

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Child Neglect Strategy 2025-2028

Working Together to Tackle Neglect

Introduction

The strategy has been refreshed to further enhance the partnership response to child neglect within Cheshire East. Neglect can significantly impact the well-being and development of any child or young person. Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership recognises the critical need to address neglect effectively through a collaborative approach, including the voices of children. This refreshed Neglect Strategy for 2025-2028 builds on the foundations established by the previous strategy (2021-2024) and integrates insights from other safeguarding partnerships to enhance our efforts in protecting children and young people from neglect.

To ensure that our approach is both comprehensive and effective, we have engaged with a diverse range of stakeholders, including children and young people, families, professionals, and community members. Their insights and experiences have been invaluable in shaping this strategy, and we are committed to maintaining an ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders as we implement and refine our approach.

Our Vision

Our vision is to ensure that all children and young people in Cheshire East grow up in a safe, nurturing environment where their physical, emotional, and developmental needs are met. By working together as a partnership, we aim to recognise the risk of neglect **before** it escalates thus making neglect a universal responsibility. We strive to identify and document the earliest signs of neglect, intervene **in a timely way**, and **provide the necessary support** to children and families to overcome the challenges associated with neglect.

Strategic Objectives

Our strategy is built on five key strategic objectives each supported by specific actions and initiatives designed to achieve our overall vision:

- **Prevention:** To prevent neglect by raising awareness, promoting early intervention, and supporting families to build resilience and parenting capacity.
- **Early Identification:** To identify signs of neglect and its impact at the earliest possible stage, ensuring timely and appropriate interventions accompanied by reviews of responses and actions taken.
- **Support and Intervention:** To provide appropriate levels of targeted support and interventions that address the underlying causes of neglect and promote positive outcomes for children and families.
- **Collaboration and Partnership Working:** To strengthen collaboration and communication among all agencies and partners involved in safeguarding children, ensuring coordinated and effective responses to neglect.
- **Evaluation and Impact Measurement:** To continuously evaluate our approach and measure the impact of our efforts to tackle neglect, ensuring that our strategy remains effective and responsive to the needs of children and families.

Each of these strategic objectives is further detailed in the following sections, with specific actions and initiatives outlined to demonstrate how we will achieve our aims.

Principles and Values

The following principles and values guide our approach to tackling neglect:

- **Child-Centred:** The needs and well-being of the child are at the heart of our practice. We prioritise the safety and welfare of children and young people in all our actions and decisions.
- **Family-Focused:** We recognise the importance of supporting families to provide a nurturing and safe environment for their children. We work with families and their wider members to build their strengths and address any challenges they may face.
- **Collaborative:** We work in partnership with children, families, their networks and other agencies to achieve the best outcomes. We value the contributions of all partners and strive to maintain open and effective communication.
- **Evidence-Based:** Our interventions and practices are informed by research and evidence of what works from the family and, from established and respected organisations that promote government advice and guidance. We continuously seek to improve our knowledge and understanding of neglect through ongoing learning and development.
- **Inclusive:** We ensure that our services are accessible and responsive to the diverse needs of our community. We respect and value diversity and work to promote equality and inclusion in all our activities.



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Types of Neglect

To provide clarity and focus to our strategy, it is important to broadly define the distinct types of abuse that neglect can lead to and that we aim to address:

Physical Neglect: This occurs when a child's basic physical needs are not met. This includes inadequate provision of food, clothing and housing. It can involve failure to protect a child from physical harm or danger and environmental neglect : home conditions, exposure to hazardous environments.

Emotional Neglect: This type of neglect involves the failure to meet a child's emotional needs. It includes lack of affection, attention, and emotional support and may involve adult behaviours and goals, such as work commitments, substance misuse or domestic abuse, being put before those of the child. On the contrary, it may involve children receiving excessive pressure to achieve academically and socially. Emotional neglect can severely impact a child's mental health and development.

Educational Neglect: This occurs when a child's educational needs are not met. It includes failure to enrol a child in school, ignoring special education needs, or allowing missing episodes and non-attendance.

Medical Neglect: This type of neglect involves the failure to provide necessary medical or dental care. It includes ignoring medical and health recommendations, not providing medication, or not seeking or being brought for medical help and appointments when needed.

Nutritional Neglect: This occurs when a child is not provided with adequate nutrition. It includes not enough or too much food, poor diet quality, and failure to address dietary needs.

Supervision and Guidance Neglect: This involves failure to provide appropriate supervision and guidance that would otherwise protect a child from potential harm or encourage their ability to thrive. It includes leaving a child alone or in the care of inappropriate carers.

