

Physical. Educational. Emotional. Medical.

# Neglect.



**Halton Neglect Strategy 2022 – 2025**





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## Foreword

### The Executive Group – Halton Children and Young People’s Partnership



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On behalf of Halton Children and Young People’s Safeguarding Partnership, we are pleased to present the Halton Neglect Strategy 2022-2025.

This strategy is the culmination of a great deal of work by a large number of people including the young people at Riverside College and Cronton Sixth Form College who have created the imagery for the strategy as part of their level 3 Diploma in Graphic and Digital Design. A number of other children and young people from a variety of settings helped in the development of the strategy by supporting us to understand what neglect meant to them and what they would do if they or a friend were experiencing neglect.

The overall purpose of this strategy is to prevent and reduce neglect within Halton. A better understanding, early recognition and a confidence to intervene, along with a more strategic approach to neglect, is essential for everyone with responsibilities for safeguarding, as we know that when children are neglected not only does this impact on their development through childhood, adolescence and into adulthood, but will often have enduring consequences throughout their lives.

Our efforts today to prevent and reduce neglect in Halton will not only serve to protect individual children, but also have the potential to anticipate and avoid a wide range of health and other potential problems cascading down through future generations, as a result of neglect.

*'The cumulative and pervasive impact of neglect on the development of children and their life chances has to be properly addressed if they are to be able to contribute to, and benefit from, society as adults and future parents.'*

*(In the Child's Time – Professional Responses to Neglect, Ofsted 2014)*

## What is neglect?

### The 2018 Working Together definition of neglect is :

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.

### Young people's definition of neglect:

A key part of our strategy is to work with young people, particularly around adolescent neglect. We have gathered the experiences and thoughts of those young people who have experienced neglect. We have also talked to their peers, to better understand how they could help. Through our safeguarding surveys with young people a significant proportion told us that they do understand the term 'neglect' and would know where to seek support for a friend who was experiencing neglect. However, they weren't as confident that they would be able to spot the signs of neglect.

Our campaign is based on what young people have told us would have most impact.

Young people told us what neglect means to them

- "Failing to care properly for something or someone"
- "Being abandoned or not receiving the basic care"
- "When a person is left to fend for themselves without any help and when they reach out they are ignored"
- "Neglect can manifest itself in many ways - physically by being ignored or your basic needs/being accounted for less than another person. Mentally by having your thoughts and struggles ignored or dismissed frequently. Or emotionally by having no one who cares for you and your feelings, leaving you to deal with them alone."



## Categories of neglect

### Physical

- This is failing to provide for a child's basic needs such as suitable food, clothing or shelter. Failing to adequately supervise a child, or provide for their safety.

