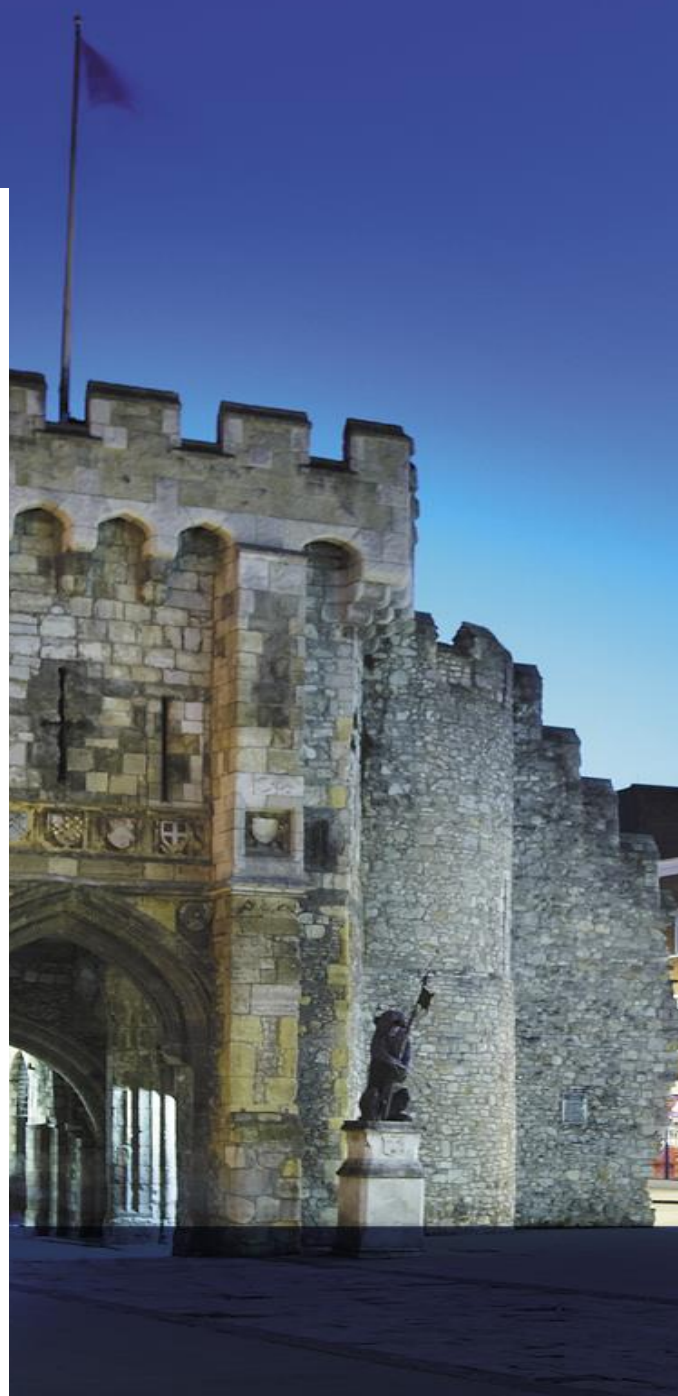


Southampton Neglect Strategy 2022

DECEMBER 2021

Southampton Safeguarding Children's
Partnership - SSCP



SOUTHAMPTON SAFEGUARDING
CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

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With thanks to Hampshire Safeguarding Childrens Partnership on which some of the information and tools are based.



Foreword

Harry Kutty - Chair of the Aspire Community Trust and Headteacher of Cantell School

As a Headteacher of a large comprehensive secondary school and Chair of a Trust of schools within Southampton I have seen first-hand, the damage neglect can cause to young people's life chances. Children deserve a fundamental right to be loved, looked after, cared for, and educated. We know that sometimes children's access to this right can be hindered by neglect and it is important that as a City we are able to identify and respond to this as early as possible.

It has been my pleasure to chair the Neglect Strategy Task and Finish group consisting of representatives from a range of services across the City of Southampton. Our aim was to ensure we refreshed and relaunched a multi-agency strategy and toolkit aimed at effectively responding to the neglect of young people within our City.

