



North Somerset Neglect Strategy 2024-2027

“Nothing is more important than children’s welfare. Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, stable, and loving home.”

(North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership, July 2023)

Foreword

Neglect is identified as a priority area for North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership because of the impact it has on the long-term chances for children and the history of Serious Case Reviews which have taken place in North Somerset. This strategy will apply to all partners, agencies and across all sectors working across North Somerset.

We should not underestimate the impact on children and young people who are subjected to and suffer neglect within their families. Neglect can cause emotional trauma, leading to poor physical and mental health, reduced educational and social outcomes, and can be at its very worst, fatal. Children and young people’s lives are adversely affected. Their ability to attend and attain at school can be reduced. Their emotional health and wellbeing are often compromised which can often impact on their success, resilience, and physical development in adulthood. Research tells us that addressing the needs of a family holistically is the best way to show sustained change.

What is Neglect?

The definition of Neglect provided by Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 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:

- a. Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);*
- b. Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;*
- c. Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers);*
- d. Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.*

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs¹.

In North Somerset and nationally neglect is the most common reason for a child to be subject to a Child Protection Safeguarding Plan. Understanding the repercussions and the right time to make

¹ Working Together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2> (accessed 25/01/2024)



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interventions is vital. Neglect can be difficult to identify and respond to, it can run alongside other forms of abuse, and it can be masked by both poverty and wealth.

Effective response requires practitioners to look beyond individual episodes and understand neglect in its context; they need to be curious and explore potential underlying factors that can lead to neglectful experiences such as, poor parental mental health, domestic violence, poverty, and social disadvantage. Practitioners need to recognise the long-term effects and how neglect impacts the child into their adulthood if not responded to in their childhood.

Practitioners will need to consider how best to support children, and the right intervention that will help protect against further harm. Practitioners need to gain a specific understanding of the world of the children they are working with and assess impact, to provide an outcome with confidence to prevent future harm. This includes neglect through failing to protect children from accessing emotionally harmful types of social media. All agencies need clear processes to ensure Practitioners are confident to make referrals to the right services.

What to do if you are concerned

If your concern is immediate, you may need to call the relevant emergency service(s) on 999. Do not wait if you feel a child's life is at risk.

If you are concerned a child or young person is suffering neglect, please ensure you advocate for them by making sure your concerns are heard, so that the risk of harm to the child will be reduced. You should inform the parent/carer or the person with Parental Responsibility that your concern is at a level you are contacting Children's Social Care and keep them updated on the action you are taking, unless you believe this will place the child at risk of immediate harm. Some professionals find these discussions harder than others; if you need any support, please contact the Professionals' Consultation Line on 01275 888690 and ensure you consult with your safeguarding lead.

If you have concerns (which are not immediate and/or life-threatening), please complete the [Request for Support form](#) and forward to childrens.frontdoor@n-somerset.gov.uk. It is important that this form is completed as fully and as clearly as possible, but do not allow this to prevent your escalation to the Front Door. Submitting this form might culminate in a Section 47 Strategy Meeting being held; this will be within 24 hours of the receipt of your Request for Support Form or acknowledgement of any other process you have used to contact the Front Door. This outcome may lead to an Initial Child Protection Conference, a Child In Need Assessment, a Family Wellbeing Intensive Support Assessment, the offer of Parenting Support and/or the provision of support through Children Centres or Family Hubs. It may also involve increased support from health and education services, and the voluntary sector. For all areas other than Section 47, parental consent must be given or those with parental responsibility must be informed.



Vision

North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership

Safeguarding means protecting a child's right to live in safety - free from abuse and neglect. It involves people and organisations working together to prevent and stop that abuse or neglect. All safeguarding will honour the feelings, beliefs, and decisions of children, young people, and their families.

The North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSSCP) is made up of three organisations:

- North Somerset Council
- NHS Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board
- Avon and Somerset Police

The NSSCP website can be found [here](#).

Our Six Safeguarding Principles

All safeguarding work is supported by six key principles covering both children and adults:

1. Empowerment - we will support and encourage people to make their own decisions and give informed consent.
2. Prevention - we will strive to act before harm occurs.
3. Proportionality - we will give the least intrusive response to risks.
4. Protection - we will give support and representation for those in greatest need.
5. Partnership - we will provide local solutions through local community services – communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting, and reporting neglect and abuse.
6. Accountability - we insist upon accountability and transparency in all safeguarding practices.

Governance

The Executive of the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership established the Neglect Working Group in 2022 to drive forward the strategic priorities of the Executive relating to neglect. This Strategy has been developed by the Neglect Working Group on behalf of the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership.

The Neglect Working Group is responsible for monitoring and reviewing this strategy on a regular basis and reporting back to the Executive of the Safeguarding Children Partnership who will provide overall governance of this strategy and challenge.

The Neglect Working Group will be responsible for reviewing and updating the Neglect Action Plan in adherence to the principles and priorities above.



Local context

64% of Child Protection plans in North Somerset were under the category of Neglect in January, which was a reduction compared with June 2023 when Neglect was the category for 82% of Child Protection plans. The national average is around 50% which shows we are above the statistical average for England². In 2023, the category of need was neglect in 396 (35.2%) out of the 1124 referrals to Children's Social Care.

In recent years, neglect has been the initial reason for three out of the six reviews carried out by NSSCP. These reviews are comprised of three Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, two Rapid Reviews, and one Local Safeguarding Review. Five out of the six reviews included a level of neglect that was raised as a concern, despite neglect not being the primary reason for the review being triggered in two instances.