### Educational

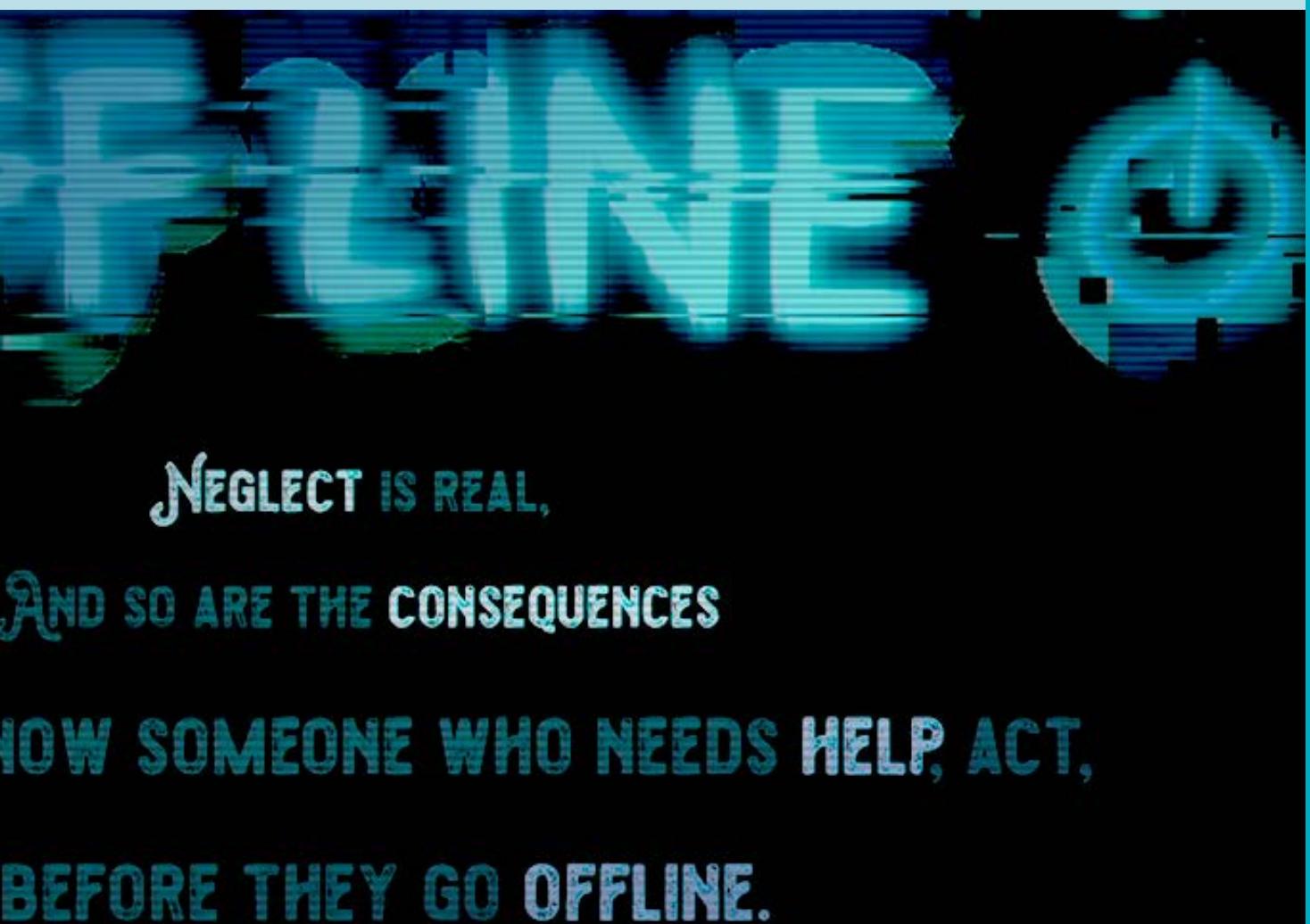
- This is failing to ensure a child receives an education.

### Emotional/Psychological

- Often the most difficult to prove, this is failing to meet a child's needs for nurture and stimulation, perhaps by ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them.

### Medical

- This is failing to provide appropriate health care, including dental care and refusal of care or ignoring medical recommendations.



## Vision and Principles

Our efforts today to prevent and reduce neglect in Halton will not only serve to protect individual children, but will also have the potential to anticipate and avoid a wide range of health and other potential problems cascading down through future generations, as a result of neglect.

Halton's ambition is to build stronger, safer more resilient communities that are able to support the development and learning of children and young people so they grow up feeling, safe, secure, happy and healthy; ready to be Halton's future.

Our Neglect Strategy will focus on the key things we think will make the most difference to improving the lives of our children and young people and achieving our vision.

### Why do we need a neglect strategy?

There is considerable national research and local evidence which demonstrates the damage done to children and young people living in situations of neglect. Whilst the harm resulting from neglect can be especially damaging in the first 18 months of life, it has a cumulative impact across childhood and into adolescence and so affects all of our children and young people. Sadly, for some children the consequences of neglect are fatal.

- Neglect is the form of maltreatment more likely to be repeated.
- Neglect exposes children to other forms of abuse, e.g., child sexual or criminal exploitation, increasing vulnerability.
- Neglect can be difficult to identify, making it hard for professionals to take action to protect a child.
- Neglect is an area where there can be drift and delay; professionals can become de-sensitised to children's living conditions and experiences of poor parenting.

