

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

Identify neglect early and support children and their families

Assess the drivers of neglect to direct

focused and appropriate support

Seek open conversations about how the concerns affect all parties

Focus on strengths and recognise improvements

Keep written records of any concerns / evidence of neglect

Start a Chronology at the earliest opportunity

Ensure robust assessment and multi-agency planning

Refer to GIRFEC National Practice Model

Use the National Risk Framework

[National Risk Framework](#)

[Aberdeenshire GIRFEC Multi-Agency Operational Guidance](#)

[National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 - updated 2023](#)

Neglect

Children's Services Social Work



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 What are the signs of Neglect?

- Basic needs such as adequate food, shelter and clothing being consistently unmet
- Inadequate supervision and lack of concern creating vulnerability in comparison to peers
- Poor access to necessary medical/dental care having a negative impact upon health
- Failure to protect from physical harm
- Difficulties recognising or lack of responsiveness to their child's emotional needs.
- Poor presentation and poor /non-attendance at school

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4 How To Recognise Neglect

Neglect needs to be understood in the context of the different developmental needs of children and young people. We need to distinguish between indicators of neglect relating to the child's presentation, behaviour etc., the parental actions or /and the interaction between parent and child, and risk factors related to environmental factors (e.g. poverty, unemployment, poor housing etc) that increase vulnerability.