

Identification and response to child and adolescent  
neglect  
OR  
Supporting parents/families to express love and care?

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# Introduction





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## What am I going to cover?

- Why identifying, responding and intervening to the neglect of children is important
- Key issues within practice across the continuum.
- Principles for this work.
- The six questions which make up identification of neglect

# Why is this Important

1 in 10 children have experienced neglect in their childhood.

Most common reason for early help plans.

9% of young adults report being severely neglected by parents or guardians

Most common reason for serious incidents and LCSPRs.

Many of the children subject to these high-profile reviews were not known to specialist services. They were either in receipt of early help –or universal services.

Often having been through the “revolving door of services” with step up and step – down without sufficient change or maintenance of change


Neglect is the most common reason for taking child protection action

41% of the concerns that were referred to police or children’s services, related to neglect


# What do children say neglect is? Daniels 2014

- 'not enough love'
- 'parents having no interest in me'
- 'being hungry all the time'
- 'having to always be there for my siblings'
- 'you end up doing your parents job- but you are not so good at it - feels like failure'
- 'it's one thing to say they love you (parents) but they have to show it; love is a doing word'
- 'it is like you do not matter'
- Commonly written "there is no doubt these parents love their children" but "do these children feel loved and cared for" is the question.



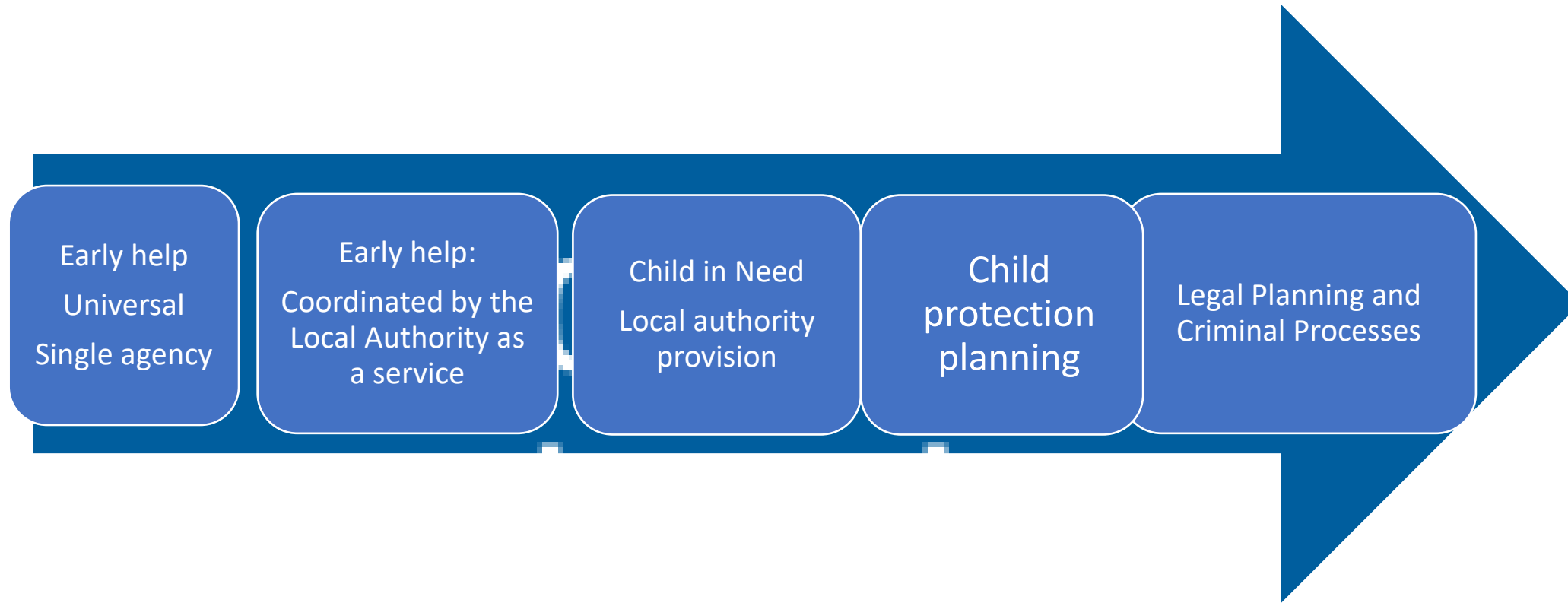


ChildLine records  
the feelings  
expressed by  
young people  
during counselling  
about neglect

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1. Worried
  2. Scared
  3. Upset/tearful
  4. Lonely/isolated/excluded
  5. Sad

Turnbull, M. (2015) Hurting inside: NSPCC report on the learning from the NSPCC helpline and ChildLine on neglect. London: NSPCC.