The 2020 Ofsted Local Authority Inspection identified that some children in Halton remain living in situations of chronic neglect for too long before decisive action is taken.

### National risk factors

A number of factors increase the likelihood of neglect in some families. Vulnerable families may have a combination of the following risk factors:

#### Child risk factors:

- Disability
- Behavioural problems
- Chronic ill health.

#### Parental risk factors

- Poor mental health, especially maternal mental health difficulties
- Drug and alcohol (substance misuse)
- Domestic abuse
- Parents' own exposure to maltreatment
- Lack of experience of positive parenting in childhood.

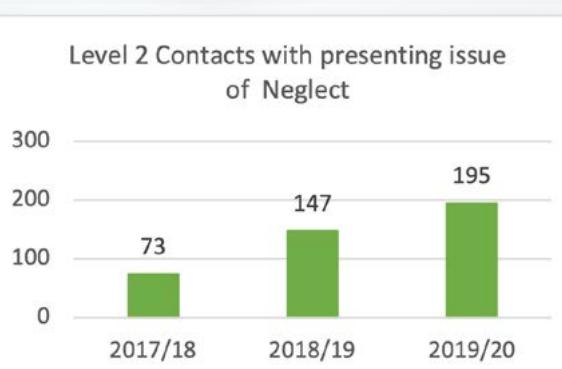
#### Wider risk factors

- Poverty
- Unemployment
- Poor social support
- Social isolation
- Cultural and language barriers
- Exploitation of children.

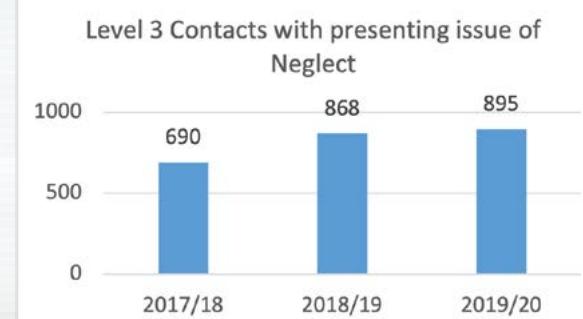
## In Halton:

- 26% of the population live in the top 10 of the most deprived areas in England
- 48% of adults are not in employment
- 49% of adults are overweight or obese
- Neglect is the most common reason for a child to be the subject of a child protection plan
- Our local demographics are changing and we are seeing an increase in the number of families living within Halton who are experiencing social isolation due to cultural and language barriers.

Halton has seen year on year increases in neglect as the presenting issue in both Level 2 Early Help contacts and Level 3 Safeguarding contacts.



The numbers of neglect as the presenting issue for Level 2 Early Help contacts has significantly risen when compared to 2017/18.



