


# Multi Agency Neglect Screening Tool: Guidance for Practitioners

**What is neglect:** At its most basic neglect is an absence of appropriate care, frequently over a long period, in which risks and harm build up over time. It is important to remember that appropriate care will look different for children depending on factors such as their age, stage of developmental and health needs. Therefore, checklists alone are not enough, it requires professional curiosity, communication and understanding of context. Identifying neglect requires professional judgement and discussion with families, colleagues, partners and crucially listening to the voice of the child. It is advised, where possible, this tool is completed collaboratively with the child, family and other professionals.

**Purpose of this Tool:** This screening tool supports professionals in the identification of neglect, helping consolidate thinking, inform next steps and support including early help and referrals to children's social care where appropriate. This tool must be used sensitively and should not stigmatize families. Some of the indicators listed may evidence other concerns rather than neglect, therefore professional judgement is required. Where concerns are identified professionals must consider how these impact the child. This tool is not intended to be a checklist, but rather a framework to support professionals in considering the needs of a child or young person, enabling them to get the right support at the right time.

**Use with Other Assessments/Tools:** It is not intended to replace other assessments or referrals. It should inform and support other assessments, including those carried out by health, education, early help and social care. It can also be used with the Multi-Agency Home Environment Assessment Tool (HEAT).

A colorful, stylized illustration of a Newcastle city scene. In the background, there's a large yellow castle (Newcastle Castle) and a green bridge (Tyne Bridge). In the foreground, there's a blue football pitch with several players in action. A pink sign with the word 'NEWCASTLE' is visible. To the left, there's a tall pink tower (St. Nicholas' Church). The overall style is cartoonish and vibrant.

**This tool does not replace the requirement for an immediate referral to Children's Social Care if safeguarding issues are identified**

**Please refer to the Multi-Agency Threshold Document:**

**<https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms1/media/13297/18-multi-agency-thresholds-guidance-newcastle-2023.pdf>**

**This can help support professionals to identify when a child may need additional support to achieve their full potential. It introduces a Continuum of Help and Support Framework, provides information on the levels of need and gives indicators of when a child or young person may need additional support.**

Listening to the voice of the child is crucial. In cases of non-verbal children think about how else they may communicate their needs. Are parents able to respond to the non-verbal communication of their child or is this not understood. Does this result in the needs of the child not being met. For example, when a baby cries a parent may think they are hungry all of the time or that the baby does not like them. Do they understand and respond to non-verbal cues?

From what you know is the child at risk of significant harm? If so, please refer to Children's Social Care (weblink below)

Is the impact of neglect likely to impact development? If so, is a referral to Children's Social Care required? Please use the Thresholds Document to support your decision (see weblink above)

Is there an Early Help Assessment and Plan in place? If there is, has it tried to address these concerns? Is a referral to Children's Social Care required or can these concerns continue to be addressed via the Early Help Plan? If there is not an Early Help Assessment and Plan, could this address the identified concerns? Please use the Thresholds Document to support your decision (see weblink above)

**Where there is an immediate need to protect a child because they are being harmed or are likely to suffer significant harm, contact the Police 999 or Children's Social Care, Initial Response Service. Use this link to make a referral to Children's Social Care: <https://www.newcastlesafeguarding.org.uk/report-a-concern/>**

**If concerns are identified in relation to home conditions, for example: Home conditions are not safe for the child; there is a lack of appropriate food, clothing or furnishings; or hygiene conditions in the home pose a risk to children, then please complete the Home Environments Assessment Tool.**

### **Further Resources**

**The NSPCC have a useful section on their website on neglect:**  
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/neglect/>

**The NSCPCC also have produced this video on why neglect can happen and how to support families:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMbHgHtje-w>

**The NSPCC have published Neglect: Learning from Case Reviews:**  
<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/learning-from-case-reviews/neglect/>