All these factors may overlap and can have long-term impacts on a child's emotional and psychological well-being.

Key Actions

Our strategy includes a comprehensive set of key actions designed to prevent neglect, identify it early, support affected families, and strengthen collaboration and partnership working. These actions are detailed below:



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Prevention

- Develop and deliver training programmes for professionals to recognise and respond to signs of neglect for all who come into contact with children and young people. These programmes will reach different professional groups, including teachers of all ages including nursery, social workers, youth group leaders, healthcare providers, and police officers to enable everyone to understand their role and responsibility in line with Working Together 2023.
- Use community spaces to communicate and inform families and the wider public about the signs of neglect and how to respond to concerns. This will include building the family resilience within the community. We will provide guidance to communities and where they feel improvements cannot be seen, what they can do to seek advice and guidance. We will collaborate closely with community organisations, faith groups, and other local partners to promote a culture of support and prevention. Use a variety of media, including social media and print to reach a wide audience.
- Implement parenting support programmes to strengthen families' ability to provide care and meet their children's needs. These programmes will include parent education, home visiting, and peer support networks.

Early Identification

- Implement robust screening and assessment tools to be used by all practitioners across the partnership who are in contact with children and young people to identify neglect at the earliest stages. These tools will be evidence-based and regularly reviewed to ensure their effectiveness.
- Enhance the capacity of partnership practitioners who work directly with children and young people to recognise and respond to neglect through continuous professional development. This will include regular training sessions, workshops, and access to expert consultation and support.

We will also establish clear pathways for referral and assessment, ensuring that all cases of suspected neglect are promptly and appropriately addressed. This will involve close collaboration with the agencies already involved with the children or young people and responses will be in line with the children and young people's needs, and an escalation to other key agencies where required.

Neglect Toolkit for Professionals

To support professionals in assessing and intervening in cases of neglect, we will provide a comprehensive neglect toolkit that includes the following tools:



- **Training Modules:** Comprehensive training materials to enhance professionals' understanding of neglect and improve their skills in assessment and intervention. These modules cover topics such as recognising neglect, effective communication with children and families, and multi-agency collaboration.
- **Resource Directory:** An updated directory of local and national resources available to support children and families experiencing neglect. The 'Livewell' directory includes contact information for support services, community organisations, and advocacy groups. Family Hubs provide further relevant family information and support facilities.
- **Assessment Frameworks:** Structured toolkit to help professionals identify and evaluate the risk factors associated with neglect. These frameworks provide a systematic approach to assessing the safety and well-being of children and level of neglect being posed.
- **Observation Checklists:** Detailed checklists to guide all practitioners across the partnership who work directly with children and young people in observing and recording signs of neglect. These checklists cover various aspects of a child's environment, behaviour, and physical condition.
- **Action Plans:** Template included in the toolkit for developing individualised action plans for children and families affected by neglect will be clear and the next steps if the case issues escalate. These plans should outline specific interventions, support services, and timelines for addressing the identified issues.
- **Referral Pathways:** Clear guidance on the referral process for when the toolkit has been utilised and there are concerns that the care of the child is not improving, with evidence including contact information for local safeguarding agencies and emergency services.
- **Evaluation Tools:** Instruments for measuring the effectiveness of interventions and support services provided to families. There is a review element within the tool which help practitioners track progress and make necessary adjustments to their approach.

Support and Intervention

- Provide tailored support services for families experiencing neglect, addressing issues such as substance misuse, mental health, and domestic abuse. These services will be delivered through a combination of in-home support, community-based programmes, and specialist interventions.
- Utilise multi-disciplinary teams around the child to deliver coordinated interventions and support to children and families. These teams will be developed through the Families First programme.

Our approach to support and intervene will be holistic and family-centred, recognising the complex and interrelated factors that contribute to neglect. We will work with families to develop individualised support plans that address their specific needs and build on their strengths.

Collaboration and Partnership Working

We will seek to build strong relationships with children and families, recognising the importance of their voices in shaping our approach. We will ensure that we include perspectives that represent the diverse range of needs and abilities living within Cheshire East locality. The design, delivery and evaluation of services will be led by children and families, ensuring that their perspectives are central to our work.

- Strengthen communication and information-sharing protocols among agencies to ensure a coordinated response to neglect. This will include the development of multi-agency agreements and the use of secure information-sharing platforms.
- Engage with the community and voluntary sector to provide additional support and resources for families through the work of the Collaboratives ([link to more info](#)). This will include partnerships with local charities, faith groups, and community organisations.