The issue: the neglect of children as a concept exists on a continuum



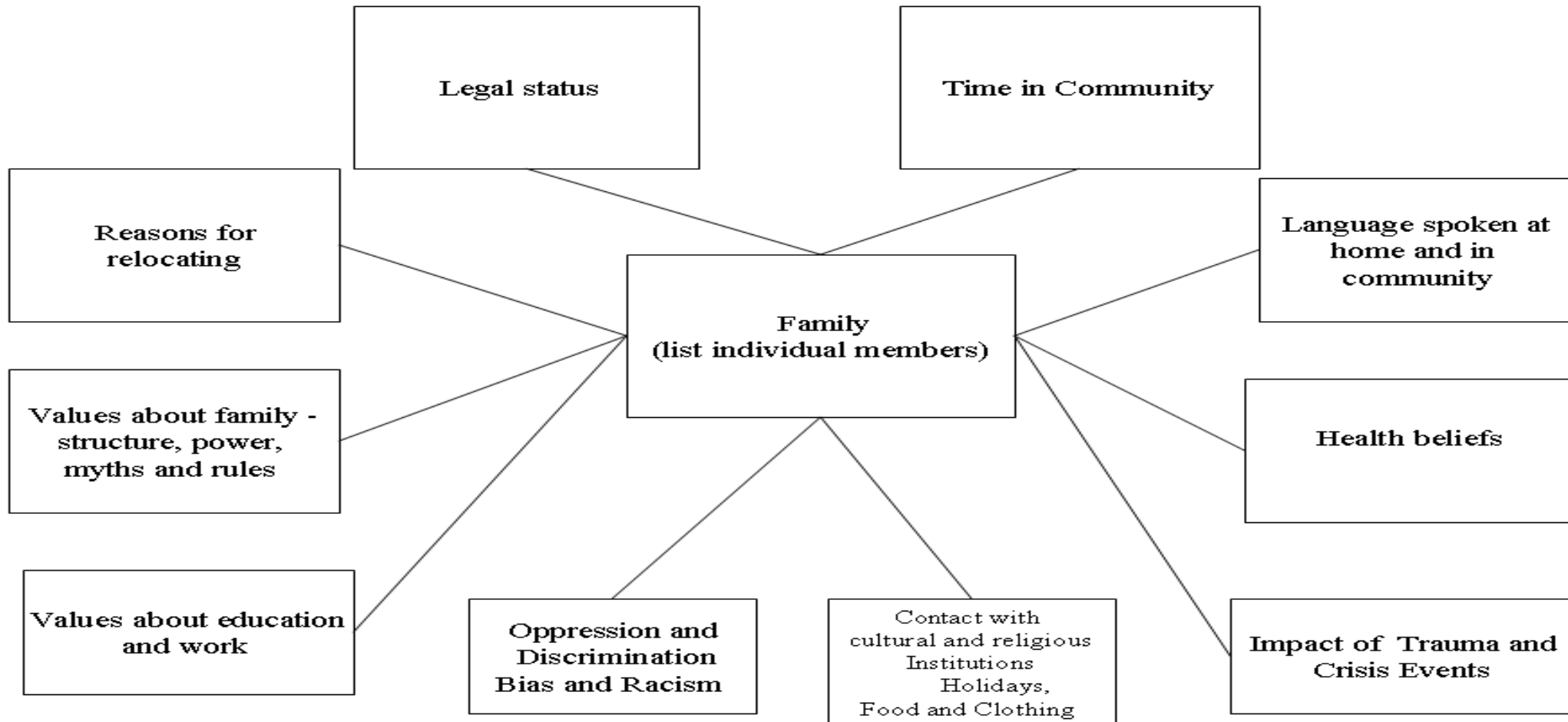
# What are the issues in practice?

- Neglect described as a “thing” rather than a relational concern.
- This is not just what parents do or do not do - but how they feel about children. Attitude matters.
- Not naming concerns of neglect. Means cumulative harm not addressed.
- Neglect left unaddressed does not go away. It gets worse. Unhelpful parental patterns develop. Children’ behaviour/emotions not supported. Parents start to view children as unmanageable and unparentable. Child blame.
- Need early plans targeted at change for children. Not asking parents to attend services but thinking what do I want to see change for children.
- Lack of a picture of a child’s lived experience over time “home conditions poor” or “inadequate” What exactly is this and what does this mean for the child. Being euphemistic
- Disguised compliance or undisguised non-compliance? Or an absence of analysis?

# Principles in Practice

- Painful work: remember that and the importance of supervision
- Cultural competency racism and discrimination surfaced. Use of interpreters/translators
- Poverty aware and surfaced.
- Separating out what is attributable to parenting and what to societal/community concerns and how do they interact negatively.
- Focus not just on mothers including fathers and holding them responsible .
- Role of extended family and friendship network. Building social capital.
- Change connected to process rather than love and care.
- Child centred practice versus adult focus and child outcomes matter

**CULTURAGRAM - 2007**

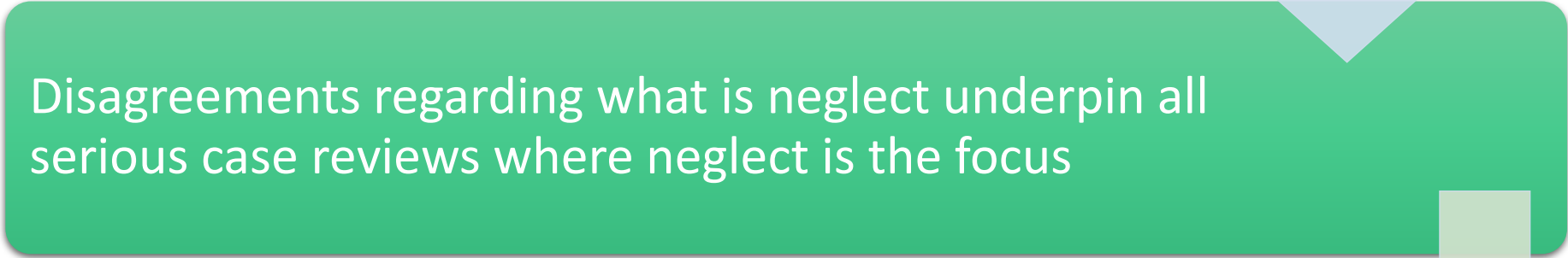


# Starting with the Definitions:

Lot of differences of opinion and focus



Disagreements regarding what is neglect underpin all serious case reviews where neglect is the focus



What is your definition of neglect?

How do you deal with conflicts/Professionals Disagreements?

Remember if everyone has a different view of a child's life.

Perhaps no one has understood it well?



# Criminal Offence

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12

02/07/2024

# Children and Young Persons Act 1933



Section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (“the 1933 Act”) provides for an offence of child cruelty. This offence is committed where a person age 16 or over, who has responsibility for a child under that age, **wilfully (i.e. intentionally or recklessly)** assaults, ill-treats, neglects, abandons, or exposes that child in a manner likely to cause “unnecessary suffering or injury to health”; or causes or procures someone else to treat a child in that manner.

Serious Crime Act 2015, Section 66 amendments have reinforced this:

after “ill-treats” insert “(whether physically or otherwise)”;

substitute “(whether the suffering or injury is of a physical or a psychological nature)”.

[Serious Crime Act 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

# Civil Definition: Working Together 2023

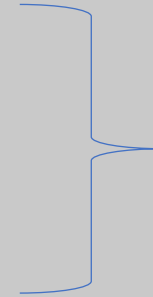
- The **persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.**
- Neglect may occur during pregnancy.
- Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide
  - **adequate 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.**

# Six questions to organising our thinking

1. Recognising and responding to persistence and change

2. Types of Neglectful Care giving

- Physical Care
- Health
- Safety and supervision
- Love and care
- Stimulation and education



Is it Global?

