

# 7 Minute Briefing

## 1 What is neglect?

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.

Persistent means there is a pattern which may be continuous or intermittent which has caused, or is likely to cause significant harm. [national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021-updated-2023.pdf](#)

There can also be single instances of neglectful behaviour that cause significant harm. Neglect can arise in the context of systemic stresses such as poverty, and is an indicator of both support and protection needs. Linking directly to articles 19, 24 and 27 of UNCRC

[The Convention on the Rights of the Child: The children's version | UNICEF](#)

## 2 Why does it matter?

Of all forms of significant harm, neglect leads to the most profound long-term effects on a child's physical development and emotional wellbeing.

Neglect is rarely life threatening but has the potential to compromise a child's development significantly, across multiple domains. Because neglect frequently coexists with other forms of maltreatment, it can be difficult to disentangle its unique consequences

## 7 Always Consider

Remember every call you attend has the potential for a child to be a risk of neglect, even when the incident is not related to child protection. If signs of child neglect are identified it is essential that you act immediately. It may be the one missing piece of the jigsaw to keep that child safe

# Neglect Police



## 3 Categories of neglect

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

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

Medical A child doesn't receive the health care they require in a timely fashion. Children not brought for appointments. This includes dental care and refusing or ignoring medical recommendations.

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

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

## 6 Police Response/Powers

1. Identify neglect concern. Don't be afraid to challenge, ask questions/gather information.
2. Record your observations on your hand held device. This may be required for evidence in proceedings.
3. Inform a Supervisor of your observations/concerns/submit a VPD.
4. If immediate risk identified use emergency Police powers.
5. Consider legislation S12 CYP.

## 5 When Does It Happen?

Neglect happens when parents or carers can't or won't meet a child's needs, this can be due to various factors such as they don't have the skills or support, mental health, drug or alcohol problems.

Neglect is often dependent on seemingly small pieces of information which, when collated, present an overall picture of a child who is at risk of harm.

## 4 Responding to neglect

Using a trauma informed approach means recognising the profound impact neglect can have on a child's physical and emotional wellbeing.

Consider contributing factors such as poverty, parental health, substance use, domestic abuse, the child's age and developmental stage and disability.