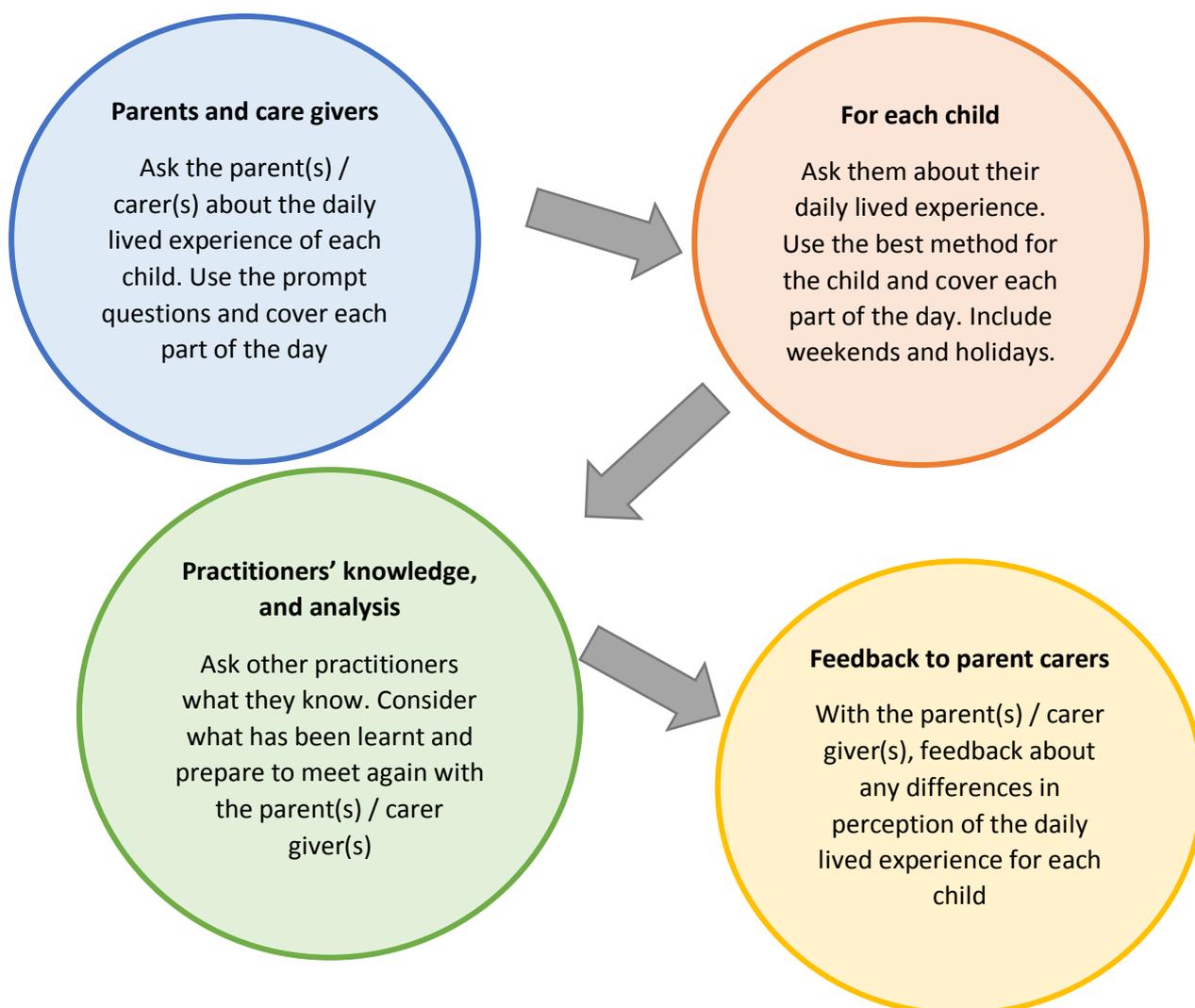


A Day in the life

For use with: Parent/Carers, children and young people
(Adapted from Horwath) and [NSW Family and Community Services](#)

What is a day in the life

Improving outcomes for neglected children means we need to know how, when, where and why neglect is occurring for each child in the household. The Horwath 'Day in the Life of the child' model aims to help practitioners gain a better understanding of what is happening in families where neglect is an issue and what actions may lead to improved outcomes for children. You should carry out the exercise with the parent/carer separately to the child. Go through each stage of the day to try to gain an understanding of what the daily lived experience of each child is. Include anything that is different for weekends and school holidays.



