



Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership

Child Neglect Strategy 2022 - 2025



ROCHDALE BOROUGH
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP



Introduction

Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership is committed to helping children young people and families live safer lives.

Neglect is one of the most prevalent forms of child abuse. It is complex, taking different forms in different families. We must all work together to support families in making positive changes to the lives of the children and young people of Rochdale borough.

The experience of childhood neglect can have significant and long-term consequences, affecting numerous aspects of a young person's development. Neglect can affect upon cognitive, physical, emotional and behavioural development, as well as a child's education and wellbeing.

This strategy sets out our commitment, vision and priorities for identifying and responding to childhood neglect. All professionals have a part to play in supporting and promoting the safeguarding of children and young people, and our neglect strategy is designed to show how early identification can work alongside the breadth of our local Early Help offer.



Strategic Aim

The overarching aim of Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership Child Neglect Strategy 2022 - 2025 is

1. early identification of neglect,
2. prevention of neglect and
3. reduction in the impact of neglect on the children and young people living in the Borough of Rochdale.

RBSCP child neglect strategy and tools have been refreshed to include a *Critical Thinking* approach where professionals put the Child's or Young Persons voice and wishes at the centre of any decision making outcomes.

The Child Neglect Strategy and associated tools are designed to allow for rapid, early identification of neglect and the form it is manifested in. The strategy and tools allow professionals, from all agencies, to make a timely determination of the short and long term impacts concerning the child or young person. This strategy uses a multi-agency approach and aims to be accessible to professionals and families.

The refreshed RBSCP Strategy and Tools are designed to complement single agency processes as the partnership understands the uniqueness of each member organisation.

A consistent, multi-agency approach is required to ensure the wellbeing and safety of those children and young people who may be at risk of Neglect.

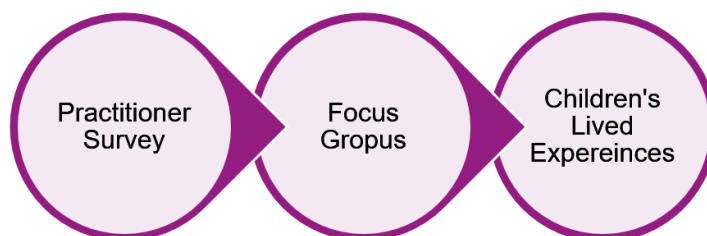


How we developed this strategy

This strategy reflects an intensive development project to understand, evaluate and redesign how all professionals identify and address neglect.

We wanted to ensure that in developing a refreshed approach, we were not preparing a strategy and assessment tool in isolation. The key to our new strategy and approach is that it has been shaped directly from the voices of all stakeholders, including children young people & families. We invited Jan Horwath from Sheffield University to support our efforts, and are thankful for her involvement in this strategy.

To understand how multi-agency professionals recognised child neglect, we held an online survey which explored different types of neglect and then used this insight to speak directly with leaders and frontline staff across a number of different agencies about their own personal experiences. The outcome of this process led us to consider the approach outlined in this strategy. Finally, before proceeding, we wanted to engage with children and young people to understand how they have previously experienced different assessments from different agencies.



The result, we hope, is that all professionals who work with children and families in the borough have access to a simple, straightforward system to identify, assess and address and child neglect.

What do we mean by *Neglect*?

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 defines neglect as:

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 needs.

Our neglect resources explore distinct, but related, areas of children and young people’s needs.

Physical care	How is the child’s physical care promoted and supported through home conditions, clothing & food?
Health	Is the child taken to health appointments and is safe sleep advice followed?



Safety and supervision	Are appropriate safety adaptations made? Do appropriate adults supervise the child / young person?
Care and nurture	How do parents / carers promote the child's independent emotional development?
Development	What do you know about the child's educational attainment or emotional wellbeing?



What do we know about neglect in Rochdale?

