



Multi-Agency Neglect Strategy

Contents

Background	page 2
Purpose and Scope	page 2
Definitions	page 3
Guiding principles	page 4
Strategic aim	page 4
Strategic objectives	page 4
Review	page 6
<i>Appendix 1</i>	<i>Delivery Plans</i>

Background

Awareness of child neglect and its consequences on the future well being and development of children has increased during the last two decades. It is notoriously difficult to define and research shows that it often co-exists with other forms of abuse and adversity. It is also the most common reason for child protection plans in the United Kingdom.

Apart from being potentially fatal, neglect causes great distress to children and leads to poor health, educational and social outcomes in the short and long-term. Consequences can include an array of health and mental health problems, difficulties in forming attachment and relationships, lower educational achievements, an increased risk of substance misuse, higher risk of experiencing abuse as well as difficulties in assuming parenting responsibilities later on in life (Taylor and Bridge 2005). The degree to which children are affected during their childhood and later in adulthood depends on the type, severity and frequency of the maltreatment and on what support mechanisms, resilience strategies and protective factors were available to the child.

Lancashire County Council has undertaken a considerable amount of research in relation to the Lancashire picture of neglect. The aim of this research was to define the characteristics of neglect, determine what good outcomes for neglected children are and understand the experiences of families. This information has been shared on a multi agency basis in order to form the basis of this strategy.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this document is to establish strategic aims, objectives and priorities for Lancashire's approach in tackling neglect. It is characterised by research within Lancashire, practitioner feedback and ongoing work streams and intends to provide an opportunity to draw together these activities in one direction from strategy through to operational. The document identifies both the statutory definition of neglect and other factors to consider to assist and further support practitioners in early identification. It intends to identify a number of guiding principles under which all work around neglect should be undertaken and identifies three priority areas of work in order to improve Lancashire's response to neglect and delivery of these priorities is identified within Appendix 1 – Delivery Plans.

The document has been developed in conjunction with Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board's and its multi-agency partners and as such applies to all agencies working within Lancashire. It is expected that emerging or refreshed, relevant agency policies and procedures will take into account the strategic priorities identified within this document. Agency's internal procedures or delivery plans in relation to neglect, should work within the same definition, guiding principles and strategic objectives as set out below.

Definition

The definition of neglect from statutory guidance states:

"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 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" ¹

However, a helpful reminder of the specific needs which are often subsumed under the banner of the failure to meet "basic needs":

- medical neglect
- nutritional neglect
- emotional neglect
- educational neglect
- physical neglect
- lack of supervision and guidance²

¹ HM Government, *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, (March 2010), p39.

² Howarth, *Child Neglect: Identification and Assessment*, London: (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p27.

These provide practitioners scope for support and early help, before thresholds for statutory action are met.

There is overlap between emotional abuse and many forms of child maltreatment and this is especially true of neglect so when working with children subject to neglectful situations an understanding of emotional abuse is also important.

For further information in relation to identifying emotional abuse, please see

http://panlancashirescb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_recog_significant_harm.html#emotion_abuse

Guiding Principles

The strategy rests on key principles which provide a strategic framework:

1. Ensuring a shared understanding of neglect and the safety, wellbeing and development of children is the over-riding priority.
2. Collaboration amongst agencies is vital to ensure effective identification, assessment and support.
3. Children and young people should expect consistency both in the practitioners and the support offered.
4. Children with special needs and disabilities have equal rights to protection from neglect and agencies must ensure that practitioners are trained to recognise and tackle neglect for this group of children who may have additional and more acute vulnerabilities.
5. Causal factors and early indicators of neglect are recognised so intervention can be made as early as possible
6. Early support should be of a kind and duration that improves and sustains children's safety into the future. It should also build strength and resilience within families rather than promoting dependency.
7. The strategy will be inclusive of participation of service users and learn from the experiences of families living with neglect.
8. Early assessment and intervention will be promoted and supported in the first instance.
9. All services must consider/research historical information to inform the present position and repeat at times of significant change as well as review at regular intervals
10. Evaluating vulnerability, need, risk of harm or suffering harm requires information sharing and consideration of a multi-faceted array of indicators and outcome areas. To effectively

safeguard children requires professionals 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

11. Work with children and young people will be measured by its impact on outcomes. Suitable statutory action may need to be taken if insufficient progress is achieved, when other methods have been unsuccessful or the level of risk presented to the child becomes unacceptable.
12. 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 and 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.

Strategic Aim

In Lancashire, we aim to ensure early recognition of neglect and improve agency's responses to children affected. We will do this by promoting their resilience and mobilising families to engage effectively with agencies, this will guarantee an improvement in the short and long term outcomes for children and young people and their families.

