

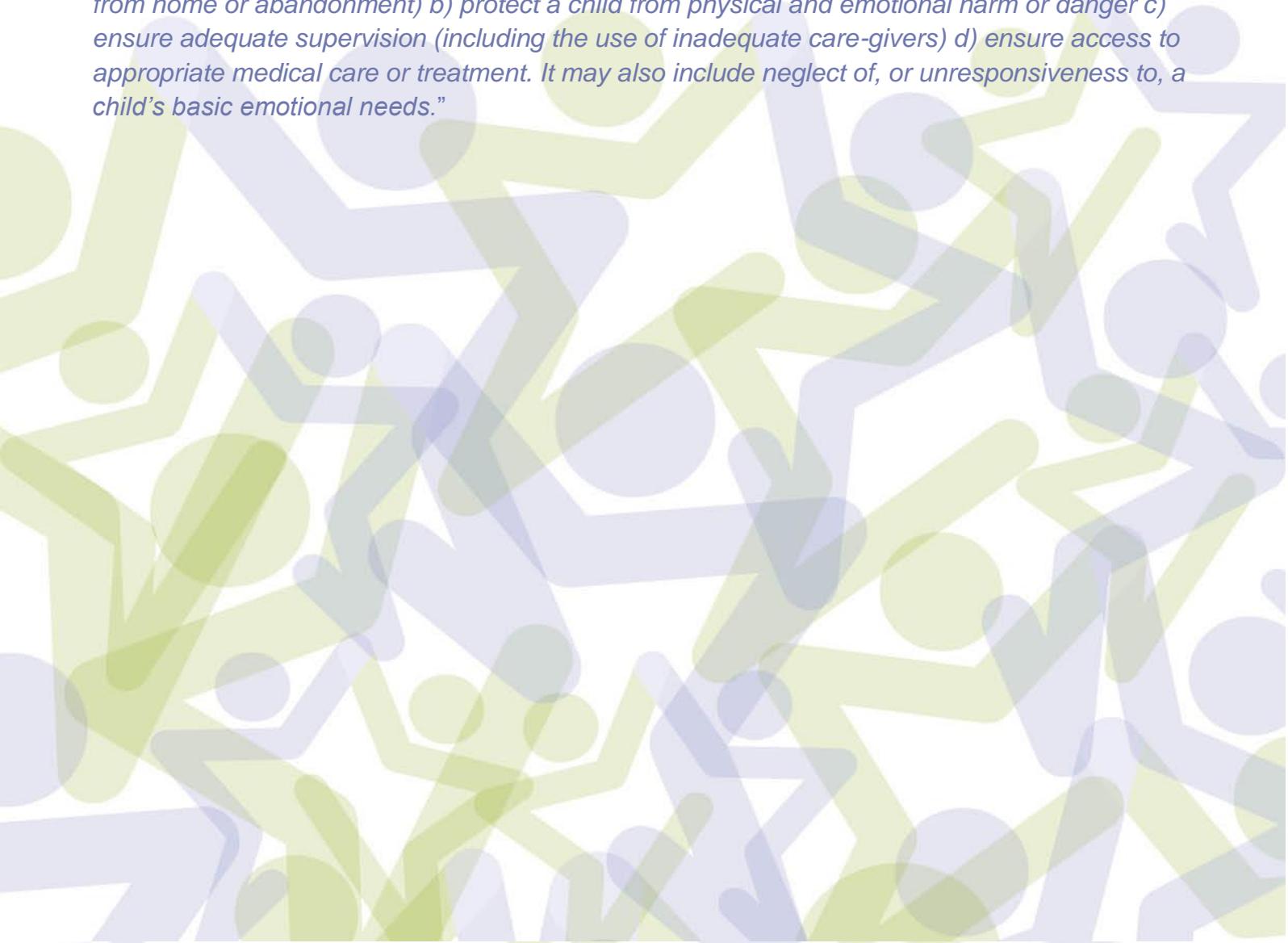
# Neglect Strategy 2021-2023

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## Definition of Neglect

Neglect is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) 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. 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: a) provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment) b) protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger c) ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers) d) ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.”*

