

Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Neglect Strategy 2024-2026



Foreword

It is a great pleasure to not only contribute to the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) Neglect Strategy for the period of 2024 to 2026, but also to be the independent scrutineer of the partnership, who will monitor and challenge performance against the aims and objectives of the strategy for the coming years.

Everyone in the community of Rotherham has a responsibility to identify children when there are concerns that neglect might be occurring and communities can play an important role in preventing neglect alongside universal service providers, charitable organisations and the Rotherham Partnership. We need to support our communities to know what to look out for and to understand what thriving and healthy child development looks like, and a key aim of the strategy is to ensure the partners in Rotherham work together to achieve this outcome.

Neglect has been a priority for the partnership for the last 3 years, but we recognise that we need to do more to improve outcomes and a Neglect Delivery Group made up of key partners has been launched to drive the work of this strategy forward, and report to the executive and provide reassurances that delivery is being effective.

The overall purpose of our strategy is to prevent and reduce the incidence of neglect within Rotherham, and to reduce the impact on children that are experiencing neglect, enabling children and families to thrive. Neglect has been identified as a priority because of the lifelong impact that it has on life chances for children and young people.

Neglect currently accounts for 40% of Rotherham's Child Protection Plans, second only to emotional abuse which accounts for 51%. This strategy will help drive these figures down and tackle neglect at the earliest opportunity, reducing the life impact and preventing the situation deteriorating.

Darren Downs (Independent Chair & Scrutineer)



Children & Young People's voices are at the heart of our what we do. They tell us..

I want to feel
safe

I will be
treated
equally

I will be loved
even when I mess
up

I will be happy
and smiling

Someone is
always there
for me

My parents will
know school is
important and make
sure I attend

Grown ups will help
me with my
homework and be
patient

I will have
enough to eat

I will not be
scared

We have created this strategy for..

- Every child and young person living in and being cared for in Rotherham
- Parents, carers, family members
- Members of the community
- Child-minders, day-care providers, nurseries, primary and secondary schools, academies, sports & social clubs and further educations colleges
- Midwives, community paediatrics and accident and emergency
- Health visitors, school nurses and GP's
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Adult services, mental health, substance use
- Staff working in youth and community settings
- Police, fire and rescue services and ambulance service
- All partnership employees, early help providers and family hubs
- Voluntary sector providers
- Council colleagues in refuge collection and housing



In Rotherham we will ensure that everyone who works with children and families understands their role in providing early help and the identification of neglect. We will promote accountability so that professionals take responsibility to build relationships with children and their families to provide direct support and not just routinely signpost to other services. We need to work together to pool our skills, knowledge and resources to achieve the best we can for the children and young people of Rotherham, whilst ensuring that professionals receive quality supervision, strong management oversight of their work and support that enables them to do their job well. We also need to be confident to challenge one another when we think we are not getting it right for the child, and will create a culture of high challenge, high support to ensure this happens.

Our Aim is that:

Rotherham will be a place where children feel safe and are safe. This strategy outlines our commitment to prevent children and young people from experiencing neglect and to intervene at the earliest possible stage to tackle its causes and reduce the impact on children when it happens. We recognise that children and young people have a right to live in an environment where they are loved, feel valued and are cared for so that they can reach their potential and have aspiration. Too many children and young people have childhoods that are damaged by neglect, very often because parents are facing problems that they struggle to deal with and often cannot solve alone. We believe in Rotherham that neglect can be prevented and that we can intervene before these concerns become a problem. This strategy will support our partners to identify and assess the extent of neglect, and support children and families with help as soon as concerns emerge. In order to do this we will ensure that:

- Families living in Rotherham and the people that work here will know more about how to recognise Neglect and will have access to information about how to address this and report concerns to the appropriate agencies.**
- Those working directly with children and families will be supported by excellent training, guidance and high quality support and oversight from managers and leaders.**
- There will be a culture of high challenge and high support in ensuring everyone delivers what is expected and reduce the impact of neglect for our children and families**
- There will be high expectations for the children in Rotherham, where concerns are addressed quickly so that the impact of neglect on a child is reduced and as far as possible children can be supported to live happy and healthy lives within their family.**

Defining Neglect:

Department for Education: Working together to safeguard children. 2018 states:

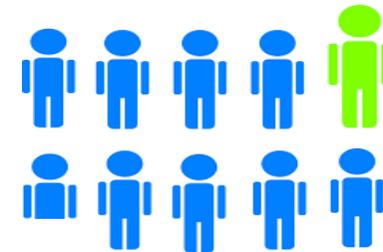
In England, neglect is defined as the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. The definition of Neglect is broad and to help identification, the NSPCC breaks this down into 4 broad types:

Physical Neglect	A child's basic needs are not met, including food, clothing, or shelter. They may not be supervised or kept safe.
Medical Neglect	A child may not receive the medical care needed. This can include delaying seeking treatment, failure to attend appointments, or not administering the medication required.
Emotional Neglect	A child doesn't get the nurture and stimulation they needs. This could be through ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them.
Educational Neglect	A parent/carer fails to provide an education. This may include failing to comply with requirements for school attendance

“In simple terms, neglect is the child or young person not getting what they need, for example not seeing a doctor when needed, not having enough to eat or warm clothes in winter. It may include not being protected from dangerous situations including domestic abuse and violence. “ (NSPCC)

Living with neglect can be lonely, isolating. **“Neglect can erode a child’s resilience, value and sense of worth.”**
Professor Olive Stevenson (2004)

NSPCC estimates 1 in 10 children are affected by
Neglect



Who is at risk?

A child of any age can suffer neglect. But some children and young people are more at risk than others. These include children who:

- are born prematurely
- have a disability
- have complex health needs
- have alternate care arrangements, such as living with extended family members
- are seeking asylum.

Other problems and life circumstances can make it harder for parents and carers to meet their child's needs, and when one or more of these issues occur, it can put a child at greater risk of neglect. A recent evidence review reports a number of social and environmental factors that are associated with neglect. These include:

Poverty: Child neglect is more often associated with poverty than other forms of child abuse, although it must be noted clearly that the majority of poor families do not neglect their children. Poverty can lead to social isolation, feelings of stigma, and high levels of stress. Pervasive stress can make it difficult for parents to cope with the psychological, physical and material demands of parenting.

In Rotherham, our partnership will work to ensure that colleagues have information about how best to support those families in our area that are struggling to make ends meet.

- **Poor living conditions:** Neglect is often associated with having poor living conditions. Poor living conditions include: an unsafe home, such as hoarding, holes in the floor, broken windows, exposed wires, leaky roof, infestation of rodents/insects, fixtures and appliances that are broken or not working, overcrowding, instability such as frequent moves, homelessness and short stays with friends/family. It is important to bear in mind, however, that emotional neglect also occurs in households with good living conditions but where parents are physically and emotionally unresponsive.

Our staff will be well trained in assessment techniques which support them to recognise these issues and make plans to deal with them in order to reduce the risk to children

- **Social isolation:** Parents who neglect their children have, or perceive themselves to have, fewer individuals in their social networks and to receive less support than other parents. This may exacerbate other parental vulnerabilities.

Our approach is to have an unwavering commitment to assisting families to establish supportive networks, so that isolation is reduced and families have access to preventative and informal help.

- **Men:** Most of the evidence around neglect relates to mothers rather than fathers. Men can be a source of risk and a source of protection to children they are raising. Fathers can be overlooked in the assessment process in child protection.

We will monitor and audit practice to ensure that the risk and protection offered by men is adequately assessed and addressed in our work.

The effects of neglect on children:

Neglect changes childhood. Children who have been neglected might experience short-term and long-term effects, and the impact can have life-long consequences if not identified early and support put in place. These can include:

- Problems with brain development and emotional regulation
- Increased risk taking, like running away from home, using drugs and alcohol or breaking the law
- Getting into dangerous relationships
- Difficulty with relationships later in life, including with their own children
- A higher chance of having mental health problems, including depression and self-harm
- Poor dental and physical health, including serious and life threatening conditions
- Poor educational attainment and outcomes impacting on life chances

The level of risk and impact varies from one child to another, but there can be occasions when the level of neglect is so high that the consequences can be life threatening or life changing.

What does it currently look like in Rotherham?

- In 2019/20 out of 24,007 contacts to Childrens services, 3,764 were in relation to Neglect (15.6%)
- In 2020/21 out of 20,001 contacts to Childrens Services, 3,296 were for Neglect (16.4%)
- In 2022-23, there were 4,249 Assessments completed with Neglect being identified as the key issues for 669 children. This is 15% of all assessments completed in that period.
- Between April 2022 and March 2023, 335 Child Protection Plans were made due to neglect, accounting for 30% of all Child Protection Plans.
- Based on research from End of Child poverty 34.6% of children were reported to be living in poverty in 2020. We know that poverty does not always equate to neglect but can be a factor that increases the risk of neglect.



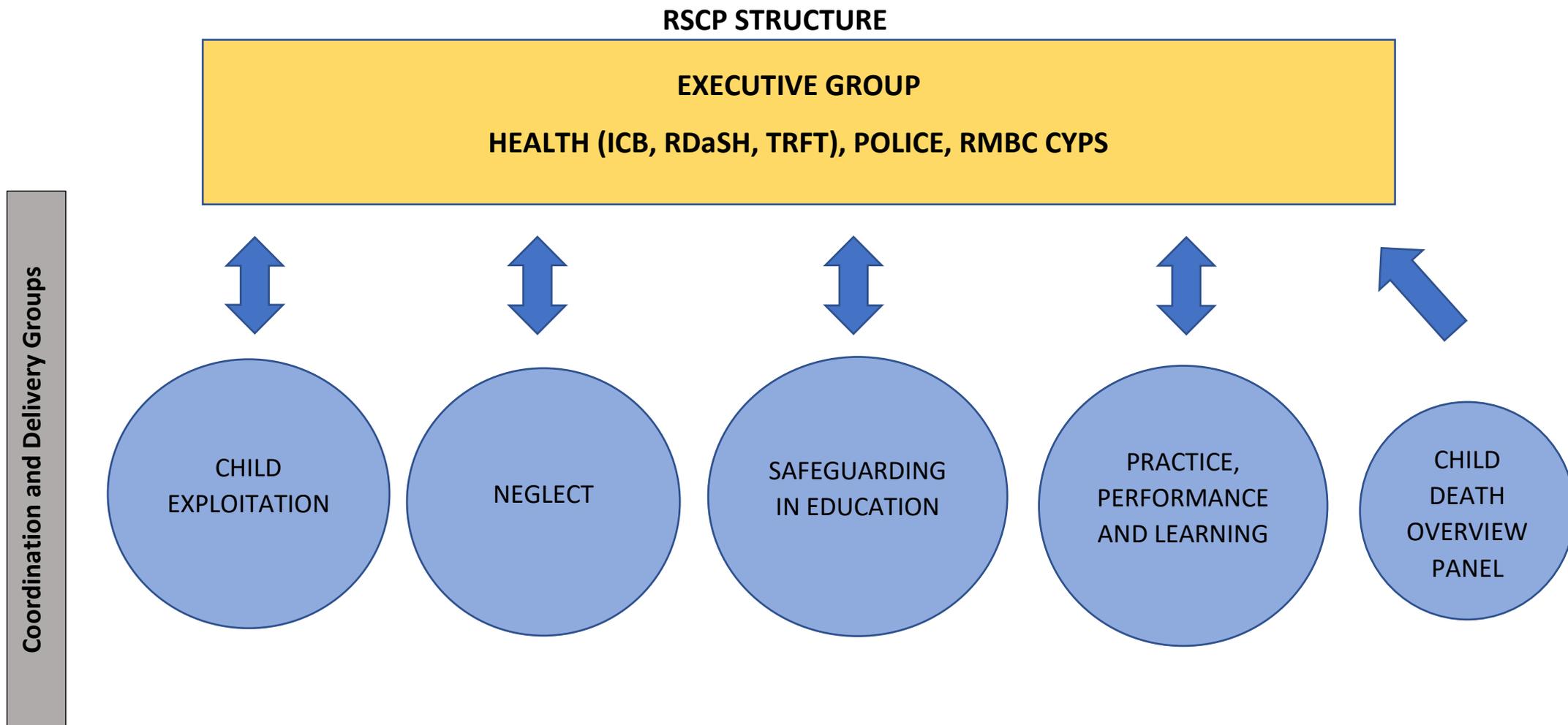
How will the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Approach Neglect?

“All Partners are committed to working together in a coordinated way to eliminate neglect and help children and families thrive.”



The Neglect Delivery Group has been created by the Partnership in order to raise the profile of neglect in Rotherham and to ensure accountability by all partners for delivery against the aims and objectives of the strategy. The delivery group will report directly to the Partnership Executive and the Independent Scrutineer who will challenge delivery against the strategy and that outcomes are being achieved that benefit children and their families. This will be done through a comprehensive scorecard that monitors key areas of performance, such as quality of interventions, numbers of referrals, training delivery, resourcing and the level of understanding and engagement with communities. The neglect Delivery Group Chair will attend the Executive Group alongside colleagues from the other delivery groups to ensure cross-pollination of all activity and that they are all working collectively to reduce neglect and its impact.

The executive will also work with other key statutory boards such as the Safeguarding Adults Board and Safer Rotherham Partnership and ensure that work is fully joined up and collaborative for our communities.



Recognising, Assessing and Responding to Neglect

Identifying neglect and determining whether statutory thresholds for action have been reached can present real challenges.