3. What is the Harm; Impact – from child’s point of view and from the evidence before us – what can we predict using the evidence base for the future -

4. Why the failure? What causes neglect? What drives it?

5. Understanding omission or commission

6. What other kinds of abuse is neglect enabling?

Think of this as along a continuum and a way to organise thinking, target interventions and amalgamate evidence

# Q1. Persistence

- What does this **ACTUALLY** this mean?
- Seen as over time “*cannot do anything because it has not been going on for long enough*” become something of a quasi-legal issue.
- Must be linked to age and stage of development – not just time - and how many caregiving tasks are needed – how many developmental milestones to complete for wellbeing
- First 2 years and adolescence are key points.
- When does history start? If we are reluctant professionally to name neglect early then how do we see cumulative pattern and impact?

# The Issue of understanding change is critical/Planning

- Understanding change as a process and articulating this
- Clear plans from early stages (simple not complex) – to see success and failure
- Plans to respond to neglect - the component parts:
  - Actions for parental change based on a good understanding making commitment to doing something differently. Showing children they can keep them in mind/put them first
  - Actions to address are about children/adolescents to address individual difficulties get the balance and recognise possibility of blame
  - Actions which ARE ABOUT COMPENSATORY CARE
- DNA v WAS NOT BROUGHT or was not facilitated to attend
- **Not engaged v did not engage in services designed to improve a child's circumstances; what have services done to facilitate engagement**



So for Yas (12) – who is running away, “out of control”, having sex, drinking, smoking and problem at school. Blamed by her parents

- The plan:
- Yas: fix the child
  - Drugs and alcohol support/ Relationship ed/ Counselling/ CAMHS/ Mentor at school/social worker/specialist support worker (7)
- Parents: change that will make a difference
  - Discussion of family history/parenting support/parenting programme (3)
- Compensatory care:
  - Support to get Yas to school/advice re debts/after school club (3)
- Total: 13 actions – what equals success?
- What needs to be different for Yas?

RESPONSE TO CHANGE

← EFFORT →

↑ COMMITMENT TO CHANGE ↓

	HIGH	LOW
HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Genuine commitment</b> Talk the talk and walk the walk</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Tokenism</b> Talk the talk</li></ul>
LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Compliance</b></li><li>○ <b>Imitation</b></li><li>○ <b>Approval seeking</b> Walk the walk</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Avoidance</b> Walk away</li></ul>

## Q 2. Type of neglect

- Physical Care
- Health
- Safety and supervision
- Love and care
- Stimulation and education



**Global  
Neglect**

How do these interact for the child- what connections are there across these domains?

If not global then where are the area's we want to concentrate our energies?

# Q3: Impact of neglect – casting a long shadow from pre-birth to adulthood and beyond

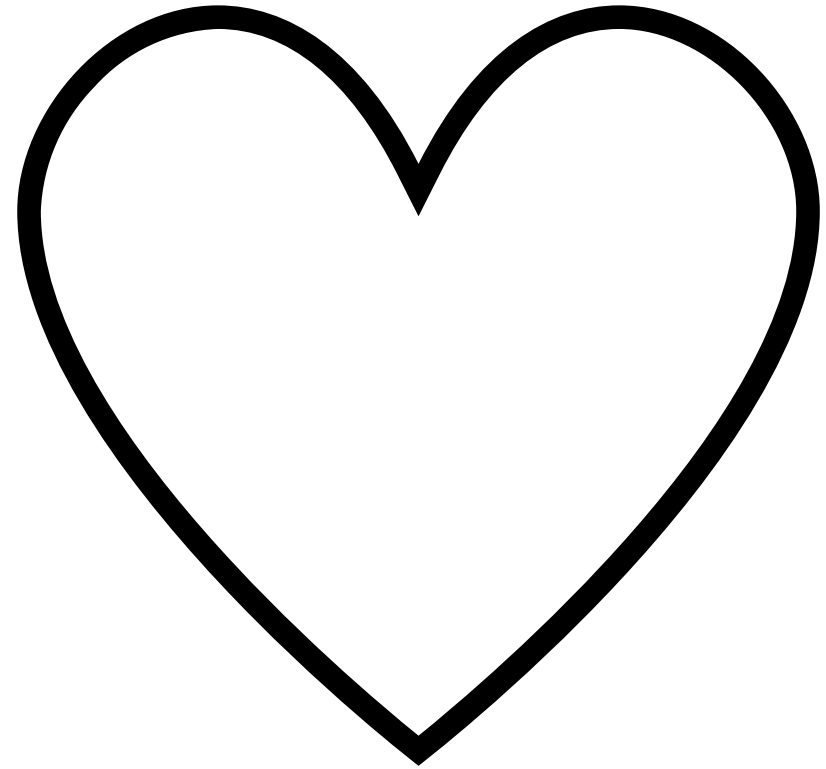


Cumulative impact across the developmental timeline

# The womb

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- Baby first home
- Call out hazardous living environment
  - Drugs, alcohol, domestic violence, stress caused by life and unaddressed mental health
- BUT
- Do it in way you make people fall in love with the baby and with empathy ( I know it is tough)
- This hazardous environment has known and unknown consequences



# Effects of neglect

Type of effect	Infants 0-2	Early Childhood	The School Years	Adolescence
<b>Development</b>	poor growth/ intellectual capacity under stimulation nappy rash, infections, hospital attendances failure to thrive	short stature, dirty, unkempt delay in learning new skills learning slow and painful language delay	severe educational deficits: learning disabilities, poor problem solving poor reading, writing and maths	Growth/brain development /achievement of puberty
<b>Behaviour</b>	withdrawn, lethargic, depressed self stimulating behaviour e.g. rocking	lacking social skills either aggressive or withdrawn indiscriminate friendliness	disruptive/overactive in class desperate for attention few friends overcompensation withdrawn	Anti-social behaviour Anger/aggression Depression School problems
<b>Emotional</b>	no learned trust	shame and self doubt lack of confidence and expectation of failure poor self concept	encopresis/eneuresis guilt/self blame self harming disturbed eating patterns	Self harm Exploitation Eating disorder

# Adolescence

Mental health problems such as depression, self-harm eating disorders, pseudo-seizures

CSE

Criminal exploitation

Anger and criminality

Problems at school

Poor relationships

Disrupted sexual development



# Adulthood

In adulthood, relationship difficulties may persist, and show themselves in social isolation or problematic relationships with frequent crises and breakups.

Women who experience neglect in childhood are also more than twice as likely as other women to experience depression, more frequently have problematic teenage pregnancy, and are more likely to be in adult relationships characterised by domestic violence

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# Impact Genetic versus environmental factors



Impact of  
abuse and  
neglect CAN  
become the  
child or  
adolescent  
problem to  
be solved

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Thinking about how children are described

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Damaged or living in damaging circs

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Difficult or not enabled to manage difficult emotions

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Badly behaved – not enabled to manage behaviour

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Problematic – not taught strategies

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Attention seeking – attention needing/attachment seeking