Strategic Objectives

The strategy has three core objectives, these are:

1. ***To improve the awareness and understanding of neglect, both within and between agencies working in Lancashire and including Adult services. This includes a common understanding of neglect and the thresholds for access to agencies.***
 - a) A common understanding of neglect between and within agencies is crucial to allow effective identification and a common language.
 - b) Understanding of each agency's thresholds for action (and an acceptance that they may not be in alignment) will allow effective and meaningful peer challenge around cases of neglect.
 - c) Working effectively between services working with children and adults, in a total family approach.

2. To improve the recognition and assessment of children and young people living in neglectful situations before statutory intervention is required, including the use of appropriate assessment tools³.

- a) The Common Assessment Framework (Common Assessment Plan - CAP in Lancashire) could be used in order to draw agencies together to identify need and support for a family. This assessment process may be complemented by the use of appropriate, recommended assessment tools specifically developed in relation to neglect. The assessment process for children and young people living in neglectful situations should be timely, robust, multi-agency, child focused and incorporate the views of the family. This support should be delivered by a practitioner that the family have an effective relationship with.
- b) Neglect-themed assessment tools should be used in conjunction with the CAF/CAP to support the measurement measure what has changed in a family over a period of time, or providing supporting evidence for statutory intervention. These assessment tools should sign-post practitioners to seeking historical information and raise awareness of the nature of neglect in its presenting features. Practitioners should also be encouraged to use these assessment tools in a dynamic way, to ensure that progress can be measured over time, for example by repeat assessment.
- c) Through the use of the CAF/CAP, complemented by neglect-themed assessment tools, information should be shared effectively across partner agencies in order to build up a full picture of the needs of the child or young person and their family. This process will also help to identify additional areas of support which can be accessed at an earlier stage, for example community resources, third sector organisations, agency project work, faith communities or extended family (where appropriate).
- d) Clear and robust thresholds identified (including neglect indicators on the Continuum of Need), and effective communication between all agencies should be established (with an understanding of the requirement to share information). Therefore, where additional need has been identified (and this need cannot be met by a single agency), further work is carried out in a coordinated way, where planning needs are recorded having involved the family and a shared understanding of progress and outcomes, which both practitioners and families are committed to. This can be done through the CAF/CAP

³ The LSCB is currently piloting the Graded Care Profile assessment tool. Available at: <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/web/view.asp?siteid=3829&pageid=41630&e=e>

and Team Around the Child (TAC) process. The Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) may have a role in collating information at this stage.

- e) Develop and promote evidence based practice and effective interventions that work for children and families where neglect is prevalent on a wide, multi agency basis.

3. *Developing and sustaining an agreed, early multi-agency response to neglect.*

- a) Findings from local research will be shared to inform Lancashire Improving Futures program, ensuring that each active work stream embeds these findings into their work.
- b) Relevant developments in service provision are promoted and clear for practitioners on a multi-agency basis.
- c) Supporting practitioners to allow them to build additional multi-agency support following on from their assessment via the CAF/CAP process.
- d) Providing practitioners with effective skills and tools to work with families experiencing neglect.
- e) Supporting practitioners to resolve common problems when working with families experiencing neglect.

Review

This strategy will be reviewed on a two-yearly basis.

Delivery plans and performance frameworks will be reviewed annually and monitored through the LSCB's Quality Assurance & Performance Management Sub Group.

Appendix 1: Delivery Plans

The delivery plans outlined below, are intended to identify a number of practical tasks which will support the achievement of the strategic objectives (described above).

It is important to recognise that each of these tasks is not intended to be a distinct piece of work, more an ongoing process alongside individual agency's responses to neglect issues.

Strategic Objective 1 –

To improve the awareness and understanding of neglect, both within and between agencies working in Lancashire and including Adult services. This includes a common understanding of neglect and the thresholds for access to agencies.

Ref	Activity	Timescales	Lead	Current Position (March 2013)
SO1 - a	Adopt and promote widely the definitions established in this strategy.	By Q2 2013/14	LSCB Team	Strategy agreed and scheduled for roll out early 2013/14
SO1 - b	Develop and roll out a series of multi-agency workshops to share and understand one another's threshold considerations and barriers to early intervention around neglect (including Adults Services Practitioners).	Throughout 2013/14	LSCB Training Unit	LSCB practitioner conferences x 3 scheduled for 2013/14
SO1 - c	Share findings in relation to patterns of causal and presenting characteristics of neglect with multi-agency practitioners to support the	Q4 2013/14	LSCB Team	Graded Care Profile assessment tool pilot progressing and scheduled for launch late 2013.

