



Spotlight on: Neglect



This Spotlight on Neglect provides an overview of the resources and local guidance available to practitioners in Southampton. The effects of neglect on children are significant, in their childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood. Sometimes the effects are fatal. Practitioners can wrestle with issues of what constitutes neglect and when to refer to MASH or escalate concerns. The resources and local guidance are there to support practitioners.

Please use this support and remember to always discuss any concerns you may have with your designated safeguarding lead, supervisor or manager.

Definition of Neglect:

[Working together to safeguard children, 2018](#)

defines neglect 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 abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

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

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

Research in Practice 2017 summarises neglect as:

‘a serious and pervasive form of maltreatment that occurs across childhood and adolescence with potential long-term consequences across the life span. Babies and young children are particularly vulnerable and dependent, which makes them especially fragile and places them at higher risk of abuse and neglect and adolescents have also been highlighted as particularly vulnerable. Neglect has also been found to be the most likely form of maltreatment to recur’.

Analysis of [serious case reviews](#) has evidenced that [neglect](#) can be fatal to a child. See [Neglect and serious case reviews](#).

Recognising Neglect. Some of the following signs may be indicators of neglect:

- Children who are living in a home that is indisputably dirty or unsafe;
- Children who are left hungry or dirty;
- Children who are left without adequate clothing, e.g. not having a winter coat;
- Children who are living in dangerous conditions, i.e. around drugs, alcohol or violence;
- Children who are often angry, aggressive or self-harm;
- Children who fail to receive basic health care; and
- Parents who fail to seek medical treatment when their children are ill or are injured.

Neglect and COVID 19 – National Lockdown

Isolation can place children at a greater risk of neglect. This is compounded by the increased economic challenges and poverty that families may be facing, and by the increased exposure of children to neglectful environments as they spend more time in the home. The contact that children have with some professionals who can identify the signs of neglect and take steps to intervene and report concerns will be more limited.

We encourage all practitioners to maintain their professional curiosity and keep a holistic view of the family and emerging risks.

What can you do to help?

Family-facing workers are the eyes and ears that may first pick up any signs neglect and other harm. Here is a checklist of things to do:

- Think about virtual relationship-based practice: how can you use technology to add value to your practice?
- Be proactive with children and families, speak with parents about your hypotheses about risk in a respectful way and include them in your planning to address this risk, where possible.
- Empower and enable families to safeguard children by sharing advice, support and information that they can use. For example, signposting to services and resources and checking back in to ensure they have been useful and had the desired outcome
- Use the [Practitioner Guide to Recognising the Severity of Neglect](#) and the [Southampton Continuum of Need](#) to identify and understand your concerns and know what to do about it.
- Understand when a referral to the [Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub](#) is needed to ensure the child is effectively safeguarded.

Missed Appointments/Was not brought

Non-attendance at or repeated cancellations of appointments and lack of access to the child on visits are indicators that should increase concern about the child's welfare. All health providers should have policies for the management of children not brought to health care appointments.

Further information can be found [here](#)

SSCP Practitioner Guide to Recognising the Severity of Neglect

The [Practitioners Guide](#) was published in 2019 and recognises that neglect is not an event but rather an absence of appropriate care given to a child, which can often be over a long period of time. The Guide includes indicators that support practitioners in identifying the severity of neglect a child is experiencing and what to do about this.

The Guide also shares some top tips when working with families where there are concerns about neglect. This is useful in focusing us on the cumulative impact on neglect especially when concerns fluctuate. There is also helpful information to consider how to understand the child's day to day lived experience firmly from the child's perspective. The Practitioners Guide to the Severity of Neglect aims to support practitioners (and their managers) in being able to state clearly:

- what the cause for concern is,
- why the current level of care is not sufficient,
- what harm is occurring and
- exactly what needs to change in terms of parenting/care giving.
- and specify realistic timelines for improvement and state clearly the consequences if improvements are not made.

SCC Educational Neglect

In Southampton we recognise neglect as the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs in order for them to thrive. This includes educational neglect which can be by parents, professionals, organisations and by the young person themselves, if they are deemed able to manage their own travel to and from school and to attend school regularly.

Southampton City Council, Education Services produced [Guidance on Educational Neglect](#). However, during the Covid-19 crisis schools are being directed to work differently by government, so this guidance must be used taking in to account the fact that provision may be different and changing. More so than ever, open discussion between colleagues will be important in establishing, for example offers made, take-up, and any reasons for non-attendance until situation changes.

Remember

Child Protection and safeguarding for children in need: Contact [MASH](#)

Early help and support for families (where a family needs support to stop anything from getting worse in the future and you feel the child is not at risk of harm at the moment): Contact [Early Help](#)

[Further resources, services and support](#), including health visiting, community health nurses and Sure Start Children's Centres – Information for family members and professionals

Further reading and resources:

[Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton Multi- Agency Safeguarding Procedures \(Neglect\)](#)

[Southampton Continuum of Need \(Threshold Guidance\)](#)

[Research in Practice – Frontline Briefing – Neglect in a context of poverty and austerity.](#)

[Growing Up Neglected, a multi agency response to older children](#)

[NSPCC](#)

[SSCP Training and webinars](#)



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