

# What is Neglect?

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 as a result of maternal substance abuse. 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

## Things to look out for

Children becoming:  
Withdrawn, Suddenly behaving differently, Anxious, Clingy, Depressed, Aggressive, Problems sleeping, Eating disorders, Wets the bed, Soils clothes, Takes risks, Misses school, Changes in eating habits, Obsessive behaviour, Nightmares, Drugs, Alcohol, Self-harm, Thoughts about suicide (NSPCC 2018)

<https://tinyurl.com/zmjtzbe>

## Tools:

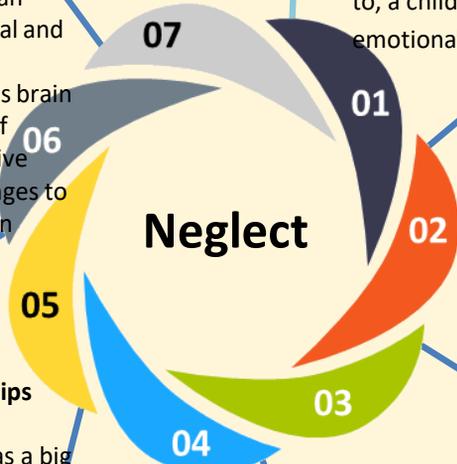
- Threshold document
- Home Environment Assessment Tool (HEAT)
- Cycle of Change
- Engagement Risk Assessment
- Risk and Resilience Matrix
- Neglect Toolkit

<http://www.durham-scp.org.uk/professionals/>

## What to do

If you are concerned that a child is being neglected consider making a referral to first contact and follow the multiagency safeguarding procedures

<https://tinyurl.com/ybm89dyb>



# Neglect

## The Impact of Neglect

Children who have been neglected may experience short-term and long-term effects that last throughout their life.

Children who don't get the love and care they need from their parents may find it difficult to maintain healthy relationships with other people later in life, including their own children.

Children who have been neglected are more likely to experience mental health problems including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Young people may also take risks, such as running away from home, breaking the law, abusing drugs or alcohol, or getting involved in dangerous relationships - putting them at risk from CSE

## Categories of Neglect

**Physical neglect** – Abandonment /expulsion from home, inadequate feeding/nutrition, inadequate clothing or physical care.

**Medical neglect** – denial of/delay in/failure to provide or permit adequate health care or treatment.

**Inadequate supervision** – lack of appropriate supervision, conspicuous inattention to avoidable dangers, exposure to hazards and risk, leaving with inappropriate caregivers.

**Emotional neglect** – Inadequate nurturing or affection, exposure to chronic abuse or violence, delay in or refusal of psychological care and treatment, over protective restrictions that foster immaturity or emotional over-dependence.

**Educational / developmental neglect** –

The failure to provide a child with experiences for necessary growth and development, such as not sending the child to school or giving him / her and education

## Effects on relationships and attachment

A parent or carer's behaviour has a big impact on a child. It can also affect the relationship between parent and child.

This relationship, or bond, between a child and their primary caregiver - usually mum or dad but sometimes another family member or carer - is described by attachment theory.

When a child is neglected they don't usually have a good relationship or bond with their parent. Psychologists would describe this as a poor attachment.

Poor attachment can significantly affect the relationships that people have throughout their lives, including how they interact with their own children. Early intervention can change attachment patterns, reducing harm to a child and helping them to form positive attachments in adulthood.

(Howe, 2011)

## Effects on Brain Development

The first years of a child's life have a big impact on how their brain develops. That is why neglect can be so damaging – a child's experiences can change their thought processes and neural pathways.

If a baby is malnourished, neural cells can become weak or damaged and this can cause lowered brain function.

If a child has a poor relationship, attachment or little interaction with a parent then it can change how their brain develops emotional and verbal pathways.

Neglect can severely alter the way a child's brain works. This can lead to an increased risk of depression in later life as well as dissociative disorders and memory impairments. Changes to the brain caused by neglect have also been linked to panic disorder, PTSD and ADHD.

(Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2009)