



## Hillingdon Neglect Strategy

### Introduction

---

Our vision is to reduce the incidence of Neglect of children in Hillingdon and to reduce repeat incidents of Neglect for individual children. We want to ensure we have a shared understanding of neglect across the partnership, including what it is, how it impacts upon our children and how to effectively reduce levels of childhood neglect across the Borough.

Within universal services all agencies work with families to improve and maintain standards of care. Where staff are concerned with a lack of progress or engagement at the universal level, such concerns should be discussed within their own agency and consideration given to initiating an Early Help Assessment (EHA) or a Team Around the Family (TAF) (<http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/29826?q=EHA+and+Taf&go=Search>).

Where early identification of difficulties arises, and supporting the family through sustainable improvements in the care of children through Early Help arrangements is indicated, the development of a TAF is needed. There is a need to promote a culture amongst all agencies of robust planning to promote sustainable improved life chances for children. To deal effectively with identified Neglect of children, the work with the family must clearly set out what needs to happen, by when, and who is responsible for specific parts of the plan. Plans should set out clearly what will happen if improvements do not happen and/or are not maintained.

In all our work with children, we want to reduce the number of assessments experienced by children and their families and so work with the family has to involve listening to the child and, whenever possible, making sure the child's wishes are followed within the plan. We want to provide parents with the tools and techniques which help them to make changes for the better, and to maintain the improvements. Key to success is the importance of encouraging and supporting positive parenting and enabling those caring for children to make sufficient and sustainable changes.

### 2. Definition of Neglect

---

Neglect is the most common reason for a child to be the subject of a **Child Protection Plan** in the UK. It happens when parents or carers can't or won't meet a child's needs. Sometimes this is because they don't have the skills or support needed, and sometimes it's due to other problems such as mental health issues, drug and alcohol problems or poverty. It may involve a child who is not being protected from sexual harm, **Child Sexual Exploitation** or the impact of **Domestic Violence and Abuse**.

#### Official definitions of neglect

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result, for example, of maternal substance abuse. In Hillingdon we should be assessing where known at the Pre-Birth stage. This can improve prenatal care to help with early identification of potential neglect and to help families understand the importance of preparing healthily and carefully for the new baby.

Once a child is born, Neglect through childhood may involve;

- A parent or carer failing to provide adequate food;
- Failing to provide clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- Failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- Failing to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers);
- Failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment;
- Neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs;
- Failing to ensure a child receives an education.

"Neglect is the most cited reason for children to be referred to Children's Social Care and for becoming **Looked After**, as reported to central government. Other categories of concern may be masked by the use of the code denoting multiple reasons, which might include Neglect, **Physical, Sexual or Emotional Abuse** and "Neglect remains the largest category or reason for referral and entering care". (October 2014 the Association of Directors of Children's Services LTD (ADCS).

**For the purposes of this strategy, Neglect is considered where it is the primary focus of concern. It is acknowledged that the concept of Neglect is known to be an element of other areas of abuse.**

However the effectiveness of adults' caring responsibilities can be adversely affected by other factors:

- Mental health issues and/ or learning disabilities;
- Physical illness or disability;
- Learning difficulties;
- Domestic abuse;
- Use of drugs and/or excessive alcohol use;
- Homelessness;
- Bereavement;
- Financial pressures;
- Family breakdown/dysfunction.

The position of the whole family needs to be considered and understood as the welfare of children is best served through supporting those looking after them, but the focus must always be on improving the outcome for the child. It also has to be established if the neglect of the child is a transient episode or is entrenched behaviour by the adults.

In some families the approach taken by carers is one of "high criticism/low warmth" and whilst this is neglectful of children's emotional needs, it is an aspect which can be amended through work with families at as early a stage as possible. With Early Help arrangements, describing this aspect can lead to early and sustainable approaches to parenting, and converting this to positive parenting.

A child's needs also change over time, and every child is different. Each child will have different responses and personal resilience to their situation based upon the child's age, ability, disability, behavioural difficulties, experience, understanding, mental health and additional support. Staff working with families should also be conscious of the need to recognise that children's growth and development can differ significantly and care should be taken to ensure a clear understanding of when developmental traits are outside the expected levels for children generally and are potentially more attributable to Neglect.

### 3. Early Help

---

The impact of Neglect on 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 identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs seek to address them as early as possible. It is equally important that practitioners are alert to the danger of drift and 'start again' syndrome.

In order to address Neglect in Hillingdon it is important that agencies effectively use the Early Help framework to assess and plan services for children and families. Likewise it is important that any intervention with families is coordinated appropriately to enable parents to sustain the changes in care given to children.

### 4. Impact of Neglect on Children

---

Neglect is dangerous and can cause serious, long-term damage - even death: Davis and Ward (2012) found that the risk of fatalities from neglect may be as high as that from physical abuse and the risks of further abuse are higher with neglect than other types of abuse.

Neglectful parenting is most damaging in both the early stages of life and in the teenage years. A longitudinal study commissioned by the NSPCC found a strong correlation between the neglect and maltreatment of adolescents and poorer emotional well being, including self harm and suicidal thoughts (NSPCC 2012). Children who receive care which is unpredictable, rejecting or insensitive are more likely to develop attachments which are less secure.

Children who have experienced neglectful parenting may have:

- Poorer emotional knowledge and be less able to discriminate between different kinds of emotions;
- Lower self-esteem and higher levels of emotional problems;
- More aggressive than children who are not neglected; and
- More uncooperative and noncompliant;
- There is also a related impact on children's social development: the evidence suggests that neglected children are more withdrawn and socially isolated and less socially competent than their peers.

