



surrey
safeguarding
CHILDREN BOARD



SSCB neglect
strategy 2014 - 2016



SURREY

Background

The impact of neglect on children and young people is enormous. Neglect causes great distress to children, can lead to poor health, poor social and educational outcomes and can be fatal. Neglect can affect the development of a child's brain. Children's ability to make secure attachments is affected by suffering neglect and their emotional wellbeing is compromised, which can affect their ability to successfully parent in the future. Neglect affects all children, from babies to teens.



What some young people have said about neglect:

“Neglect is when parents ignore you, when parents leave you and you get hurt, if you are bullied at school and you have no one to turn to. Neglect is scary.”

“We don't have much money. Sometimes she (mum) goes out in the evening and leaves me (only aged 13) to look after my brothers. I worry about her because I don't know where she has gone and when she will come back. I am scared she may not come back.”

“I am worried about my friend, he misses a lot of school and his house is in a real state. He says his dad has gone out but I'm not sure. He gets bullied because he smells.”

Local and national picture

Department for Education (DfE) statistics show that neglect was the most common reason attributed to children becoming the subject of a child protection plan, accounting for 41% of cases - year to March 2013. (*Department for Education 2012, quoted in Ofsted, 2014*).*3 **Neglect and Serious Case Reviews** (*Brandon, Bailey, Belderson and Larrison 2013* *4) note that neglect is more prevalent in serious case reviews than had been previously understood. Neglect was present in 60% of the serious case reviews undertaken between 2009 and 2011. The report makes the point that neglect with serious outcomes is not confined to the youngest children in our society.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has been asked by the Department of Health (with the approval from the Department for Education) to develop social care guidelines in relation to child abuse and neglect. This will be built on the current **NICE guidelines on child maltreatment** (2009, 6*).

The total number of children subject to care proceedings in England and Wales, giving neglect as the primary or contributory reasons, was 45% of the total (*Action for Children 2013*)*5.

The total number of children in Surrey subject to a child protection plan as of 9 July 2014 is 931 and the number of children subject to a child protection plan where neglect is identified as the risk factor is 478. The number of children subject to a plan under dual categories where neglect is a feature is 20. This accounts for 53% of the total number of children subject to a plan.

NICE National Institute for
Health and Care Excellence

Local and national picture

The Government's education select committee reviewed the child protection system in 2012. They concluded that the needs of children and the importance of acting quickly to secure early intervention for children are all too often not given enough priority. In response to this review, Ofsted undertook a thematic inspection of 11 local authorities and published its report in March 2014, summarising findings and making recommendations to both local authorities Children's Services and local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs).

One of the recommendations refers to the need for the LSCBs to develop a local neglect strategy to drive forward improvement in outcomes for children.

- Neglect Matters - a multi-agency guide for professionals working together on behalf of teenagers. (Lesley Hicks and Mike Stein 2010).
- NSPCC, Neglect Matters - a guide for young people about neglect.
- In the Child's Time - professional responses to neglect. (Ofsted 2014).
- Brandon et al, (2013) Neglect and Serious Case Reviews, NSPCC and University of East Anglia.
- The State of Child Neglect in the UK - Recommendations for the UK Government. (Action for Children and University of Stirling 2013).
- When to Suspect Child Maltreatment, NICE guidelines. (July 2009).

