



## What is Child Neglect?

Neglect is the most common form of child abuse. It is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs. It may include a child being left hungry or dirty, without adequate clothing, shelter, supervision, medical or health care.

Child Protection Plans for Neglect can only be agreed if the threshold for significant harm is met. For Child In Need plans, there needs to be evidence of significant impairment. Neglect is usually part of a process of concerns rather than a one off incident. As such, all agencies have a responsibility to tackle signs of neglect at the earliest opportunity to aim to prevent risk of significant harm or impairment.

## Spotting the Signs of Neglect

- A child always reporting to being hungry – stealing or hoarding food
- Hygiene concerns, i.e matted hair, skin often dirty, poor body odour
- A child who is always tired
- Medical needs not being met – i.e not being taken to medical appointments on a repeat basis
- Inappropriate clothing – ie inadequate clothing to keep warm in winter
- A child saying they are left at home alone or concerns around poor supervision
- Frequent illnesses and infections – medical advice not being sought
- Regular absence or lateness from school
- Poor home conditions
- Living in dangerous conditions, e.g. around drugs, alcohol and/ or violence
- Failing to meet developmental milestones

(Please note this list is not exhaustive and not all of these factors automatically mean a child is being neglected - use professional curiosity)

## What to do when you recognise neglect

If in the course of your role, you are working with a family who you believe may be experiencing neglect, commence a **Graded Care Profile - GCP**. This is a tool undertaken with the family. It will provide a measure of the level of care the child/ren is experiencing and enable identification of need. It will look at strengths, weaknesses and what needs to be changed. It is a crucial tool in early identification and intervention.

Further details about the GCP and links to training can be found at the following link - <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/child-protection/hertfordshire-safeguarding-children-board/professionals-and-volunteers/graded-care-profile-structured-judgement-tool-developed-by-jane-wiffin.aspx#>

Another identification and intervention tool is the Families First Assessment (FFA), this again is undertaken with the family and can be done alongside a GCP. This will also support coordination of early help support through a family plan to reduce risk of family needs escalating. Information on Families First can be found at:  
[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/familiesfirst](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/familiesfirst)

## What to do when you recognise neglect cont'd

As professionals we all have a responsibility to try to help families and to work collaboratively with them. If this offer of help and support is rejected, please discuss this with your manager/Safeguarding lead. If you are working with a family, undertaking a GCP or FFA and they fail to engage or disengage, concerns are likely to increase. If as a result you are concerned that the child/ren is at risk of significant impairment or significant harm, your completed GCP or FFA will accompany your referral to Children's Services. Please see the Threshold Document for guidance.

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/child-protection/hertfordshire-safeguarding-children-board/professionals-and-volunteers/professionals-and-volunteers.aspx#>

Please note, Children's Services can only gain admission to a family by a Court Order where there is evidence of significant harm to children.

Providing help and support to families is likely to be more effective if they feel in control, listened to and that they have a choice.



Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. Children should have the support to develop and flourish physically, socially, and emotionally.

You should be aware of how to spot the signs of neglect and act.

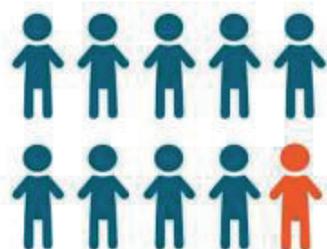
Be curious: when in contact with children and families always look for signs of neglect and record any concerns.

There's often no single sign that a child or family need help so if you think something doesn't seem quite right, don't ignore it. Look further, identify and intervene in partnership with the family.

Ask the family for their agreement for you to provide help and support to meet theirs and their child/rens needs. Working together, openly will support families to engage.



Neglect is a factor in 60% of serious case reviews  
(NSPCC)



1 in 10 children have experienced neglect



For further information on details included in this leaflet  
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