Child neglect has been a longstanding issue in the borough, with a large majority of children and young people known to have experienced neglect at some point in their upbringing.

Rochdale borough was ranked as the 15th most deprived locality in England in 2019; 30% of our residents live in the 10% most deprived areas nationally. Much research has been carried out which identifies the links between deprivation, child neglect, and Adverse Childhood Experiences. This can result in families experiencing entrenched or cyclical neglect.

At the end of March 2022 84% of all referrals to Children's Social Care were categorised as *abuse / neglect*. 40% of all Child Protection Plans had a main category of neglect. Almost $\frac{1}{3}$ of rapid review referrals to RBSCP in 2020/21 were for child neglect, and neglect was evident in most other referrals.

Our own audit and development work tells us that we need to do more to listen to children's voices to understand their lived experiences.

What do children and families think?

Parents want to be spoken to in plain English, and not made to feel like they are doing something wrong.

Children and families do not want to tell their story to lots of different people over again.

Try not to use negative language, it is important to focus on positives and what is going well.

The body language of someone talking to us is half of the story.

What do practitioners think?

Assessment tools need to be short, concise and participative.

Professionals can see physical neglect easier than emotional neglect.

Training should help to identify different types of neglect and what to do, not just show us how to fill in a form.

Our work is all about relationships – we need to be open and honest with families.

