



**STOCKPORT**  
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Stockport Family's Neglect Toolkit

Guidance to support practitioners in their  
response to neglect

2026-2027



Ambitious Stockport, creating opportunities *for everyone*

# Stockport's Neglect Toolkit

**In Stockport, we use a range of tools to help us understand, assess, and respond to neglect. These tools support practitioners to identify the seriousness of concerns, analyse the impact on the child, recognise patterns over time, and develop a clearer understanding of the underlying causes- the 'why' behind neglect.**

## **Neglect- Focused Questions within our Stockport Family Assessment**

Where concerns about neglect are identified for any child, within a Stockport Family Assessment, a set of neglect-focused questions will be triggered. These questions support structured, child-centred analysis, helping practitioners to understand the child's lived experience, identify patterns over time, and assess the impact of parental care.

## **Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) Assessments**

The GCP2 is an evidence-based tool to assess the quality of care. It is mandatory for all children subject to a child protection plan in Stockport (under the category of neglect) and may also be used at lower thresholds of planning if it is helpful. It should inform analysis, planning, and decision-making.

## **'A Day in the Life of a Child Experiencing Neglect' Timeline**

This should be completed for any child open to children's social care and family help, where neglect is a concern. It captures the child's daily lived experience, highlighting gaps in care, routine, supervision, and emotional support, using direct work, observations, and multi-agency information.

## **Systemic Genograms**

Systemic genograms should be completed for any child open to children's social care and family help. These help explore family history, relationships, and patterns, supporting understanding of the underlying factors contributing to neglect and informing targeted interventions.

## **Child Impact Chronologies**

Child impact chronologies should be completed for any child open to children's social care and family help. These identify the cumulative impact of neglect over time, helping practitioners understand patterns and assess the likelihood of change, supporting evidence-based decisions.

## How will this guidance support my practice?

This guidance is designed primarily to support practitioners in answering the new neglect-focused questions within the Stockport Family assessment, set out below.

This guidance is structured in two parts. The first focuses on understanding **the child's daily experience** of neglect and its impact. The second focuses on the **parent/ carer's daily experience**, supporting practitioners to consider factors in both the parent's past and present that may help explain the 'why' behind neglect, and support us to plan interventions that are more likely to support change.

This guidance has been developed following two days of collaborative work between Jan Horwath (Professor of Child Welfare and expert in the field of neglect) and practitioners in Stockport, exploring how we can best support families to improve outcomes for children and young people who experience neglect.

### Stockport's Neglect Focused Questions within the Stockport Family Assessment

#### The Child's Daily Experience

1. Considering a typical day, how are the child's physical, emotional, and developmental needs met (or unmet) throughout morning, daytime, and evening routines?
2. How does the child experience care, comfort and love during a typical day?
3. What impact does the child's day-to-day care have on meeting their physical, emotional and developmental needs, and on their overall opportunity to thrive?
4. What strengths or protective factors exist in the child's life that support and nurture them?

#### The Parent's Daily Experience

1. What is understood about the parent's own experiences of being cared for in childhood, and how might these experiences influence their current parenting patterns and the quality of care they provide?
2. How might the parent's experiences in adulthood impact their caregiving and ability to respond to their child's needs?
3. What are the parent's beliefs about what good enough care for a child looks like, and how might these beliefs have been shaped by their own upbringing, experiences, and cultural context?
4. How does the parent notice and respond to their child's needs, and what does this show about how caring, attentive, and consistent they are as a parent?
5. What current stressors, environmental factors, or support systems are affecting the parent's ability to meet their child's needs, and how do these influences manifest in the caregiving provided?

## Key Principles of Stockport's Neglect Toolkit

### What is Neglect?

Neglect is one of the most common forms of abuse affecting children and young people in Stockport, yet it can often be overlooked or minimised in practice.