I strongly believe that neglect is a precursor to other issues that are rightly very much in the public eye; child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, domestic abuse, and mental health difficulties into adulthood. Many of these very serious safeguarding issues have been exacerbated over the last 19 months with the impact of COVID-19 and it is therefore absolutely the right time to ensure a refresh of the strategy leads to life changing outcomes.

Put simply, if we can respond early, effectively, and together, our young people will be so much more able to thrive and live positive lives. Communication, Clarity and Consistency is the key to tackling neglect.

With thanks to members of the Neglect Strategy Task and Finish Group and all contributors to this piece of work.

Harry Kutty
Chair of the Aspire Community Trust
Headteacher of Cantell School



Introduction

Neglect is one of the Southampton Safeguarding Children's Partnership (SSCP) ongoing priority areas of work. It has featured in almost every serious case review and partnership review in Southampton in recent years. The effects of neglect on children are significant, in their childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood. Sometimes the effects are fatal. Practitioners can wrestle with issues of what constitutes neglect and when to refer to the Childrens Resources Service (CRS) or escalate concerns. The resources and toolkit are there to support

practitioners. Please use this support and remember to always discuss any concerns you may have with your designated safeguarding lead, supervisor or manager.



Strategy Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to develop understanding of the indicators of neglect to enable practitioners to respond to children's needs as soon as possible. This strategy aims to ensure that all agencies work together so that anyone who encounters children and young people are able to recognise and respond to cases where a child or young person may be at risk of neglect.

This strategy is applicable to all professionals who work with children and young people (including unborn babies) and their families across Southampton. It aims to build on existing good practice and promote more effective ways of working.

We recognise that partnership working is essential to effecting positive change for children, young people and families and this is essential to ensure that the priorities of this strategy are successfully met.

Accompanying this strategy is the newly refreshed toolkit with a range of tools to support practitioners in their roles which provides practical assistance in recognising neglect. Throughout this Strategy, the toolkit, and in all work with children, partners in Southampton agree that:

- The wellbeing of the child is paramount and must never be secondary to the parent/carer's needs.
- The voice of the child must be sought, and if the child is not able to have a voice, this in itself should be regarded and recorded as a concern.
- Working in partnership and sharing information is key to tackling this multi-faceted issue.

Equality and diversity Considerations

“The Children Act 1989 promotes the view that all children and their parents should be considered as individuals and that family structures, culture, religion, ethnic origins and other characteristics should be respected” (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018)

In the development of this strategy and the toolkit considerations for diversity relevant to; age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation have been considered. This has been achieved by retaining a clear focus on positive outcomes for children and their families. Within the strategy it is recognised that information is accessed in different ways. The impact of disability in the family is considered and associated tools have been developed to support accessibility and understanding for these families.



What is Neglect?

Definition

Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE 2018) defines 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, 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”.

Neglect is the most common form of child abuse. In Southampton we recognise neglect as the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs in order for them to thrive. Neglect means that a child may be left hungry or dirty without adequate clothing, shelter, supervision or medical care. A child may be put in danger or not protected from harm. Neglect also includes psychological and emotional harm.



Types of neglect

- Physical - when a child's basic needs associated with food, clothing and shelter are not met, e.g. not providing appropriate clothing, food, cleanliness and living conditions
- Emotional - When a child doesn't get the nurture or stimulation they need to form secure and positive attachments e.g. they are ignored, humiliated or isolated.
- Supervisory - When a child fails to be provided with adequate guidance and supervision to protect them from harm e.g. leaving them alone or with inappropriate carers or abandoning them
- Nutritional - When a child is provided with inadequate calories for normal growth/'to thrive' or when childhood obesity occurs due to provision of an unhealthy diet.
- Medical - When a child is denied medical or dental care, to treat or prevent an illness or condition e.g. ignoring or refusing recommendations and failing to seek medical attention.
- Educational - When a child's is not given access to education e.g. parents/ carers fail to send them to school, fail to support their learning, respond to special needs or show an interest in the child's education.

Vulnerable groups

Any child can suffer neglect. But the NSPCC, in their report *'Neglect is also child abuse – know all about it' (2021)*, recognise that some children and young people are more at risk than others. These include children who:

- are born prematurely
- have a disability
- have complex health needs
- are in care
- are seeking asylum.

