



Neglect

Northumberland Safeguarding
Children Board

Definition of Neglect

The **persistent** failure to meet a child's basic physical &/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development

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

Definition of Neglect cont.

Failure to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger

Failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers, or the failure to 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 To Safeguard Children 2015)

A Pattern, not an Event

Chronic Neglect:

“The breakdown or absence of a relationship of care”

Not usually a specific event, or a series of events, but the daily atmosphere in which neglected children have to live; “the very air that they breathe”.

Daniel and Taylor 2005

Spectrum of Neglect

- Medical neglect
- Nutritional neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Educational neglect
- Physical neglect
- Lack of supervision and guidance
- Environmental neglect

(Horwath 2007)

Why Does Neglect Happen?

Causal factors include:

- Carer replicating their experience of being parented
- Domestic abuse
- Adult mental health issues
- Substance misuse or other addictions
- Carers with learning difficulties
- Life events which overwhelm carers (eg bereavement, financial difficulties, separation)

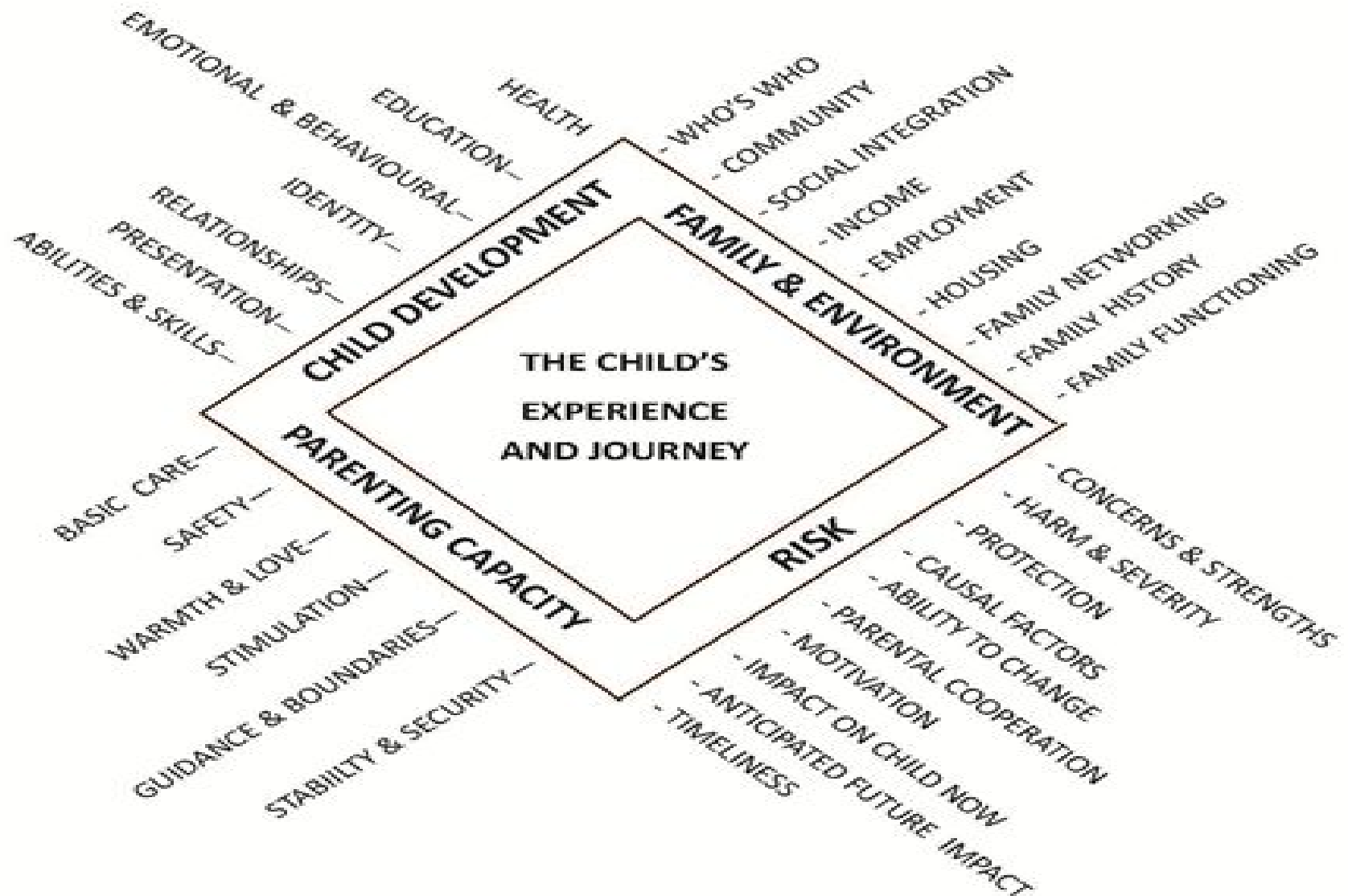
Possible Signs of Neglect

- Constant hunger, scavenging for food or emaciation
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
- Untreated medical problems or frequent A & E visits
- '*Was not brought*' to health appointments
- Low self-esteem
- Developmental delay and failure to thrive
- Poor social relationships
- Compulsive stealing
- Scavenging for food or clothes
- Poor dental care / tooth decay

Neglect – Adult Behaviours

- Low warmth high criticism – the most damaging environments for children
- Failure to meet child's basic needs
- Leaving alone/with inappropriate carers
- Refusing/failing to give love
- Failure to meet medical needs/access treatment
- Failure to attend routine medical appointments
- Failure to ensure school/nursery attendance

Children and Families Assessment Framework



Reflective Questions

Am I...

- Over-sympathising with the carer's life experiences or being over-supportive of their needs?
- Meeting my own needs by being a nurturer to the carer rather than focusing on the child?
- Playing down concerns with the carer because I feel uncomfortable saying difficult things to them?
- Trying to avoid damaging my relationship with the family?
- Being too trusting of carers – do I have evidence for the progress they self-report?
- Able to understand what life is like for this child?

Lessons from Serious Case Reviews

- Timeliness of pre-birth assessments
- Particular vulnerability of:
 - babies
 - teenagers
 - the youngest child
- Invisibility of men
- Co-morbidity of parental substance use, mental health issues and domestic abuse
- Chaotic families often generate chaotic professional response
- Success is not just getting through the door!

What Works with Neglect - Assessment

- Be clear, honest and direct and acknowledge the involuntary nature of the relationship
- Clarify roles and expectations, including what is required of the client
- Explain consequences of non-compliance and the advantages of compliance
- Understand how the client sees the problem as well as how we see it
- Understand what the client wants, as well as what we want
- Recognising the role of men

What Works with Neglect - Intervention

- Need to address causes, not just symptoms
- Long term intervention – no quick fixes
- Multi-faceted - range of approaches and services
- Tapping the potential of family members, friends and wider community
- Bringing about 'change' in parent-child relationships
- Actively developing resilience in children
 - Support
 - Coping Strategies
 - Achievement

(Research in Practice)

What keeps children safe from neglect?

- Robust assessments – including Early Help
- Membership at Team Around Family meetings and core groups
- Genuine joint working
- Strong Child Protection Plan or Child in Need Plan
- Child Protection Review timescales met
- Real engagement with families
- An 'open, questioning mindset and dogged professional challenge ... both within and between agencies' – use of 'respectful uncertainty' Brandon et al 2010

Keep the Child in Focus