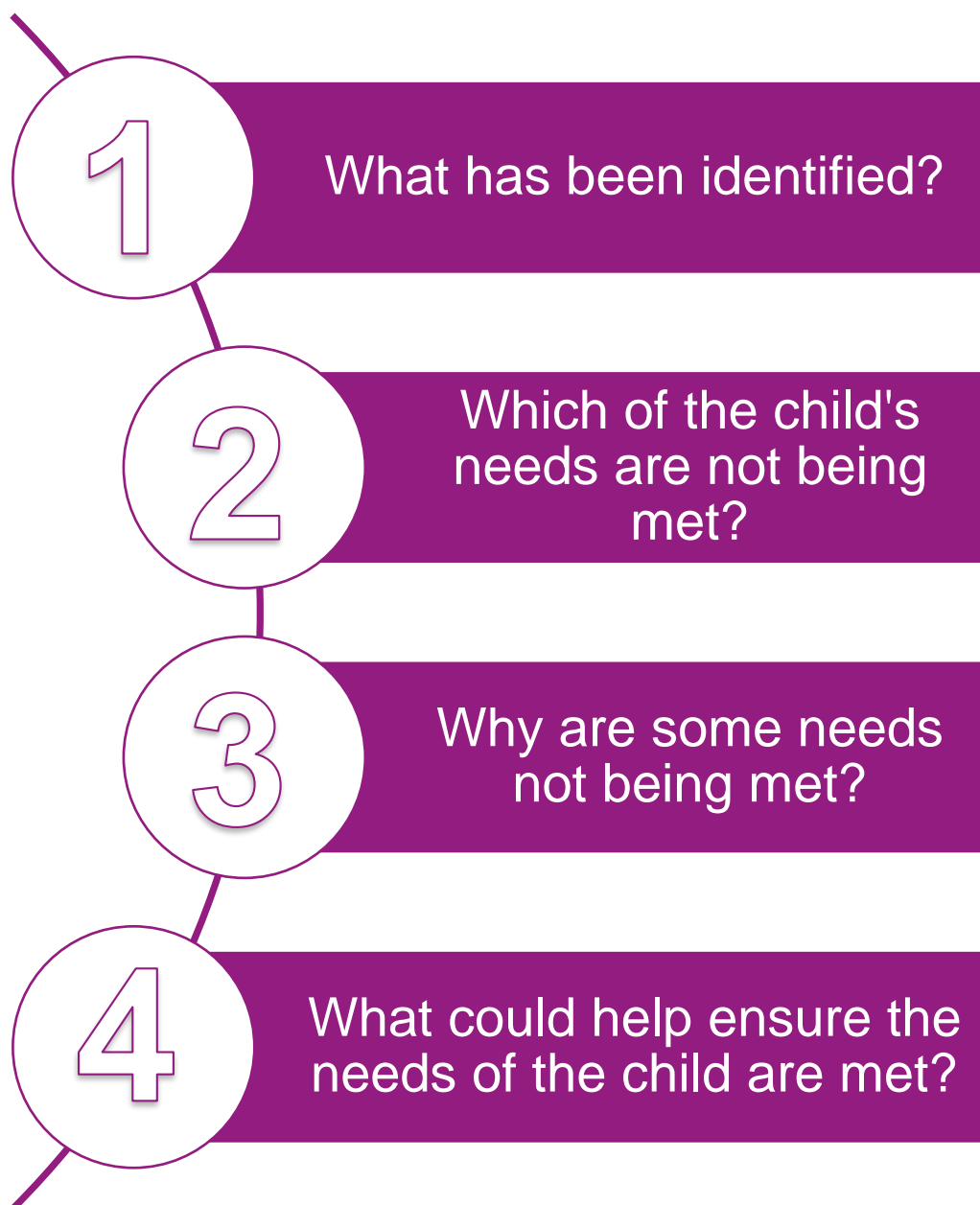


Identifying child neglect

Our approach focuses on 4 key questions which can be explored with children and families, or can be prompts for professional practice to help to think about why you have highlighted possible neglect, and who may be able to help.

At each stage, it is important to consider the **child's voice** as well as the **whole family's views and wishes**.

Instead of focusing on neglect, our approach puts the child's needs and experiences front and centre; what are their needs, what does that look like for them and what could help it look better?





1 What has been identified?

What has the professionals identified about a child or young person? It is important to be clear about what specifically we are worried about. Why is it that we feel a child may not be having some of their needs fully met?

2 Which of the child's needs are not being met?

Rather than thinking about *is the child being neglected*, consider which specific needs are not being met. For example:

- Does the child attend school every day?
- Is the child accessing health services appropriately?
- Are there any apprehensions regarding the child's diet?

3 Why are some needs not being met?


This question forces us to start to think about the underlying causes, rather than concentrating on the symptoms. Are the child's parents, carers, and wider family supported and enabled to parent the child to their full potential? Gathering the child's views and wishes is critical at this point to understand the impact it has on their daily life.

4 What could help ensure the needs of the child are met?

It may not be appropriate to initiate child protection procedures to help support families to meet a child's needs. There could be services available locally at an Early Help level that can provide positive parenting support. Think about how to frame a conversation with parents, carers, or wider family members to understand their own views and wishes and what would support them.

Our [Neglect Toolkit](#) and [Neglect Quick List](#) are designed to help all practitioners working across all organisations to help you identify specific safeguarding requirements the child or young person may have, and be exact about which of the child's needs are not being fully met.

Physical care	
Needs fully met	Needs partially met
<p>The child has appropriate food and drink for their age and stage of development. Any special dietary requirements are always met.</p> <p>The child is dressed appropriately and has access to clean clothing.</p> <p>The child is clean, and is able to demonstrate self-care appropriate to their age and stage of development. Any skin irritations are treated appropriately.</p> <p>The child lives in an adequate home with all appropriate furniture, heating, and amenities. Any animals in the home are well cared for and do not present a danger.</p>	<p>The child receives low quality food and drink not appropriate for them. Parents / carers do not fully understand the importance of a balanced diet.</p> <p>The child's clothing does not always fit correctly.</p> <p>The child is reasonably clean but this is not consistent, and they do not always brush their teeth. Skin conditions are not always treated (e.g. nappy rash).</p> <p>The home has some essential amenities but is not always clean enough or is in need of improvement.</p>
<p>Record any observations or concerns you have regarding PHYSICAL CARE here</p>	<p>The child does not receive an appropriate diet, with a lot of sugar, crisps, chips, sweets etc. The child appears hungry.</p> <p>The child's clothing is dirty, does not fit and unsuitable for them, or the environment.</p> <p>The child is dirty and is not encouraged to wash. Skin conditions are untreated and can become chronic.</p> <p>The home is dirty and is in a state of disrepair. There are obvious hazards or opportunity for injury and is lacking in basic amenities. There are animal faeces, and the animals are uncared for and can appear anxious of their owners.</p>