When would you use it?

Improving outcomes for neglected children means we need to know how, when, where and why neglect is occurring for each child in the household. The Horwath 'Day in the Life' model aims to:

- Gain a solid understanding of a child or young person's daily routine; this will help you focus on the child's lived experience
- Identify positives or strengths as well as highlighting areas of concern or risk in respect of neglect
- Look at parenting capacity in relation to daily life, especially thinking about expectations of the child from a developmental perspective

The model requires practitioners to develop an understanding of what a full day is like in the life of each and every child and carer in the family. By comparing and contrasting the information from each family member, practitioners can begin to understand why neglect is taking place, what is likely to happen if things do not change within the home, and what actions are required and appropriate to improve outcomes for the children.

How would you use it?

The model requires practitioners to talk to children and parents about what a regular day is like in their life across a 24 hour cycle. By talking to each family member and cross-referencing their experiences of the same day, practitioners are able to make the experiences of each neglected children visible and begin to understand their daily lived experience.

When using the model with families, consider the following guidance:

- Children should only be asked to describe their lived experience periodically (no more than every 3 months). This will allow you to develop a picture of how things may have changed for the child but prevents family members feeling fatigued by the process
- Family life for neglected children can be chaotic. When trying to understand their lived experience, aim to ask open questions, do not take anything for granted and do not presume any degree of routine occurs in the household.

Closed question

When do you eat dinner?

How do you get to school?

What time do you get up in the morning?

Alternative open question

What happens in the evenings in your house?

Can you tell me what the mornings are like? What happens when you wake up?

When do you get out of bed?

- The process of talking about the daily lived experience can take a long time. Try not to let children get bored and disengaged. If you have particular areas of concern, focus on asking what is happening for the child at a particular time of the day. (I.e. if you are worried that the child isn't going to school, you could ask, "Can you tell me what happens in the mornings when you wake up?").
- The concept of time can be abstract and easily misunderstood by younger children. When asking younger children to recall their daily lived experience, rather than asking "can you tell me about a morning last week?" you could ask "can you tell me about what happened this morning?"
- Children may be guarded about talking about their experiences. Make sure to let them tell their story at their own pace. If they are uncomfortable talking about their life at home, start by asking questions about what happens elsewhere (i.e. "can you tell me what it is like for you at school?")
- For young, pre-verbal children you will need to rely upon your observations and the details of other family members' lived experiences, including asking specific questions of parents or other children about their interactions with their infant or toddler.

Use a range of age appropriate tools and techniques to prompt details about the child's lived experience. You can use **the picture cards and timeline sheets** if these are age appropriate for the child or young person.

When talking to and thinking about neglect, consider a range of domains and be attuned to cumulative harm. What is their daily experience?

- *Are the child's basic daily needs being met: sleeping, eating, hygiene?*
- *How are children spending their time? Are they playing and interacting? Going to school or child care? Spending extended periods without interaction in their pram or in front of TV?*
- *Do children have a regular routine? Having a routine is important for children because it provides them with consistency, and makes the world more predictable for them. However, having a routine is not the same as having a rigid or inflexible daily schedule.*
- *Are parents spending time with children, providing them with the nurturance, attention, love and affection they need for positive emotional development?*
- *Are the children properly supervised? Are there clear boundaries and limits? Is there warmth and constancy?*
- *What do you think the child might name as the good and bad things about their daily experience?*

