Neglect Strategy on a Page

Swindon Safeguarding Partnership | For managers and practitioners

Swindon Safeguarding Partnership

Why Neglect Matters

Neglect is the most common form of harm to children, with significant and long-lasting effects on:

- Physical and mental health
- Emotional wellbeing
- Learning and education
- Safety
- Relationships
- Future life chances

Poverty is not neglect, but it can increase a family's vulnerability.



The strategy aims to

1. **Recognise**
   Spot the early signs of neglect with confidence.
2. **Explore and identify**
   Use curiosity and multi-agency information to see the child's world.
3. **Prevent**
   Offer timely Early Help to reduce risk and stop escalation.
4. **Respond**
   Take coordinated, effective action when neglect is identified.
5. **Quantify**
   Use data to understand trends, prevalence and emerging themes.
6. **Evaluate**
   Review practice, measure impact and learn from reviews.

Expectations of managers

1. **Set the standard**
   Make child-centred, curious practice the norm. Challenge the normalisation of neglect.
2. **Build capability**
   Ensure staff have the training, tools and support to identify all forms of neglect.
3. **Make supervision count**
   Routinely test the child's lived experience, cumulative harm and evidence of change.
4. **Assure and improve**
   Use audits, reviews and data to identify gaps, reinforce learning and track impact.

Key supervision question



Key principles

- Child-centred
- Shared responsibility
- Early Help first
- Consistency
- Professional curiosity
- Context matters
- Evidence-informed practice

What good practice looks like

Everyday actions for every practitioner working with children and families

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Notice concerns early

- Look for patterns and cumulative harm, not one-off incidents. What does the chronology show?
- Do not overlook poor home conditions, missed appointments or school absence.
- Ask: what is it like to be a child here every day?

Be curious about the child's experience

- Spend time with the child.
- Listen to their views and observe behaviour and interactions.
- Notice non-verbal communication.
- Verify what you are told rather than relying on parental accounts.

Consider every area of neglect

- Medical
- Nutritional
- Emotional
- Educational
- Physical
- Lack of supervision and guidance

Record and share information

- Keep clear chronologies so patterns emerge.
- Use the Neglect Identification or Quality of Care Assessment tools when concerns arise or grow.
- Record the impact on the child and include their voice.
- Share promptly with partner agencies.

Act early and decisively

- Early Help means acting, not waiting.
- Be clear with families about what must change.
- Address adult issues while keeping the child central.
- Escalate if progress is not good enough.
- Recognise and challenge disguised compliance.

Remember: not acting is also a decision, and it may leave children at further risk.

Do not forget young people

- Neglect can present differently: emotional neglect, lack of supervision, poor school attendance.
- Greater vulnerability to exploitation.
- Never assume young people can cope alone.

How we will know it is working

- Neglect identified earlier.
- Sharper child-focused assessments.
- Stronger multi-agency working and more confident practitioners.
- Better outcomes and feedback from children and families.

Further information can be found on the SSP Neglect Webpage

Neglect is everyone's business



Small signs, noticed early and acted on thoughtfully, change lives.