



London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham | The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea | Westminster City Council

**Local Safeguarding Children
Board**
For
Hammersmith and Fulham,
Kensington and Chelsea
And
Westminster

**Neglect Strategy
2014 - 2016**



1. Introduction and Background

This strategy has been developed in response to local knowledge as to the causes and effects of neglect, learning from local serious case reviews and management case reviews within the Tri Borough area, and from the Ofsted Thematic Inspection Report; In the child's time: professional responses to neglect (March 2014).

The impact of neglect on children and young people is enormous. Neglect causes great distress to children, leading to poor health, educational and social outcomes and is potentially fatal. Children's abilities to make secure attachments are affected and their ability to attend and attain at school is reduced. Their emotional health and well-being is often compromised and this impacts on their success in adulthood and their ability to parent in the future. In some cases neglect has also to be a contributing factor in the death of some children.

As of 31 March 2014 there were 133 children subject to child protection plans because of neglect across the three Boroughs. The impact of neglect of children is often accumulative, advancing gradually and imperceptibly and therefore there are many more children at risk of neglect who are not yet in receipt of statutory child protection services. These include those being offered early help, due to concerns relating to neglect, and those whose needs and protection plans address more obvious concerns such as emotional abuse who may also be suffering neglect. There are also many children at risk of neglect where their needs have not been identified by services.

The Ofsted Thematic Inspection on neglect explored the effectiveness of the arrangements to safeguard children who have experienced neglect, with a particular focus on children 10 years and older. Whilst the Ofsted report focuses on younger children this document also recognises the significant impact of neglect on older children, who are in receipt of statutory services such as the Youth Offending Service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Social Work and the Police.

The Ofsted report presented a mixed picture in terms of the quality of the professional response to neglect. It placed the challenge to local authorities and partner agencies to 'learn lessons' from those cases whereby professional responses to neglect have been timely and effective, thereby providing families with the early help they need.

2. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this document is to set out the strategic aims and objectives of the Tri Borough Local Safeguarding Children Board's approach to tackling and reducing the impact of neglect. This strategy also seeks to identify key principles under which work around neglect should be undertaken and identifies key priority areas of work in order to improve our collective response to neglect.

Universal and early intervention services have a critical role in identifying and addressing the safety needs of the child, alongside child protection services. This strategy has been

developed in conjunction with multi-agency partners working with children young people and their families within the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster City Council.

This strategy should not be viewed in isolation and should be considered alongside other key strategies including Early Help policies and procedures, and the Tri Borough Thresholds of Need guide, and the Local Assessment Protocol.

The Tri Borough LSCB, including all multi agency partners, are commitment to improving our identification and recognition of neglect and its effects on children and young people, and our responses to effectively tackling neglect.

Tackling neglect has been identified as a top priority for the Local Safeguarding Children Board in 2014/15.

3. Definition of Neglect

The London Child Protection Procedures - 4th edition (Apr 2011) defines neglect as:

Neglect is 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 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.

As well as the statutory definition, it is important to have regard to the specific needs of children that are often subsumed under the term 'failure to meet basic needs'. Professor Jan Horwath (2007) identified additional categories to consider. These include:

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

There is an overlap between emotional abuse and many forms of child maltreatment and this especially true of neglect. So when practitioners are working with children who are experiencing neglect an understanding of emotional abuse is also important.

During the past decade there has been an increasing awareness of the impact on children of parenting which is neglectful or abusive.

Reviews undertaken by Allen (2011) and Munro (2011) both acknowledged the need to intervene early in the development of problems or issues, as well as early in a child's life, both of which have a key role in tackling child neglect. The Allen Review in particular highlighted the significant impact of emotional abuse and neglect during early childhood, because the first three years of life are so critical to children's later development.

Prevalence of Neglect:

- Neglect is the most common reason for a child to be made subject of a child protection plan in England (41% of cases in year ending March 2013).
- Neglect is a serious factor in the majority of serious case reviews (60%), and for children of all ages not just younger children.
- The NSPCC study on child maltreatment in the UK found that one in ten young adults had experienced serious neglect during their childhood (2011).

As of 31 March 2014 the children subject to child protection plans under the categories of neglect and emotional abuse across the three Boroughs was:

	CPP under category of Neglect	CPPs under category of Emotional abuse
Hammersmith and Fulham	47 (29%)	80 (50%)
Kensington and Chelsea	59 (64%)	29 (32%)
Westminster	27 (27%)	47 (47%)

Risk Factors

There are three different categories of risk factors that increase the likelihood of neglect in some families: child risk factors; parental risk factors; and wider determinants of health.

