



Child neglect toolkit - Competencies Framework

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The RBSCP Neglect competencies are designed to ensure that all practitioners can demonstrate an agreed minimum level of knowledge and skills and deliver appropriate responses to neglect in line with the Rochdale Borough Neglect Strategy 2022 – 24.

The competencies apply to a wide range of practitioners and volunteers in a range of settings, including but not restricted to:

- Those working directly with children, young people and their families in child/family specific or front line public services e.g. children's social care, early year settings, health services, schools.
- Those working in services for Adults e.g. adult mental health, substance misuse, domestic abuse who may become aware of child safeguarding risks as a result of their work
- Those with limited contact with children, young people and/or parents/carers as part of their role who may nonetheless become aware of possible abuse or neglect, e.g. bus drivers, librarians, front line/administrative staff in any universal service.

RBSCP recognise that single agencies will also have their own competencies that are specific to their area of work and that, depending on an individual's role and responsibility, further competencies may need to be achieved and evidenced.

The neglect competencies do not replace these single agency standards but should be used in conjunction with them.

The decision about how to promote the competencies and to assess and monitor compliance should be made by individual agencies, in a way that is appropriate and relevant for their workforce and service users, as well as meeting any statutory and regulatory requirements.

It is recommended that assessments of competency take place as early as possible for all new starters – this will ensure that any development needs are identified as soon as possible, to reduce the risk of children, young people and families experiencing abuse or harm.

Child Neglect Competencies – Everyone who has contact with children, young people and their families

Understanding Neglect	Practitioners are alert to neglect as the most common form of child abuse.
	Effective practitioners are able to recognise a range of indicators of child neglect, including indicators of physical, health, safety & supervision, care & nurture and child development.
	Ineffective practitioners consistently fail to recognise the seriousness of neglect and fail to recognise neglect as a form of child abuse.

Neglect Risk factors	Practitioners are alert to risk factors which make a child more vulnerable to neglect.
	Effective practitioners are able to understand that some children are more vulnerable to neglect, including babies, teenagers, unaccompanied asylum seekers, children who are looked after and disabled children. They also recognise that factors including domestic abuse, parental drug and alcohol misuse and parental mental health issues may increase the risk of neglect.
	Ineffective practitioners consistently fail to recognise and address vulnerability and risk

Neglect Signs & indicators	Practitioners are alert to the signs which indicate a child's basic needs are not being met.
	Effective practitioners are able to distinguish a healthy child from one who's health and development is being impaired due to abuse or neglect. They also consider the child's experience within the family by listening to what is being said.
	Ineffective practitioners consistently fail to notice the signs that a child is experiencing neglect and do not ask or hear what the child is telling them.

Impact of neglect	Practitioners are able to offer early help to reduce the impact of neglect.
	Effective practitioners are able to understand that neglect is serious and can cause significant, long term harm. They can identify the need for support at an early stage. They also understand that children who experience neglect are more vulnerable to other types of abuse.
	Ineffective practitioners consistently underestimate the short and long term impact of neglect. They do not know, or understand how early help can be used as an effective tool to reduce risks.

Child Neglect Competencies – Everyone who has contact with children, young people and their families

Practitioners are able to effectively respond to neglect.

Taking action on neglect

Effective practitioners:

- Understand their role in relation to neglect. They know when and how to respond to immediate safety issues in relation to children.
- Demonstrate appropriate professional ownership and persistence.
- Know the boundaries of their own personal competence and responsibility, when to involve others and where to seek advice and support.
- Work closely with other agencies to plan interventions.
- How to report concerns about a child and understand the importance of sharing information in order to safeguard.
- How to take action, as an individual which is appropriate to your position which leads to effective outcomes.

Ineffective practitioners:

- Avoid responsibility for dealing with neglect.
- Blame others for lack of progress.
- Lack persistence.
- Are not aware of multi-agency documents such as escalation policy, early help frameworks, Childrens Needs & Response Framework.

Child Neglect Competencies – Practitioners who work directly with children, young people and their families

Practitioners recognise the importance of understanding the child's lived experience.

Focus on the child

Effective practitioners:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which abuse and neglect may impact on the normal development of children and young people.
- Recognise that children and young people who are being neglected may find it difficult to tell someone and that children may 'normalise' their experiences if it is all they have known.
- Recognise that children and young people may communicate their abuse or neglect indirectly through their behaviour and appearance.
- Demonstrate understanding that some children are more vulnerable to neglect, including babies, children with disabilities and adolescents.
- Use creative approaches/a range of tools to elicit and understand the child's perspective, wishes and feelings.
- Understand the value of the Child's Voice and use tools to stimulate this.

Ineffective practitioners:

- Lack an understanding of child development.
- Fail to see and speak to the child, observe how they are, listen to them or take serious account of their views, and see the situation from their perspective and experience.
- Focus on the immediate needs of a parent so that the voice and best interests of the child are not clear, not considered and therefore not acted upon.
- Fail to provide appropriate opportunities for the child's voice to be heard.
- Fail to understand that the concept of the 'child's voice' applies to pre and non-verbal children

Practitioners are knowledgeable of Early Help.

