

Multi-Agency Response to children subject to Neglect.

Introduction

Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) implemented a multi-agency audit in September 2025 focusing on children, young people and their families experiencing neglect.

Neglect is one of the most common categories of abuse for child protection plans nationally and locally and has been identified as one of the continuing strategic priorities for the partnership in for 2025- 2026.

Areas of Good Practice

- **Comprehensive referrals:** were seen to include detailed professional observations around neglect enabling effective screening and swift intervention for children at risk.
- **Strong partnership working;** health services, schools and early help teams played pivotal roles in monitoring, supporting and referring families especially for newborns and children with additional needs.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** cultural factors such as family history were acknowledged within assessments and plans which supported statutory support and intervention from agencies.
- **Multi agency coordinated planning:** led to prompt child protection actions, and a co-ordinated focus on addressing key issues such attendance, mental health and improving home conditions.
- **Child Centred approach-** evidence in case records of the voice of the child was sought, utilising tools such as teen star to involve older children in meetings and to contribute openly on important topics such as family dynamics and domestic abuse.
- **Clear threshold understanding** by agencies was seen and evidence of escalating interventions appropriately and challenging delays could be evidenced.

Context

15 families were selected for the audit comprising of 42 children/young people.

The audit focused on the following key lines of enquiries (KLOE) on:

- Quality of referral
- Voice of the Child and family, equality, diversity and cultural considerations
- Recognition and Identification of Neglect, along with outcomes
- Multi-agency Information sharing and collaborative working
- Response by multi agency partners to neglect

The multi-disciplinary audit involved agencies who were working with these children and young people including:

- Children's Social Care
- Targeted Early Help
- Berneslai Homes Barnsley Hospital
- Education Welfare Service
- SWYFT- perinatal mental health
- Primary and Secondary Schools
- Early Years Settings
- 0-19 Public Health Service
- Waythrough Compass Be
- Police Early Help
- BSAFE

Neglect is a priority for the BSCP and the audit findings and recommendations will be overseen within the Neglect subgroup.

Areas for Development

- **Better communication, and collaboration with agencies** could be strengthened. The audit found some agencies were unclear around expectations and roles, which lead to delays in interventions and actions being addressed within plans.
- **Improve early help assessment quality** by clearly evidencing the impact of day-to-day neglect through detailed, well-articulated descriptions that can support the understanding of the child's lived experience.
- **Encourage professional curiosity** to explore underlying family issues and vulnerabilities which impact on neglect and the ability to sustain change within families.
- **Monitor and review cases** where neglect has been ongoing for some time, addressing intervention support, ensuring plans are SMART and when needed to look at escalation when risks persist.
- **Parental engagement** to be encouraged within planning and developing actions plans that include family-owned actions that can support to foster sustained change within families.
- **Information Sharing** to strengthen the processes for sharing documentation, meeting minutes, assessments between agencies in a timely manner.

Resources & Further Information

Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership Multi-Agency Training Programme offers training opportunities to help staff work with children and families when there are concerns around neglect. There are a number of training courses and programme available for all practitioners to attend.

For the dates and times of these training events and for the details of all other training offered, please follow this link:-

<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/children-young-people-and-families/safeguarding-families-in-barnsley/safeguarding-children/safeguarding-children-training-courses/>

The Neglect Screening Tool offers practitioners a clear and structured way to identify neglect. Support by brief guidance on how to use the tool in

[Neglect Screening Tool](#)

[Brief Guidance – Using the Neglect Screening Tool in Practice](#)

Barnsley Local Safeguarding Children Partnership [Neglect Strategy](#)

Overall Conclusion

- Strong partnership working across different agencies was shown with timely interventions, collaborative working and including the direct work with children and young people.
- Chronic and cumulative neglect was evident throughout the audits, with little evidence of any sustained change being made within families. There is greater need to explore underlying family issues and vulnerabilities which impact on neglect and the ability to sustain changes. Ensuring this is reflective in assessments and actions plans to actively engage families within.
- Limited utilisation of the Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) tool has led to prolonged exposure of children to neglect. It is essential that practitioners develop confidence in employing identification tools such as the neglect screening tool or GCP2 at an early stage of intervention to effectively support and demonstrate positive change.
- Audits showed good multi-agency working, but there's still room to improve. We need clearer collaboration on what each agency is expected to do, better use of SMART action plans, more consistent information-sharing of sharing of plans, and timely meetings to ensure progress is being made.
- Improving quality of evidencing and recording impact of neglect both through case file recording, quality of early help assessments and referrals systems.

Recommendations

1. Enhance the quality of referrals and early help assessments to evidence, neglect and cumulative neglect and the impact this has on children, young people and families.
2. Strengthen early identification and professional curiosity around neglect and the lived experience for children utilising resources and structured frameworks such as the screening tool and Graded Care Profile.
3. Improve consistency in multi-agency working ensuring actions within plans are SMART and are regularly monitored to evidence sustained change and track risk
4. Ensure assessments and plans are holistic and triangulate all available information considering family dynamics, cumulative neglect, and parental needs from the outset.
5. Invest in ongoing neglect training focusing on areas such as how neglect impacts on children with disabilities engaging families with learning or mental health needs where neglect is factor.
6. Increase family engagement ensuring there is participation in assessments and meetings. Making sure their voice and lived experience is captured and family actions are included within plans.
7. Ensure there is timely progression of neglect cases with regular reviews and escalation of cases where risks persist.
8. Improve processes for timely sharing of documentation and assessments between agencies.

Questions for Reflection

1. How can we make sure we are aware of early indicators of neglect and improve our professional curiosity within our work with children and families?
2. How confident are we in ensuring the voice of the child and their lived experience is captured within our direct work, assessment and review process on a consistent basis?
3. How do we ensure the family context, including chronic neglect and other complicating factors is fully considered in all assessments and interventions, ensuring the needs of all family members is met?
4. What can we do to strengthen our multi-agency working and collaboration with partnering agencies to ensure there is no drift and delay to our work with children, young people and families?
5. Do your supervision arrangements effectively build staff confidence, enable interventions to meet the family's needs and where necessary appropriately escalate concerns about neglect?
6. What further training and support do you feel is needed?

What to do now

1. **Use these reflection questions during supervision, or when applying professional curiosity about neglect, to help you consider the child's lived experience.**
2. **Share the audit learning and the key messages within your team meetings and with colleagues to think about how you as an organisation can improve your practice.**
3. **Familiarise yourself with the additional resources and information**
4. **Think about using the neglect screening tool within your practice**
5. **Encourage staff to attend training and build knowledge and confidence on working with families experiencing neglect**

Feedback

Please complete our feedback form to help us improve our learning briefings: <https://forms.microsoft.com/e/jWUKtt5BrU>