

# **Safeguarding Children from Neglect**

## **A Guide for Parents**



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH  
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD**

**Keeping Children Safe Together**

# Why do we need to prevent Neglect?

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**Neglect** is the ongoing failure to meet a **child's** basic needs and is the most common form of **child** abuse. A **child** may be left hungry or dirty, without adequate clothing, shelter, supervision, medical or health care. A **child** may be put in danger or not protected from physical or emotional harm. [Child neglect | NSPCC](#)

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Neglect is the most common reason for a child to be the subject of a child protection plan or on a child protection register in the UK.

There are a number of factors which can adversely affect a parent's ability to meet the needs of their child. Although these factors may be present it should not be assumed that the child is being neglected but they should at least act as a signal to the professional to explore with the parent and child the impact of their situation or behaviour on the child.

Factors that might have an effect on a parent's ability to care for their child include problems such as mental health issues, drug and alcohol problems or poverty.

Although professionals may be worried about a child, it's not always easy to identify neglect. There's often no single sign that a child or family need help. So, professionals look for a pattern of ongoing neglect before they step in.

## Types of neglect

### Physical

Failing to provide for a child's basic needs such as food, clothing or shelter. Failing to adequately supervise a child, or provide for their safety.

### Emotional

Failing to meet a child's needs for nurture and stimulation, perhaps by ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them. It's often the most difficult to prove.

### Educational

Failing to ensure a child receives an education.

### Medical

Failing to provide appropriate health care, including dental care and refusal of care or ignoring medical recommendations.

Practitioners working in universal health and education services have a key role to play in providing early help for neglect and a range of specialist services can provide early help to prevent child neglect as well as supporting families after neglect has been identified. Specialist services include social services, housing services, drug and alcohol services and support from voluntary organisations.

## Signs of Neglect

Children who are neglected may have:

- Poor appearance and hygiene, they may:
  - be smelly or dirty
  - have unwashed clothes
  - have inadequate clothing, e.g. not having a winter coat
  - seem hungry or turn up to school without having breakfast or any lunch money
  - have frequent and untreated nappy rash in infants.
- Health and development problems, and may have
  - untreated injuries, medical or dental issues
  - repeated accidental injuries caused by lack of supervision
  - recurring illnesses or infections
  - not been given appropriate medicines
  - missed medical appointments such as vaccinations
  - poor muscle tone or prominent joints
  - skin sores, rashes, flea bites, scabies or ringworm
  - thin or swollen tummy
  - anaemia
  - tiredness
  - faltering weight or growth and not reaching developmental milestones (known as failure to thrive)
  - poor language, communication or social skills.
- Housing and family issues, and may be:
  - living in an unsuitable home environment for example dog mess being left or not having any heating
  - left alone for a long time
  - taking on the role of carer for other family members.

# Keeping Children Safe from Neglect

It can be difficult to know when to take action to protect a child from neglect.

One off signs may not mean that a child is being neglected. Knowing when a child or family need help requires someone to recognise that there are ongoing or persistent patterns of neglect.

So it's important for concerns to be reported and recorded. This helps social workers and other professionals build up a picture of a child's life over time.

## If you think a child is at risk of harm, contact

Children Social Care

- Peterborough 01733 864180
  - Cambridgeshire 0345 045 5203
- Out of Hours (Emergency Duty Team) 01733 234724

Cambridgeshire Constabulary  
NSPCC

101 or in emergencies 999  
0808 800 5000



Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board  
[www.safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk](http://www.safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk)