

Southampton City Council Practitioner Guidance Document- Educational Neglect (September 2019)

There is no statutory definition of educational neglect. A task and finish group has been established as a result of recommendations from a Serious Case Review (unpublished at time of document issue) and includes School Improvement Team, Education Welfare Service, Head of the Virtual School, Educational Psychology Service, Admissions Team, Manager for Inclusion, Legal Services, Early Years Advisory Teachers. The Local Safeguarding Childrens Board has had overview of the work.

Neglect is defined as, ***“The persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical, emotional, and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development”*** Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018).

The definition agreed for Southampton and included in the Safeguarding Partnership Neglect Strategy is:

“Neglect is the most common form of child abuse. In Southampton we recognise neglect as the ongoing failure to meet a child’s basic needs in order for them to thrive. Neglect means that a child may be left hungry or dirty without adequate clothing, shelter, supervision or medical care. A child may be put in danger or not protected from harm. Neglect also includes psychological and emotional harm; a child needs care and attention and opportunities to relax, play and learn”.

<http://southamptonscb.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Neglect-Strategy-2019-1.pdf>

Within this definition the Local Authority recognises that educational neglect exists and can be a factor within physical, emotional, sexual or criminal harm. It is a likely outcome of a range of contributing factors that could be attributable to parent(s)/carer(s), professionals or organisations. It could also be the continued persistent failure of a parent or young person, deemed old enough to determine their own actions, to manage their own travel to and from school and to attend school regularly.

In Southampton we recognise that educational neglect can be any one or more of the following:

Parental:

- Failure to identify provision for their child or adequately maintain schooling/education provision
- Failure to engage in most school/ Local Authority/ trust meetings - even where support is offered - that leads to a disengagement of a child in their schooling with a detrimental impact on their development
- Failure to engage as required with agencies beyond school, for example health services that leads to a delay/ deterioration in their child’s development, taking into account of a child’s needs
- Parental failure to provide substantiated reasons for absences from school
- At least one court intervention which fails to improve attendance
- Ineffective take up of support that may have been likely through identified need to improve the educational development of their child

Young person(s):

Consideration of educational neglect could be applied when a young person is old enough to determine their own actions and independently travel to and from school safely where:

- Full parental co-operation is clearly demonstrated and educational provision offered is appropriate for the young person's needs:
- Pupil engagement and attendance levels are identified as seriously impeding their development
- Action may have been taken previously against the parent for failing to secure regular attendance of the young person and the young person will have awareness of the impact of their disengagement

Professional(s):

- Where one or more professionals or organisation(s) have failed to report concerns that require additional intervention to avoid serious impairment of a child's development
- Where educational provision that is alternative to full-time education is not provided/is not in line with needs and is not monitored effectively or changed/adapted to reduce the serious impairment of a child's educational development, taking into account an individual child's needs and wishes
- Where transfer of records or known information that supports a child's developmental needs, including their social, emotional, mental health and well-being and learning needs are not shared with other professionals or transferred to new settings in a timely manner
- Where a child is 'off-rolled' from a school that does not follow correct process, or is off-rolled not in the best interests of the child but is in the interest of the school. Ofsted currently define 'off-rolling' as; *"The practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the pupil"*. It must be noted that there are circumstances where off-rolling is not unlawful – where it is in the best interests of the child and has followed due process.
- Where an agency has failed to take timely action to minimise the impact of known and recognised poor parental management of educational attendance or provision
- Where an agency has not put into place in a timely manner, or sufficiently taken into account advice from health professionals, to establish an Individual Health Care Plan to support individual health needs.

In Southampton

Abuse/neglect is a broad category for Child in Need cases therefore the majority of children will have this as an identified feature on their assessments.

40% of children on a Child Protection Plan have neglect as a key feature identified (May 2019).

Additionally, many of these pupils have been or are persistent absentees, and known to have a reduced/or had experienced a reduced timetable.

Advice for practitioners

The term “educational neglect” can be used to challenge colleagues and parents to consider if their actions could be viewed as neglectful i.e. likely to seriously impair the educational development of the child.

It may be helpful to use the neglect strategy and practitioners guide <http://southamptonlscb.co.uk/neglect/> when considering educational neglect.