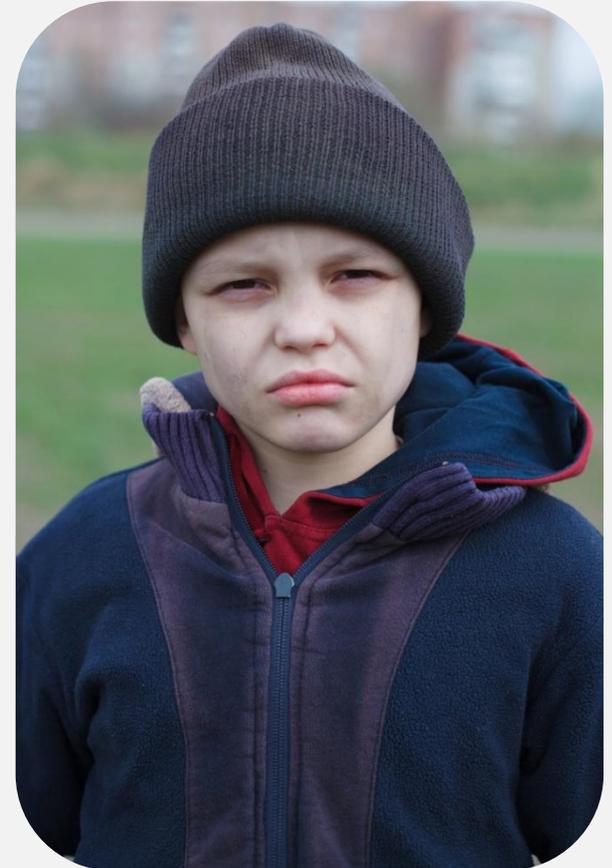
Definition of neglect

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 (page 93) defines neglect as:

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs is 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.



Identified risk factors

Neglect is often attributable to family issues, sometimes generational issues. Various research into neglect has identified a number of risk factors that should be considered as signs of neglect.

They are as follows:

- Adult mental health (especially depression).
- Domestic abuse.
- Drug and alcohol misuse.
- Parents' own exposure to maltreatment.
- Lack of experience of positive parenting in childhood.
- Poverty when linked to other risk factors.
- Poor social support for parents.
- Child having a disability, behavioural difficulties or chronic ill health.

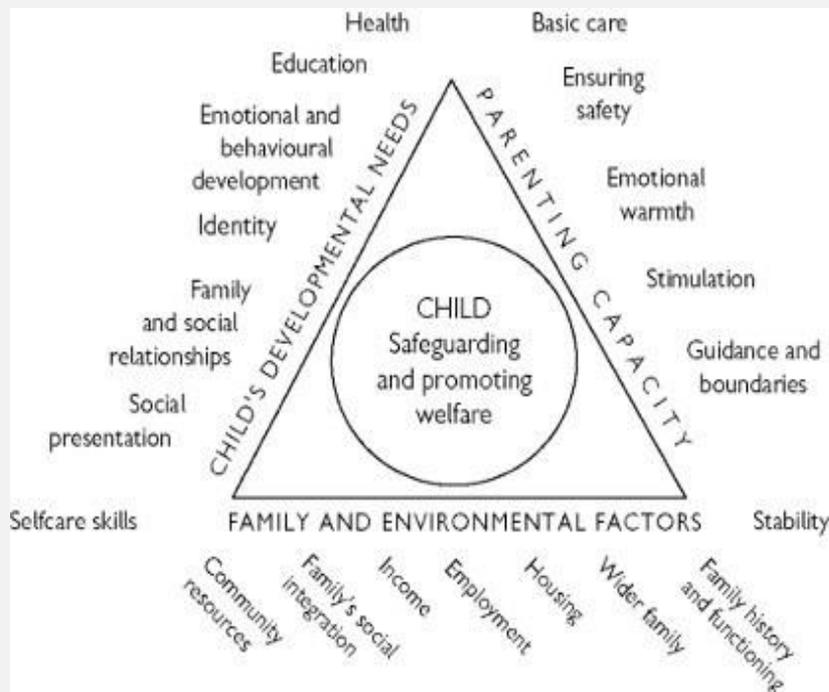
However, this is not an exclusive list and there may be other factors to consider, depending on a child's individual circumstances.

Action for Children's research: 'Seen and Heard – taking action on child neglect 2011', highlighted the following indicators (although this is not an exclusive list, these are signs which could prompt an early help assessment). The signs of neglect include:

- Poorly fitting and smelly and dirty clothes.
- Children appearing dirty or unwashed.
- Children lacking friends, being bullied at school and being laughed at by peers.
- Not attending school or early years setting regularly or on time.
- Not keeping medical appointments and dental checks.
- Not doing homework.
- Lack of parental interest in what children are doing. By having lots of small accidents, not serious in themselves but indicative of poor/inadequate supervision.

Identified risk factors

The 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families' (2000, chapter two) defines the child's developmental needs, parenting capacity, family and environmental factors and demonstrates how these are linked:



Reference should always be made to these areas when considering the possibility of child neglect. If concerns are identified that a child's needs are being unmet, neglect can be considered as a hypothesis and tested in terms of significant harm and whether or not there exists a deficit in parenting capacity to cause the shortfall. Unmet needs may not in itself indicate neglectful parenting unless it is demonstrated that if the parent or carer has tried to change his or her parenting behaviour, the needs would have been met. Evaluations of the findings of serious case reviews also highlight the need to listen and take account of the child's perspective (Brandon et al 2013).