Other problems and life circumstances can make it harder for parents and carers to meet their child's needs. When one or more of these issues occur, it can put a child at risk of neglect.

Neglect - The Local and National Picture

National Picture

The *'NSPCC Statistic Briefing: Neglect, 2021'* identifies that for the UK as a whole, neglect is the most common form of abuse given as a reason for child protection plans or registrations. Over 29,000 children across the UK were the subject of a child protection plan or on a child protection register because of neglect in 2019/20, making it a concern for 50% of all children on a plan or register. Just over 26,000 of these children were in England.

In England, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel received 482 serious incident notifications between 1 January and 31 December 2020. 276 related to nonfatal injuries, of which 12% related to neglect as the primary form of serious harm.

Neglect was also mentioned as an underlying feature in 34% of non-fatal incidents and 35% of fatal incidents. (*Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, 2021*)

In 2020/21 the NSPCC's helpline responded to a total of 84,914 contacts from people who were concerned about a child's welfare. 12,833 contacts related to concerns about neglect, making it the 2nd most discussed concern and the most commonly mentioned form of abuse.

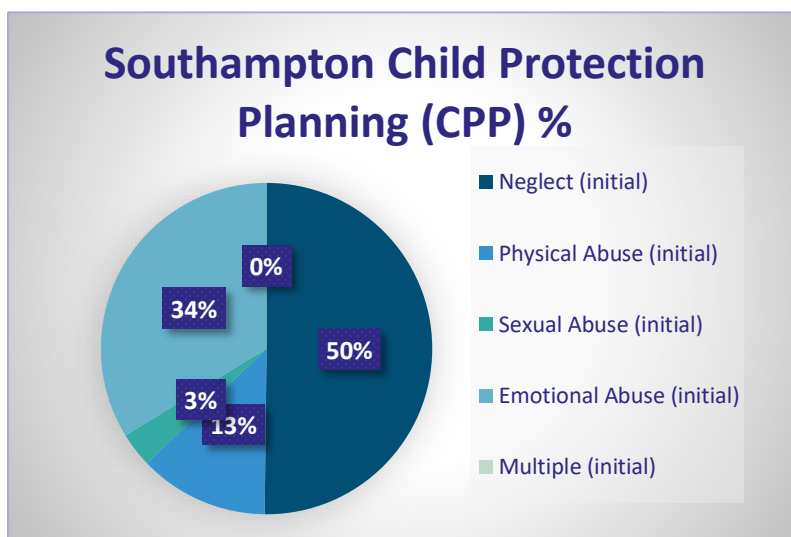
'NSPCC Statistics Briefing: Neglect, 2021' states that 1 in 10 children in the UK have been neglected. Furthermore, neglect is the most commonly mentioned form of abuse by adults

contacting the NSPCC helpline. However, less than 1% of Childline counselling sessions are about neglect, possibly because children often don't recognise their experiences as neglectful.

Child protection plan data, at 31 March 2020 available for England only, shows that younger children were more likely to be on a child protection plan because of neglect than older children. However, research suggests that the neglect of older children is more likely to go overlooked as signs of neglect may be more difficult to identify in older children and there can be an underestimation by professionals of older children's need for parental care and support (*Growing up neglected: a multi-agency response to older children, Ofsted et al, 2018*).

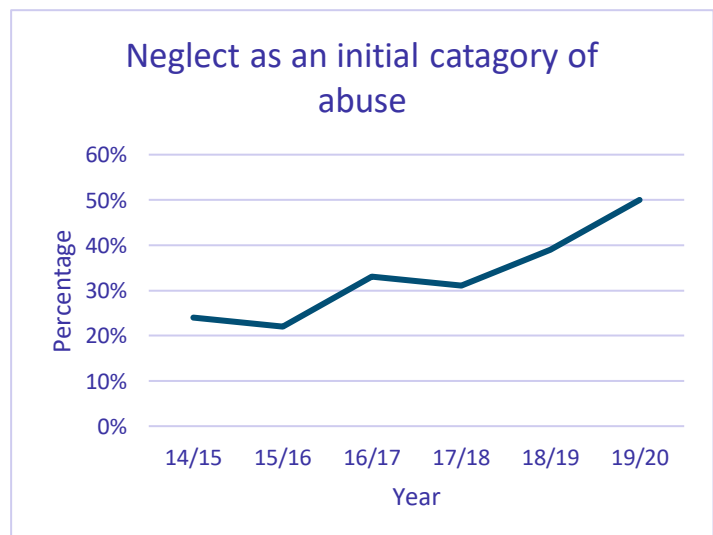
Local Picture

Neglect features regularly arising in Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) and is often combined with other areas of harm.