- 1- Key questions: are the child’s educational development needs being met or are there aspects of the provision that are impacting negatively on the educational development of the child?
The child’s education is paramount and therefore needs should be considered equally alongside health and well-being or other factors, when determining what support a family requires and not after all other family needs are addressed.
- 2- Set appropriate, achievable steps within a clear timeframe in addressing the health, well-being and educational needs being discussed. Parents usually want the best for their child and so ensure they are supported to achieve this at the earliest possible opportunity with engagement through individual organisation teams and Early Help support. Where parents are not supporting the educational development of their child this should be clearly recorded and the necessary steps taken to minimise the impact of this.
- 3- Observe, engage and support the child – a range of professionals’ perspectives may be required. Ensure the child’s voice is heard and give time for this to happen in a meaningful way.
- 4- It is expected and reasonable to challenge behaviour with regard to a child’s educational needs that appears may be neglectful. Be sensitive in any challenge of parents or professionals and record reasons for challenge and any outcome. Escalate where a child’s basic needs are often not met, challenge parents where children present in a manner that is different to that which is expected for every child, on all occasions. Different parenting styles can affect what expectations are manageable and understood, these can also be cultural differences therefore be sensitive and knowledgeable, but do not fail to challenge. It is possible that there may be other aspects of neglect that may cross over with educational neglect therefore clear recording is essential.
- 5- Review a child in the context of their family and previous events or patterns. Record your thoughts and reasons for decisions, be professionally curious when safeguarding children and always consider their educational development in addition to other needs.
- 6- Discuss cases with another appropriate person, consider if others may hold different/ similar or the same concerns, build a picture of different professionals’ views. Be proactive and call a professionals’ meeting if you, as the professional, consider that the picture/understanding of the concerns is likely to be clearer as a result. Ensure there is a planned and cohesive approach to tackling neglectful adult behaviour and escalate to the appropriate managers/ supervisors to make them aware.

- 7- Consider if other aspects are present, such as but not limited to: exclusions (lawful or unlawful); Children Missing Education – what has been discovered or looked in to and what actions have been taken; whether there is a full-time offer of education; whether there is a reduced timetable that is reviewed regularly and amended to support education need; whether there is a provision relative to needs that may be short or long term for medical needs; whether parents are fully aware of their responsibilities if removing a child to be Electively Home Educated – how do they know?
- 8- Always ensure that on any change of schools – at normal transition points or in-year - that the records to facilitate the educational development of a child/young person are shared to ensure that the child will be supported appropriately from arrival. This should include any information that supports their attendance such as start of day arrangements that support arrival/settling in to school.
- 9- Ensure that where any change or reduction in an offer of full-time education is made that parents understand and are in agreement with this in the interests of their child. Check that Southampton City Council guidance for reduced timetables or flexi-school arrangements are followed and review is planned and regular.

Educational neglect may be more likely if any of the following factors are present:

Child Risk factors	Parental risk factors	Wider agency & professionals risk factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse childhood experiences (neglect/abuse) • Disability • Substance misuse • Learning difficulties • Family unit breakdown • Bereavement • Views not taken into account in decision making about education • Chronic ill-health • Poor mental health • Child subjected to exploitation (sexual or criminal) • Living in poverty • Going missing • Reduced or inappropriate educational or timetable provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous action regarding poor attendance at school • Poor parental mental and emotional well-being • Substance misuse • Domestic Abuse/violence • Learning difficulties • Lack of positive parenting in childhood • Adverse childhood experiences • Being obese or underweight • Poor parental engagement in education • Unable to provide/uninterested in development of child of any age • Disguised compliance/ non-compliance with agencies • Exploitation or criminality • Bereavement • Family breakdown • Ill health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Unemployment • Lack of positive personal networks • Lack of sharing of information between agencies regarding concerns • Ineffective monitoring and review of reduced timetables or alternative provision • Lack of triangulation or challenge regarding information provided by parent where it raises query/ may not be substantiated • Lack of substantiated / reasonable information for absence • Inconsistent or unsustainable responses to agency support • Lack of health information to support a suitable Individual health care plan that supports engagement in education

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child performing role of carer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not following health advice that enables engagement in education	
<p>Protective factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parental interest and action to support the educational development of their child• Full educational provision that meets needs or amendments that are effectively reviewed regularly• Positive and effective engagement with agencies to support the child, parent/ family (health, social care, early help, education)• Sustained improvements in attendance managed independently by pupil or parent• Effective agency communication and sharing of information to safeguard a child including for their attendance at school or educational provision		