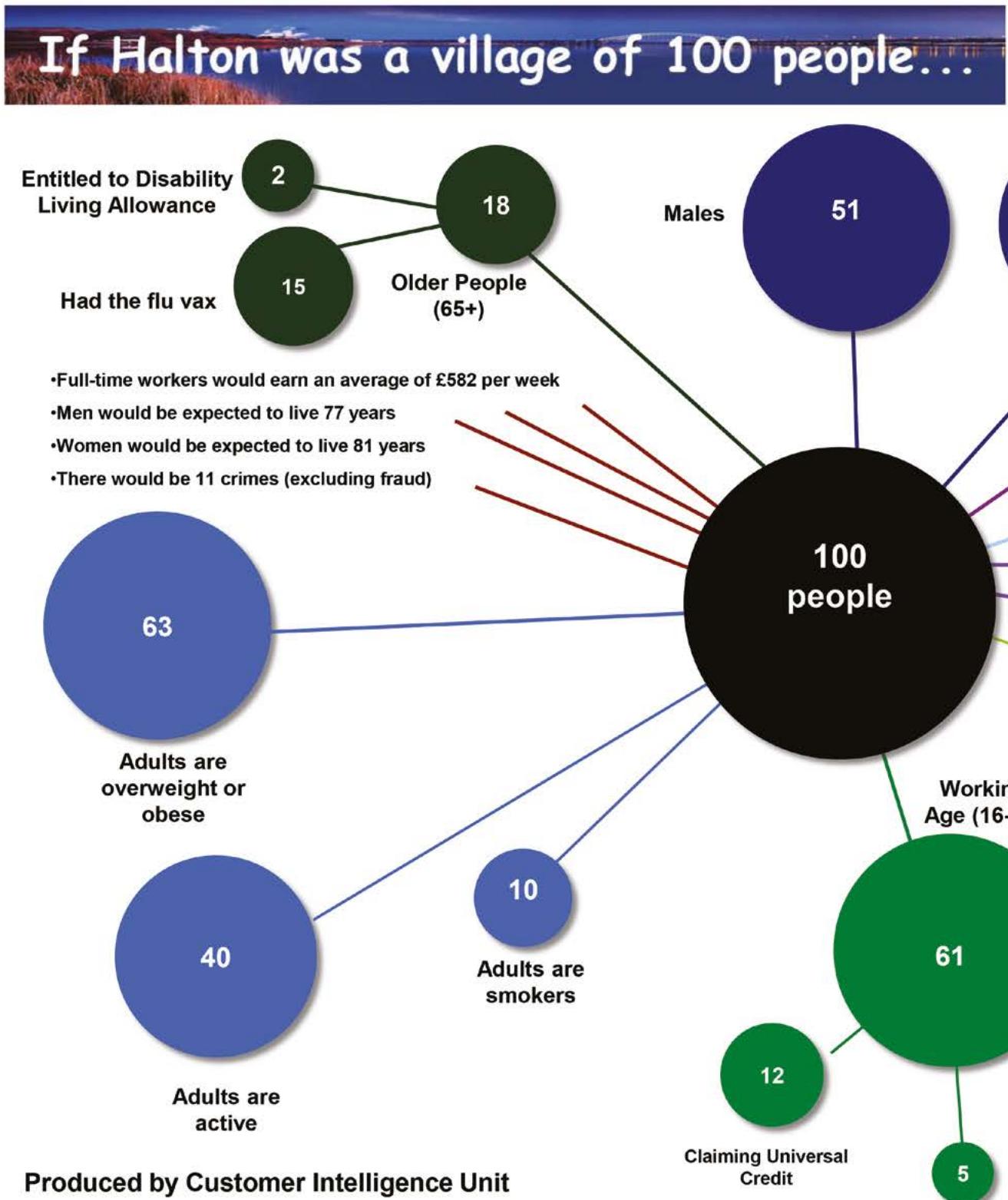
A similar upward trend can be seen in contacts at Level 3 Safeguarding. For 2018/19 the numbers of neglect as the presenting issue for Level 3 contacts increased by 178 (26%) when compared to 2017/18.

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
73	147	195
	up 101%	up 33%

In 2018/19 neglect as a presenting issue for Level 2 Early Help contacts doubled compared to 2017/18. There was a further increase of 33% in 2019/20 when compared to 2018/19.

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
690	868	895
	up 26%	up 3%

There was a smaller increase of 3% in 2019/20 when compared with 2018/19. This could be because more neglect contacts were dealt with a Level 2 Early Help which were up 33% on previous year.