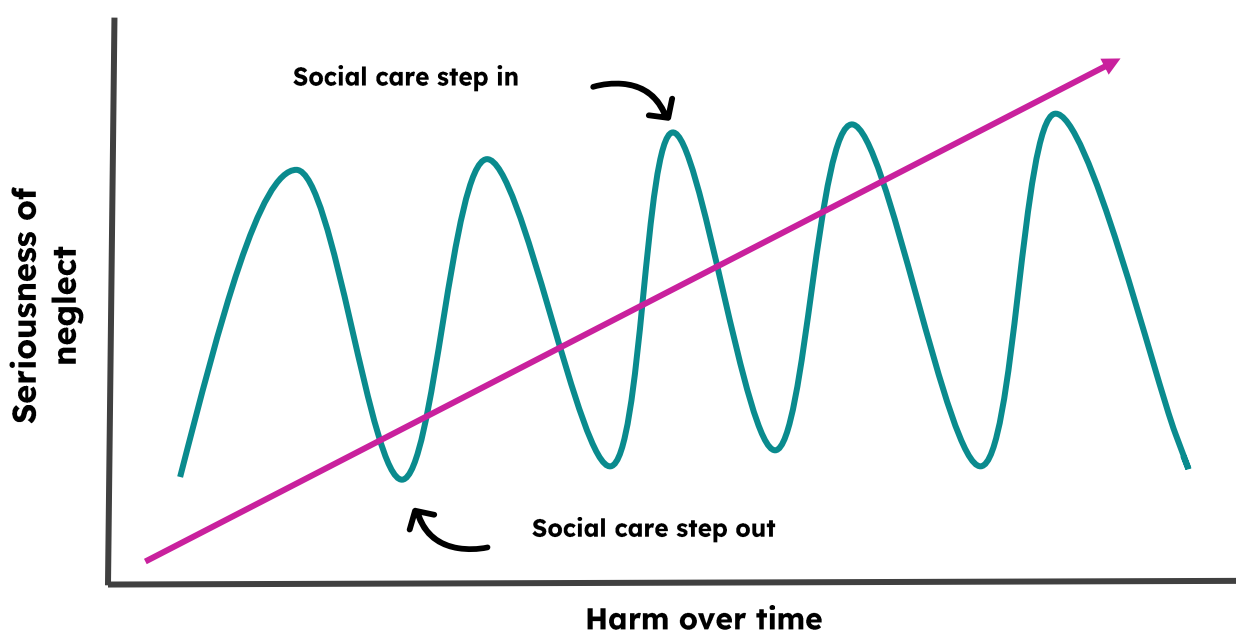
*Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)* defines neglect as the 'persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious harm to their health or development.' This may include failing to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, supervision, healthcare, education, or emotional care. Neglect can also occur during pregnancy, for example through maternal substance misuse.

To read more about the context of neglect in Stockport, please read Stockport's neglect strategy here: [Stockport Neglect Strategy 2025 to 2027](#)

### Cumulative Harm- what is it and why does it matter?

When assessing and understanding neglect, it is vital that we recognise that neglect is rarely a single incident; it is often long-standing and persistent, with harm building over time. In practice, responses to neglect can sometimes be episodic; services become involved when concerns escalate, and step back when things appear to improve. However, this can mask the ongoing nature of neglect. Even where the quality of care fluctuates, the harm experienced by the child continues to build over time, demonstrated by the graph below (Petitt, 2025).

This is why it is essential to understand and assess cumulative harm. Looking at patterns over time, rather than isolated incidents, enables practitioners to recognise the sustained impact on the child and make more informed decisions about risk and the need for longer-term support.



## Understanding the Child's Daily Experience

**Every child or young person in Stockport where there are concerns about neglect should have a "Day in the Life" timeline uploaded to Liquidlogic. This can be created digitally (e.g. in Word) or hand-drawn and scanned before being uploaded to the Documents section.**

### Developing a Timeline: A Day in the Life of a Child Experiencing Neglect

Historically, practitioners have been encouraged to complete 'day in the life' exercises with children, often using clock-based visuals. However, a more effective approach is to construct a detailed timeline that represents a day in the life of a child experiencing neglect.

This timeline should be developed using all the information that a practitioner has gathered, including professional observations, what the child has said, feedback from multi-agency colleagues, and insights from parents and carers. Drawing these perspectives together helps to create a meaningful and holistic picture of the child's day-to-day lived experience.