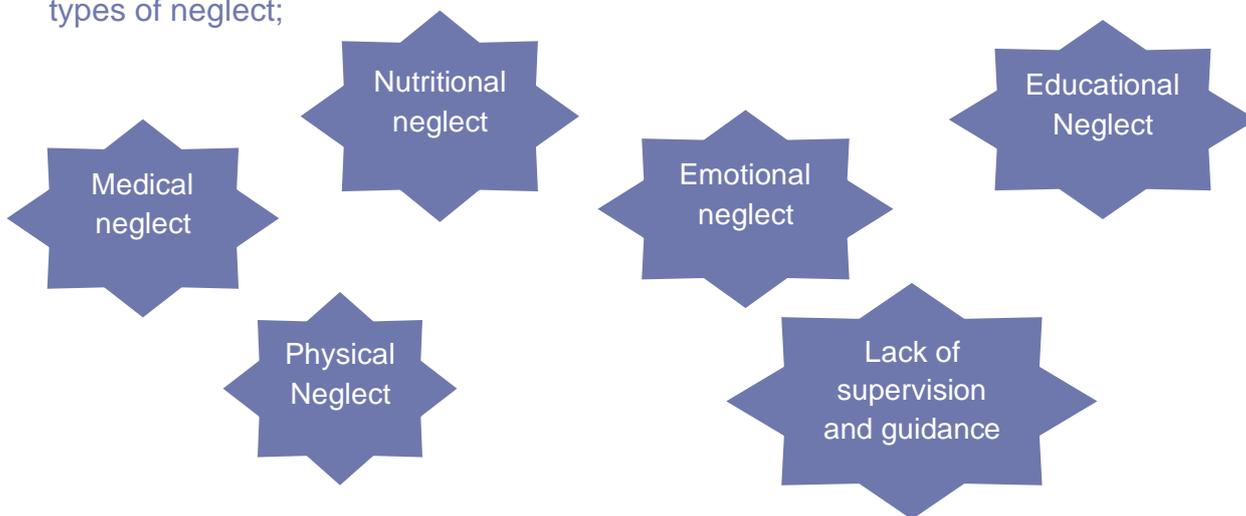


## Introduction

Neglect is one of the most common reasons for children to be supported by Child Protection Plans (CPPs) nationally. “Neglect can be life threatening and should be treated with as much urgency as other categories of harm.” (Brandon et al. 2012)<sup>1</sup>. Legacy Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews repeatedly tell us that Neglect can have lifelong impact and, in extreme cases, can be fatal. Neglect also increases children’s vulnerability to other types of abuse such as child sexual and criminal exploitation and radicalisation. Full commitment, from all partners, to urgently address child neglect is essential.

In the latest triennial review of serious case reviews<sup>2</sup> (2019), neglect was found to be a significant factor in the lives of the children who died or were seriously harmed; neglect featured in 208 of 278 cases (75%) and was the primary factor in 19% of the cases reviewed.

As well as the statutory definition, it is necessary to recognise the specific needs of children and in turn understand ‘failure to meet basic needs’. **Howarth (2007, p27<sup>3</sup>)** identified six different types of neglect;



## The Impact of Neglect on Children

Findings from research into child neglect identifies that although the causes of neglect are varied, the studies suggest that, amongst other things, parental mental health problems, substance misuse, domestic abuse, and poverty, are factors which increase the risk of neglect. Neglectful families often experience a variety and/or combination of adverse factors which impact on the ability to parent. Mental health problems, particularly depression, have been linked with parents sometimes struggling to meet a child's needs. Likewise, substance misuse is believed to play a crucial role in undermining a parent's ability to cope with parental responsibilities. Unstable and abusive relationships can also increase the risk of a child being neglected. The impact on children of living with domestic abuse frequently includes direct violence or witnessing abuse, which is potentially very damaging to children. There is some indication of the cyclical and inter-generational nature of neglect; neglectful parents may have been affected adversely by their own past experiences.

<sup>1</sup> Brandon et al (2012) “New learning from Serious Case Reviews: a two year report from 2009-2011”. Available at: [SCR FINAL June 22 2012 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101221/SCR_FINAL_June_22_2012.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [2019 triennial analysis of serious case reviews childrens social care Mar2020.pdf \(rip.org.uk\)](https://www.rip.org.uk/2019-triennial-analysis-of-serious-case-reviews-childrens-social-care-Mar2020.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Howarth, Jan (2007) Child Neglect: identification and assessment. Basingstoke. Palgrave Macmillan  
Page | 2

In relation to Neglect, there are critical junctions where the risks are higher. Serious Case Reviews involving children under one year of age, show a high percentage of those babies are fatally injured. This pattern relates to the following factors; physical vulnerability of the infant, its invisibility in the wider community and inability to speak for itself, and the physical and psychological strain experienced by caregivers whilst caring for a newborn baby. Robust assessment of the parent's strengths and any potential risk to the unborn child, in order to both identify the children most at risk and then to effectively manage their protection is needed.