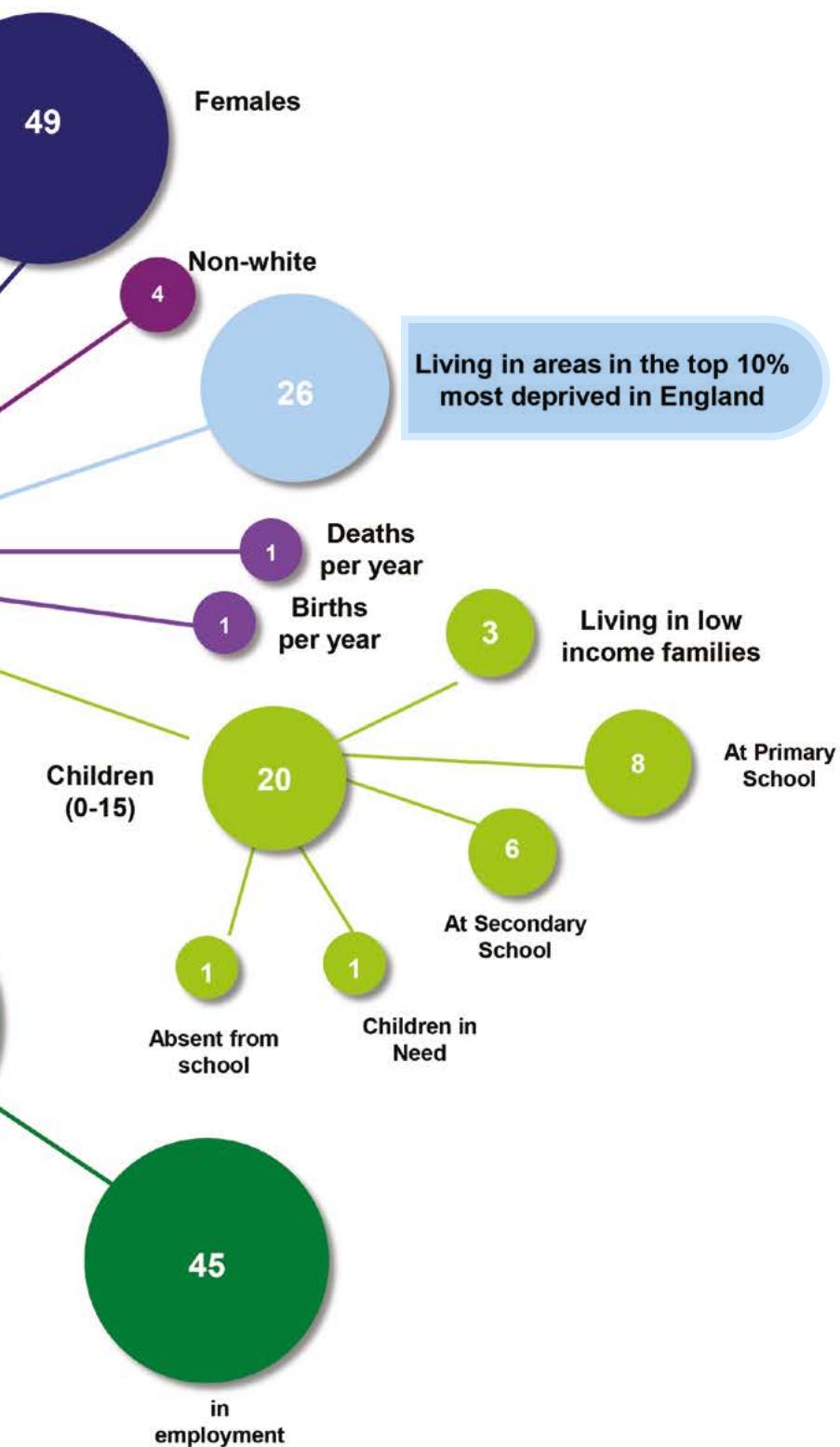


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Source data please visit:

<https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/research-officer/15195?version=latest>

E-mail: [research@halton.gov.uk](mailto:research@halton.gov.uk)



## What audit tells us about our responses to neglect in Halton

- Neglect is the most prevalent category for child protection planning in Halton.
- Audit is able to provide examples of innovative, flexible and joined-up multi-agency approaches to engaging and supporting families in Halton but we are not always effective in addressing root causes of neglect, with the result that some children are left for significant periods of their childhood in conditions of chronic neglect despite targeted interventions.
- Parental mental ill health is not well understood across the children's workforce, yet audit tells us that this is a significant factor in the neglect of children in Halton.
- The child's lived experience is not considered sufficiently in decision making; our practice can become parent focused.



support.