### How a Timeline Can Be Created

A timeline may be developed in different ways depending on the context. It may be created by a single agency, such as a social worker, family help worker, or school, bringing together their own observations alongside information from multi-agency colleagues. It may also be developed collaboratively, with professionals contributing from their own perspectives, for example, a nursery describing the child's experience during nursery hours, a social worker or family support worker adding information from home visits and discussions with the child and parents, and other professionals such as a GP contributing insight into health needs and their impact on daily life. In some cases, parents, and where appropriate children and young people, may also create their own timeline or contribute to one developed by practitioners.

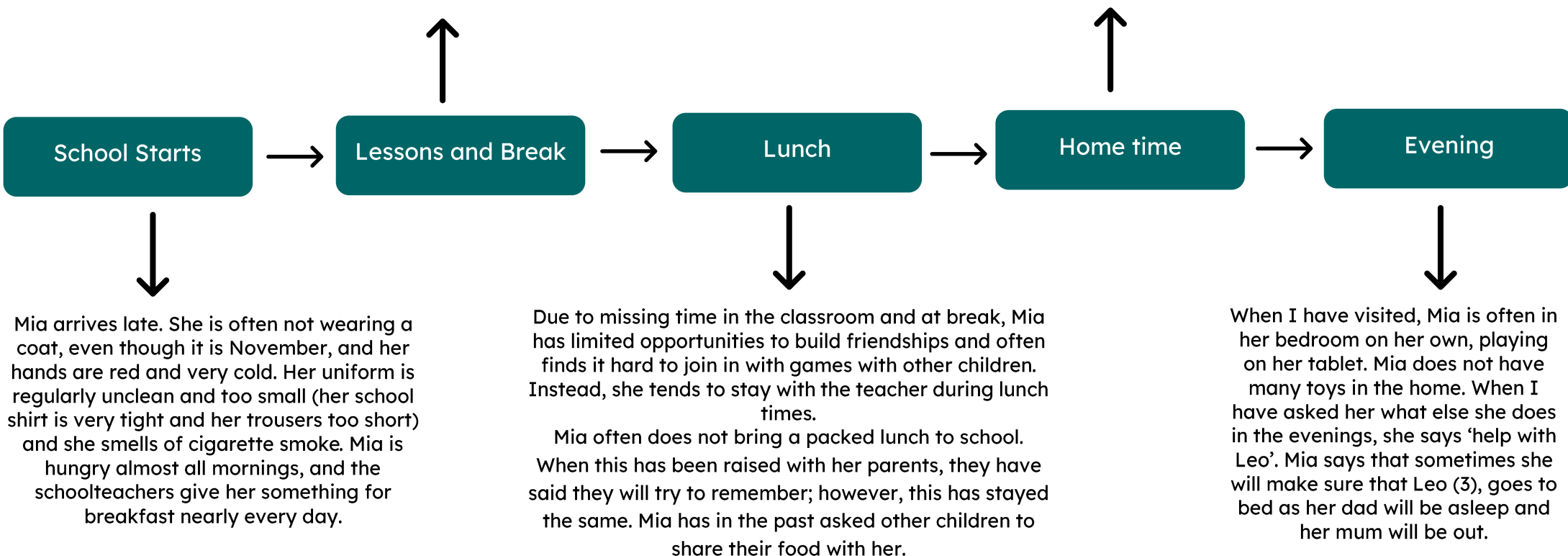
### Questions to reflect upon when completing a timeline

- What does the child's day-to-day lived experience of neglect look like at different points in the day, and what evidence do I have to support this?
- What additional information do I need to fully understand the child's lived experience?
- Which of the child's needs are being met and which are not, based on what the timeline is showing me?
- How does the child's experience of daily life differ from their parent/carer's view of it, and why might that be?
- What changes are needed to improve the child's lived experience, and how will I know if those changes are making a difference over time?

## An Example

Mia finds it difficult to concentrate in class and her teacher says that she often stares out of the window and struggles to engage in group work. She becomes quickly frustrated when she finds tasks challenging and becomes tearful. As a result, she spends part of most days out of lessons and breaktimes with the pastoral lead, Miss Kelly, who notes that Mia can be difficult to console at times.

