

Safeguarding Children Week 2021

Child neglect

Tackling child neglect is a key priority for us all in Rochdale. Child neglect is the most common form of abuse in the UK and the effect of neglect on children and young people is devastating. Almost half of all Child Protection Plans at the end of March 2021 were for children experiencing neglect. It is a complex issue and there is no single cause of neglect and no single solution. For this reason, the Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership has prioritised reviewing and refreshing our approach to child neglect across the borough with dedicated development work.

What is child neglect?

Child neglect is complex, and can sometimes be difficult to identify. There are a variety of different possible causes and symptoms, with issues such as culture & identity, disability, language and communication, developmental delay, all having an impact on how professionals can spot the signs and support families.

The Department for Education definition of child neglect is set out below.

Neglect 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:

- 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

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

Working Together to Safeguard Children, DfE 2018

Across Rochdale borough, we are using learning from front-line practice, children's lived experiences, and safeguarding practice reviews to update our multi-agency definition of neglect in the Rochdale Borough Neglect Strategy.



Rochdale Borough Neglect Strategy

In March 2021 the RBSCP began development work on reviewing our current Neglect Strategy, drawing on a number of different strands to understand what multi-agency practitioners would find helpful when working with families where there are concerns about neglect. The redeveloped strategy will have a focus on early identification, and support at an Early Help level with a view to preventing issues escalating to a point where social care involvement is required.

Our refreshed approach will be developed in consultation with multi-agency practitioners across the borough and informed by learning from children's lived experiences. If you would like more information, or would like to participate in upcoming engagement work, please email rbsb.admin@rochdale.gov.uk

We hope to launch our new neglect strategy and approach later in 2021.

Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Competencies - Neglect

RBSCP have recently developed new competencies for staff as part of our on-going commitment to effectively spot and respond to child neglect. These new 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 2018-20.

It is important that all staff who work with children familiarise themselves with the matrix, [click here for a copy](#).

The partnership recognises that agencies may well have their own competencies and these do not replace those; they are to be used in conjunction. The competencies can be used with staff, and partners, in a variety of established monitoring activities like: inductions, observations, supervision, PDRs / appraisal, case file audits, e-learning, coursework and team discussions.

Assessing neglect

Assessing neglect cases can be difficult. Neglect can fluctuate both in level and duration. A child's welfare can, for example, improve following input from services or a change in circumstances and review, but then deteriorate once support is removed. Resources are available on the RBSCP website to support you. These will be updated over the coming months, and training will be made available for any new tools.

Multi-agency neglect screening tool

This screening tool is intended for frontline practitioners within all partner agencies as a means to quickly identify areas of concern which may indicate a child or young person is being neglected. The tool is designed to be applicable to all ages of children and should help identify neglect and associated factors across the age ranges. It is intended to complement existing tools and agency assessments. If the screening tool indicates that a child or young person is experiencing neglect, a more comprehensive assessment should be completed.

[Click here for the assessment tools.](#)

Coronavirus and child neglect:

Keeping children safe and protecting them from harm needs to remain our top priority in these challenging times.

Due to coronavirus, many are spending more time at home. Isolation can place children at a greater risk of neglect.

People do not always report their concerns because they are not certain of the signs, do not know where to report, or are worried about being wrong. This means that Rochdale Children's Social Care could be missing out on vital information they need to keep children safe from harm.

Some of the signs you may spot include:

- Aggressive or repeated shouting
- Hearing hitting or things being broken
- Children crying for long periods of time
- Very young children left alone or are outdoors by themselves
- Children looking dirty or not changing their clothes
- Children being withdrawn or anxious

If you spot these signs it does not necessarily mean a child is being abused or neglected but by raising your concerns you can make sure that children are safe and families are getting the support they need at the earliest opportunity. Every family goes through challenging times at some point.

To report:

If you see something, are told something, or something does not feel right, you need to report it to Rochdale Children's Social Care on 0300 303 0440 or out of office hours 0300 303 8875. If you feel a child or a young person is in immediate danger contact the Police on 999.



More information for practitioners:

[Types of neglect](#)

[GM Multi-agency neglect procedure](#)

[7 MB Neglect](#)

For further information and resources, [click here](#).

RBSCP is currently delivering child neglect training online. For details of this and are other online training packages click [here](#).