

Neglect

Out of the 4 categories of abuse and which are; neglect, emotional, physical and sexual abuse....neglect is the most common initial category of abuse for children who are likely to be supported by children services, statutory interventions and engagement.

Definitions of neglect:

Neglect is a pattern of failing to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter. It is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development.

Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse. It is important that practitioners remain alert and do not miss opportunities to take timely action. However, while you may be concerned about a child, neglect is not always straightforward to identify.

Neglect may occur if a parent becomes physically or mentally unable to care for a child. A parent may also have an addiction to alcohol or drugs, which could impair their ability to keep a child safe or resulting in them prioritising buying drugs, or alcohol, over food, clothing or warmth for the child. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal drug or alcohol abuse.

'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused – advice for practitioners'
- HM Government (2015)

Other definitions describe neglect as "the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs" (Department for Education, 2018; Department of Health, 2017; Scottish Government, 2014; All Wales, Child Protection Review Group, 2008).

Neglect can have serious and long-lasting impacts on a child's life, it can lead to serious harm and even death.

The four main types of neglect are:

- **physical neglect:** not meeting a child's basic needs, such as food, clothing or shelter; not supervising a child adequately or providing for their safety
- **educational neglect:** not making sure a child receives an education
- **emotional neglect:** not meeting a child's needs for nurture and stimulation, for example by ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them
- **medical neglect:** not providing appropriate health care (including dental care), refusing care or ignoring medical recommendations (Horwath, 2007).

Neglect can happen at any age, sometimes even before a child is born. If a mother has mental health problems or misuses substances during pregnancy, for example, she may neglect her own health and this can damage a baby's development in the womb (Haynes et al, 2015).

(Source NSPCC)

What might neglect look like for children in the early years?

- Failure by parents or carers to meet the basic essential needs e.g. adequate food, clothes, warmth, hygiene and medical care including poor oral hygiene
- A child with poor attachment and unresponsive towards adults
- Failure to thrive or typical developmental milestones are not met, including poor speech and language development
- A child with significant weight loss over short periods of time
- A child who thrives away from the home environment
- A child frequently absent from the setting with no apparent reason (for those over 5 non-school attendance)
- A child left with adults who are intoxicated or violent
- A child abandoned or left alone at home without adult supervision or with someone unable to adequately supervise them