Whenever Mia asks who is collecting her from school, she doesn't know, and this is often different people, including extended members of the family. They are often late to collect Mia, and when asked why, say that they weren't asked until the last minute if they could help.



## Understanding the Parent's Daily Experience

**Parenting is strongly influenced by three key factors (Houston, 2019):**

**Experiences** – A parent's own experiences of being parented, along with both positive and adverse childhood and adult experiences, can shape how they respond to their child's needs and the approaches they use in parenting.

**Beliefs** – A parent's beliefs about what constitutes 'good enough' parenting, influenced by their experiences and by how they see themselves in the role of caregiver, shape the expectations they place on themselves and guide how they raise their children.

**Context** – The wider context of a parent's life also affects caregiving. Socio-economic factors such as income, housing, and living conditions, together with the attitudes and support of friends, family, and the wider community, all contribute to the environment in which a child grows up.

### Understanding the 'Why' Behind Neglectful Parenting

To effectively assess and intervene when children are experiencing neglect, it is essential to consider the parent's lived experience, in order to understand the 'why' behind neglectful parenting. Without this understanding, there is a risk of taking a superficial or short-term approach, sometimes described as a 'patch up and dispatch' response. In these cases, things may appear to improve temporarily, leading practitioners to step back, but because the underlying patterns, beliefs, and drivers of neglect are not addressed, difficulties are likely to re-emerge.

For example, a practitioner might be concerned about home conditions, arrange for a skip to clear clutter, and see an immediate improvement. While the home now looks tidier, the beliefs, behaviours and patterns that led to the neglectful conditions remain unchanged, meaning the situation can quickly revert.

In systemic terms, this is referred to as first-order change (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974). First-order change focuses on behaviour, rather than the deeper beliefs or patterns that drive it. While behaviour may change temporarily, without addressing the underlying causes at the belief level, the child remains at risk because neglect is likely to reoccur.

## Reflective Models to Understand the 'Why'

A useful framework for understanding neglect was developed by **Jan Horwath (2026)**. It helps us explore parents' own childhood experiences and how these shape the type of neglect their children may experience. Reflect: Thinking about a family you are working with where neglect is a concern, ask yourself how the parent's own childhood experiences of care might, or lack of care, be influencing the ways they respond to their child today?"

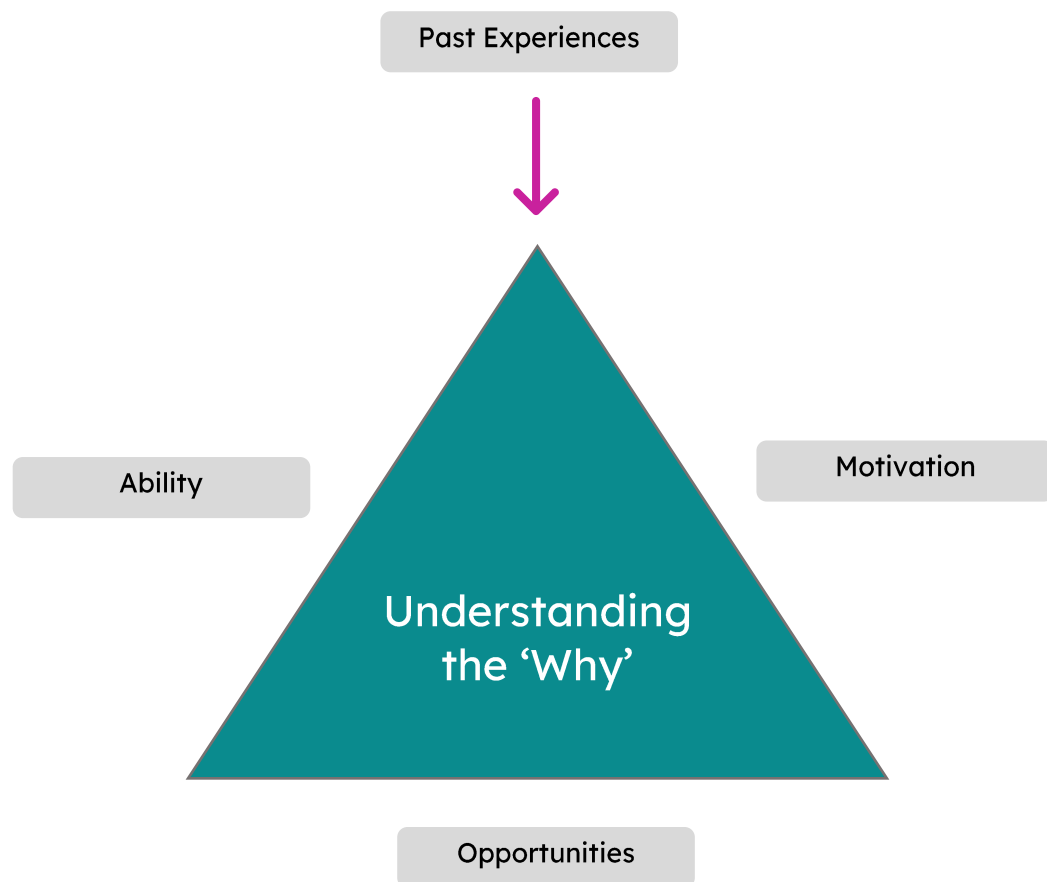
Where we see **chronic neglect** (where all of a child's needs are unmet consistently) parents are likely overwhelmed by significant adult-focused challenges, such as long-term substance misuse, severe mental health difficulties, or persistent high stress. When their own needs dominate, they may struggle with basic daily living, leaving the home neglected, routines absent, and the child's essential and developmental needs unmet. We are also likely to see some level of self-neglect in the parent. Children in these environments often experience minimal stimulation, inconsistent meals, and little parental presence or engagement.



