



Bristol Safeguarding  
Children Board

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## Neglect Summary document

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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to;

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs ([Working Together 2015](#)).

Neglect is the most [common](#) form of Child Abuse and it usually happens over a period of time but can be a single event. There are different types of Neglect:

**Medical neglect** - the refusal or failure to provide appropriate health care for a child, placing the child at risk of physical or developmental delay, placing the child at significant risk of harm.

**Nutritional neglect** - is usually associated with inadequate food for normal growth leading to 'failure to thrive' it could also be as a result from an unhealthy diet and lack of exercise which can lead to obesity, which increases the risks to health and adulthood.

**Emotional neglect** - this involves a carer being unresponsive to a child's basic emotional needs, including failing to interact or provide affection, and failing to develop a child's self-esteem and sense of identity (see further Information for leaflets for professionals).

**Educational neglect** - includes carers failing to comply with state requirements, but also include the broader aspects of education such as providing a stimulating environment; showing an interest in the child's education and supporting their learning including ensuring that any special educational needs are addressed and met.

**Physical neglect** - refers to the dirty state of the home, lack of hygiene, lack of heating, inadequate and/or broken furniture and bedding. It may include poor or inadequate

clothing, which may mark a child as different from his peers resulting in isolation or bullying. It also refers to a lack of safety in the home including exposure to substances.

**Failure to provide supervision and guidance** - refers to the carer failing to provide the level of guidance and supervision required that the child is physically safe and protected from harm. It may involve leaving a child to cope alone, abandoning them or leaving them within appropriate carers, or failing to provide appropriate boundaries about behaviours such as under-age sex or alcohol use. It can affect children of all ages.

## **The Impact of Neglect**

Neglect can have long lasting effects including poor mental health and trauma and can make a child more vulnerable to [other forms of abuse](#) and risks (Please refer to specific [BSCB Multi-Agency Guidance](#)).

Children who are neglected may have;

- Poor Appearance and Hygiene
- Health and Development Problems
- Housing and Family Issues

Children may display behaviour such as (list non exhaustive);

- Self Harm
- Drug or Alcohol misuse
- Be withdrawn
- Sleep problems
- Eating Disorder
- Absent from School
- Criminal activity
- Take Risks
- Aggressive Behaviour

Further guidance for professionals is available at the [South West Child Protection Procedures](#).

## **Further Information and Support**

A collaborative project by the NSPCC, Cardiff University and the Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) developed a series of leaflet to help professionals. These leaflets summarise what is currently known about the behaviour that can be observed in young children who have been emotionally abused or emotionally neglected. It also considers the interactions between these children and their parents.

Pre School - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/advice-and-info/core-info-emotional-neglect-abuse.pdf>

Ages 5 – 14 - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/advice-and-info/core-info-emotional-neglect-5-14.pdf>

Ages 13-18 - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/advice-and-info/core-info-neglect-emotional-abuse-teenagers-13-18.pdf>

[Research in Practice](#) has a wide range of resources including webinars for professionals that detail the impact of Neglect, its relationship to other forms of abuse and responding effectively to a child's needs.

[ChildLine](#) gives support to children both online and on the telephone for a wide range of issues including a Deafzone and SignVideo for Hearing Impaired Children. Tel 0800 1111.

[NSPCC](#) is a National Charity that has a helpline that provides help and support to parents, professionals and families that have any concerns about children. Helpline 0808 800 5000.

[Mapping System and Directory](#) for children, young people, parents and professionals of the support that is available locally and nationally.