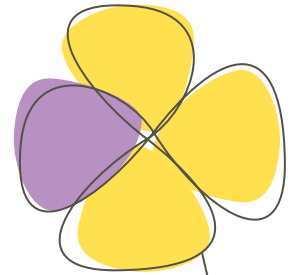


August 2009



Action for Children **briefing**

Action for Children neglect intervention project



Child neglect has a devastating impact on a growing number of children across the UK each year. It is the most pervasive form of child maltreatment in the UK.

Action for Children is developing a UK neglect intervention project to identify effective and timely interventions with children and families. This project is the subject of a longitudinal evaluation by the University of Salford.

Neglect is a persistent failure to provide appropriate care and attention to a child's needs, including food and a safe environment, which is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.¹

Neglect involves a wide range of complex factors, from children feeling that they are not loved or properly nourished, supported and clothed, to worrying that their home is not safe and secure.

Neglect can have a devastating impact on all aspects of a child's development, and this impact can last throughout their life. The risks of recurring maltreatment are higher with neglect than for other types of abuse. Research literature has consistently shown a negative association between neglect and factors that promote good outcomes for children.

Resilience (enhanced ability to cope with adverse situations) is developed through positive experiences in other situations and through interventions to promote a secure base, positive self-esteem and a sense of self-efficacy. However, ongoing neglect is likely to affect precisely those factors that encourage resilience and so provide protection in adversity.

There is evidence that, following early identification of neglect, some children and families fail to receive adequate services, sometimes with tragic consequences. Action for Children's experience of working with thousands of the most vulnerable families across the UK has provided us with a wealth of evidence on the issue of neglect and the practical, long-term solutions that combat it. We are developing a UK neglect intervention project to identify effective and timely interventions with children who are neglected.

What is Action for Children's neglect intervention project?

Action for Children's UK neglect intervention project focuses on work with children whose developmental needs are not being met sufficiently, placing them at risk of poor educational, emotional and social outcomes.

We know that child neglect is difficult to reverse and that no single method of intervention is likely to be sufficient. The chronic and multiple nature of the problem necessitates a holistic, joined-up approach with a blend of services tailored to individual needs, possibly over a long period of time.

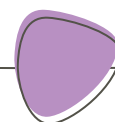
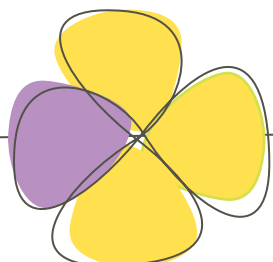
The work of Action for Children's supporting families' team to develop new and existing services is driven by our desire to explore approaches that improve outcomes for vulnerable children.

Action for Children's UK Neglect Intervention Project is intended to enhance work currently in progress within Action for Children exploring targeted family support models. This builds on other work undertaken on targeted family support responses to address a range of complex multiple needs for children in families caught in a cycle of low achievement, seeking to develop the service base in a proactive way.

Action for Children's UK Neglect Intervention Project focuses on work in six of our services across the four nations that are delivering direct work with families with a child under eight years of age where neglect is a serious concern. This is a whole-family approach that includes work with at least one child under eight, where there is evidence of emerging vulnerability and additional unmet need requiring a multi-agency response.

The project aims to:

- ▶ deliver better outcomes for vulnerable children
- ▶ develop an improved service response that can be rolled out across the organisation
- ▶ capture learning to be shared (internally and externally)
- ▶ improve co-working relationships with local authorities and other statutory teams to enhance service responses



Our longitudinal evaluation



Action for Children has commissioned the University of Salford to undertake a longitudinal evaluation of our Neglect Intervention Project to support our practice development.

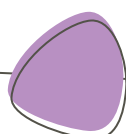
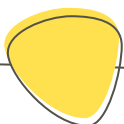
This is important because neglect in its many forms remains an under-researched area, with most of the existing evidence coming from abroad. We believe that there is currently a lack of evidence to guide practitioners in delivering effective interventions to prevent or reduce neglect and its impact.

We hope that our four-year programme of research will help to bridge this gap. The evaluation is intended to establish which interventions produce the best results in given sets of circumstances. We will be gathering evidence on:

- ▶ the circumstances in which families are referred for intervention
- ▶ the wide-ranging assessment of family needs and problems
- ▶ the interventions applied
- ▶ the long-term outcomes for children of the interventions

The costs of interventions and the relationship to outcomes for children will also be explored. This evidence will give us a greater understanding of what works in practice.

We are keen to work with partners and to share our findings as broadly as possible.



The next steps



We know that intervening in neglect is likely to be costly, requiring intensive, long-term, multi-faceted work by a highly skilled workforce.

Action for Children believes that the Government should work with third sector partners to develop effective responses to tackling chronic neglect.

Upcoming dates

Interim report year 2 – Autumn 2009

Annual report year 2 – July 2010

Interim report year 3 – Autumn 2010

Annual report year 3 – July 2011

Interim report year 4 – Autumn 2011

Annual and final report year 4 July 2012

¹ '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 provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion for the home and abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.' DCSF, Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2006

Talk to us

If you would like to be kept up to date with the project, please contact:

Kate Mulley

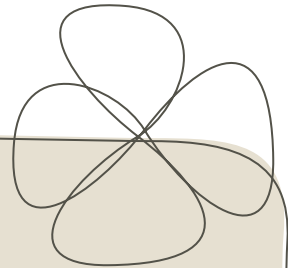
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as long as it takes