Vulnerable adolescents also require special consideration. Young people, particularly across the 11-19 age group may respond differently to neglect, either presenting with challenging behaviours or actively suppressing any indicators of neglect. Sometimes this leads to practitioners not being aware of neglect or trying to address and label the risky behaviour rather than seeing the whole picture, and what is causing it.

Another critical time for children exposed to neglect is the transition from primary to secondary school. Children with neglectful backgrounds are unlikely to be supported by their family through this transition. This can compound their experience of neglect and entrench difficulties throughout their adolescence.

Disabled children and young people are at increased risk of neglect due to impaired capacity to resist/avoid abuse, communication impairments and an inability to understand what is happening or to seek help. Disabled children at greatest risk are those with behaviour/ conduct disorders. Other high-risk groups are children with speech and language difficulties, deaf or blind children and those with complex health related conditions.

## Children and young people in Surrey have shared with us their understandings of Neglect:

'Child neglect involves failing to meet a child's basic needs, including leaving them hungry, dirty, without sufficient shelter or clothing or meeting their medical needs.'

'Child neglect is showing a lack of warmth towards a person, not worrying or caring about them, their education or safety.'

'Child neglect causes the child to feel less than a valued human and is abuse.'

## **Surrey Police Force Advisor for Child Vulnerability has shared her experience of a Neglect case**

*There's a particularly harrowing case that'll forever be etched in my mind. It involved a toddler from Surrey who was regularly observed sat in a car seat. Concerned for her welfare, some*

*practitioners challenged the child's parents but were fobbed off with comments such as: "She's only in there while the dogs are running around, I'll get her out in a moment."*

*Eventually the child was admitted to hospital for 'failing to thrive' and the severity of her suffering became apparent. She couldn't sit or even hold her head up on her own, had pressure sores all over her back, organ failure and wasn't expected to last more than a couple of days due to starvation. Even at this point the mother stated that she was simply shy and always ate well at home. The truth is that this poor baby, alongside her three siblings, had only ever known a life of neglect. Thankfully, an exemplary Police investigation, was carried out which saw both parents charged for a catalogue of offences with the trial due to take place later.*

*Reading this case which had been referred for a Serious Case Review, literally brought tears to my eyes. It was horrific. On this occasion police weren't involved until the moment the child was admitted to hospital, but it made me reflect on what I might have done if I'd happened to visit the home for other matters, and if I'm truthful, I'm not sure that I'd have felt it was significant enough to have reported the infant in the car seat to anyone – after all, it could have been a one-off thing.*

*But that's the thing with neglect - in isolation each individual incident can easily be overlooked. This case (along with thousands of others) highlights the consequences when neglectful episodes accumulate. We know neglect can be hard to identify and sometimes feels like a grey area between 'good enough parenting' and 'neglect'.*

Neglect is often insidious; it advances gradually and can become chronic so there is a risk that agencies do not intervene early enough or recognise their role within ongoing Neglect. Cumulative harm is the outcome of multiple episodes of abuse or neglect experienced by a child and refers to the effects of patterns of circumstances and events in a child's life which diminish a child's sense of safety, stability and wellbeing. When considered individually, each episode of abuse and/or neglect may not be deemed to be significantly detrimental. However, when considered cumulatively, the unremitting daily impact on the child can be profound and exponential, covering all dimensions of a child's life; developmental, social, psychological, relational and educational.

## How to respond

The approach to child neglect needs to be consistent, holistic, strengths-based and person-centred. It should include the following;

- Take neglect seriously.
- Understand roles and thresholds.
- Use guidance, resources and tools available. In Surrey, practitioners are supported in the identification of Neglect by the use of the Neglect Screening Tool and GCP2/ GCP2A.
- Clearly articulate and share your concerns.
- Be prepared to challenge and to escalate if necessary (use the SSCP Escalation Protocol)

## Foreword from tripartite partners



*We know the impact of neglect changes childhood and has far reaching consequences including poor health, education and social outcomes, aside from the immediate distress to children. Children's abilities to make secure attachments can be disrupted. Their emotional health and well-being are often adversely affected and this impacts on their success in adulthood and ability to parent in the future. Neglect can therefore be intergenerational, and the cumulative effect of this on individuals and society can be substantial.*

