

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-protectionscotland-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 Questions to Consider

What might you observe in a neglected child? What might a child who was being neglected tell you? What might you observe in parents who were neglecting their children? Can you think of one way you can listen to children more? What do you do well regarding neglect in your school? How can you improve?

Neglect Education



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

6 Responding to Neglect

GIRFEC National Practice Model
Vulnerability/Resilience Matrix
Chronology

Robust assessment and analysis
Multi-agency meeting and plan
Remember the 5 GIRFEC Questions
Maintain an open and inquisitive approach

Don't be afraid to change your mind
Consider current and past information, and underlying risk factors
Look beyond the presenting issue
Maintain a good chronology

If Child Protection concerns – follow child protection guidance

5 How To Recognise Neglect

Health and Developmental Problems – Children not attending appointments, dietary concerns (over eating/nutrient deficient diet), unexplained developmental delay, poor language or social skills, regular illness or infections, repeated accidental injuries, lack of correct medicines, unexplained changes of medication and administration patterns, untreated injuries and conditions, regression in communication /social skills not in line with pupil's developmental profile.

Housing and Family Issues – living in an unsuitable home environment, being left home alone, parents/carers failure to attend meetings. **Change in Behaviour** - Withdrawn, anxious, clingy, depressed, aggressive, problems sleeping, eating disorders, bed wetting, soils clothes, takes risks, misses school, obsessive behaviour, nightmares, drugs, alcohol, self-harm, thoughts about suicide, lack of focus on school work, unexplained changes in engagement / focus with learning, unexplained increase in emotional dysregulation.

4 How To Recognise Neglect

Neglect can take many forms and it needs to be understood in the context of the different developmental needs of children and young people. Staff should make a distinction between indicators of neglect which relates to the child's presentation, behaviour etc. the parental actions or /and the interaction between parent and child, and risk factors, which relate to environmental factors which more likely to increase the vulnerability of the child.

Poor Appearance and Hygiene - poor personal hygiene, lack of appropriate clothing/footwear, unwashed clothes, poor dental hygiene, frequent or untreated nappy rash, hunger.