## What can we do to prevent neglect?

**Learning from case reviews in which a child has been seriously or fatally injured, highlight the following key features (NSPCC, Sept 2015):**

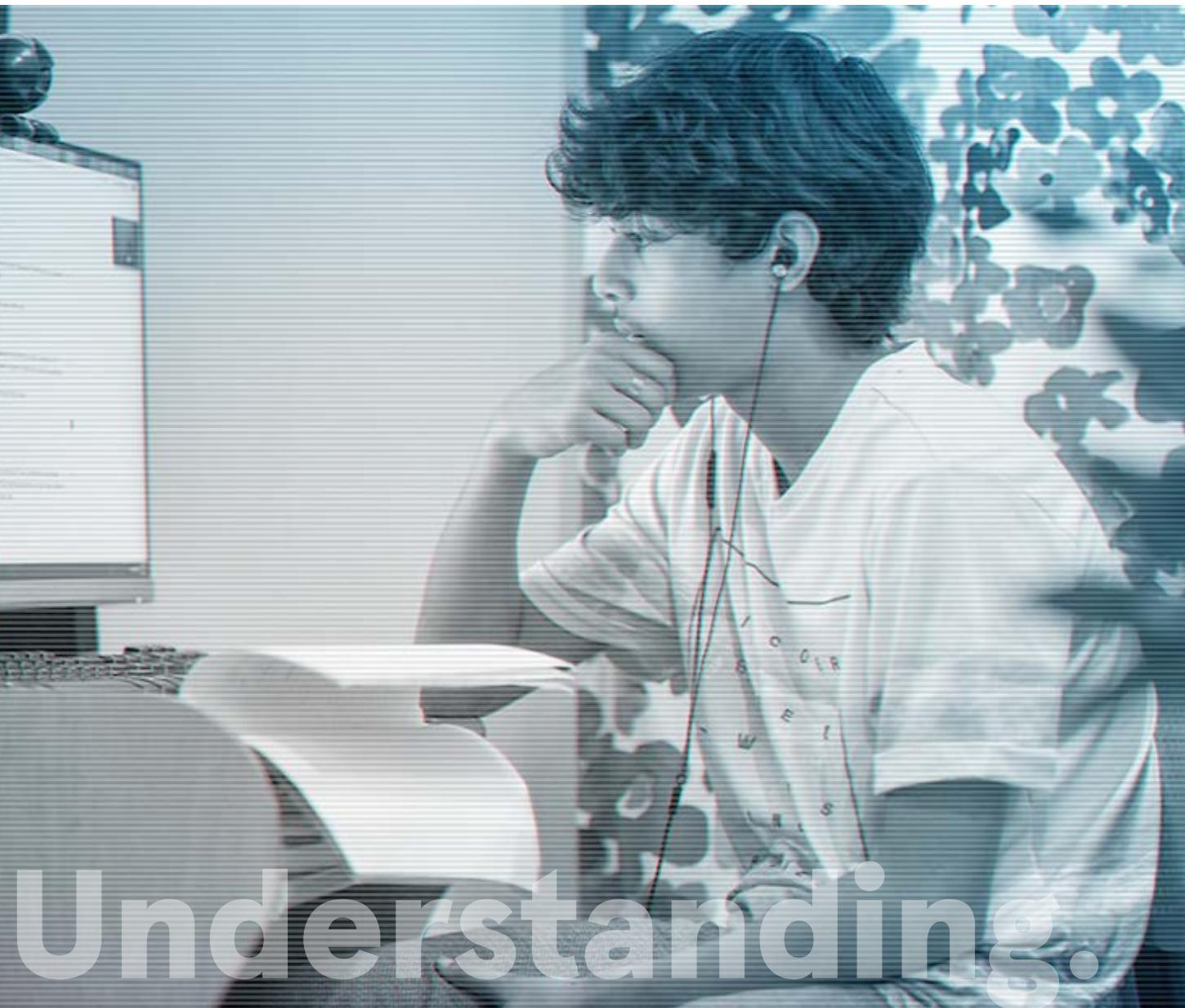
- Professionals must understand and recognise physical and emotional neglect, and the impact of cumulative and long-term effects of neglect on children
- Teenagers experiences can be missed; especially where there are younger children in the home This can include sexual or criminal exploitation by others
- Tooth decay can indicate neglect and dental surgeries should consider initiating further enquiries
- Systems should be in place to monitor missed appointments and professionals should know what to do when there are concerns
- Frequent accidents may indicate poor quality parenting; frequent visits to A&E should cause concern
- Maintain a focus on the bests interests for the child rather than the immediate needs of the parent who may be demanding
- Improvements to home conditions should be regularly reviewed to ensure they are sustained
- Be aware of the possibility of disguised compliance and respectfully challenge when parents fail to follow agreements
- See the bigger picture and take account of family history
- Undertake robust and comprehensive assessments and actively review these
- Use supervision to avoid case drift.