*It is important that professionals in universal settings, early help services, social care and specialist services have a shared understanding and common language when considering whether a child may be suffering neglect and are able to respond to these concerns in a timely and proportionate way.*

*Positive outcomes would include; children who are at risk of harm as a result of neglect are identified and support is provided in a timely way to prevent harm, partners can provide evidence that there is consistency in approach and quality, and practitioners are increasingly skilled at identifying, assessing, preventing and intervening in cases of neglect. This will help us to improve the lives of children, young people and families across Surrey.*

## Surrey Picture

In 2020, an SSCP briefing report<sup>4</sup> into the themes emerging from 13 case reviews in Surrey between 2016 and 2020, highlighted that recognising and providing a timely response to cases of neglect was imperative to reduce significant harm. The report highlights how professionals can find it challenging to evidence significant harm as a result of neglect. From April 2019 to April 2020, Surrey Police recorded 117 cases of Cruelty to or Neglect of children.

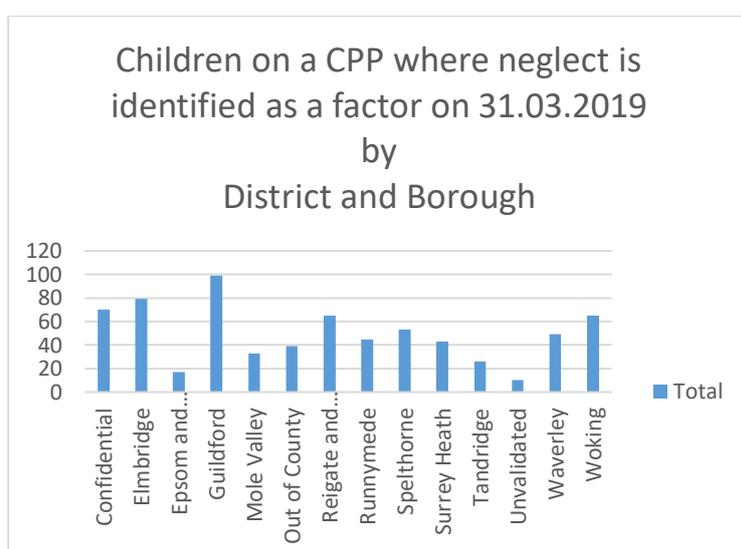


Chart 1:

There were estimated to be 261,905 children and young people aged 0-17 living in Surrey in 2018 and projected figures show this number is likely to remain static. Neglect is the most common category of abuse for children subject to child protection (CP) plans. In Surrey the total

<sup>4</sup> [SSCP-Thematic-Review-Surrey-SCRs-and-Case-Reviews-2020-Final.pdf \(surreyscp.org.uk\)](#)

number of children on CP plans was 1,136 as of 31st March 2019- **62% of these had identified neglect as a contributory factor.**

There are a number of factors which may be linked with neglect, more detailed information is available, but the most common factors are identified below. In England domestic abuse is the most common factor identified at the end of the assessment, in Surrey mental health is the most common factor.

Chart 2:

The pattern of neglect by age group mirrors what we know nationally, neglect is more likely to be identified in the 0-4 followed by the 10-14 age groups.

