



Background

Neglect can be more difficult to define & identify than other types of abuse thus professionals must sometimes rely on their own standards & beliefs. Reviews & research have highlighted a range of causal factors including:

- Parents may lack the necessary skills and knowledge
- Lack of secure attachments, causing lack of care & empathy for the child
- Parents may have poor mental health or a learning disability
- Parents may be affected by substance misuse or domestic abuse
- The family may live in impoverished and isolated circumstances

Messages for Good Practice

- Hold regular reviews to ensure that the required changes are occurring in the family in a timely fashion
- Remember to record facts rather than subjective observations, e.g. record "The child's clothes smelled of urine". Do not record "The child was smelly".

Definition

Neglect is defined in [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) 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."

Messages for Good Practice

- Different causal factors require different and targeted responses to cases of neglect
- Practical resources are beneficial, but it is essential to review regularly whether they are improving the child's lived experience

Risks of Neglect

In the first 2 years of a child's life neglect can have profound effects on a child's development, leading to problems with self-esteem, emotional regulation and relationships. During the first 5 years of a child's life it is likely to damage all aspects of development and in later childhood it is also likely to lead to problems with aspects of adult life.

Protection & Action to be Taken

When supporting a family in which neglect is present, care must be taken to resist the pressure to focus on the needs of the parents/carers: intervention should concentrate on ensuring that the child's needs are being met. Low-level concerns may be a warning sign for later neglect. Early intervention can be important in assisting families and prevent significant harm to the child(ren)

Indicators of Neglect

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. It relates to the lack of a parents capacity to meet the physical & emotional needs of the child. There is no set pattern of signs that indicate neglect other than that the child's basic needs are not being adequately met. Remember; a child might not understand that they are being neglected.