Success indicators

- Number of children subject to an Initial Child Protection Conference with neglect as a reason.
- Number of children subject to a second Child Protection Plan with neglect as a reason.
- Reduction of the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan under the category of neglect for whom domestic abuse is the focus of the plan.
- Number of interventions where the Family Strengths and Needs Toolkit has been used.
- NSSCP Multi-Agency Audits of Early Help Assessments, Child in Need and Child Protection Plans for neglect show good impact of the plan and use of the Family Strengths and Needs Toolkit.
- Increasing feedback from parents and children who have had Early Help Assessments or other plans in place for neglect.
- Reduction in the number of repeat referrals to Children's Services following use of the Family Strengths and Needs Toolkit, where neglect features.
- Increase the percentage of Early Help Assessments, where neglect has been identified as a factor who then go onto have Children's Social Care support.
- Attendance rates for children attending medical and dental appointments, particularly for adolescents.

Aims and Purpose of this Strategy

The overarching aims of the multi-agency Neglect Strategy are to:

- Promote the welfare of children and young people to improve their outcomes and reduce the number of children and young people in North Somerset who are experiencing neglect.
- Improve multi-agency understanding of neglect.

² For national data see: [Children in need, Reporting year 2023 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk) (accessed 30/01/2024)



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- Identify and address worries about neglect at the first opportunity to improve outcomes for children and young people, which may include use of the Family Strengths and Needs toolkit (see below for further details regarding this toolkit).

Principles

- We have the safety and wellbeing of the child at the heart of everything we do, and we are aspirational that every child should achieve their full potential.
- We will work in a trauma-informed way, seeking to understand the lived experience and behaviours of the child and their family.
- We recognise that neglect is multi-dimensional and that children may have their medical, nutritional, emotional, educational, physical, or supervisory needs neglected. These forms of neglect can have different impacts at different stages of a child's life, from pre-birth through to adolescence and can have an enduring impact for the rest of their life.
- Each organisation, whether working with children or adults, will have a different role but all have a responsibility to work collaboratively to bring their unique perspective to the partnership assessment and response.
- We will adopt an evidence-based approach, appropriate to the family's unique circumstances. We will upskill our workforce and communities to prevent, identify and provide the right support in the right place at the right time.
- We will have shared evidence-based tools (Family Strengths and Needs Toolkit) to assess neglect and inform our partnership offer of support.
- We will seek to work with families positively to build on their strengths and collaborate to help them to find their own solutions.
- We will seek to develop a positive culture and use language that explores and explains the impact of neglect so that families feel respectfully challenged and are supported to understand the concerns.
- Children can experience neglect in all socio-economic groups, but where they and their families are living in poverty it can be challenging to differentiate between their unmet needs and neglect. We will ensure that we support our workforce to differentiate between unmet needs and those children who are experiencing or at risk of significant harm.
- We will understand the prevalence of neglect in our area and evaluate the impact of the support that we provide to families.

Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority: People (Leadership, Partnership, and Skilled Professionals)

- Leadership drives forward the appropriate systems, culture, and practice changes to sustain robust local arrangements to tackle neglect.
- There is a collective commitment by safeguarding partners, relevant agencies and named organisations to help and protect children who are suffering or likely to suffer from neglect. Practitioners from all agencies understand the prevalence and type of neglect affecting children and young people in their local area. Features of disproportionality (in terms of both



under and overrepresented groups) are also understood and action is taken to address these areas as appropriate.

- Practitioners access specialist training. Alongside routine awareness raising, this helps them develop a collective understanding, work together effectively, and ensures they have the right skills to recognise and respond to neglect. Practitioners are particularly alert to the risks arising for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Strategic Priority: Practice (Recognition, Assessment, and Support) Early Recognition of Neglect

- Neglect is identified and named as a concern by practitioners at the earliest opportunity. Effective early help is coordinated, involves partnership, and prevents problems getting worse. Less children are brought up in households suffering from neglect.
- Practitioners do not normalise neglect because of poverty and there is greater awareness of:
 - Neglect by Affluence
 - Educational Neglect
 - Adolescent Neglect (and the connection to poorer outcomes for this cohort, including the potential for serious youth violence)
 - Robust management oversight and supervision.
- We will listen to and value the voices of children who are experiencing neglect to influence practice.
- Practitioners are intently curious about family contexts: their background, culture, and circumstances. They undertake or facilitate home visits to check on children at home. There is a focus on significant others, particularly men.
- Practitioners are alert to the risk of children being neglected through exposure to domestic abuse, parental substance misuse, adult mental health and learning difficulties.
- All services consider and research historical information on the child and family to inform the present position.
- Practitioners will respond to emerging forms of neglect, such as the failure to protect children from access to harmful websites and social media.
- Practitioners receive effective supervision to help them evaluate, challenge, and reflect upon their analysis of risk to children, particularly in the context of neglect and the cumulative indicators of harm. Practitioners challenge each other and escalate as appropriate when there are professional differences.
- There is effective collaboration, information sharing and multi-agency oversight on children who are suffering or likely to suffer from neglect.

The Family Strengths and Needs Toolkit

In July 2023 the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership published the [Family Strengths and Needs Toolkit](#) with accompanying [practice guidance](#). The Toolkit was produced by Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership and adopted for use in North Somerset by agreement of the Children Partnerships in both Local Authority areas. The Toolkit has been provided to assist



professionals in North Somerset to identify and assess children and young people who are, or are at risk of, experiencing neglect.

Links to Related Resources

[NSSCP Effective Support for Children, Young People and Families: Guidance for all who work with children and families](#)

[NSSCP Resources Library](#)

[NSSCP Procedures online](#)

[North Somerset Children's Services Early Help Strategy 2023-2026](#)