

A young boy with dark hair, wearing a blue zip-up hoodie, is climbing a tree. He is holding onto a branch with his left hand and appears to be looking down or at something in his hands. The background is blurred, showing more of the tree and some foliage.

# Barnsley Local Safeguarding Children Board: **Keeping children safe**

**'Neglect Matters'** strategy ensuring  
Barnsley has effective arrangements for  
preventing and responding to neglect at  
the earliest stage

2017 – 2020



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# Introduction and summary

## About this strategy

Barnsley aspires to be a place where children feel safe and are safe. This document outlines our commitment to prevent children and young people from experiencing neglect and to intervene at the earliest possible opportunity 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. In Barnsley, 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 Barnsley that neglect is preventable and that we can intervene before neglect concerns become a problem. We can and should identify, assess and support children and families with early help when neglect concerns first emerge. We must not tolerate children and young people being exposed to ongoing chronic neglect when significant harm occurs as the consequences are often lifelong.

## How does the Government define neglect?

**Department for Education: Working together to safeguard children. London: 2015 states:**

In England, neglect is defined as the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological need, 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:
- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

## Emotional neglect

The late Professor Olive Stevenson said “for children living with neglect, it is the soil they thrive in and the air they breathe”. In Barnsley we recognise that neglect can happen in any family and we want to dispel the myth that it only happens in low income or deprived families. We also want to promote understanding that neglect can often reflect the nature and quality of the relationship that the parent has with their child and that neglect exists to varying levels across all of our community.

## What the law says about neglect

Although the legislation around neglect is not specific, the Children and Young Person Act 1933 Section 1 includes this within the offence of ‘Child Cruelty’. The 1933 Act itself was introduced to prevent a child or young person being exposed to moral or physical danger. It states:

*If a person who has attained the age of 16 years and has responsibility for a child or young person under that age wilfully assaults, ill-treats, neglects, abandons or exposes him/her or causes or procure him/her to be assaulted, ill-treated neglected or abandoned or exposed, in a manner to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health, that person is guilty of an offence.*

In 2012, during a campaign launched by Action for Children - it was recognised that the law needed to ‘catch-up’ and in particular to cover the harm caused by emotional neglect since the existing legislations focus was on ‘physical harm’. Subsequently, in the Serious Crime Bill announced during the 2014 Queen’s Speech, it was clarified that the offence of cruelty covers serious emotional neglect and psychological harm.

Neglect remains the most common form of child abuse across the UK and is usually the most common cause for being subject to a child protection plan.

In Barnsley, the incidence of children subject to child protection plans because of neglect is 41% of all children who child protection plans however this figure is likely to be higher as we know children suffering from emotional harm or physical harm are very often also neglected.

In addition to children who are subject to child protection plans, there are also children who are not yet in receipt of statutory child protection services but who are being offered child in need support and early help due to concerns relating to neglect.

At the early help stage we are aware that we need to recognise the emerging signs of physical and emotional neglect much sooner. We are committed to reducing the numbers of children and families experiencing difficulties arising from neglect. We are also working towards preventing those ‘early difficulties’ from escalating and becoming ‘chronic and entrenched’, which leads to families requiring interventions by statutory services.

In Barnsley we are determined to reverse the current trend, so we with partners have made a commitment to tackling neglect and have pledged to work together to reduce the incidents of neglect and to raise professional and public knowledge of neglect.