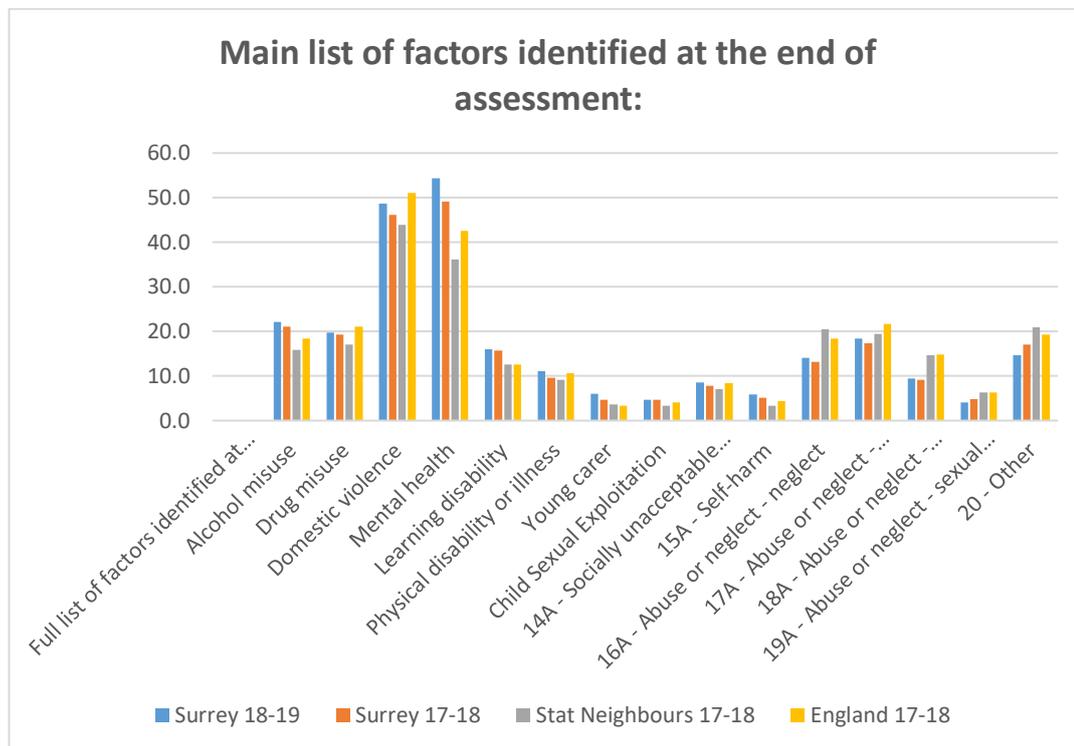
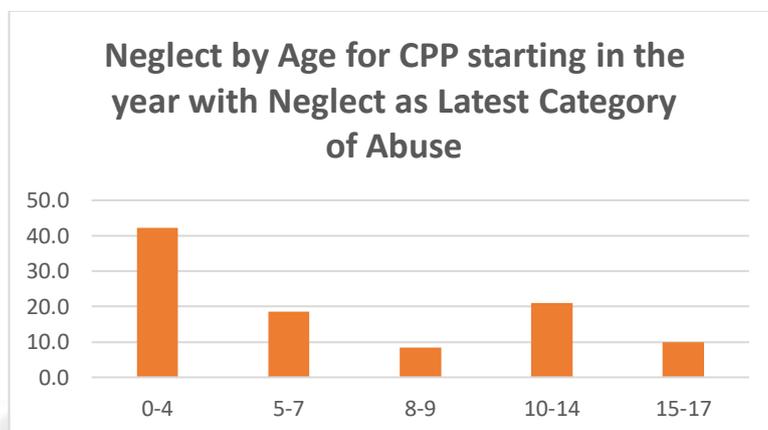


Chart 3:



## Purpose of the strategy

This strategy is for children services, social workers, family support workers, early help workers, schools, community and acute health practitioners, early years workers, Police and any other practitioner or manager who is responsible for supporting vulnerable families, where there are signs of neglect. Often the picture of a child who is being neglected is an emerging one and therefore it is essential that practitioners are observant and professionally curious about a child's presentation and their day to day experience at home.

This document outlines the strategy that the SSCP as a multi-agency partnership will take during 2021-2023 to prioritise and address Child Neglect in Surrey. This includes working within the Family Safeguarding and Family Resilience Models to ensure that issues are addressed restoratively and in a family context, and to pull together all of the work happening across the partnership to reflect coherent and consistent ways of working to tackle the issue of neglect.

The Surrey document: [Effective-family-resilience-SSCP-Dec-2020-v7.pdf \(surreyscp.org.uk\)](#) explains how together we will act as soon as problems emerge, share information and provide effective, timely support to enable children and their families to overcome difficulties and become more resilient so that they can manage future life challenges independently. The Request for Support Form is available on the SSCP website: [Categories Abuse and Neglect: Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership \(surreyscp.org.uk\)](#)

"Time for Kids" is a values-based way of working across the Children's System in Surrey to reignite and strengthen the passion and vocation in all of us working with children and young people. It puts children at the centre of all that we do so that they can fulfil their potential. Time for Kids consists of five principles that, if embedded in the way we work, will help our children and young people thrive: [201013 What is Time for Kids Final.pdf \(surreycc.local\)](#)

## Time for kids principles



This strategy builds upon the SSCP Neglect Strategy 2017-20. As a result of the 2017-20 strategy, the following was achieved;