The following characteristics of neglect may make it harder for professionals to recognise that a threshold for action has been reached:

- The chronic nature of this form of maltreatment can mean that professionals become accustomed to how a child is presenting and fail to question a lack of progress or be professional curious.
- Unlike physical abuse, for example, the experience of neglect rarely produces a crisis that demands immediate action, making it difficult to evidence that the threshold is met at a specific point in time.
- Neglect can in some cases be challenging to identify because of the need to look beyond individual parenting episodes and consider the persistence, frequency or pervasiveness of parenting behaviours, which may make them harmful and abusive.
- Practitioners may be reluctant or lack confidence to make judgements about patterns of parental behaviour, particularly when these are deemed to be culturally embedded or associated with social disadvantages such as poverty or when the parent is a victim in their own right.
- The child may not experience neglect in isolation, but alongside other forms of abuse.

In Rotherham, we have adopted the use of the NSPCC 'Graded Care Profile 2' (GCP2). The GCP2 is a tool designed to help practitioners take a strengths-based approach to measure the quality of care a child is receiving, thus supporting them to identify neglect. An assessment may be carried out using the GCP2 for many reasons, including to inform decisions about the next steps of a child's case or to identify the additional support needs of families.

Research carried out by the NSPCC concluded that the GCP2 had a positive impact in

- Bringing about positive change for families
- Supporting practitioners to make informed decisions
- Targeting the area of greatest need and promoting that change
- Supporting the relationship between the practitioner and parents/carer

Other partnership initiatives include the use of the 'SHAREDD' tool by South Yorkshire Police, this tool supports responding officers to recognise signs of neglect and therefore screen referrals to the appropriate agency for additional support and intervention.

This strategy will support, guide, and monitor the implementation of such assessment tools in order to maximise the multi-agency response to neglect at the earliest opportunity, therefore reducing the harmful impact to Rotherham's children.

How will we measure our impact:

The impact against the work will be measured and monitored by the Partnership executive and through the independent scrutineer. Progress will be assessed on a bi-monthly basis through a performance scorecard and by audits and appropriate challenge. The three key areas that will be subject to scrutiny are identified below:

1. Understand

We will support and guide families, communities, and professionals in this challenging area of practice, by increasing engagement, awareness and understanding of neglect. This will be done through high quality and targeted awareness engagement and training that will be available to all that this strategy is for. This will ensure neglect is responded to confidently, competently, swiftly and effectively.

We will ensure that neglect training and development programmes are responsive to learning from research of local, regional, national serious case reviews and case audits by working with colleagues from across the country and teaching partnerships.

We will have safe systems in place to ensure early identification and the meeting of needs at the point of concerns being raised.

We will have a comprehensive scorecard that identifies and tracks key performance metrics and identifies areas additional scrutiny and focus, along with areas of good practice and success. This will be used to inform our audit processes for additional reassurance and scrutiny.

We will work to ensure that we provide the means for children to have a voice and influence so they can let us know what life is like for them, and how we can continue to improve and deliver for them. Their voice is essential to improving our services and we will listen and address the feedback.

2. Reduce

We will work with families in a manner which ensures that they are given every opportunity to effect change, ensuring that the child's needs remain paramount. We will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of assessments, interventions and family plans, ensuring we are getting it right for children and that we are mindful of the impact of diversity and issues of intersectionality.

We will analyse and interrogate partnership data to enhance our understanding of the local picture and the improvements and challenges ahead.

We will promote effective intervention at the earliest opportunity in order to minimise the impact on the child and to ensure, as far as possible, that children grow up safely within their family.

We will ensure that the training received across the partnership is relevant, effective and accessible by all, and monitor that the attendance and impact of the training is delivering what we expect.

We will ensure a culture of high challenge and high support is seen throughout the partnership, and that all involved are able to confidently challenge delivery and escalate appropriately if required.

3. Prevent

We will analyse our information in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of this strategy in making a difference to the children of Rotherham.

We will monitor performance to ensure that our work is reducing the impact and levels of neglect within our communities. This will be supported by high quality training, and robust analysis by the Practice, Performance and Learning delivery group

We will all take responsibility for our role in this strategy, and support a culture of shared accountability and transparency, where partnership and trust is developed.

We will prevent the neglect experienced by children throughout Rotherham by having safe systems that are responsive, effective and accountable across the partnership.

Finally, Be Curious and Act Against Child Neglect

In Rotherham, we want to encourage and support professionals and members of our community to spot the signs of neglect...Neglected children may:

- Experience hunger or a dirty appearance, physical weight loss and missed appointments
- Be without adequate clothing, e.g. no coat in winter
- Be living in dangerous conditions, e.g. drugs/significant alcohol in the home, poor home safety measures, the home may be unhygienic
- Be aggressive, withdrawn or may self harm
- Talk about homelife without warmth or detail, there may be many caregivers or an uncertain pattern of carers

This is everyone's responsibility, and we need to work collectively to reduce Neglect. Make sure you do your bit.