Local data shows that in 2019 -2020, 50% of children from Southampton, who were subject to child protection planning, had neglect identified as the initial category.

Previous year's figures illustrate an increase in neglect as the initial category of abuse in child protection plans:



In addition, further data shows potential areas for concern in Southampton:

- Obesity and severe obesity in children aged 10-11 years is recorded at 24% with regional figures at 18% (2019/20)
- Emotional wellbeing of our children and young people - there are higher rates of hospital admissions for self-harm (10-24 year olds) in Southampton 683.5 per 100,000 in Southampton, regionally 508.9 per 100,000, 2019/20)
- Alcohol misuse by our young people-with a rate of 49.2 per 100,000 hospital admissions for alcohol specific conditions for under 18 year olds. Regional figures are 31.2 per 100 000. (2019/2020)
- Substance misuse by our young people-with a rate of 106.7 per 100,000 hospital admissions for substance misuse for under 15-24 year olds in Southampton. Regional figures are 77.8 per 100 000. (2019/2020)
- 29% of children in Southampton did not achieve a good level of development (GLD) at the end of reception Regional figures show 25%
- 18.2% of Southampton children are in absolute low-income families (under 16s). This is 11.1% across the south East Region.

Voice of families

Neglect – a child’s experience:

‘My mum allowed me to stay out late and come home when I wanted, she loves me, but I was worried that I would be taken away and put into care and that she would get into trouble. I always had to do a lot around the house and help with my brothers and sister. At first, I thought the social workers just interfered, they kept changing, I didn’t really know why they were



there. Now they have got involved, I have a time that I have to be home, which I don’t like, but I don’t have to help out as much at home anymore mum does more. Also, they have helped with sorting us all out with our own beds and we all have school uniform that fits so that’s good.’

Neglect – a parent’s experience:

I had a very negative attitude towards Social workers, especially after listening to what other people said. That is why I never asked for any help when we were struggling for money and just getting by with food. This is how I was brought up, so I didn’t see it as a problem. I didn’t really

know what neglect was and I didn't know that I was neglecting my children. I couldn't really understand what people were worried about, I was alright when I was young, and this is how I grew up. When the social worker got involved, she helped me to see what the issues were which meant that I was able to make changes. I was hard though especially when the social worker changed, it took a long time to build trust with the new one and I felt like I was starting over again.

Voice of practitioners

Practitioners have reported that after extensive use of the toolkit, they find it very helpful, particularly using visual aids where families find this useful in developing a shared understanding of what may be areas of concern.

Strategic Priorities

Aims

The strategic aim of the Neglect Strategy is to prevent and reduce the impact of neglect and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Southampton. In order to fulfil this aim, it is imperative that neglect is recognised early, prevented and that all agencies involved in the care and support of children and families work in partnership to effectively, collectively and consistently respond to all children considered to be at risk of neglect.

To support the implementation of this strategy and to ensure that 'neglect' is widely understood and responded to in joint working arrangements, the SSCP will focus on the following priorities:

- **Prevention** – the SSCP and partners commit to raising awareness and understanding of neglect to enable multi-agencies to focus on identifying and supporting children and families where there is risk of neglect.
- **Intervention** – the refreshed Neglect Toolkit provides practitioners with practical information on the indicators of neglect, practical tools and what to do to help.
- **Quality Assurance** – the SSCP monitors the impact of the tool kit through the Safeguarding Practice Improvement Group.

Quality Assurance

How will we know that we have met our priorities?

The SSCP and partners have developed an action plan which provides details on how we will meet these priorities (see appendix A)

Workforce Development

Continuing high quality professional development for all practitioners with safeguarding responsibilities is imperative. Training for front-line practitioners is key to ensure they are up to date with major features of neglect.

