

1 minute guide: Neglect

What does the EYFS say about neglect?

Providers must train all staff to understand their safeguarding policy and procedures, and ensure that all staff have up to date knowledge of safeguarding issues. Training made available by the provider must enable staff to identify signs of possible abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity, and to respond in a timely and appropriate way.

What is Neglect?

Neglect is defined in the Statutory Guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 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.

Types of neglect

Neglect can be a lot of different things, which can make it hard to spot. But broadly speaking, there are 4 types of neglect.

Physical neglect - A child's basic needs, such as food, clothing or shelter, are not met or they aren't properly supervised or kept safe.

Educational neglect - A parent doesn't ensure their child is given an education.

Emotional neglect - A child doesn't get the nurture and stimulation they need. This could be through ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them.

Medical neglect - A child isn't given proper health care. This includes dental care and refusing or ignoring medical recommendations.

Signs of neglect

Neglect can be really difficult to identify and differs from other forms of abuse in that there is rarely a single incident or crisis that draws attention to the family. Having one of the signs doesn't necessarily mean a child is being neglected. But if you notice multiple signs that last for a while, they might show there's a serious problem.

Children and young people who are neglected may have:

- **poor appearance and hygiene** which may include the child being smelly or dirty, being hungry or not given money for food, having unwashed clothes, having the wrong clothing, such as no warm clothes in winter, having frequent and untreated nappy rash in infants.
- **health and development problems** which may include anaemia, body issues, such as poor muscle tone or prominent joints, medical or dental issues, missed medical appointments, such as for vaccinations, not given the correct medicines, poor language or social skills, regular illness or infections, repeated accidental injuries, often caused by lack of supervision, skin issues, such as sores, rashes, flea bites, scabies or ringworm, thin or swollen tummy, tiredness, untreated injuries, weight or growth issues.
- **housing and family issues** which may include living in an unsuitable home environment, such as having no heating, being left alone for a long time, taking on the role of carer for other family members.

- **change in behaviour** which may include becoming clingy, becoming aggressive, being withdrawn, depressed or anxious, changes in eating habits, displaying obsessive behaviour, finding it hard to concentrate or take part in activities, missing school, showing signs of self-harm using drugs or alcohol.

What is the impact of Neglect on children?

Children can experience neglect at any age – from birth to adolescence. Neglect can cause a range of short- and long-term effects which may vary depending on the age of the child affected.

Brain development

The impact of neglect during the first two years of a child's life can have profound and lasting effects on the development of the brain, leading to later problems with self-esteem, emotional regulation, and relationships. If a baby is malnourished, neural cells can become weak or damaged and this can cause lowered brain function. If a child has little interaction with their caregiver, it can change how emotional and verbal pathways develop and impact their ability to learn. This may have consequences for brain functioning in later life.

Physical development

Parents and carers need to help young children to develop gross motor skills. If they are being neglected, or if parents don't know how to stimulate their child, this process may not happen effectively, and the child's development may be delayed

Physical health

If a child isn't given enough food, they will immediately experience hunger and discomfort and may have trouble concentrating. But longer-term malnourishment will also affect their physical health and development.

Having an unhealthy diet can also lead to obesity-related health problems.

Not receiving appropriate medical care can result in poor health, dental decay and in some circumstances, death.

Mental health

Children who have experienced neglect are more likely to experience mental health problems, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), dissociative disorders, memory impairments, panic disorder, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

Relationships and attachment

Children who don't get the love and care they need may develop problems with attachment – they may struggle to form a strong relationship or bond with their caregiver. This can lead to a child becoming isolated and affect their ability to maintain healthy relationships with others later in life (including their own children).

Risk-taking behaviour

Young people who have experienced neglect may take more risks, such as: running away from home, breaking the law, abusing drugs or alcohol, becoming involved in unhealthy and/or abusive relationships.

Safety

If children and young people aren't being supervised appropriately by their parents and carers they may have accidents which can cause injury, illness, disfigurement, disability or even death

What action should I take?

In supporting a family in which neglect is an issue, the greatest of care must be taken to resist the pressure to focus on the needs of the parents/carers, although this is important intervention should concentrate on ensuring that the child's needs are being met. This may require action to ensure that the parents/carers have access to specialist (and if necessary independent) advice and assistance, including assistance in communicating with professionals.

If you believe that a child's needs are not being met, intervention should generally be the provision of Early Help services such as information, training and support services.

If there is no progress, and the assessment by professionals is that progress is unlikely without more proactive intervention a referral to MASH should be considered.

Referral contact details

Urgent safeguarding concerns call the Duty team, on 01302 737 777.

Where you believe there is immediate risk of significant harm the police should be contacted on 999.

Report a concern - [Report a Concern | Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership \(dscp.org.uk\)](https://dscp.org.uk)

Training

Refresher in Safeguarding

Basic Awareness

Neglect within Early Help

WRAP

Signs of Safety

LADO

Early Years Child Protection Conference Training

Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) is an assessment tool that helps practitioners take a strengths-based approach to measuring the quality of care a child is receiving and supports them to identify neglect

If you are interested in attending this training, sessions are available to book on Buy Doncaster

[Training & Events | Buy Doncaster](#)

Links to useful information

[Neglect is also Child Abuse: Know All About It | NSPCC](#)

[Neglect | Childline](#)

[Neglect | Doncaster Safeguarding Children Partnership \(dscp.org.uk\)](https://dscp.org.uk)