Where we see **disorganised neglect** (highly inconsistent and unpredictable quality of caregiving) parents have often grown up with unmet needs, learning to rely on themselves rather than receiving reliable care. As adults, they may be self-focused, with intense and rapidly shifting emotions, creating a home that may feel very unstable. Children experience caregivers who may be nurturing and engaged one day, but withdrawn or dismissive the next, making it difficult to feel safe, understood, or supported.

Where we see **emotional neglect**, parents have often grown up in an 'emotional desert', without emotional warmth or secure attachment, making it difficult for them to form meaningful bonds with their own child. While a child's practical needs, such as food, clothing, schooling, and healthcare, may be met, there is an absence of emotional connection, comfort, and attunement. On the surface, parenting may be "good enough," but when emotional topics arise, they may shut down, avoid engagement, or shift responsibility onto the child.

## Reflective Models to Understand the 'Why'



(Jan Horwath, 2026)

The framework on the right offers another useful model for exploring the “**why**” of neglect. It prompts practitioners to consider where neglectful parenting might be coming from:

- **Ability** – Does the parent lack the knowledge or skills to provide “good enough” care? This may occur, for example, if nurturing was never modelled in their own childhood or if learning difficulties limit understanding.
- **Motivation** – Does the parent believe the care they provide is adequate, or “better than what they had,” making them less likely to recognise the need for change? This aligns with the systemic concept of **problem definition**, reminding us to check whether we and the parent see the problem in the same way, as misalignment can reduce the effectiveness of interventions.

Are factors such as poor mental or physical health, substance use, or trauma affecting the parent’s resilience and ability to meet their child’s needs consistently?

- **Opportunities** – What socio-cultural and environmental factors shape the parent’s caregiving? Poverty, social disadvantage, poor housing, and limited access to education can all restrict a parent’s ability to meet a child’s needs, increasing the risk of neglect. These broader structural factors help us understand that neglect often arises not only in the individual, but from systemic constraints that shape what is possible for families.

## Tools you use to explore the 'Why' with Parents

### Systemic Genogram

A systemic genogram maps family relationships, patterns, and significant events across generations. When used with parents, it can help them reflect on how caregiving patterns, and experiences of trauma or neglect, may have been passed down through the family system. It can also highlight intergenerational patterns that influence current parenting, increase self-awareness, and identify strengths and supportive relationships that can be built upon.

