are reduced
- Practitioner attendance on Training
- Effective use of agreed standardised approaches and comprehensive frameworks to support early help assessments and across the continuum to chronic cases. To monitor the use of such tools to secure evidence in PLO and legal proceedings.

It should be acknowledged that in the short to medium term, through improved recognition of neglect etc. there may be an increase in some of the above indicators.