RBSCP  Neglect Tool Kit: Quick List		SAFE GUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP		
This Neglect Quick List is designed to help you quickly consider if any of the child or young person's needs are not being fully met by their parent or carer.				
For each relevant area of need, consider if any of the categories are being met, and what the impact on the child is likely to be.				
Area of need	Category of need	Fully met	Partially met	Not met
Physical Care	Food and drink			
	Clothing and bedding			
	Personal hygiene			
	Home conditions			
Health	Safe sleep			
	Bedtime routines			
	Health appointments			
	Immunisations			
	Illness treatment			
Safety and supervision	Disability support			
	Adaptions / equipment			
	Baby handling			
Care and nurture	Child care			
	Child's personal whereabouts			
	Child's identity			
	Emotional attachment			
Child development	Parental attachment			
	Protection from risk			
	Health checks			
	Educational attainment			
	Hobbies / sport / leisure			
	Healthy diet			
Personal reflections / next steps				



The RBSCP website contains resources to help you work with families and to explore any identified safeguarding subjects you have regarding their ability to fully meet children's needs. Information on training and development for child neglect will be continually updated to ensure that our training is available to all practitioners.

How children & young people experience neglect

As outlined above, neglect can take many different forms in different families. This is also true as children and young people grow and develop in their own individual ways. A new-born baby's needs will look very different to those of an adolescent, and we would expect parents and carers to respond differently as a result.

Our neglect toolkit does not differentiate between different age categories, but encourages individuals to explore families using their own professional curiosity.

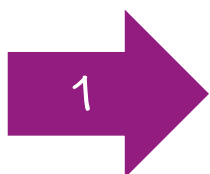
For example, a child's dietary requirements will evolve as they develop from a new-born baby, through their early years and then as an adolescent. However, their parents or carers would still be expected to provide **appropriate food and drink** at all ages. This can also be dependent upon a number of other factors such as any disability needs of the child or their parents / carers, the family's cultural background or religious beliefs, or any other significant influencing factor.

Our approach should be consistent throughout; the child's needs should be prioritised and met in line with their age and stage of development.



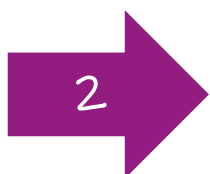
What is the aim of our strategy?

Our Child Neglect Strategy prioritises supporting families to meet children and young people's needs. There are lots of reasons why parents and carers may be unable to fully meet needs, and agencies need to work together to understand these and provide support that is relevant to the family at that moment in time.



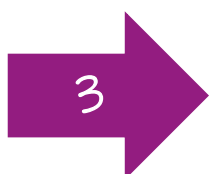
Strengths based working with families

The unique, individual strengths of each family should be recognised and championed, to help parents and carers to support children and young people. Building on these strengths will enable families to provide care nurture and support to children and young people.



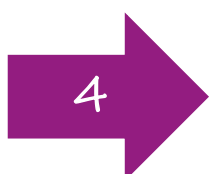
Early identification and Early Help

We need to identify any child or young person whose needs are not being fully met as early as we can. This will prevent issues escalating and requiring a more significant level of involvement from agencies. The Rochdale Children's Needs and Response Framework¹ provides further guidance to allow for early, effective decision making.



Building meaningful relationships with families

Providing support at an Early Help level will promote strengths-based working and relational practice. Agencies should work with families to develop goals for them to achieve that take account of their individual circumstances.