Early identification & early help

Effective practitioners understand that the sooner families get the help they need, the better the outcomes for children and therefore respond to risk in a timely and effective manner. They understand universal services and the role that an Early Help Assessment and processes can play.

Ineffective practitioners allow a case to drift by not supporting early interventions.

Child Neglect Competencies – Practitioners who work directly with children, young people and their families

Practitioners are knowledgeable of Think Family.

Think Family

Effective practitioners understand that 'Think Family' is about securing better outcomes for children, young people, adults and families by co-ordinating the support they receive from all services. They create packages of support to reflect each family's individual needs.

They understand that whilst there are different family patterns and lifestyles and that these can vary across different ethnic, cultural and faith groups, all children have a fundamental right to have their basic needs met by being flexible and creative with assessment and planning.

Also, effective practitioners assess and understand individual family circumstances and take a multi-agency approach to ensure a full picture of family is known prior to planning support.

Ineffective practitioners do not consider forming relationships with families and display a rigid approach – 'one size fits all' – no flexibility.

Practitioners are knowledgeable of Children's Needs & Response Framework.

CRNF

Effective practitioners are competent and confident in ability to apply CRNF in neglect cases. They use the framework to facilitate multi-agency discussions and know when to refer to children's social care and when to offer early help.

They have heard from the children and their families and understand previous interventions and their successes. An effective practitioners seeks evidence to support successful outcomes and know how to escalate if not found.

Ineffective practitioners consistently are unfamiliar with the Children's Needs & Response Framework. They fail to understand thresholds and consistently make inappropriate referrals.

Practitioners will effectively maintain safeguarding records.

Recording

Effective practitioners understand the reasons for maintaining accurate, timely records of all concerns and actions regarding safeguarding and child protection, including chronology.

All evidence, inclusive of child and families voice is consistently recorded and updated. Records are reviewed and new evidence is always recorded. Records are stored correctly in line with agency policy and procedures.

Ineffective practitioners do not understand why recording of evidence is important for the safe and successful outcomes of children and this fail to maintain appropriate records

Child Neglect Competencies – Practitioners who work directly with children, young people and their families

Practitioners are effective in their assessment.

Assessment

Effective practitioners analyse the facts available and where gaps are found, they apply critical thinking or professional curiosity to gain data. They take the full history of the family into account and patterns of previous episodes of neglect and use information to create a full chronology.

When assessing they include background information of the parents' own childhood to better assess parenting capability. Listen to other's perspectives and check/triangulate information for factual accuracy.

In neglect cases they utilise the toolkit to provide a consistent multi-agency analysis.

Ineffective practitioners do not consider the possibility of disguised compliance. They produce limited assessments with little or no evidence of information gathering or analysis. They are not able to identify gaps or seek the voice of people they are working with to understand their assessment. They approach assessments with preconceptions or bias. They do not consider the case as individual and unique. They fail to review assessment when new evidence is found. They do not consider the benefit of multi-agency working or information sharing. They fail to capture and understanding of family history during assessment.

Practitioners are effective in their planning.

Planning

Effective practitioners are knowledgeable about different types of support available and how to consider these post assessment. They ensure that the child's wishes and feelings are clear when formulating plans and involve them in all plans. They recognise the multi-agency support available and how to effectively utilise this support. An effective practitioner will ensure action and successful outcomes are seen and evidenced as they are SMART. (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time based)

Ineffective practitioners do not create effective action after planning. They ignore or are unaware of the knowledge and expertise that the multi-agency network of partners can bring to the work of the team. They do not seek the involvement of children and their families when formulation of plans occur.

Child Neglect Competencies – Practitioners who work directly with children, young people and their families

Practitioners are effective in their reviewing	
Review	Effective practitioners review plans regularly to understand their effectiveness. They ensure improvements are seen and update plans accordingly. They make effective use of case supervision to review their decision making with a senior colleague and accept challenge as a tool for improvement. Effective practitioners also review their own professional development to ensure knowledge is comprehensive and up to date. They are aware of information providers and utilise them frequently.
	Ineffective practitioners see reviews as a tick box exercise. Ineffective case reviews lead to ineffective interventions. They see challenge to their decision making as a threat or are not confident in their knowledge and back down immediately. They rely on others to point out where professional development is required.

Practitioners are effective in their escalation.	
Escalation	Effective practitioners are knowledgeable about the Escalation Policy and can utilise to professionally influence areas where a case may not be achieving success. They know what “good” looks like and are not afraid to challenge where success outcomes are not being met.
	Ineffective practitioners do not challenge, or are not aware when challenge is required. They do not utilise the Escalation Policy and do not recognise the risks presented.

Using the Competencies Development activities that may contribute to meeting the competencies include:

- Multi-agency training, conferences and briefings
- Serious Case Review briefings
- Single agency induction/safeguarding training
- Practice workshops
- E-Learning
- Personal research/self-directed learning
- Mentoring and shadowing
- Management supervision
- Peer supervision
- Formal education/Qualification pathway

Competencies should be assessed using mechanisms that are already in place within organisations including:

- Induction programmes
- Direct observation
- Supervision
- Performance and Development Reviews (PDRs) / appraisal
- Discussion, formal or informal
- Questioning, individually or in team meetings
- Case File audits
- e-learning completion
- Coursework and assignments as part of a qualification