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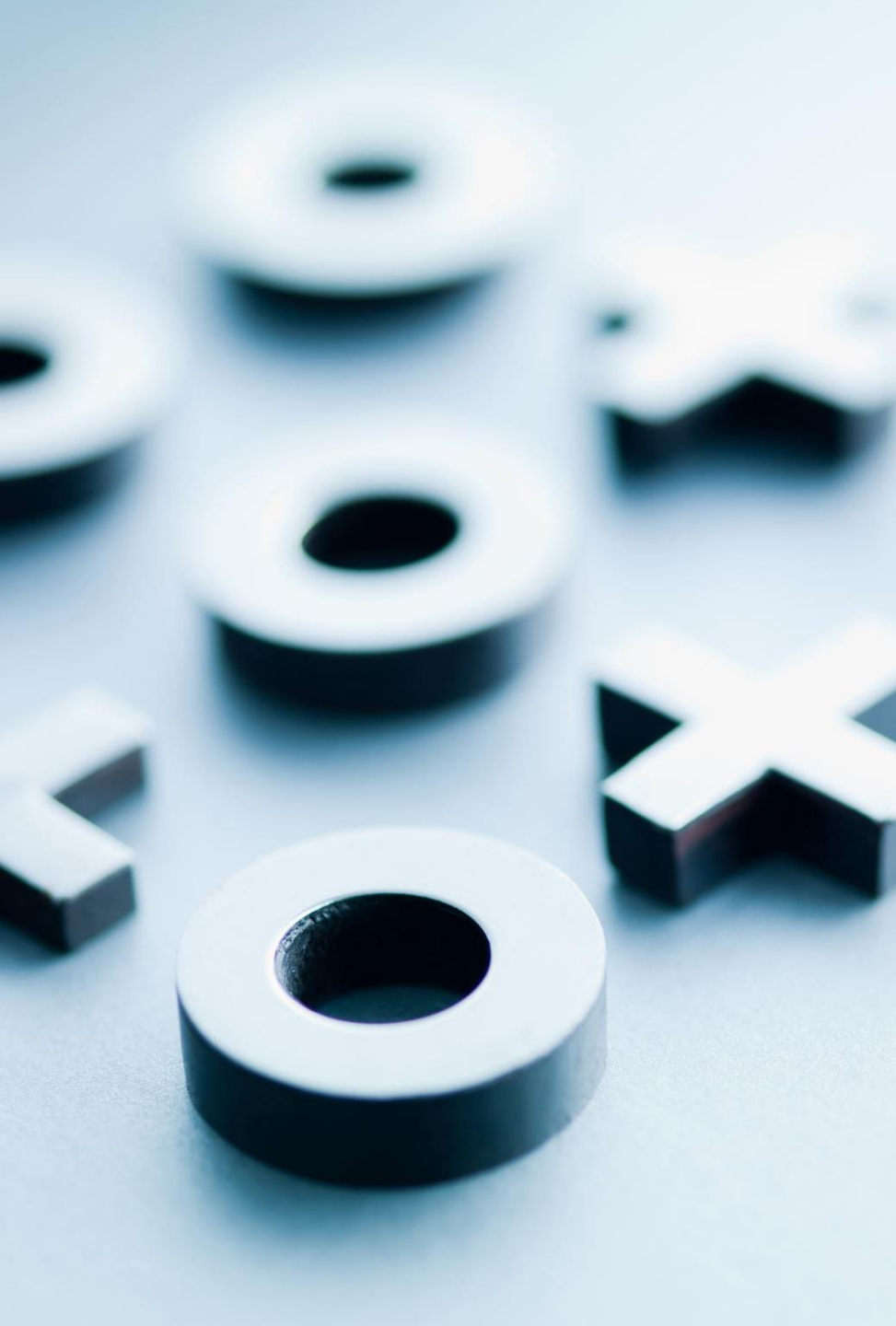
Manipulative – has not been taught how to get help/attention

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Concerning behaviour or behaviour which suggests concern

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Out of control – has not been taught to regulate emotions.



## Q4. Causal Factors

- What is driving the neglect?
- This might also be the time to do a culturagram
- or genogram – what is influence of past on present
- Understanding cause key to intervention

Intervention	Past Experience	Present Context	Intervention
←	<p><b>negative parenting/abuse in childhood</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic abuse and violence</li> <li>• Parental Learning Disability</li> <li>• Parental mental ill health</li> <li>• Parental problematic substance misuse</li> </ul>	→
Intervention	The Meaning of the child	Social Exclusion and low social capital	Interventions
←	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scapegoating</li> <li>• Hatred/Blame</li> <li>• Childs reminds parent of rape</li> <li>• Disability not accepted</li> <li>• Ethnicity not accepted</li> <li>• Falling out of love for the child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extreme poverty and no support mechanisms</li> <li>• No social capital – lack friendships/family</li> <li>• non acceptance by others unable to attend groups</li> </ul>	→

Exacerbating factors: POVERTY LARGE FAMILIES ILL HEALTH / PRIMARY AND SECONDARY CAUSES



# The Big Issues

**All require careful thought- specialist tools and knowledge  
If this is your area of expertise GREAT**

**If not – FIND OUT!**

- **Domestic abuse and violence – the within and between**
- **Parental Learning Disability**
- **Parental mental ill health**
- **Parental problematic substance misuse**

# 5. Omission versus Commission

Important to  
recognise both

Omission is passive

Commission – holding  
the child responsible  
for the Quality of  
Care they receive

Psychological trick

Falling out of love

Caring in a way that  
scapegoats

**Q6. What is  
neglect  
driving or  
enabling**

**Sexual abuse and sexual  
exploitation**

**Physical abuse**

**Emotional Abuse**

# Reflections & thoughts

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