

Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership Neglect Strategy 2024-2025



The purpose of this strategy and linked practice guidance and toolkit is to prevent and reduce neglect within the city of Plymouth.

We know that neglect remains the primary category of abuse for children placed on child protection plans in Plymouth and it remains one of our strategic priorities.

This strategy in conjunction with our practice guidance and toolkit will provide a local understanding of the prevalence of neglect, support our practitioners and improve identification and response to neglect across all agencies working together.

What is Neglect?

The statutory definition of neglect –

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 caregivers).
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

The 4 basic types of neglect include Physical Neglect, Educational Neglect, Emotional Neglect, Medical Neglect.

Child's Voice

Young people have told us their experience of neglect:

"They only worried about the family allowance and milk tokens".

"I've not been able to have new shoes for return to school and am too embarrassed to ask for help."

"I felt like I shouldn't have been born".

"It still haunts me in my adult life."

"You feel that you are the reason your parents are in a toxic relationship."

"Normal everyday things became a struggle for me."

Learning from research

- Neglect is the most common type of abuse of children.
- Neglect is a recurring theme in child safeguarding practice reviews.
- 1 in 10 children in the UK have been neglected. When last recorded neglect was present in 44% of child protection plans in Plymouth.
- Concerns around neglect have been identified for half of children subject to child protection plans.
- Police recorded child cruelty offences is increasing.
- Neglect leads to major organic damage including severe shrinkage of a child's brain & reduces the capacity of the child to develop and grow.
- It leaves children open to sexual and physical abuse, vulnerable to longer term exploitation.
- Pupils who do not achieve the expected standards at school have lower attendance than those who achieve the standards.

Our Key Principles

- Child Focused – safety, wellbeing and development of child is the overriding priority.
- Outcome focused.
- Consistency of practice.
- Collaboration of professionals for effectiveness.
- Whole family approach.
- Early Help – ensuring early recognition of signs of neglect, helping to tell the story once.
- Well trained workforce.
- Risk Management.
- Inclusive – recognising children with special educational needs and/or disabilities may be more vulnerable to neglect.
- Effective Information sharing.
- Current assessment informed by historical information.
- Ensure educational needs are being met, through persistent failure to send children to school.

Our Priorities

- Multi-agency commitment to improve our Early Help offer, including our recognition of neglect to prevent it from escalating.
- Staff development utilising practice tools that recognise strengths and support change with families embedding the NSPCC GCP2 tool, building confidence for multi-agency practitioners in its use.
- Increasing understanding of assessment & intervention and Team Around the Family to support positive change.
- Relational & Trauma-informed practice is able to change the way families accept support & make positive changes for their family to reduce neglect and keep their children safe.
- The voice of children to be represented in all professional interactions with families.

How will we measure and communicate positive change for our children and families?

- Monitoring of Early Help assessment data & cases requiring statutory support around neglect with a desire to increase Early help assessments therefore reducing the requirement for statutory support.
- PSCP agencies reporting an increase in GCP2 assessments completed.
- Audits, feedback and questionnaires demonstrate an increase in parental knowledge and understanding of neglect & children feeling safe, nurtured and supported.
- The voice of children to be demonstrably represented in all professional interactions with vulnerable families.
- School attendance improvements and reduce permanent exclusions in the city.