

01 Background



Neglect is a large issue in the North East, both from the number of children who are subject to child protection plans for neglect, and involvement of neglect in serious case reviews. The definition of neglect is tricky, as it is not as objective as definitions of other types of abuse, and thus professionals have to rely in part on their own standards. Adults tend to see neglect as a physical care issue (a bit like the NSPCC adverts), which leads professionals to intervene with the physical environment in cases of neglect. Children on the other hand tend to see neglect in terms of emotional issues ('love is a doing word') and parents not caring enough to bother with them. This means that adults and children will speak about neglect very differently

Why it matters 02



Neglect has lifelong consequences for children. Obviously, it can be fatal, and affects the global development of children.

Neglect also affects longer term welfare, with negative consequences for physical and mental health over the lifetime. Neglect can also lead to difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships, lower educational achievements, and increased risk of substance misuse. The impact of neglect depends on the type, severity and frequency of neglect as well as resilience and protective factors for the particular child.

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To watch a video about the impact of neglect please click here

Questions to consider

- What might you observe in a child who was being neglected?
- What might a child who was being neglected tell you?
- What might you observe in parents who were neglecting their children? What might they say? What might they do?
- Can you think of one way you can listen to children more?
- What do you do well regarding neglect in your team/service?
- Where might you improve?

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Information

Neglect is not a one-off, dramatic event, but rather an accumulation of issues over time. It can happen to children of all ages, including teenagers.

The Definition of 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

Neglect

unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs. (Working Together 2013:86)

Causes of neglect

The causes of neglect are generally compromised parenting capacity, and it is telling that in many cases, the cause is recorded as either, poor parental mental health (54%), domestic abuse (52%), substance misuse (49%) or alcohol misuse (38%). This suggests that the issue is unlikely to be a 'quick fix'.

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What to do

Take neglect seriously! Realise that adults (parents and professionals) speak of neglect differently from children, and be prepared to listen out for children's stories. Listen to children. And ensure that you know the child's story, for example

by ensuring that you know what 'a day in the life of' is like for this child. Look out for low level concerns which may be warning signs for later neglect Intervene earlier to assist families before the crisis stage has been reached.

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