A key part of working with systemic genograms is using thoughtful, reflective questioning. Where neglect is a concern, examples of questions include:

- What are the main pressures or stresses you are facing at the moment, and how do these affect day-to-day life at home?
- When things feel overwhelming, what tends to happen at home—and what happened in your own home when things were overwhelming for your parents or carers?
- Where do you think your ideas about parenting come from, and how were you parented yourself?
- Are there things you are trying to do differently from how you were brought up, and how easy or difficult is that to manage?
- Are there times when what you believe is important as a parent is hard to put into practice? What gets in the way?
- If your child were to describe you as a parent in the future, what would you hope they say?

Training on systemic genograms is available on Learning Pool as part of the Five Big Things for Best Practice- [Book Systemic Genogram and Child Impact Chronology Training Here](#)

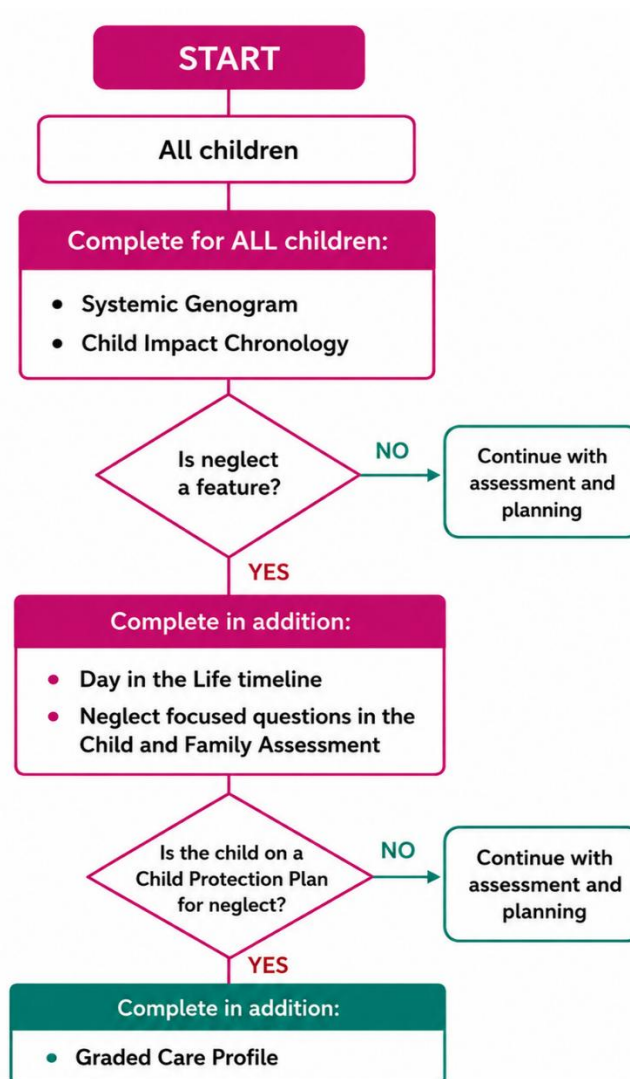
This research in practice guide also provides a helpful overview [Research in Practice - Systemic Genogram Guide](#)

### Timeline/ footsteps work

This exercise involves parents reflecting on their lives in chronological order, identifying significant events, challenges, and positive experiences. It can help them understand how past experiences such as loss, trauma, or unmet needs may be influencing their current parenting. It also provides a visual way to link past events with present behaviours, helping to make patterns of neglect more understandable and creating opportunities for discussion about change and support. Parents may be asked to highlight negative events in red and positive events in green to support reflection.

A similar exercise can also be completed focusing on the child's life, helping parents reflect on their child's experiences over time. This can support thinking about when things have been going well for the child, when there have been difficulties, and what factors may have contributed to these differences.

## Navigating what you should do, and when



### Additional Training and Resources

For all practitioners working with children, young people and families in Stockport, Neglect and Graded Care Profile 2 Training is available to book onto:

[Training & Events | Support Services by Stockport Council](#)

### Additional Reading

- [“Why did it take so long to respond?” – Child neglect: A thematic analysis](#)
- [Too little, too late: The multi-agency response to identifying and tackling neglect](#)
- [Neglect | Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel](#)
- [How the GCP2 assessment tool for neglect supports families and practitioners to achieve change | NSPCC Learning](#)