NSPCC research identified that some children are especially vulnerable to neglect, amongst them are:

- Children born prematurely, or with very low birth weight,
- Runaways and missing children
- Children in care
- Asylum seeking and refugee children.

Adolescents, children with disabilities, and children under one are highlighted as particular at risk groups.

Domestic abuse, mental ill health and/or substance misuse are common features in families where children are neglected and could be used as proxy indicators for potential neglect.

A recent report by Action for Children identified a combination of factors that define extremely vulnerable families, are those that increase the likelihood of neglect, such as maternal mental health difficulties, material deprivation, poor-quality housing, and parental illness.

The impact of neglect of children is often accumulative, advancing gradually and imperceptibly and therefore there is a risk that agencies do not intervene early enough to prevent harm. It is important that all agencies (Health, schools/education, Police, Probation, Housing, third sector) identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs and seek to address them as early as possible.

4. Guiding Principles

This Strategy rests on key principles which provide a strategic framework:

- a) enabling a shared understanding of neglect and the safety, well-being and development of children is the overriding priority;
- b) ensuring the early recognition and identification of the signs and symptoms of neglect and the importance of effective collaboration amongst agencies. This will be co-ordinated through an agreed Early Help Assessment Tool;
- c) early help needs to be of a kind and duration that improves and sustains the safety of children and young people into the future;
- d) children with additional needs such as special education needs and disabilities are potentially more acutely vulnerable;
- e) beneficiary engagement is critical therefore the views of children and young people and their families with regards to 'what works' will inform the development and implementation of effective interventions;
- f) ensuring a 'Whole-Family' approach is owned by all stakeholders;
- g) all agencies need to consider historical information to inform the present position and identify families at risk of inter-generational neglect;
- h) ensuring effective information sharing to inform assessments and evaluations of risk;
- i) agencies need to challenge each other about improvement made by families and its sustainability;
- j) work with children and young people needs to be measured by its impact on outcomes;

k) suitable statutory action needs to be taken if insufficient progress is achieved and methods have been unsuccessful in addressing levels of risk present;

l) significant regard needs to be given to the overlap between neglect and other forms of child maltreatment such as domestic abuse and substance misuse etc.

5. Strategy and Objectives

Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster City Council collectively aims to ensure the early recognition of neglect and improve agency responses to children and young people affected by neglect through strong and effective multi-agency leadership.

In accordance with our LSCB's four key strategic objectives of:

- **Early help and prevention of harm**
- **Better outcomes for children subject to child protection plans and those Looked After**
- **Practice areas to compare, contrast and improve together**
- **Continuous improvement in a changing landscape,**

the Board has sought to provide these cross-cutting themes to capture the work we undertake and the current improvements priorities. One of these key priorities is neglect.

Whilst the Safeguarding Action Plan 2014-15 highlights the neglect priority this strategy seeks to identify four core outcome objectives specifically in relation to Neglect.

These are:

- 1) **To secure collective commitment to addressing neglect across all partner agencies and to demonstrate effective leadership in driving the appropriate system, culture and process changes required forward.**
- 2) **To improve awareness and understanding of neglect across the whole partnership. This includes a common understanding of neglect and the thresholds for intervention.**
- 3) **To improve the recognition, assessment and response to children and young people living in neglectful situations before statutory intervention is required, including the appropriate use of assessment tools.**
- 4) **To ensure the effectiveness of service provision.**

6. Key Indicators of Measurement

It is important that the measures of success are established and agreed, and an effective action plan is in place. Please see Appendix A for the copy of the Action Plan 2014 – 2016.

The following outcome indicators will be able to provide insight into the effectiveness of the strategy and the implementation of the action plan:

- Reduction in the number of re-registrations under the category of neglect;
- Reduction in the number of repeat referrals to the social work teams covering 'children in need' and child protection threshold level 3 – 4 work;
- Reduction in persistent school absenteeism;
- Reduction in the number of Looked After Children;
- Increase in the referral rates to the Early Help Service referencing the earlier identification of neglect.

7. Governance

Governance and challenge will be provided by the Tri Borough Local Safeguarding Children Board, with subgroups and a short task working group to support the work of delivering the actions to support this Strategy.

All Board Members are responsible to ensuring proactive support of the Action Plan, and delivery as required. The Board will hold all members to account.