- Neglect was named one of the strategic priorities in the Surrey Safeguarding Children's Partnership Safeguarding Children Strategic Plan 2020/21 and will continue to be a priority going forwards.
- Multi-agency Neglect training and development of e-learning options to support an understanding of child neglect by SSCP/ Surrey Children's Services Academy was offered and promoted. Plan for Evaluation and impact to be monitored by the Learning from Practice Sub-Group.
- The SSCP carried out a multi-agency self-evaluation on Neglect during 2019. The recommendations from the final report dated May 2020 have been used to inform the strategy and recommendations recorded in the Neglect Sub-Group action log overseen by the SSCP Development Team. The Forward plan includes agreeing the next multi-agency quality assurance evaluation.
- SSCP Neglect Sub-Group has met regularly to raise awareness amongst professionals and to recognise, prevent and reduce neglect so that children at risk of becoming neglected are identified, supported, and have improved outcomes.
- Neglect Sub-Group members developed and promoted the Neglect short screening assessment tool signed off by Executive for use by practitioners with time-limited contact with children, young people and families.
- Neglect Sub-Group members prepared the Project Implementation Plan for rollout of GCP2 across Surrey.

- GCP2 Project Manager is in place, overseen by the GCP2 Project Management Board that meets bi-monthly.
- Effective Family Resilience as a practice model rolled out across Surrey to provide the framework for professionals to work with families using a strength-based model and support families to achieve better outcomes for children
- Dedicated neglect section within the SSCP website including resources for professionals and information on GCP2/ neglect screening tool.
- Surrey Health Needs Analysis completed and signed off in 2021. This builds a picture of neglect across the county from across health and social care. It also draws on some of the findings of the community impact assessments completed throughout Autumn 2020 and has been used to inform this strategy.
- Agencies have provided updates on their strategies and actions taken to raise awareness of neglect (including during Covid 19) and how this and good practice is disseminated through their networks.

## Aims of this 2021-23 Strategy

Whilst significant work was undertaken to improve the multi-agency response to Neglect, the 2020-23 Neglect Strategy aims to build on this and achieve:

1. An *increase* in the number of appropriate and detailed referrals due to better identification of neglect and its impact on families. A *reduction* in the number of cases held at level 4 as a result of neglectful parenting showing early intervention has been successful.
2. A reduction of re-referrals and number of children returning to Child Protection Plans for Neglect, and the number of case reviews which cite poor identification, assessment and response to neglect as a factor, indicating that interventions are impactful and positive change is sustained.
3. The lived experience and voices of Children, Young People and Families will be captured, recorded and heard within referrals, assessments and surveys. Listening to Children, Young People and Families will inform interventions for Neglect.
4. An increased understanding, common language and a shared narrative of Neglect across the partnership. This is to be achieved by the promotion and use of evidence-based models including Family Safeguarding, Effective Family Resilience and NSPCC Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2).
5. Full rollout and implementation of the GCP2 by the partnership to support robust objective assessments of Neglect and the journey of the child and family. This includes embedding and ensuring multi-agency professionals are trained and confident in identification of neglect utilising GCP2 and the Neglect screening tool depending on their role with the family, including GCP2-A as an antenatal pilot.
6. Each agency provides a timely and robust response to Neglect with no drift or delay. Mechanisms for evaluating and monitoring the impact of the GCP2 and broader work on Neglect must be implemented across the partnership through SSCP audit and independent scrutiny. The Surrey Childrens Services Academy will ensure that the learning is taken forward across the wider partnership and develop a Neglect communication strategy in liaison with the SSCP partnership team and GCP2 Project Manager. We are developing services in Surrey which protect children from neglect,

details of these can be found under the Family Information Service: [Surrey County Council - Family information directory \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/family-information-directory)

7. To improve the awareness and understanding of Neglect within communities (public, voluntary services, community services for example) to share preventative messaging so that early identification can be achieved. A steering group is recently convened to work on a Surrey wide Neglect campaign with support from the NSPCC.

## Further reading and relevant resources to this strategy are available as follows:

**SSCP procedures link** [Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures Manual. | Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

**Neglect links on SSCP website (includes neglect screening tool and GCP2)** [Categories Abuse and Neglect; Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership \(surreyscp.org.uk\)](#)

**SSCP Escalation Protocol 7.2** [Inter-Agency Escalation Policy and Procedure | Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

**Neglect HNA** [Neglect Health Needs Assessment; Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership \(surreyscp.org.uk\)](#)

**Link to Surrey Academy Neglect training** [The Dynamic Management of Neglect; Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership \(surreyscp.org.uk\)](#)

**Surrey C-SPA contact details and request for support form** [Contact Children's Services - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

**Helping Families Early Strategy:** [Helping Families Early Strategy 2020 to 2023 \(final version 5 June 2020\) \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

**NSPCC Neglect pages** [Neglect | NSPCC](#)