

JOINT STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

THEME: Safeguarding

TOPIC: Neglect

Why is this important?

To effectively safeguard children and young people from neglect requires professionals working in all areas to be curious and inquisitive about family circumstances and events. Child neglect can be multifaceted and the impact enduring; it often involves a broad set of circumstances which can only be pieced together through the accumulation of evidence.

Evidence has indicated neglect can slowly and persistently erode self-esteem leaving children isolated, disengaged and disconnected socially.

Neglect is not absolute or scientifically measurable. It is relative and relies on a series of complex interagency judgements. Neglect encompasses several different domains, these are:

- Medical - minimising or denying health needs
- Nutritional – failing to provide appropriate nutrition which may result in faltering growth or obesity
- Emotional – being unresponsive to the child’s basic needs for interaction and support
- Educational – failing to provide stimulation in early years to support learning in school age children
- Physical – failing to provide adequate living conditions, warmth, food and clothing
- Lack of supervision and guidance – failing to provide appropriate supervision to ensure safety of young children and to provide information and guidance on common risks for older children

<http://bjsw.oxfordjournals.org/content/38/3/601.extract>

The causes of neglect are also complex. Crittenden (1999) suggested three common presentations which are not mutually exclusive:

- Disorganised neglect which occurs in multi-problem, disorganised, crisis ridden families
- Emotional neglect which might occur in families who are relatively materially advantaged but fail to connect with their children emotionally
- Depressed neglect where parents may be unable to perceive their children’s needs or to believe that any change is possible

Crittenden, Child neglect: causes and contributors in Dubowitz H (ed) Neglected Children: Research, practice and policy. Sage Publications, pp47-68

There is often an intergenerational factor whereby parents themselves experienced impaired levels of parenting which they replicate with their own children. It is important

to recognise that patterns of parenting and family life can be very longstanding and entrenched with complex underlying issues.

Research and experience have shown that all forms of neglect damage children's development. The effects are cumulative and pervasive and can cause long term damage. It has been shown that neglect has an irreversible impact on the physical development and growth of the brain. Neglected children may have difficulty in learning, in regulating behaviour and emotional and stress responses.

Adolescent neglect is widespread and can have serious consequences including risk taking behaviours, self-harm and suicide. Other types of abuse may occur in the same family and may escalate concerns but it is the day to day neglect which leads to the most harm for the child. The risk of serious harm or death from neglect may be as high from physical abuse due to inadequate supervision, inadequate nutrition or healthcare.

Research shows that neglect of adolescents is more common than might be expected and that it may be linked to adolescents' problem behaviours. The response to adolescent neglect is usually poor, and this is partly due to incorrect assumptions that teenagers are naturally resilient, but also because safeguarding responses do not differentiate between younger and older children.

<http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/troubled-teens-policy-and-practice-briefing.pdf>

There is considerable research and evidence to show that living in situations of neglect, and its long term cumulative impact, damages children. Ofsted reports that all aspects of a child's development can be adversely affected, including physical and cognitive development, emotional and social wellbeing and the child's mental health and behaviour.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419071/In_the_child_s_time_professional_responses_to_neglect.doc

Nationally, neglect is identified as a serious factor in the majority of Serious Case Reviews and it is the most common reason for children becoming subject of a child protection plan.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/neglect-serious-case-reviews-report.pdf>

There are a number of well accepted definitions of neglect, set out in the Children Act 1989 and restated in Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department for Education, 2013). Neglect is defined 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), or
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs”.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419595/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf

The Manchester Picture

Manchester's Children's Services serves a population of approximately 124,000 0-18 year olds (mid 2015 population estimate). Children and young people under the age of 20 years make up 25.6% of the population of Manchester. 60.9% of school children are from a minority ethnic group.

The Child Health Profile 2017 provides evidence of higher levels of need in Manchester compared to the rest of the country. The health and wellbeing of children in Manchester is generally worse than the England average. This includes:

- a significantly higher rate of young people in care
- significantly more families experiencing homelessness and more children in low income families
- significantly worse educational attainment from being ready for school at reception to GCSE results
- significantly worse oral health including decayed/missing teeth and hospital admissions for dental caries at age 0-4 years
- significantly more obese children at reception age and in year 6

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile-group/child-health/profile/child-health-overview>

Manchester is ranked 5th in the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015. In addition there is a high level of child poverty with 36.4% of children aged under 16 living in poverty – compared to 22.5% in the North West and 20.6% in England.

Most recently published data shows the following as at 31st March, 2016:

There were 1,235 Looked After Children (rounded to nearest 5, 105 per 10,000 child population)

By comparison the rate for Statistical Neighbours* is 93 per 10,000 child population

Of the children looked after by Manchester City Council, 41% had neglect specifically identified as a factor.

There were 840 children on a Child Protection Plan (rounded to nearest 5, 71.6 per 10,000 child population)

By comparison the rate for Statistical Neighbours* is 62.9 per 10,000 child population

Of the children in Manchester on Child Protection Plans, 57% were on the plan for a primary reason of neglect and 76% had neglect recorded as a factor. The percentage for Statistical Neighbours* was 36.6%.