## Strategy Statement 1: Making an Impact:

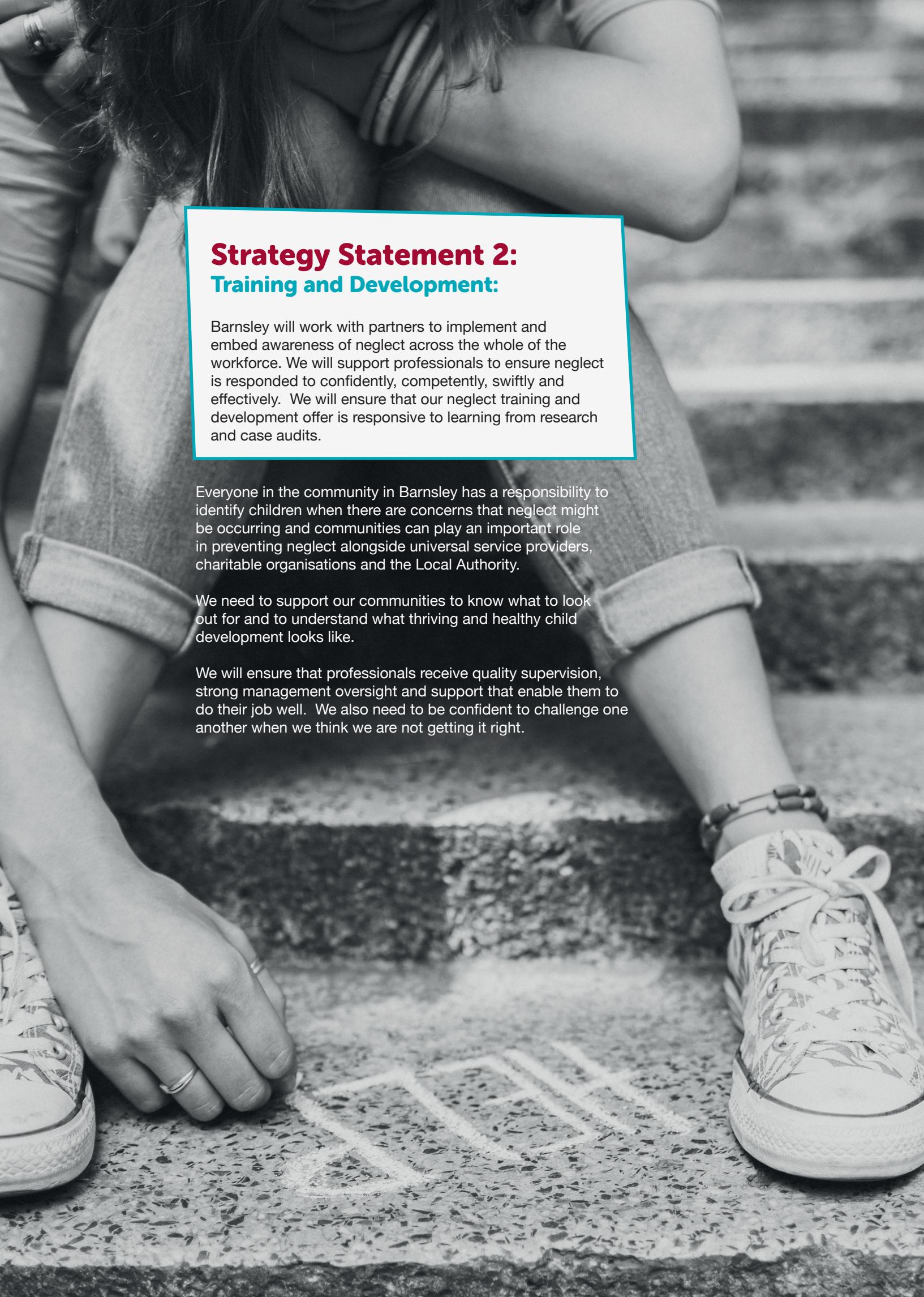
In Barnsley we are committed to reducing the impact and prevalence of neglect across the spectrum of need for all children and young people in our area. We will work together to raise awareness of neglect and reduce the prevalence of children suffering from neglect in Barnsley.

## Who is this strategy for?

This strategy is for:

- Every child and young person living in and being cared for in Barnsley
- Parents, carers, family members
- Members of the community
- Child-minders, day-care providers, nurseries, primary and secondary schools, academies and further education colleges
- Midwives, community paediatrics and emergency departments
- Health visitors, school nurses and GP's
- Child and family mental health services
- Adult services, mental health services, substance misuse services
- Staff working in youth and community settings
- Police, fire and rescue services and ambulance service
- Council employees
- Early help providers
- Family centres
- Voluntary sector providers

In Barnsley we aim to ensure that early recognition of neglect and improved responses by all agencies reduces the number of children requiring statutory intervention and that the life chances of children are improved". We will work together to pool our skill, knowledge, resources and expertise to achieve deliver the best we can with children, young people and families. We will work with children, young people and families in a way that builds relationships and sets out clearly what the expectations are in order that the prevalence of neglect is reduced.



## **Strategy Statement 2: Training and Development:**

Barnsley will work with partners to implement and embed awareness of neglect across the whole of the workforce. We will support professionals to ensure neglect is responded to confidently, competently, swiftly and effectively. We will ensure that our neglect training and development offer is responsive to learning from research and case audits.

Everyone in the community in Barnsley 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 Local Authority.

We need to support our communities to know what to look out for and to understand what thriving and healthy child development looks like.

We will ensure that professionals receive quality supervision, strong management oversight and support that enable 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.

## Strategy Statement 3: Community Awareness:

We will work with communities to embed awareness of the signs and symptoms of neglect and harness the strong community spirit in Barnsley to make a difference. We will listen to the voices of children, young people and families and learn from their experiences

## What children and adults tell us about living with neglect?

*"We have covered neglect at Barnsley College today, we should be more open and honest at Junior School and should discuss it with the kids"* **Kirsty age 16**

*"Neglect can be a lot of different things, emotional or physical which means the child's needs are not being met"* **Gail – nurse**

*"It can have a negative impact on a child's physical or emotional health and can cause issues such as failure to thrive. It seems to be on the increase, due to the times we are in. We need more community services and to take a more proactive role. Staff need more training in working with families and dealing with neglect".* **Sam – Barnsley mum**

*"Not meeting the basic needs of a child and families need to feel confident to say when they are struggling and not fear their children will be removed. Important teachers know what to look for. It's important to have someone like a health visitor to offer help and support".* **Vicky – Barnsley mum**