The SSCP runs regular Neglect Training which is free of charge and accessible by all agencies in Southampton. All agencies are also hold responsibility for ensuring that their workforce is well trained and informed with the most up to date information.

In addition to training, supervision has a crucial role to play in ensuring that practitioners are supported in their thinking and decision making, and also through the emotional demands of the role. Supervision should aim to provide safe but a challenging space to oversee and review cases and offer opportunity to bring a ‘fresh pair of eyes’ to the situation. Discussion in supervision should focus on the risk factors for the child and actions to negate these risks, for further information and visit the HIPS procedures for the full version of the [Supervision Standards](#)

The role of Early Help and Prevention



“Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child’s life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can also prevent further problems arising; for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where

a child has returned home to their family from care, or in families where there are emerging parental mental health issues or drug and alcohol misuse.”

Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018

What is Early Help?

The right early help services at the right time can prevent emerging problems from getting worse and becoming deep seated or entrenched. Through our Early Help Strategy we aim to improve outcomes for children and families in Southampton and at the same time reduce the demands upon specialist and statutory, higher tier services.

When a child/young person/family needs something extra, Early Help is the initial response offered by all services in contact with children, young people and families. This builds an understanding to address extra needs and prevent situations from getting more difficult for children and young people. The aim of Early Help is to build on people's capacity and resources to manage their own dilemmas, resolve their own difficulties and prevent further problems in the future.

In Southampton, most children, young people and family's needs are met by universal services (services that are available to everyone). For those children and families who need some additional help, our Early Help Services will provide support and expertise to the child and family. Building on a One Family, One Worker, One Plan principle our Early Help Assessment, will ensure they receive all the support they deserve.

Aim of Early Help

There are a number of common aims to Early Help, including:

- To promote early intervention to assist children, young people and families who have vulnerable or complex needs and are therefore vulnerable to poor outcomes
- To share information and complete holistic assessments
- To plan and deliver SMART, planned interventions in response to need at the earliest opportunity
- To provide services to improve outcomes for children, young people and families
- To review and measure outcomes for children, young people and families
- To work in partnership with children, young people and families in the assessment process
- To avoid repeat interviewing of children and families and duplication in assessment processes

Problems can occur at any time in children's lives and our services need to be responsive to emerging needs at all ages. Early Help is not just aimed at preventing abuse or neglect but at ensuring the best start and improving the life chances of all children and young people, by working with their families.

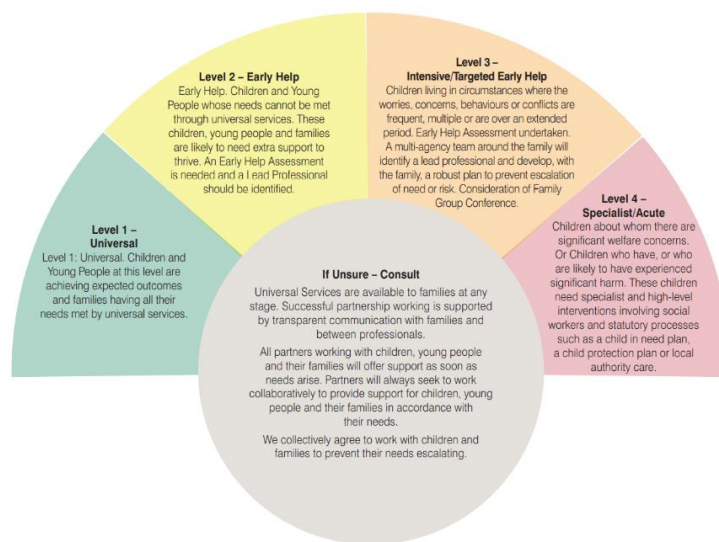
In Southampton, the early help system is made up of service users, community resources, universal service providers and targeted services working together to enable families to manage their own dilemmas and solve their own problems, making whatever changes are necessary to secure the well-being of their children, enabling appropriate risk management in the community and a proportionate response to risk and need.

