

Communication – Context - Curiosity

Neglect consistently represents half of all cases of child abuse in the England, and accounts for a significant number of the Child-in-Need and Child Protection Plans in Newcastle: yet it remains complex and difficult to identify. There are no absolute criteria regarding what constitutes neglect. Identifying neglect often requires evidence over a period of time or from a range of sources (though neglect can be a one-off event). Professionals should aim to describe the impact of potential neglect on a child, referencing their individual needs and contexts. For example, where neglect is a factor in a child failing to thrive. This requires professional expertise, sensitivity and discussions with supervisors and safeguarding leads.

What is Neglect: At its most basic neglect is an absence of appropriate care, frequently over a long period, in which risk and harm build up over time. It is important to remember that appropriate care will look different for children depending on factors such as age or developmental and health needs. Whilst there are many potential indicators of neglect, identification often requires professional **curiosity, communication** and understanding of **context**. Identifying neglect requires professional judgement and discussion with colleagues and partners.

Types of Neglect: Neglect can be categorised into many sub-types, including: Physical; Supervisory; Emotional; Educational; Nutritional; Medical (including not bringing children to appointments); and Societal. These forms of neglect can occur in isolation but may also occur simultaneously with other types of neglect.

Neglect can include (but is not limited to)...

- ☐ Not providing for a child's basic needs
- ☐ Not providing appropriate supervision for a child
- ☐ Not addressing health needs (not bringing children to appointments)
- ☐ Poor school attendance
- ☐ High levels of criticism/low levels of warmth
- ☐ Lack of Stimulation
- ☐ Declining help and support
- ☐ Leaving child alone when not safe to do so
- ☐ Not providing the support for children to thrive.

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“Neglect can take many forms. It could be a parent allowing their child to suffer serious harm on a one-off occasion or failing to care for them over a long period. It can be emotional as well as physical with children not receiving basic daily care, emotional warmth, stimulation or guidance and boundaries.”

Impact

The impact of these forms of neglect is likely to be different for different children depending on the severity and duration of the abuse, as well as other factors such as the presence of strengths and protective factors, the age and needs of the child. Neglect is extremely damaging to children in the short and long term. The experience of neglect affects physical, cognitive and emotional development; friendships, behaviour and opportunities. Neglected children may fail to thrive or meet developmental milestones. Of all forms of maltreatment, neglect leads to some of the most profound negative and long-term effects on brain and other physical development, behaviour, educational achievement and emotional wellbeing

Identification

Neglect can be difficult to identify. It can be hidden, thresholds can be unclear, and there can be differing personal and professional understandings of what constitutes neglect. Identifying neglect often involves evidencing its occurrence over time and demonstrating the impact. This can be supported by good record keeping, chronologies and sharing information. Neglect often occurs alongside other family problems including mental health issues, substance misuse or living with domestic violence.

More Information

For more information the NSPCC have produced a webpage on [Neglect](#) and the online document [Protecting Children from Neglect](#) as well as two useful [podcasts on Neglect](#).