In addition 18% of Children in Need on 31st March 2016 had neglect recorded as a factor.

*Manchester's Statistical Neighbours:

Birmingham, Bristol, Coventry, Greenwich, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle on Tyne, Nottingham, Southampton and Salford.

What would we like to achieve?

'Our Manchester, Our Children: Manchester's Children and Young People's Plan, 2016-2020' sets out how a wide range of organisations and partners from across the city will deliver a shared vision for children and young people. The plan identifies priorities under four outcome themes; safe, happy, healthy and successful. These were chosen to encapsulate the broad range of things we want to achieve as a city.

Safe: All children and young people feel safe, their welfare promoted and safeguarded from harm within their homes, schools and communities.

The plan states that we will work to;

"...intervene with children and their families in a more timely way to ensure that they get the right service at the right time, thus preventing abuse and neglect and the unnecessary escalation of need."

The Children and Young People's Plan is one of a number of key integrated strategies that set out the city's ambitions and promote the wellbeing and resilience of children, young people and their families. These include the Early Help Strategy, the Early Years New Delivery Model and the Family Poverty Strategy.

http://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/6610/our_manchester_our_children

The Manchester Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) Business Plan 2015-17 identifies the significance of Neglect as one of the challenges for Manchester and includes as an action:

'Understand why Manchester has such high levels of neglect in Child Protection and require our agencies to implement our neglect strategy'

<http://www.manchesterscb.org.uk/docs/MSCB%20Business%20Plan%202015-17%20published%20090315.pdf>

The MSCB Neglect Strategy for Children, Young People and Families 2017-2019 identifies a number of Guiding Principles which provide a framework to underpin practice and the approach to working with children and families where neglect is a feature, across all levels of need:

- Ensure the safety and well-being of children, young people and their families is paramount.
- Demonstrate a commitment to ensuring safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children, young people and their families is seen and understood as being everyone's responsibility.
- Recognise that the experience of neglect and its detrimental impact is not confined to young children and occurs across all ages and can occur in all parts of our communities
- Recognise children with special needs and disabilities have equal rights to protection from neglect and we will ensure that practitioners are trained to recognise and tackle neglect for this vulnerable group of children.
- Neglect should be identified at the earliest opportunity to ensure children and young people at risk of or those experiencing neglect receive the necessary support in order to reduce the escalation of concerns.

- Provide timely help and support to children, young people and their families at the earliest opportunity in order to avoid wherever possible intrusive and costly statutory interventions will be the last resort where the level of risk to the child makes it a requirement.
- Work with children, young people and their families using the Signs of Safety model and approach, building strength and resilience rather than promoting dependency. We are committed to 'do with, not to' families.
- Make sure where there are concerns about the safety of a child or young people, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations will reduce the risk of harm and enable us to provide a joined up response.
- Measure the impact of the effectiveness of work with children, young people and their families where Neglect is a feature. We will challenge ourselves to develop and improve by asking ourselves - Did our work result in improved outcomes for children and young people and a reduction in their experience of Neglect?
- In all that we do ensure voice of the children and young people is heard and that we are able to understand their daily lived experience when considering their needs.
- Offer learning and development opportunities the children's workforce working across all levels of need aimed at ensuring there is a shared understanding of neglect, promoting the safety and well-being and of child development.
- When planning learning and development opportunities take into account children, young people's and families' own feedback and their own personal experiences.
- Avoid 'start again' and ensure professionals carefully consider historical information when making decisions, reviewing progress and developing plans to inform the present position and repeat at times of significant change as well as review at regular intervals.
- Evaluate vulnerability, need, risk of harm or suffering harm requires effective information sharing and encouraging our children's workforce to be curious and inquisitive about family circumstances and events and also requires different professionals to be challenging of each other about improvement made by families and its sustainability.
- Consider Neglect in the context of other risk factors. Neglect often co-exists with other forms of abuse or risk factors so this strategy must link with other board work streams and priorities; for example domestic abuse, substance misuse and adult mental health, child poverty and youth homelessness.

www.manchestersafeguardingboards.co.uk/resource/neglect/

Greater Manchester

Manchester is contributing to the development of the Greater Manchester Safeguarding Partnership Neglect Strategy and recognises that there are opportunities to work with partners and partnerships across Greater Manchester to tackle child neglect. The vision

of the GM Strategy is that action is taken at the earliest opportunity to prevent neglect and that this will be achieved by:

Preventing

Nipping neglect in the bud; developing a shared understanding of the early indicators of neglect; listening to children's experiences; providing pathways for universal services to take action; and creating and maintaining positive change.

Intervening

Developing confident workers; making sure our workforce have the skills, knowledge and tools to understand why neglect happens, build trusting relationships with children and their families to deliver effective interventions.