The Southampton Early Help Assessment is a tool used by all partners to assess the Early Help needs of a family and individual family members. It can be used by schools, health, housing or any prevention and early help service across Southampton. It assists practitioners in a range of settings to assess the need of children and their families. It is a multi-agency gathering of information in order that any additional needs within a family can be understood and the process of providing or accessing support can begin.

If at any point in the process, a child or young person is considered to be at risk of significant and immediate harm, a call to the Police may be necessary.

For all Early help support consent must be obtained.

The Early Help Assessment should be completed for families where there is a concern around neglect. The [Southampton Pathways Document](#) (which is planned to replace the continuum of need) demonstrates when an assessment should be used:



Childrens Resources Service - CRS

If you have concerns about a child who is at risk of harm, you can make a request for service online. If you wish to discuss your concerns with a member of the team first, please contact the CRS during office hours.

Telephone number for members of the public: 023 8083 3004

Telephone number for professionals: 023 8083 2300

Email address: Childrensresourceservice@southampton.gov.uk The 'Request for a Service' form can be completed online at: www.southampton.gov.uk/childrensocialcare

Call 999 if it is an emergency and the child is in immediate danger.

Further guidance and support can be found in the [SSCP Neglect Toolkit](#)

We will review this strategy in 2023

References

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- Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (2021) Annual report 2020: patterns in practice, key messages and 2021 work programme (PDF). London: Department for Education. [The Child Safeguarding Annual Report 2020 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/978210/Child-Safeguarding-Annual-Report-2020.pdf)
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- [Southampton Data Observatory](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/about-us/southampton-data-observatory/)
- NSPCC - [Neglect is also Child Abuse: Know All About It | NSPCC](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/press-releases/neglect-is-also-child-abuse-know-all-about-it/)

Appendix A



Neglect Strategy- Action Plan 2021

| Priority | Lead | Activity | Key Performance Indicators | Baseline | Target Date | Progress | Impact on Children and families |
|---|------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|----------|---------------------------------|
| <p>Prevention – the SSCP and partners commit to raising awareness and understanding of neglect to enable multi-agencies to focus on identifying and supporting children and families where there is risk of neglect.</p> | SSCP, Partners & Relevant Agencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh of strategy and toolkit • Launch event • Follow ups to event • SSCP continue to commission half day Neglect Training which is free of charge to practitioners across all agencies in Southampton. • Spotlight updates • Early help and neglect forum – held frequently – focus on different areas, ACES, Substance misuse etc • Provide in depth case studies that support understanding of identifying risks of neglect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategy and toolkit will be available and easy to navigate • Practitioners will feel knowledgeable and have guidance to refer to • Practitioners know where to find information (signposting has been supportive) • Evaluation link for toolkit users to feedback • Reduction of CPP's where neglect is the initial category • Training attendance is <u>good</u> and feedback gained • Practitioners are <u>able</u> to identify and intervene where there are risks of neglect before it progresses. | 50% of CPP has neglect as initial category (2019) | Determined ready for launch in February | | |
| <p>Intervention – the refreshed Neglect Toolkit provides practitioners</p> | SSCP, Partners & Relevant Agencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toolkit available to practitioners on website and easy to navigate • Clarify the Early help pathway | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners are confident to identify neglect and respond appropriately. | NA | Ready for February launch | | |



Neglect Strategy- Action Plan 2021

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|---|---|--|--|-----------|---|--|--|
| <p>with practical information on the indicators of neglect, practical tools and what to do to help.</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglect forum frequently to support workforce • Seek family feedback on interventions • Visual guides to support families • Spotlight updates • Guidance and toolkits will reinforce a restorative approach • Restorative practice as a neglect forum topic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring the uptake of groups and services offered to families • Family feedback on interventions • Monitor the amount of early help referrals • Feedback from families and practitioners about the restorative approach – success rates of restorative interventions | | <p>Feedback mechanisms decided in monitoring and guidance group</p> | | |
| <p>Quality Assurance the SSCP monitors the impact of the tool kit through the Safeguarding Practice Improvement Group.</p> | <p>SSCP, Partners & Relevant Agencies</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action plan written and managed • Review by the monitoring and evaluation group • Management of monitoring activity • Audits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure the number of 'hits' of the refreshed toolkit • Pre and post launch evaluations • Staff evaluations | <p>NA</p> | | | |