(Safeguarding Children across Services (2012) Carolyn Davies and Harriet Ward)

Neglect can be far-reaching in its consequences for a child. Not only will the experience of it make a child's life miserable but it can affect all aspects of their development. It is also likely to influence the relationships they make with others in both early and later life and have an impact on how they parent their own children. (Howarth, 2007).

### 5. Extent of Neglect in Hillingdon

---

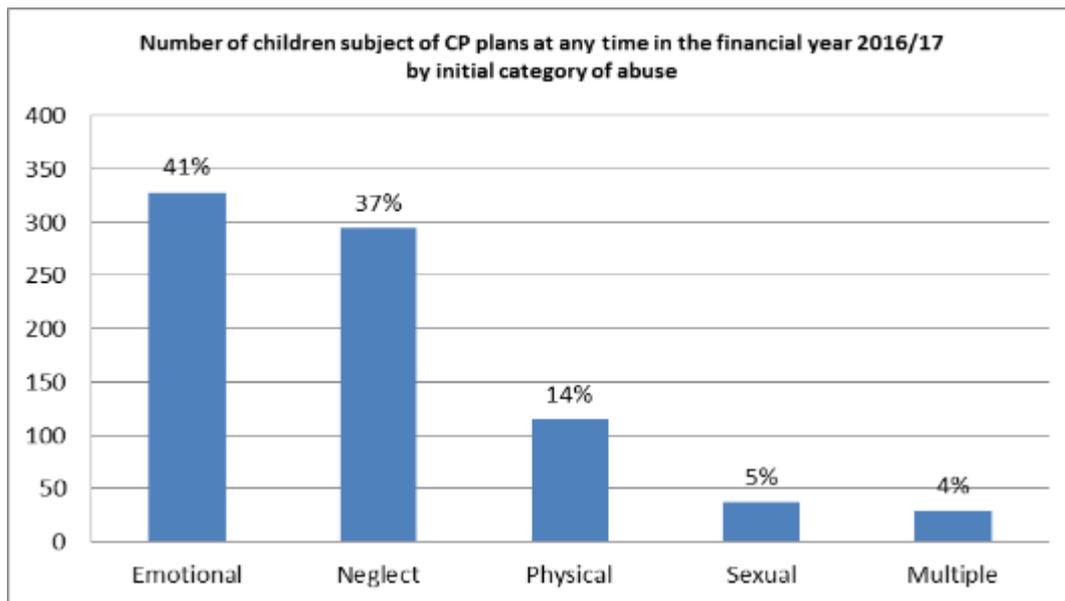
Tackling child neglect alongside other risks and vulnerabilities is identified as a priority for our Board. We have all made a commitment to improve opportunities for children and young people with an emphasis on early intervention and preventative work as a corporate priority as well as a LSCB priority.

This strategy sets out how Hillingdon LSCB will make a difference to children living with neglectful caregiving.

1 in 10 children in the UK have experienced neglect (Branson et al, 2012).

In Hillingdon neglect is the primary reason for concern in 37% of cases (compared to 45% nationally) where children were subject to plans at initial child protection conferences.

This relates to all children that were subject of a plan at any time during the year 2016/17, so the ICPC in some cases was before the year.



Over 28,300 children in the UK were identified as needing protection from neglect in 2016/17.

This relates to all children that were subject of a plan at any time during the year 2016/17

Nationally neglect is a factor in 60% of serious case reviews.

In Hillingdon in the year 2016/17 there were 2,895 referrals to children's services which cited neglect as a factor (66% of all referrals),

This figure relates to referrals with a Category of Need of "Abuse or Neglect" so not all are Neglect.

193 children becoming subject of an **Initial Child Protection Plan** had Neglect cited as a plan category reason during 2016/17 (42% of the total), whilst for 34 children subject to a second or subsequent **Child Protection Plan** (50% of the total), Neglect was cited as a plan category reason.

This relates to plans starting in 2016/17 only.

## 6. Strategic Objectives

---

1. **Promote a common awareness and understanding of what neglect means in Hillingdon and the impact on children.**
  - A common understanding of Neglect between and within agencies is crucial to allow effective identification and a common language;
  - This will be achieved by ensuring that the strategy is agreed by LSCB and LSAB by improving and establishing a strong professional base for identifying, understanding and managing situations of neglect with clear and agreed multi agency approaches;
  - Ensure a whole family approach is embedded within all multi-agency assessment cultures;
  - Ensure continued multi-agency training in early identification and help for families.
2. **Minimise the incidences of neglect for children**
  - Ensure that for any statutory multi agency plan that the family has an agreed "step down" plan (aimed that children continue to receive good care).
  - Improve the recognition and assessment of children in neglectful families at an early stage and strengthen the early help provision of support through Team Around the Family (TAF) arrangement (see<http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/29826?q=EHA+and+TAF&go=Search>)
  - Ensure a robust and consistent application of thresholds as identified within "<http://www.londoncp.co.uk/>" to ensure the intervention is matched to assessed needs
3. **Ensure the effectiveness of service provision**
  - We will continue to use the Signs of Safety principles and restorative practice approach to identify the impact of neglect on children and deliver interventions which will improve children's lived experiences
  - We will use multi - agency audit to quality assure processes and measure effectiveness of intervention
  - We will proactively seek the views of children living with neglect to understand child's lived experiences during assessment and intervention
  - We will provide practitioners with effective skills and tools to work with families experiencing Neglect, by adopting the Graded Care Profile 2 to identify strengths, weaknesses and actions required to enable change within families.