

Background:

Neglect is the form of maltreatment most often recorded in official safeguarding data, regardless of the age of the children concerned, and is the most prevalent form of maltreatment young people experience according to research.

What to do:

Try to identify early and support children in their families.
Keep written logs and chronologies of events.
Use the Merton Evidence Based Screening Tool to evidence strengths and concerns.
Discuss and refer to Merton MASH on 0208 545 4226/7 or mash@merton.gov.uk

How to recognize it:

Neglect can be recognized by the physical presentation of the child or the home environment. It can be medical, nutritional, emotional, educational, supervisory, or caused by living in homes where there may be parental mental health, substance misuse problems, domestic violence or other stresses.
It needs to be understood in the context of the daily lived experiences of children. Neglect is a cumulative form of harm and needs to be understood in terms of the frequency of those experiences and ages of children

What is it?

While there is considerable consensus both nationally and internationally concerning what constitutes physical and sexual abuse, there is much less agreement about the definitions and thresholds for neglect. There is also some overlap between neglect and emotional abuse.
In this country it is defined as *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.*



How to recognize it:

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, behavior etc., the parental actions or /and the interaction between parent and child, and risk factors, which relate to environmental factors (e.g. poverty, unemployment, poor housing, etc.) more likely to increase the vulnerability of the child.

Why it matters

Neglect is considered to be at least as damaging, if not more so, than other forms of maltreatment because its impact is the most far-reaching and difficult to overcome. Neglect in the early years may be the most damaging from the point of view of long-term mental health or social functioning. It can be equally damaging in adolescence. Neglect can lead to significant problems – including with mental ill health, substance misuse, school (attendance, behavior and attainment), offending and early sexual activity – and can be the precursor of serious harm.

7 minutes briefing:

Neglect

Carla Thomas

Why it matters

Studies are increasingly identifying the importance of early life experiences to people's health throughout the life course. Individuals who have adverse childhood experiences (ACEs; during childhood or adolescence) tend to have more physical and mental health problems as adults than do those who do not have ACEs and ultimately greater premature mortality

Supporting material

- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/neglect/>
- <https://www.mertonscp.org.uk/documents/neglect/>