Improving links across agencies and services

Strengthening professional links between agencies will help to identify cyclical or entrenched neglect in adults as well as children, improving outcomes using a think family approach. Effective partnership working is vital in order to ensure that outcomes for children and families are central to all assessment, planning and intervention. This includes the need to consider differing views and experiences which evidence the value of exchanging ideas and developing critical thinking in regards to how best to achieve improved outcomes. The Escalation Policy² provides a clear process for agencies to resolve professional differences.



Embedding this strategy



We want to ensure that our new approach to child neglect in Rochdale is embedded across all agencies working with children and families.

We will therefore develop a training programme that addresses both identification and addressing child neglect. We want to enable practitioners, professionals, and anyone else working with children and families with the skills and tools to effectively identify neglect.

A child neglect training programme will provide delegates with the knowledge, skills and information necessary to be able to spot the signs. We know that the hidden forms of neglect can be harder to identify, and we want to make sure that anyone working with children and families is able to identify emotional and wellbeing neglect as well as physical neglect.

The training programme will then explore how we can begin to address

child neglect. This will brief professionals on the identification and screening tools available locally, as well as how our collective Early Help offer can be accessed to support families in need of support.

In addition, the RBSCP website will be updated with a resource library containing a range of tools and links for anyone to access. This will include a section for the public, to help them identify and report neglect, and a larger section for professionals. This second section will include learning from Child Practice Safeguarding Reviews, seven minute briefings, neglect tools and supporting documents and links to other sources of information such as Research in Practice.



How will we deliver this strategy?

To ensure that we deliver our strategy effectively, we have prepared a short action plan below which sets out the steps we will take and how we will monitor our effectiveness.

What will we do?	What change will we see?	How will we know we are successful?
Develop bespoke training courses for all professionals working with children and families.	More families will be supported under early help arrangements for emotional and wellbeing neglect, with preventative support offered at the right time.	<p>Early Help Assessments³ will be specific on identification of neglect prevention. Child and Family Voice evident on EHA via the use of RBSCP Neglect Tool.</p> <p>Successful neglect prevention outcomes are evident on Team around the Family closure (TAF) forms.</p> <p>An increase in practitioners completing relevant training.</p>
Ensure Neglect Tool is embedded into Early Help Assessment process replacing current signposting to existing tools.	Early Help Assessments will recognise and assess Neglect earlier and support offered before thresholds to Children Social Care are met.	We will see an increase where Neglect prevention is identified earlier and successful outcomes achieved whilst observing a corresponding decrease in Children In Need / Child Protection plans due to positive actions at TAF level.
Ensure child neglect is a focus in all RBSCP child safeguarding weeks.	Increased awareness of different types of child neglect.	Increase in social media and communication throughout the year. Child neglect awareness raising is more prominent.
Monitor usage of the Neglect Toolkit and training uptake to measure the impact of our strategy.	As more agencies access updated training and resources practitioner confidence will increase, and we will be able to target those agencies who are not making full use of the resources.	<p>An increase of pro-active Neglect prevention identified in Early Help Assessments.</p> <p>An increase in training uptake and website downloads.</p>



<p>Strengthen links with adult safeguarding with routine performance reporting to joint children's and adult safeguarding governance</p>	<p>Increased awareness of the links between child neglect and neglect in older adults, or self-neglect.</p>	<p>We will see an increase in safeguarding referrals for individuals of the same family and more families will receive early help without needing statutory Children's Social Care involvement as well as Adult Care support.</p>
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Appendices

1	Rochdale Children's Needs and Response Framework	Rochdale Safeguarding Partnership Board - Assessment Tools, Forms, Templates & Other Resources
2	Escalation Policy	Rochdale Safeguarding Partnership Board - Assessment Tools, Forms, Templates & Other Resources
3	Early Help Assessment	Rochdale Safeguarding Partnership Board - Early Help