



Strategic Partnership Boards
SAFETY SAFEGUARDING WELLBEING



Bitesize video guide: Child neglect

My name is Rosemary Fagbemi and I'm a school nurse

Neglect is when a parent or the person who is responsible to care for a child cannot or will not meet the child's basic care needs. Neglect may also occur during pregnancy.

There are different types of neglect:

Physical neglect is when the child is not provided with adequate food or clothing. It also includes the lack of a clean and safe home environment, where the child is not adequately supervised or put in danger by being left at home alone.

Educational neglect is when a child does not attend school and there are no other arrangements to meet the child's educational needs.

Emotional neglect can mean the child is not loved, nurtured or stimulated to grow and develop. Other forms of emotional neglect may include ignoring, humiliating, intimidating, or isolating the child. Emotional neglect also covers role refusal where the adult expects the child to parent them in terms of the child meeting the adults' emotional needs rather than the other way round.

And *Medical neglect* is when the child's health needs are not met due to the parent or carer not following health advice or attending health appointments, refusing medication, or ignoring dietary needs and also their dental and optical needs.

Neglect affects children of all ages, from the very young through to teenagers. Some children are more at risk such as children in care, asylum-seeking children, and/or children who live with a parent who has substance abuse or mental health

problems or suffers domestic abuse in the home. Children living in poverty and unsuitable housing may also be at more risk of neglect. Some parents who were neglected themselves may be more likely to neglect their own children.

Neglect can lead to children experiencing both short and long term effects that last throughout their life.

In babies and young children, neglect can affect their brain, impacting on their growth and development. Neglected children may run away from home, break the law, misuse drugs or alcohol, and be vulnerable to exploitation. Children may experience mental health problems including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Neglect can also affect children's interpersonal behaviour and they may find it difficult to maintain healthy relationships with other people.

Professionals can find it difficult to identify and take action about neglect, this is because sometimes it's difficult for all professionals to agree what is 'adequate' to meet a child's needs as it remains a matter of subjective professional judgement.

Even when professionals have concerns, they may not feel comfortable reporting them especially if the concerns relate to the family's cleanliness and hygiene. Professionals who have known the family a long time may have become desensitised to the poor living conditions and in consequence lower their expectations of what is good enough for a child. Professionals may also miss a child being neglected due to their focus being on the adult or other issues affecting the family.

Sometimes parents can make improvements and the neglect is reduced but unfortunately the improvement is not sustained and the neglect returns. Professionals need to always take account of the whole history of neglect when undertaking a risk assessment.

However it is vitally important that all practitioners take responsibility to identify and recognise neglect, and where appropriate provide early help and intervention to complete an assessment to identify the needs of the family, and who is best placed to provide support, and arrange a Team Around The Family Meeting.

When undertaking any assessment or meeting with children and their family, professionals need to be alert to the signs of neglect and consider whether the child is in a neglectful environment and receiving neglectful parenting or care that is impacting on their behaviour and wellbeing.

Your three messages to take away are:

1. Neglect is just as harmful as other forms of abuse and can cause serious long term damage – even death. Sometimes parents make improvements, but these are not sustained, you should always look at the whole history of neglect when undertaking a risk assessment.
2. Early identification of neglect can enable a child and their family to receive the right support to meet the child's needs and if required, safeguarding actions can be taken to protect the child.
3. Look out for signs of neglect. Gather information from other agencies for the child and their family and consider how issues of neglect impact on them. Seek advice and consider which agency could work best with them and support them to make the changes. If appropriate raise safeguarding concerns and escalate to a child protection investigation by referring to the MASH.

Thanks for watching and goodbye