Early help has a key role to play in supporting parents and preventing children becoming at risk from neglect or abuse. Halton offers a wide range of parenting programmes, and open access groups through children's centres. We can also offer one to one support in the home to help parents establish positive routines and structure whilst caring for their children. Where children are being, or at risk of being criminally or sexually exploited there is multi agency work and planning through a contextual safeguarding operation group to reduce these risks. Family counselling sessions can also be accessed as part of our early help offer. Many of these support services are still able to be delivered even during periods of national lockdown.

## What we want from our new strategy

### We want our strategy to...

- Support practitioners to more robustly tackle child neglect in Halton
- More effectively mitigate the impact this form of child abuse has on children and young people.
- Assist agencies to identify neglect much earlier in children's lives.
- Assist in reducing the number of children that suffer neglect and reduce the impact and time they suffer.
- Raise the profile of adolescent neglect, including criminal and sexual exploitation.
- Deliver a well trained workforce confident in tackling neglect and a public that recognises and reports neglect
- Enable children and adult members of the community to recognise neglect and know what to do if they are worried about a child.
- Support family networks to achieve long term safety for children



# Our priorities 2022 – 2025

## Priority 1 ➤ Strategic Commitment Across all Agencies

Tackling neglect is a priority for Halton and this strategy is informed by Nice Guidelines (February 2019).

To address neglect in Halton we will:

- Drive neglect as a key priority of HCYPSP and ensure that we adopt a **Think Family approach**
- Enhance our **quality assurance framework** to enable us to better monitor the impact of our work.
- Raise awareness and **collaboration around neglect with local children's boards/ children's trust.**

## Priority 2 ➤ Improve Awareness, Understanding and Recognition

This is a priority because audit is telling us that neglect is sometimes difficult to recognise. Our audits suggest that we need to make more timely responses to children who are vulnerable to neglect. We believe that adolescent neglect may require a different approach to ensure we recognise its features and respond effectively.

**To address this, we will:**

- **Work with young people** to get a better understanding of neglect from their perspective
- Review and **refresh our website**, including procedures content around neglect.
- Improve the use of **communication channels** to promote awareness, understanding and recognition of neglect, including, newsletters, twitter etc
- Embed the use of the **neglect assessment framework and revise local training around neglect**

## Priority 3 ➤ Prevent Neglect through Early Help

This is a priority because the impact of neglect of children is often gradual and therefore there is a risk that agencies do not intervene early enough to prevent harm. Working Together (2018) requires local agencies to have in place effective assessments of needs of children who may benefit from early help services. In Halton agencies should effectively utilise the 'MAP' process to assess unmet needs and co-ordinate appropriate support. The home conditions and neglect screening tools have already been introduced into Halton to support the identification of neglect within families, but we know that these still need to become embedded in every day practice.