Guiding principles

A shared understanding of neglect and the safety, wellbeing and development of children is the overriding priority.

Collaboration amongst agencies is vital to ensure effective identification, assessment and support.

Identification of neglect at the earlier stage is a priority for all partners and early assistance is coordinated through the early help process.

The 'Think Family Approach' is owned by all stakeholders. You can see Surrey's [Think Family Approach](#) on the council website.

Historical information is used to inform assessments.

Continually question hypothesis and assumptions made in relation to each child's case.

Appropriate statutory action is taken if sustainable progress is not made to reduce risk.

Outcomes of the work with children and their families is measurable

All children, regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, special needs and caring responsibilities should have an equal right to be protected from neglect.

Neglect often co exists with other forms of abuse or risk factors, so this strategy must link with other work streams for example domestic abuse, substance misuse, adult mental ill health, child poverty and youth homelessness ensuring that children and families are able to benefit from all developments as appropriate to their needs.



Early Help

The impact of neglect on children is often accumulative, early intervention is therefore essential to identify emerging problems and addressing these at the earliest stage.

Agencies need to intervene early enough to prevent harm occurring and to break the cycle.

In Surrey, our ambition for early help and preventative services is to ensure that:

‘Everyone works together to offer early help and timely intervention to support the resilience and well being of children, young people, families and communities promoting wellbeing and positive life opportunities.’

(Surrey early help partnership reference group - June 2013).

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015, is clear about the importance of early help and says:

- Effective early help relies on local agencies working together to identify children and families who would benefit from early help.
- Undertake an assessment of the need for early help.
- Provide targeted early help services to address the needs of the child and their family which focuses on activity to significantly improve the outcomes for children (Working Together, page 12).



Early Help

Working Together 2015 also says:

Professionals should in particular, be alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs or special educational needs
- is a young carer
- is showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health and domestic violence
- is showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect.
- has returned home to their family from care.

Professionals working in universal services have a responsibility to identify the symptoms and triggers of abuse and neglect. They share that information and work together to provide children and young people with the help they need. Practitioners need to continue to develop their knowledge and skills in this area. They should have access to training to identify and respond early to abuse and neglect, and to the latest research showing what types of intervention are most appropriate (Working Together 2015, page 13). It is important that all agencies use the early help assessment tool and the team around the family approach. Please refer to the [Early help, multi-agency levels of need document](#).



Strategic aims and objectives

Surrey Safeguarding Children's Board aims to ensure that the early recognition of neglect and improved responses by all agencies reduces the number of children who need statutory intervention and when this is required the life chances of children are promptly improved and the risk of harm reduced.

This strategy has **four objectives** to meet these ends:

1. To improve the awareness and understanding of neglect, both within and between agencies working in Surrey and including Adult Services. This includes a common understanding of neglect and the thresholds for access to agencies.
2. Staff in all partner agencies will be required to undertake multi-agency training (basic and advanced level training) to ensure that there is common understanding of neglect, thresholds and assessment tools and consistency in approach.
3. To improve the recognition, assessment and intervention for children and young people living in neglectful situations, to prevent the need for statutory involvement, to include promotion of the early help assessment process, information sharing and agreed thresholds of intervention
4. To ensure the effectiveness of service provision, this will include consultation with young people and their families and multi-agency and single agency audits which seek to evidence the views of children and young people, their carers and the workforce about the services being offered and their effectiveness.



Strategic aims and objectives

Key indicators

The following indicates the effectiveness of the strategy:

- Reduction in the number of child protection conferences where neglect has been identified as the risk factor.
- A reduction in the number of repeat child protection conferences where neglect has been identified as the risk factor.
- Increase in the number of early help assessments completed per agency where neglect is the risk factor.
- Reduction in persistent absenteeism from school and early years settings.
- Increased attendance of medical appointments, health and developmental reviews for all Surrey children.
- Reduction in the number of child and family assessments completed where neglect is the risk factor.
- Children and young people report that services have enhanced their wellbeing.

This strategy is to be reviewed a year after its launch or when the NICE guidelines, in respect of neglect, have been published, whichever comes first and every year thereafter.