Bromfield, L. & Miller, R. (2012), p. 23



How to do this work with children

This activity can be done with a school age child creatively You will want to consider both school days as well as weekends/school holidays when routines might differ. Using a blank piece of paper, or one of the **timeline sheets** ask the child to map out pictorially, splitting the page into boxes to represent different parts of the day and ask them to show you what each time of day looks like:

| Getting Up | Going to School | The school day | After school | Evening | Bedtime |
|------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|---------|---------|
| | | | | | |

Or you can draw a timeline and complete it together from getting up at 7am, for example, to going to bed at 9pm



There are a set of prompt **picture cards** that you can use. You could print them out, laminate them and have them available as separate cards. You can ask the child to pick a card and get them to draw on one of the timeline sheets or your prepared piece of paper with what they want to say or write their response if that is what they would prefer.

For older young people you would more likely (depending on communication needs) have a conversation. You could record what they say on the **Young Person's Views sheet**.

Carry out the work with each child or young person separately and then with the parent carers for each child.

For the discussion with parent carers, you could use the **Parent Carer Perception sheets** to record what has been said.

Using either method, these are the areas that should be covered with some prompts (adapted from Howarth 2017):

Morning

How do they get up in the morning?

- What time do they wake, or get woken up?
- Is there a regular routine?
- Does the child take responsibility for other siblings or for parents/carers?
- Who makes sure everyone is up in time?



Do they have anything to eat?

- Is there usually something to eat for breakfast in the house?
- Does an adult supervise or make breakfast?
- Does the child buy something on the way to school? If so, what?
- Does the child go to breakfast club at school? Are they fed at nursery/pre-school?

What about getting dressed and ready for the day?

- Are clothes ready and clean? Is there a routine for that?
- Does the child have to find their own clothes? Choose their clothes?
- Do they have their own clothing?
- What about having a wash, brushing teeth and hair? Is this prompted or supervised by an adult?
- If the child bed-wets, are they encouraged to bathe/shower before school?

Getting to school

What happens if they are going to school?

- How do they get to school?
- Does an adult take them?
- What is the journey to school? For example, a 30 minute walk crossing a dual carriageway or five minute walk across a playing field?
- Do they take younger brothers and sisters? Do they walk with friends?

What happens at school?

- How do they get along with teachers?
- What do they do in the playground?
- Do they have anyone to play with at break and lunch time?
- What do they like to do at school? What don't they like?
- What do they eat at lunchtime?
- Are they in any clubs at school?
- Do they get bullied?

After school

What happens after school?

- Do they get collected from school? On Time?
- Do they stay for after school activities?
- Do they see friends after school or play out?
- What is the journey home from school like?
- What happens when they get home?
- Is food available?
- Do they take care of anyone when they get home? Other brothers and sisters? Carers/parents/other adult relatives?



What happens if it's the weekend/holidays?

- Would they be expected to look after siblings/parents/carers?
- Do they have to do jobs in the house/run errands?
- What happens about food?
- Are they supervised by an adult? Does someone know where they are?

Evening/night time

- Do they have a bedtime?
- Who decides when they go to bed?
- Where do they sleep? What kind of bedding do they have?
- Do they change their clothes before bed?
- Do they have a wash/brush their teeth?
- Are they disturbed when trying to sleep? This could be because of other noises in the house, or nightmares, for example
- Are they left alone at night? Are they expected to look after other children when parents/carers go out or are unavailable?

Top tips

Some children who lack confidence in their artistic abilities will benefit in exercises like this from your bringing along images you have prepared – for example, to represent times of the day, breakfast food, a school building, toiletries, a bath. They can stick these on whichever sheet is used.

You might also want to bring emojis or feeling faces, which again are easily made or downloaded, so the child can indicate non-verbally how they feel about certain tasks or times of the day.