	early identification of neglect. (Link also to activity under Strategic Objective 2).			
SO1 - d	Share findings in relation to patterns or causal and presenting factors with the refreshing process for the Continuum of Need (CoN) – ensuring that they are consistent with messages for practitioners (above).	Q2 2013/14	Rod Norton	LIF and CAF Project Board to consider the Strategy and incorporate into the new CoN.
SO1 - e	Identify "expert professionals" contacts in each district who can give support and guidance to other professionals around referrals & thresholds around neglect. This system intends to establish more firmly each agency's role in tackling neglect and give practitioners confidence in working further with families where appropriate.	Q2 2013/14?	Rod Norton	This role to be played by the new Early Support Coordinators within LCC once appointed. Understanding of neglect to be incorporated into Lead Professional training. New CAF Officers, once appointed, to ensure training in place around thresholds for a range of staff including LPs
SO1 - f	Establishing / utilizing existing multi-agency best practice forums to develop understanding between agencies and provide some level of peer challenge.	Q4 2013/14	LSCB Locality Groups	Local LSCB Safeguarding Groups to take forward via local best practice panels.
SO1 - g	Carry out a wider publicity campaign amongst professionals around identifying neglect and the benefits of inter-agency	Q4 2013/14	LSCB Team	This will be delivered through the activities already given above: practitioner conferences, GCP pilot and strategy roll out.

	<p>working to build up a fuller picture. Including findings in relation to patterns of causal and presenting characteristics of neglect with multi-agency practitioners to support the early identification of neglect.</p>			
--	---	--	--	--

Strategic Objective 2 –
To improve the recognition and assessment of children and young people living in neglectful situations before statutory intervention is required, including the use of appropriate assessment tools.

Ref	Activity	Timescales	Lead	Current Position (March 2013)
SO2 - a	<p>Develop a neglect assessment tool be used alongside the CAF process when working specifically with neglect across all agencies. Share with practitioners alongside promotion of effective interventions which work with families where persistent neglect has been identified. (Link to sharing of patterns of presenting and causal characteristics described in Strategic Objective 1).</p>	Q4, 2013/14	LSCB Team / NSPCC	Progressing through NSPCC pilot of Graded Care Profile assessment tool.

SO2 - b	Undertake work with professionals on a multi-agency basis around analysis of root causes of neglect – in order to ensure correct support is provided and probability of reoccurrence is reduced.	Q4, 2013/14	LSCB Team, LIF Programme Managers	Should be delivered by above activities and engagement with LIF programme managers.
SO2 - c	Support work currently underway around multi-agency information sharing protocol – to support practitioners in their decision making and confidence around gathering / sharing multi-agency information.	N/A	N/A	Already in place.
SO2 - d	Ensure identification & assessment of neglect is integral to the development of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	Q2 2013/14	MASH Lead	Remit to MASH Project Board.
SO2 - e	Develop support mechanisms / training for professionals building confidence to have authentic conversation with parents around neglect during early support period. Training and promotion the GROW model for practitioner's use. Link to other ongoing training around CAF refresh.	Q4 2013/14		This will be delivered through the activities already given above: practitioner conferences, GCP pilot, strategy roll out and LIF connectivity.
SO2 - f	Feedback already gathered from parents & children to be shared with practitioners to inform practice.	Q2 2013/14		Progressing through LCC following audit of cases and consultation with parents / carers.
SO2 - g	Further, multi agency work to be commissioned in relation to parent & child feedback to inform practice.	Q4 2013/14	LSCB QA Sub-group	QA Sub-group to consider

Strategic Objective 3 –**Developing and sustaining an agreed, early multi-agency response to neglect.**

Ref	Activity	Timescales	Lead	Current Position (March 2013)
SO3 - a	Share findings from research with all work streams of Lancashire Improving Futures in order to embed neglect within their work.	As above	As above	Covered above – connectivity with LIF
SO3 - b	Identify high quality provision available for early support of families experiencing neglect.	As above	As above	Covered above – connectivity with LIF
SO3 - c	Support and promote the use of CAF in the identification of other agency's concerns and use of the CAF at the earliest possible opportunity as a robust mechanism for ensuring multi-agency contribution, effective assessment and provision of support.	As above	As above	Covered above – connectivity with CAF/CON
SO3 - d	Communicating clearly identified early support pathways with professionals on a multi-agency basis by disseminating current provision under Lancashire Improving Futures in relation to neglect.	As above	As above	Covered above – connectivity with LIF
SO3 - e	Develop and promote guidance, and support from a strategic and	As above	As above	Covered above – Practitioner conferences, GCP Pilot, LSCB Training Courses, Strategy roll out

	management understanding of what works in neglect.			
SO3 - f	Develop and promote guidance, and support from a strategic and management understanding of strategies to deal with common problems when working with families experiencing neglect.	As above	As above	Covered above – Practitioner conferences, GCP Pilot, LSCB Training Courses, Strategy roll out