Protecting

Taking decisive action; making the right decisions in the child's time when working with families supported by a strong evidence base and analysis of parental capacity to change.

National

Due to the continuing high levels of Neglect and the consistent findings from both research and inspections, Ofsted highlight the importance of:

- early recognition
- robust management oversight and supervision
- specialist training
- acknowledgement of the complexity of this work
- effective and timely responses to meet the needs of the child for both help and protection

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419071/In_the_child_s_time_professional_responses_to_neglect.doc

What do we need to do to achieve this?

The MSCB Neglect Strategy for Children, Young People and Families 2016-19 is designed for use by all those who work with children and families in all agencies and settings. The strategy sets out clear strategic aims and objectives with clear priorities that outline how partners will work together to offer a coherent, effective and well co-ordinated multi-agency response to cases where neglect is an issue.

The children's workforce must be able to identify and recognise Neglect in families across universal and specialist services to ensure that an effective multi-agency response is provided at the earliest opportunity to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families and to reduce the risk of an escalation of concerns.

The strategy clarifies the statutory definition of neglect, key features and risk factors including Manchester's Levels of Need and is cognisant of the Early Help Strategy.

It is easy to focus on adult-orientated 'quick fixes' but instead the focus should be on the impact of neglect on the child and often complex underlying causes.

Manchester has identified a number of overarching Strategic Objectives.

1. To develop and improve the awareness and understanding of neglect, both within and between agencies working in Manchester including adult services. This includes a common understanding of neglect and the thresholds for access to services.
2. To agree what Neglect-themed screening and assessment tool for use by the children's workforce working with families where Neglect is a feature. In order to develop confidence amongst the children's workforce and to ensure they have the skills, knowledge and tools to assess Neglect this will need to be rectified.
3. The views of children, young people and their families are used to inform the development of practice and services.
4. Developing and sustain an agreed, early multi-agency response to neglect.
5. Work with children and young people will be measured by its impact on outcomes for children, young people and their families.
6. Build strength and resilience in children, young people and families rather than promoting dependency by promoting a culture that builds on strengths across the children's workforce rather than promoting dependency. We will deliver on our commitment to 'do with, not to' children, young people and families.

What are we currently doing?

Early Help

Early Help Hubs are established in the North, Central and South localities of the city. The hubs deliver an effective integrated local offer of support as well as being the gateway to more intensive interventions. The hubs are designed to provide support at the earliest opportunity to families in need of additional help in order to prevent difficulties from escalating and requiring higher level, statutory services. They provide support to partners to develop an early help offer within their own organisations, complete Early help Assessments (EHAs) and manage the Team Around the Family., for families with more complex needs, the hubs ensure that targeted and specialist services take a key worker role and co-ordinate a more intensive package of support.

Signs of Safety

Signs of Safety is being implemented across Children's Services, Early Help and partner agencies. Practitioners are using the Signs of Safety framework in the completion of the early help assessments (EHAs). The framework will support assessment of children and families with all areas of need, and is not limited to, but will be used to address cases where neglect is a feature.

Its purpose is to enable practitioners across different disciplines to work collaboratively and in partnership with families and children. The tools are designed to help conduct risk assessments and produce action plans for increasing safety, and to reduce risk and danger by identifying areas that need change while focusing on strengths, resources and networks that the family have.

The model's use of plain language supports parents' understanding of neglect and enables them to understand concerns, and consider what changes they can make to reduce the risk to their children. It is an opportunity for parents to develop a better

understanding of what children need to thrive, particularly, where they have not had a positive experience of being parented themselves.

The Child Assessment for Neglect and Disability Overview (CANDO) Tool

The CANDO tool was developed within CMFT to be used primarily within health to assist assessment and practice. It is derived from the Graded Care Profile (Polnay and Srivastava 1997) and has been used in referrals to CMFT Specialist Case Planning Service. The CANDO assessment tool was devised in such a way that it could provide suggestions for both the family and the agency to work collaboratively. It is acknowledged that assessment is not a static process but rather a baseline from which future evaluations may be viewed as a measurement of the ability of parents to change behaviours. The tool was aligned with Manchester's level of need and framework for response.

The aims of the CANDO Tool:

- Make the child the focus and the voice of the child heard throughout
- Assist health Practitioners to identify neglect early. This is achieved by assessing three aspects; the child, carer and the home environment.

This tool has not been further developed for multi-agency use though; the Manchester Safeguarding Children's Board has recently agreed the Graded Care Profile will be the 'common' assessment tool to be used.

References and Links

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Chapter 3: Child Neglect: Causes and Contributors

Patricia McKinsey Crittenden

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Our Manchester, Our Children

http://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/6610/our_manchester_our_children

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Be Professionally Curious, National Multi Agency Child Neglect Strategic Work Group, 2015

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/media/5287/child-neglect.pdf>

Other JSNA Topics that this links to

- [Safeguarding](#)
- [Early Help Offer](#)
- [Mental Health & Emotional Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Child Sexual Exploitation](#)

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