

13th March 2022

6.

Child neglect strategy

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Cllr Stacey Elson
Portfolio Holder

1. Aim

- 1.1 This report is to update members on Walsall's Child Neglect Strategy.
- 1.2 Child Neglect is a strategic priority for the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership and this multi-agency Neglect Strategy is aiming to drive development and improvement. We know that experience of neglect in childhood can have significant and long-term consequences, affecting many areas of a child's development and their life into adulthood. It is the most common type of abuse experienced by children in Walsall, as it is nationally.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That members support the work we are doing with partners through the safeguarding partnership board around the prevention and support of mitigating against the impact of child neglect.

3. Report detail – know

- 3.1 Three priorities were identified across the adult and children's Safeguarding Partnership agenda in 2021, with Neglect and All Age Exploitation being key for the Children's Partnership. These priorities were determined through the review of partnership data, our understanding of practice from case reviews and audits and wider partnership discussion about issues which require a joint spotlight.
- 3.2 A child neglect steering group was established in January 2021 to coordinate the development, delivery and impact of Walsall's Neglect Matters Strategy. The Subgroup is made up of key leaders from: • Health • Public Health • Police • Early Help • Primary school rep. • Secondary school rep. • Adult Social Care • Children's Social Care • Housing providers • LA Customer Services • Healthwatch • One Walsall.

Multi-agency engagement and involvement is strong within the steering group as well as having developed strong links with key partnership boards like Walsall

Together has been essential for the implementation of this strategy and ensuring we can maximise impact on children, young people and families in Walsall.

3.3 The Steering group worked collaboration with our children and young people to develop the guided principles that would drive the strategy. Children and young people identified that the following key principles would be key in effectively supporting children who experience neglect at the earliest moment possible:

- **Training** – so everyone in Walsall understands what neglects means, understands the impact it has on children and the role they can play in preventing neglect or supporting children who experience neglect.
- **Seeing and Hearing Children** – listening to children in every way possible – by talking with them, listening to them and seeing them.
- **Taking Action** – children identified that having at least one adult or a network of adults that listen; that they can trust and that offer support is key to good help

3.4 A comprehensive needs assessment and extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders identified the 4 key Strategic priorities. Each priority has an allocated lead partner to strengthen the shared accountability in implementing the strategy:

Priority One (sponsor - One Walsall): to improve the awareness and understanding of neglect and the delivery of effective preventative support

Priority Two (sponsor Health): to improve the recognition and assessment of children and young people living in neglectful situations before statutory intervention is required, including the use of appropriate assessment tools.

Priority Three (Sponsor LA): improve the effectiveness of interventions and reduce the impact of neglect

Priority Four (Sponsor Chair of the child neglect steering group): strategic commitment and leadership that drives good practice and improvement in tackling neglect.

3.5 Practitioners told us through the consultation that it would help them if where appropriate we aligned key strategies and communications across key areas of their work. We therefore launched the Child Neglect Strategy together with the refreshed Early help Strategy and the Domestic Abuse Strategy in November 2021 helping us to develop a more robust joined up partnership response around key demands.

4. Financial information

4.1 There are no financial information related to this development.

5. Reducing Inequalities

- 5.1 The aim of the strategy is to ensure that all children have the right support, in the right place, at the right time, for as long as it is needed to enable them to be safe from harm, happy and learning well with self-belief, aspiration and support to be their best.
- 5.2 Most parents want to meet the needs of their children, but at times need help to do so. Research shows that parents and caregivers who have support—from family, friends, neighbours, and their communities—are more likely to provide safe and healthy homes for their children. When parents lack this support or feel isolated, they may be more likely to make poor decisions that can lead to neglect.

6. Decide

- 6.1 In our first year the partnership has focussed on raising awareness around the neglect strategy and developing our outcome framework so we could understand the outcomes we collectively wanted to achieve.
- 6.2 The steering group is currently planning a practitioner “Neglect matters” event in May to continue to raise awareness, take stock on progress and refresh the action plan.

7. Respond

- 7.1 Since the launch of the strategy we have:
- developed a multi-agency action plan setting out SMART key actions across each of the priorities.
 - developed our multi-agency neglect outcome framework so we can measure our collective impact. This will be implemented as of April 2023.
 - continued to develop our training offer to deliver awareness, understanding and response to neglect. In the last 12 months we have focussed on Early Year providers and Voluntary and Community Sector.
 - utilised the Early Help ACTION campaign (Aware, Care, Think don't Ignore or do Nothing) to ensure we action on the guiding principles children and young people identified.
 - maximised opportunities through big programmes like Holiday Activity and Food programme to ensure we maximise opportunities to identify and support children and families early.
 - In order to strengthen practice across partnership, we have secured partnership resource to recruit a Neglect Practice Improvement Coordinator. This post will be directly responsible to work across the partnership in developing a resource hub, training programmes, practice reflection sessions that will support practitioners in implementing effective practice in working with families where neglect is a identified need. This will include the consistent use of the Grade Care Profile (an evidence based tool in identification and working with families in addressing neglect). This post will be in place by June 2023.
 - We are working with the police to see how there AWARE (a mobile based app) can be used to better identify neglect and can be up scaled to be used by a wide range of agencies.

- We have embedded a 'Think Family' approach as part of the adult neglect strategy to ensure we identify effectively any children who maybe impacted by adult self-neglect.
- The partnership has considered how the development of the Family Hubs can provide opportunities for effective support to families to prevent child neglect especially in those areas were we currently see low uptake of preventative programmes.

8. Review

8.1 The joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) undertaken by Ofsted, Care Quality Commission and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services in November 2022 found that -

"Children who need help and protection receive a coordinated and effective multiagency response at the 'front door' in Walsall. Senior leaders ensure that there is a culture of continuous and shared learning across the partnership, which is successfully disseminated to staff. This helps to support identification of risk and needs for children, at the earliest opportunity, and promotes improvements in services for children and their families."

8.2 The outcome framework will be implemented as off 1st April 2023 which will enable us to collectively measure the local impact of the neglect strategy and inform future decision making.

Background papers

Appendix A - Neglect strategy [Neglect Strategy 2021 - 2024 \(walsall.gov.uk\)](https://www.walsall.gov.uk/neglect-strategy-2021-2024)

Appendix B – Neglect Outcome framework



NeglectStrategyOutcomesFramework.docx

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