When working with young carers you will need to measure the extent of the caregiving tasks and the positive and negative outcomes associated with these additional responsibilities. Joseph, Becker and Becker (2009) have developed assessment tools for this, which include additional resources to inform both assessment of need and support for young people.

Other practitioners

Your assessment will of course include consultation with other practitioners about their perception and observations of the family. Note these and align the information to what you have learnt from the various family members.



Analysis

When you have completed this activity reflect on what you have heard and think about the following:

- Can you identify what is missing in the care of the child?
- How many dimensions of the child's needs are being met or are at risk?
- What appears to be the impact of this on the child's development, presentation or wellbeing?
- What are your thoughts about the likelihood that improvements can be made in the child's timeframe?
- Do any changes need to be made and how significant are they?
- How can you verify any information?

Feedback to the parents

Collate the views of each child or young person and set them out on the **Feedback to Parent Carers sheet** alongside the perceptions of the parent carer(s).

Use this to feedback what you have heard with the parent carers. Ask them about any differences in perception between themselves and what the children and young people have talked about or drawn.

Identify positives or strengths as well as highlighting areas of concern or risk. Talk about what needs to be different and work with the family around deciding how to achieve this – by developing an agreed plan.

SUMMARY OF RESOURCES TO BE INCLUDED

- 2 x timeline documents
- Picture cards – to be printed, laminated and cut into cards
- Childs views/ record sheet
- Young person's record sheet
- Parent's carer perceptions record sheet
- Feedback to parent/ carers



Things to think about

1. **Venue and space** – you do not need a lot of space however the children or family that you are working with need to feel comfortable and have a sense of privacy
2. **Time** – you need to allow enough time to complete the exercise and to deal with any issues that may emerge. A child may complete the exercise very quickly and may not seem to want to discuss anything in detail. Let their parent/carer or teacher know that they have completed the exercise in case issues arise at a later point
3. **Resources** - make sure that you have a pack of resources available including paper, pens, copies of worksheets, arts and craft materials and small toys etc.
4. **Comfort** - think about drink, food, toilets and anything else a person might need to keep them feeling relaxed and safe. Interruptions such as telephones or people coming in and out, or loud noises that make it hard to concentrate should be avoided.
5. **Clear brief** - ensure that all people participating in the activity understand the process, what they will be expected to think and communicate about, and for what purpose the information will be used.
6. **Confidentiality** - It is important that the participant is aware of any issues of confidentiality. Things to consider include; what happens to any information that is shared in the course of the exercise? Is it discussed outside the room? If so by whom and for what reason? It is important that the participant is made aware of this.
7. **Ownership** – It is important to talk about what will happen with the sheets/paper at the end of the activity. Are you going to make copies or use the information for assessment purposes? The person you are working with needs to know this so that they can make a choice about what to share.

Purpose of the Practitioner's Tool Kit

The Practitioner's Tool Kit is a resource of tools which can be used by practitioners working with children and families. The tools support practitioners in their day to day work and can be used to support work already being done by them to identify and understand what is going on within a family.

It should be noted:

- This is not an exhaustive list of Tools.
- Not all Tools are appropriate for all families, individuals or situations.
- Practitioners should use the Tools which best support them and the family in appropriately identifying, assessing and responding to their needs.
- Practitioners can and should be creative about how they use or adapt these Tools to make them appropriate to the individual, circumstance or situation.

If whilst working with children, young people and families practitioners are concerned about a child or young person being at serious risk of harm they should, following their own agency procedures:

- Discuss their concerns in the first instance with their **Safeguarding Lead** or line manager if they are unsure if they are suffering significant harm
- Inform the parents and / or gain their consent to make this contact unless doing so would put the child at risk
- Gather initial information using the [Contact Form](#) as guidance which is available from the LSCP website www.leedsscp.org.uk/Concerned-about-a-child
- **Call the Duty & Advice Team**
- If you believe a child is in **immediate danger** and at risk of harm call the police on 999.

If the child or young person is not at risk of being significantly harmed practitioners should consider an [Early Help](#) response.