**To address this, we will:**

- Refresh supporting guidance to ensure that neglect is reinforced in the **thresholds document**.
  - Embed the use of neglect tools in assessment
- Carry out **audits** to check the use of neglect tools in practice.
- Develop good practice **case studies**

## Priority 4 Improve Effectiveness of Interventions and reduce the impact of neglect

This is a priority because we know that sometimes our interventions do not make a big enough difference or impact quick enough to improve the lived experiences of our children and young people.

### To address this, we will:

- Revise the threshold document to ensure that neglect is identified at the earliest opportunity.
- Review policies and procedures around specific target groups, e.g., children with disabilities and families where English is not the first language to ensure that they are in line with the neglect strategy and ensure the use of qualified interpreters when dealing with families who don't have English as a first language.
- Embed the use of multi-agency chronologies to evidence neglect, the effectiveness of interventions for individual children and to support assessment of parent's ability to make sustained change.
- Identify and focus intervention on underlying issues for parents that contribute to child neglect such as understanding and responding effectively to parental mental ill health,
- Support practitioners to be clear about the cumulative effects of neglect and to have the confidence to undertake timely and effective challenge/escalation for a child who is being neglected.
- Develop IT reporting so that we can collect evidence that assessment framework is being used effectively in step up and step down decisions in MAP, Child in Need and Child Protection

## Making our priorities happen

### Implementation Plan

Our implementation plan, published on the children's partnership website, sets out the key actions we think we need to do to achieve our priorities. Task and Finish groups will develop more detailed plans to identify how we will achieve these key actions and the plan will be reviewed and updated quarterly to ensure delivery of this strategy.

### Governance

The Neglect sub group will monitor progress against the implementation plan, undertake performance reporting and analyse the dataset and will keep the impact of training and development under review. A chair's report outlining progress and any issues or risks will be regularly presented to the Executive Group.

### Measuring Success

The success of the strategy will be measured based on a range of quantitative and qualitative measures set out in this strategy.

### Qualitative Measures

A number of qualitative measures will be monitored and reported through the governance arrangements. These include:

- HCYPSP multi-agency audits show early identification, use of assessment tools and good impact of the plan.
- MAP and Children's Social Care audit show good use of the tools within the neglect assessment framework.
- Feedback from parents collected at MAP, children in need, initial child protection case conference, child protection case review meetings and at case closure.

- Young people's views of neglect through feedback at children in need, initial child protection case conference, child protection case review meetings and at case closure and specific work as part of the neglect strategy.
- Feedback from frontline staff through frontline visits, audits, staff surveys and training questionnaires.

## Quantitative Measures

A neglect scorecard has been developed and will be integrated into the HCYPSP dataset, reviewed quarterly and reported to the Executive Group. This is attached at Appendix 1.

## How we will know our practice is good

How much we did	What does it show?	
This will be measured by the neglect scorecard at Appendix 1	The neglect scorecard will show us whether we are identifying neglect early enough and at a young enough age, whether we deal with cases in a timely way and avoid drift and delay. It will also tell us whether practitioners are taking up the training offered and using the tools we have developed to support them in their practice.	
How well we did it	Are we making a difference?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HCYPSP multi-agency audits show early identification of neglect in cases where appropriate assessments are used. They also assist in improving outcomes for children.</li> <li>MAP and Children's Social Care audit show good use of the tools within the neglect assessment framework.</li> </ul>	<p>Feedback from parents collected at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children in need</li> <li>Initial child protection case conference</li> <li>Child protection case review meetings</li> <li>Case closure.</li> </ul> <p>Young people's views of neglect through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct work with those young people on a plan for neglect</li> <li>Focus groups</li> <li>Feedback at children in need, initial child protection case conference, child protection case review meetings and at case closure</li> </ul>	<p>Feedback from frontline staff through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frontline visits</li> <li>Audits</li> <li>Staff surveys</li> <li>Training questionnaires.</li> </ul>



***Halton Clinical Commissioning Group***

**Thank you to Riverside College and Cronton Sixth Form College**