*"Neglect means being all alone, you need help and advice from people who have experience to help you. You need to speak to parents about what they are going to do to look after their children and then check they are doing it"* **Ruben age 11 years**

## Children and young people who have lived with physical and emotional neglect in Barnsley have told us

*"It is important for people who work with children and families to actually know what neglect is and to understand what to do to support them. There needs to be workers in place for children to talk to if they are worried and not being cared for properly. It is not about punishment is about working with families"*  
**Chelsea age 14 years**

*"Social workers need to act quicker when children are not being looked after properly and listen to the child and help them"* **Lorraine age 17 years**

*"My mum didn't look after me properly and I needed help, professionals need to know when to help"*  
**Charlie 15 years**

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

## Strategy Statement 4: Effective Practice:

We will work to ensure that everyone who works with children, young people and families are aware of, and understands the signs, symptoms and impact of living with physical and emotional neglect. We will evaluate the effectiveness and impact of interventions, help and support to ensure we are working together to get it right for children. We will ensure that our assessments of need are formed by evidence based practice and that we understand the impact of family functioning, culture and diversity.

Not one service alone in Barnsley is responsible for working with vulnerable children where emotional and physical neglect is a concern. We therefore have to work together to meet the needs of children and young people and enable them to feel safer and to know they have a voice to influence what happens to them. We will do this by ensuring our plans for children and young people are multi-agency and focussed on holistic needs, with clear goals and timely outcomes. We will ensure our assessments and plans clearly record the voice of the child, young person.





## **Strategy Statement 5:**

### **The Child's Voice:**

We know that when children suffer neglect their brain development can be impacted upon and they can suffer long standing adverse consequences that can endure throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is important that we use a range of evidence base tools to understand the child's world that our assessments and plans take account of the child's experiences and voice.

## Prevention and early intervention

Barnsley has an Early Help Strategy in place which is changing the way universal and early help workers approach their work. The multi-agency family centres provide a locality based environment for professionals to work together, know the community they are working in and provide a range of services from prevention to targeted interventions pre-birth to 19 years of age, 25 years if disabled.

We recognise the importance of helping children and families at the right time and with the right level of service. The Barnsley threshold document and child concern model helps professionals to be clear about the level of need and risk. Identifying neglect and assessing family difficulty and the impact upon children is often complicated in neglect cases because professionals can feel overwhelmed by the complexity of family issues and the focus can shift to parental problems away from the child. We can be over optimistic about lasting change when limited progress has been made.

In Barnsley we want to achieve greater consistency in managing thresholds for neglect through the introduction of the Graded Care Pathway 2 Assessment Tool which is a specific tool that can enhance good quality assessments, benchmark strengths as well as concerns and help to target and sequence interventions.

Working with partners we will strengthen our practice and effectiveness at helping and supporting children and families at an earlier stage.

### Strategy Statement 6: Early Help and Prevention:

We will work with partners and practitioners across the spectrum of need to ensure that neglect is recognised and responded to consistently, at the right time and by the right people for the child and family. To do this, we will make sure we have simple and clear pathways with practice guidance that supports the recognition, assessment and management of neglect and contributes to evidence based services to meet targeted need from universal / universal plus through to early help.

## Barnsley assessment tool for neglect

In Barnsley we are working with the NSPCC to implement the Graded Care Profile Tool 2. This is an evidenced based tool that has been tested and designed to help child care professionals when working with neglect. We believe that if professionals consistently incorporate the use of this tool into everyday practice with families to identify areas of strength and areas that need support and improvement, it will enable us to recognise early signs of neglect. We will be specific and clear about what needs to change, consistently measure the quality of the care given to the child over time and whether change is occurring. This will support the right families being stepped up into statutory services and for those already receiving this service to know whether neglect remains the key issue that creates risk for the child.



## **Strategy Statement 7:**

### **Assessing Neglect:**

We will promote the use of the Graded Care Profile Tool 2 at every stage across the threshold of need. We will monitor its use and promote it as an aid to assess and review circumstances to measure change and improvement.

## **References**

1. NSPCC Inform May 2014
2. UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child: Article 12
3. NSPCC Graded Care Profile 2 for Neglect
4. R. Johnson and R. Cotmore (2015) National evaluation of the Graded Care Profile. London 2015
5. O Stevenson (2nd Edition 2007) Neglected Children and Their Families



## Where to go for help

**For further information and support services contact:**

If you think the child is in immediate danger, call the police on **999** or **01142 202020**.

If the child's not in immediate danger, but you're still concerned about them, call our social care assessment service on **(01226) 772423** (weekdays before 5pm). Saturday, Sunday or a Bank Holiday, or it's after 5pm (4.30pm on a Friday), call our Emergency Duty Team on **0844 9841800**. Or contact the NSPCC on **0808 800 5000** or **Help@nspcc.org.uk**. [www.safeguardingchildrenbarnsley.com](http://www.safeguardingchildrenbarnsley.com)