

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 Responding to Neglect

Home visits in line with agency guidance, but particularly in homes where there are children or where children regularly visit. Look for the signs and identify indications of neglect early.

Keep written records of any concerns, pass concerns on immediately, refer, or link into existing multi agency plans Ensure robust ongoing assessment and be an active and participatory part of multi-agency planning and monitoring

Refer to GIRFEC National Practice Model www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org

Neglect Adult Services



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 Who Is At Risk?

Any child can suffer neglect, but some are more at risk than others, ie those born prematurely, with disability, with complex health needs, looked after children at home and children whose families are seeking asylum. When working with any adult with responsibility for a child, there is the potential for a risk of neglect. If signs of child neglect are identified it is essential that you act immediately, report your concerns, link in with Children's services and be part of a plan to address and protect. You may have that one missing piece of information that can help to keep that child safe.

5 What to look for

Failure to provide for basic needs: adequate food, shelter and clothing. Inadequate supervision and lack of concern. No access to medical/dental care: failure to protect from physical harm, frequent accidents. Unresponsive to their child's emotional needs, no nurturing.

4 How To Recognise Neglect

Be aware of parental willingness to discuss children and their needs.

Be vigilant to a lack of concern, dismissiveness or a resistance to home visits or questions around family life.

Be aware of any lack of parental supervision/guidance.

When visiting homes, look at the conditions around you, cleanliness, age appropriate toys/provisions etc.

Children may appear withdrawn, anxious, clingy, depressed, aggressive, may have problems sleeping, eating disorders, bed wetting.

Parents may report that child takes risks, blames child for behaviours without taking responsibility, may report obsessive behaviours, nightmares, drugs or alcohol use, thoughts of self-harm/suicide.

Increased parental drug or alcohol use or decreased mental wellbeing or health could all contribute to potential neglect.