

1 MINUTE GUIDE

Safeguarding Committee

neglect



Welcome to the first addition of the Safeguarding Committee's 1 Minute Guide.

The purpose and intention of these guides are to keep safeguarding at the top of our agenda and continually equip staff with up-to-date knowledge on a variety of safeguarding topics.

WHAT IS NEGLECT?

Neglect is defined in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2023 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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance use'. Nationally it is the most common form of maltreatment in England.

Neglect can be a challenge for professionals to identify as it can often be passive and not always by commission but by omission; however that does not mean that neglect should not be addressed and challenged.

NEGLECT MAY INVOLVE:

- **Physical neglect** – inappropriate clothing, food, cleanliness and/or living conditions (exclusion from home or abandonment).
- **Medical neglect** – the minimising or denial of a child's illness or health needs and/or a failure to seek appropriate medical attention or administer medicine and treatment.
- **Nutritional neglect*** – not providing adequate calories or nutritional intake for normal growth (failure to thrive). This in extreme cases could be in the form of malnutrition or cases of obesity.
- **Emotional neglect** – being unresponsive to a child's basic emotional needs. Failing to interact or provide positive affection, undermining a child's self-esteem and sense of identity.
- **Educational neglect** – failing to provide a stimulating environment or support a child in their school activities. Failing to respond to any special needs and failing to comply with state requirements about school attendance.
- **Lack of supervision and guidance** – failing to provide an adequate level of supervision and guidance to ensure a child's safety and protection from harm e.g. lack of a stair gate, medication not put out of a child's reach.

Most experts distinguish between emotional neglect and emotional abuse by intention: emotional abuse is intentionally inflicted, emotional neglect is an omission of care.

FURTHER READING -

[Daniel Pelka Serious Case Review Coventry LSCB](#)

[National Review: Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson](#)

Please refer to your Local Authority Safeguarding Partnership for specific resources, threshold tools and assessment to support the identification of and the support provided for cases of Neglect.

WHO DOES IT AFFECT?

Neglect can happen at any age, sometimes even before a child is born and can affect children of all ages. It tends to affect boys and girls equally. Often when a young person is experiencing neglect there may be barriers to them or their families engaging with interventions and support provided. Neglect can have short- and long-term effects on a child's development such as:

- Brain development
- Physical development
- Physical health
- Mental health
- Relationships and attachment

It may also lead them to take risk taking behaviour or ignore safety guidance.



HOW TO SPOT NEGLECT

Staff in care and education settings are likely to observe a range of signs that a child may be suffering neglect. These could include:

- Being frequently absent from school
- Inappropriate clothing (e.g. shoes too small, clothes are ill-fitted or unsuitable for the weather conditions)
- Clothes are consistently dirty or smelly
- Being hungry
- Hands are cold, red and swollen
- Unkempt appearance and poor hygiene; hair quality is poor or is messy, teeth are dirty, skin dirty
- Lacking necessary medical or dental care, including immunisations or glasses
- Missing medical appointments
- Health problems, including anaemia, body issues, poor muscle tone or prominent joints, regular illness of infections, repeated accidental injuries (often cause by lack of supervision), skin issues (e.g. sores, rashes, flea bites, scabies, ringworm), thin or swollen tummy, weight or growth issues, untreated injuries
- Being constantly underweight or considerably losing weight
- The parent or carer has failed to keep the child protected from physical harm or danger
- Begging or stealing things like money or food
- Living in an unsuitable environment (e.g. no heating, messy)
- Being left home alone for long periods of time
- Changes in behaviour, such as becoming clingy, aggressive, withdrawn, depressed or anxious, displaying obsessive behaviour
- Changes in eating habits

It is important to remember that schools' systems such as analysing attendance, seeking medical appointment evidence, parent evenings etc. all have a part to play in identifying those persistent or ongoing cases of neglect.

WHAT SHOULD STAFF DO?

Staff should be encouraged to recognise that their personal values and attitudes could be a barrier in identifying cases of neglect. Think about what you know about the child and what their life might be like. Talk to other professionals to see if they share your concerns. Record your concerns on **CPOMS** and report directly to a **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**.

If the support the school can offer is not achieving an acceptable standard of care for the child, consider what other agencies or services may be able to support the child (Multi-Agency Early Help). Use resources such as the Neglect Toolkit, Graded Care Profile alongside the Levels of Need (or your LA threshold tool) to support professional decisions.

However, if the risk escalates a **LADO Local Authority Designated Officer Referral** should be made, including a chronology of what has been tried and to what effect. The **LADO** referral will be made by our **DSL**. Staff should follow the Witham Prospect School's Safeguarding Policies and Procedures for escalating concerns and external processes.

HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM OTHER TYPES OF ABUSE?

Neglect differs from other forms of abuse in that there is rarely a single incident or crisis that draws attention to the family. It is repeated, persistent, neglectful behaviour that causes incremental damage over a period of time.