Evaluation and Impact Measurement

- Develop a comprehensive multi-agency framework for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of our neglect strategy. This framework will include a range of qualitative and quantitative measures to assess progress and impact.
- Collect and analyse data on key indicators of neglect to measure progress and identify areas for improvement. This will include data on the occurrence and prevalence of neglect, as well as outcomes for children and families.
- Conduct regular reviews and audits to ensure that our responses to neglect are effective and in line with best practices. These reviews will involve multi-agency teams and include input from children and families, in particular ensuring the voice of the child is highlighted.
- We will continuously improve our understanding of neglect and the most effective ways to address it. This will include accessing Research in Practice and other academic sources. We will continue to develop robust internal processes linked with audit, single and multi-agency learning and, encouraging individuals to engage with their continuing professional development.



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Impact Measures

To ensure that our strategy is making a meaningful difference, we will track the following impact measures:

- Increased early identification and intervention where neglect is seen. This will include measures of the timeliness and appropriateness of interventions, as well as outcomes for children and families.
- Reduction in the number of children experiencing neglect, including a **reduction in repeat episodes and the length of time spent on plans**. This will involve measures of both the occurrence and prevalence of neglect, as well as the severity of neglect cases.
- Improved outcomes for children and families receiving support for neglect. This will include measures of child well-being **incorporating what matters to them**, family functioning, and the effectiveness of interventions.
- Enhanced collaboration and coordination among agencies involved in safeguarding children. This will include measures of communication, information-sharing, and joint working practices.
- Feedback from children, families, and professionals on the effectiveness of our interventions. This will include qualitative measures of satisfaction and engagement **e.g. are children happier as a result of interventions**, as well as gaining feedback on specific aspects of our services.
- Monitor to understand the frequency and circumstances of police protection episodes and assessing the effectiveness of our interventions in reducing these occurrences by neglect being responded to at a much earlier stage.

In addition to these impact measures, we will develop a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to track progress against our strategic objectives. These KPIs will be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain relevant and reflective of our goals.

Unplanned Entry to Care

In Cheshire East, neglect is contributing to high numbers of children entering care in an unplanned way. To reduce the number of children entering care in an unplanned way, we will focus on addressing the high incidences resulting from police protection episodes. This will involve a multi-faceted approach, including:

- **Strengthening Family Networks:** We will work with families to identify and strengthen their support networks, including extended family members, friends, and community resources. By building stronger, more resilient family networks, we can help reduce the need for children to enter care in an unplanned way.

- **Enhanced Early Intervention:** We will strengthen our early intervention services to provide timely and effective support to families at risk of crisis. This will include making full use of the new Family Hub facilities and emerging methodologies such as iTHRIVE and the Solihull Approach. There will be earlier escalation where issues are identified.
- **Collaborative Response to Crisis:** We will establish a multi-agency working in line with Families First that provides rapid, coordinated responses to support families and children in emergency situations.
- **Police Training and Awareness:** We will work together with police to ensure there is specialised training for police officers to help them recognise signs of neglect and understand the impact of their actions on children and families. This training will emphasise the importance of working collaboratively with other agencies to find alternative solutions to taking children into police protection.
- **Monitoring and Reviewing Police Protection Episodes:** We will establish a robust system for monitoring and reviewing police protection episodes to identify patterns and areas for improvement. This will include regular multi-agency case reviews and the development of action plans to address identified issues.

Conclusion

Cheshire East's Children's Safeguarding Partnership is committed to tackling neglect through a collaborative, multi-agency approach. By implementing this refreshed strategy, we aim to create a safer and more nurturing environment for all children and young people in our community. We will continuously evaluate our efforts and adapt our approach to ensure that we are effectively addressing the complex issue of neglect and promoting the well-being of our children and families.

We recognise that tackling neglect is a complex and ongoing challenge, and we are committed to working together as a partnership to achieve our vision. We will continue to engage with all stakeholders, including children and young people, families, professionals, and the wider community, to ensure that our strategy remains responsive and effective.

As we move forward, we invite all partners to join us in this important work. Together, we can make a real difference in the lives of children and young people in Cheshire East, ensuring that they have the can grow up in a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment.

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to the development of this strategy, and we look forward to collaborating with you to achieve our shared goals. Your commitment, expertise, and collaboration are essential to the



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success of our efforts to tackle neglect and safeguard the well-being of children and young people in our community.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our commitment to tackling neglect through a comprehensive, evidence-based, and collaborative approach. We will continue to build on the progress we have made, learn from our experiences, and adapt our strategies to meet the changing needs of children and families. Together, we can ensure that every child in Cheshire East can thrive and reach their full potential.