

What is neglect?

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, 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); or*
- *ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.*

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.'

(Working Together 2018)

Neglect usually happens over a period of time although sometimes it is a one-off event. There are different types of neglect: physical, medical, emotional and educational. A child who is neglected will often suffer from other abuse as well, both inside and outside of the home. It is the cumulative effect of neglect which has the most impact.

The effects of neglect:

Neglect can lead to poor health, education and social outcomes, and is potentially fatal. Children's abilities to attend and achieve at school is reduced. Their emotional health and well-being is often compromised and this may impact on their success in adulthood, their ability to form good relationships and to parent in the future. Research tells us that children neglected in very early childhood can have the biology of their brain development affected. This results in difficulty regulating emotions, reduction of 'cause & effect' thinking, difficulty in recognising emotions in others or an ability to articulate their own emotions, and after 2 years of age these deficits may be difficult to overcome. Children of any age can be affected and in adolescence the brain is growing rapidly again so there is a case for continuing to intervene in neglect cases in the teenage years.

A key message is that neglect is preventable and can be tackled if agencies work together to develop the range of responses required for intervening at a number of levels.

What can professionals and others do?

Be aware of the warning signs and symptoms of child neglect which vary from child to child. By understanding these indicators, problems can be addressed as early as possible and the right support and services for the child and their family provided. The child:

- may seem like they haven't washed, are dirty/smelly, their clothes seem dirty
- may be hungry or asking for other people's food
- may often come to school with no lunch money or packed lunch
- may often not turn up for school, or they arrive late
- may not seem to have many friends
- may get sent to school even when they are really unwell
- may have an unusual relationship with a parent e.g. parents show a lack of compassion, or the child may seem anxious not to upset the parent and even appear to be afraid of them
- may not be growing and developing as they should

- may appear to be nervous, unusually fussy or very withdrawn. Some children may also copy or act out what they have experienced at home, such as violence or sexual activity.
- their parents don't seem to know where they are or what they are doing

Whilst neglect is usually an act of omission, **adolescent neglect** can be a deliberate act where young people may be abandoned by parents or forced to leave home. Neglect can include parents not being aware of their child's activities outside the home; not making sure they get health care when they need it; not taking an interest in their education; or failing to provide emotional support with problems or offering encouragement.

Where you become aware of neglect then ensure that you act on these concerns:

- Gather as much information as you can about what it is like to be that child day to day.
- Get advice about a Family Early Help Assessment from the Local Area Team.
- Seek Advice from Children's Social Care.

You can use the [Neglect Screening Tool and the Threshold Guidance](#) to assist with your decision making and your evidence.

The Local Area Team and Children's Social Care can both be contacted on **01904 55 1900**. They may decide to support by carrying out a *Graded Care Profile* (assessment of neglect.)

Where can you find out more about neglect?

- The CYSCP Multi-agency Neglect Strategy <http://www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk/neglect.htm>
- The CYSCP Neglect webpage <http://www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk/neglect.htm>
- The City of York Neglect Storyboard <http://www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk/about-the-cyscb.htm>
- DfE sponsored research <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/indicators-of-neglect-missed-opportunities>
- An Action for Children briefing note on child neglect <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/resources-and-publications/policy-responses/be-professionally-curious/>
- Troubled Teens: a study of the links between parenting and adolescent neglect <https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/resources-and-publications/troubled-teens-a-study-of-the-links-between-parenting-and>
- An NSPCC report on how we can act now to stop child neglect <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2015/thriving-communities-framework-neglect/>
- Action for Children report on what makes services accessible for families <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/resources-and-publications/research/preventing-child-neglect-in-the-uk-what-makes-services-accessible-to-children-and-families/>
- Ofsted report on professional responses to neglect <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/professional-responses-to-neglect-in-the-childs-time>

Learning and development:

CYSCP provides a number of local opportunities for learning about neglect. Check for the latest courses here: <http://www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk/learning-and-development.htm>