

Safeguarding Children from Neglect

A Guide for Professionals



NORTHUMBERLAND SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD
Keeping Children Safe Together

Why do we need to prevent Neglect?

Neglect remains the most common form of child abuse across the UK and is usually the most common cause for a child being the subject of a Child Protection Plan. It is well documented that neglect can cause significant distress to children and young people and can lead to both poor short and long term outcomes.



1 in 10 children in the UK have experienced Neglect (NSPCC 2016)

29 % of calls to Childline are about Neglect

Neglect is a factor in **60%** of Serious Case Reviews (NSPCC 2015)

What is Neglect?

In terms of safeguarding and child protection the official description is set out in the government's statutory guidance Working Together 2015 as

"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".

Identifying Neglect

There are a number of factors which can adversely affect the parent's ability to meet the needs of their child. Although these factors may be present it should not be assumed that the child is being neglected but they should at least act as a signal to the professional to explore with the parent and child the impact of their situation or behaviour on the child.

Children with disabilities

There is a potential for disabled children to be neglected, given the reliance some children have on their parents to meet their care needs. Disabled children may also be at increased risk due to communication difficulties, sympathy for carers affecting professional judgement and perceptions that the needs of a disabled child should be viewed differently from other children.

How children and parents seek help

Children are more likely to speak to adults in whom they have confidence and who care about them. The importance of establishing a strong, respectful and approachable relationship with the child is of paramount significance

Professionals need to be proactive in seeking support for families who are struggling and not to shy away from engaging such families in constructive dialogue about ways in which help can be provided. Equally important is the role that fathers play in caring for their children.

Parental Consent

The clear expectation is that all professionals will discuss their concerns openly and honestly with the Child, where appropriate, and their family.

Where a practitioner is requesting support of services on behalf of a child or family, they require consent beforehand – this is regardless of whether they are seeking support from Early Help or from Children's Social Care for Child in Need services.

Where a referral relates to immediate safeguarding concerns, and professionals are concerned that seeking consent may place the child at risk of significant harm, consent is not required and contact should be made with Children's Social Care as soon as possible. The reason for not informing the parents or carers of the referral should be clearly recorded by the professional.

Should the child or family decline the offer of an assessment, the professional who identified the concerns should discuss the case with the Early Help Team or their Safeguarding Lead to determine if the circumstances warrant a referral to Children's Social Care.

For further guidance please refer to the Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board's Threshold Document. http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Child-Families/Safeguarding/Multi-agency-thresholds-document_1.pdf

Tackling Neglect

Tackling neglect at an early stage will make a difference and can help prevent the serious long term consequences of neglect which includes;

- Poor growth and physical development / delayed learning
- Poor attachment
- Poor language development
- Untreated dental decay
- Poor ability to play, socialise and learn
- Behavioural problems in later childhood
- Adolescent violence and anti-social behaviour
- Increased likelihood of suicidal thoughts and attempts in adolescence
- Mental health problems in adulthood
- Difficulties parenting their own children
- Severe neglect can result in the death (including as a result of suicide) of a child or young person

Keeping Children Safe from Neglect

It can be difficult to know when to take action to protect a child from neglect.

One off signs may not mean that a child is being neglected. Knowing when a child or family need help requires someone to recognise that there are ongoing or persistent patterns of neglect.

So it's important for concerns to be reported and recorded. This helps social workers and other professionals build up a picture of a child's life over time.

For more information on the referral process, please see
<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Safeguarding/What-can-I-do-if-I-suspect-a-child-or-young-person.aspx#worriedaboutachild-reportyourconcerns>

If you think a child is at risk of harm, contact

Children Social Care,

First Contact

01670 536400

Out of Hours (Emergency Duty Team) 0345 6005252

Northumbria Police
NSPCC

101 or in emergencies 999
0800 800 5000

For further information regarding how to assess neglect, your agencies' responsibilities and neglect training please see visit

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Safeguarding.aspx>



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County Hall Morpeth Northumberland

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