

7. Response to neglect

Rotherham's partnership approach to neglect and cumulative harm can be found in the [Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Neglect Strategy 2021](#). Where there are concerns about standards of care the [Rotherham's Children's Services Graded Care Profile](#) provides a tool for assessment, planning, intervention and review.

Rotherham has adopted the Continuum of Need or 'windscreen' as a helpful way to communicate different levels of vulnerability whilst

acknowledging the fluidity of a family's situation over time. A copy of this is available here [Continuum of Need](#)

Help and guidance can be found in [Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Manual](#)

And the [Multi Agency Threshold Guidance and Descriptors](#)

6. Who is at Risk?

Any child can suffer neglect, however children and young people are at greater risk if they:

- Are born prematurely
- Have a disability
- Have complex health needs
- Are in care
- Are seeking Asylum
- Living in a household where the toxic trio is present-drugs/alcohol, domestic abuse, mental health

5. Practitioner Response

- Take neglect seriously.
- Realise that adults (parents and professionals) speak of neglect differently from children.
- Listen to children and ensure that the 'child's voice and daily lived experience' are the primary focus of practice and supervision across the thresholds of need.
- Look out for low level concerns which maybe warning signs for later neglect; consider the cumulative impact on the child.
- Intervene at the earliest opportunity to assist families before the crisis stage has been reached
- Keep your knowledge up to date with accessing the latest research and learning.

1. Introduction

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 is characterised by the failure of the parent/carer to prioritise the needs of their child. It can occur at any stage of childhood, including the teenage years. (Working Together 2018). The definition of neglect is not as objective as other forms of abuse as it relies on professional assessment.

Neglect is the most common form of child abuse and is the most common reason for referrals.

2. Impact

The impact of neglect is often cumulative, advancing with the risk that agencies do not intervene early enough to prevent harm. It leads to poor health, educational and social outcomes and is potentially fatal. It compromises children's emotional health & wellbeing impacting on their success in adulthood and their ability to parent in the future. Neglect increases vulnerability to further abuse and exploitation.

4. Why it matters ...

Preventing those early difficulties from escalating and becoming 'chronic and entrenched', which lead to families regularly requiring interventions from statutory services.

Neglect has lifelong consequences for children, which can be fatal. Neglect can affect global development of children and brain development. Neglect can also lead to difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships, lower educational achievements and increase risk of substance misuse

3. Types of Neglect

Physical (not providing basic needs eg food/ clothing/ shelter); **Emotional** (omission of love & failure to nurture); **Medical** (not providing appropriate healthcare, refusing care, ignoring medical requirements); **Educational** (not ensuring education, not responding to SEN, lack of interest in achievements); **Nutritional** (insufficient calories or food of insufficient nutritional value); **Lack of supervision or guidance** (exposure to hazards, not providing appropriate boundaries).

Evidence may be noticed by different agencies in the family at different points in time. Identifying emerging problems & potential unmet needs ASAP is vital.

7. Response to cumulative harm and neglect

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6. What to Do

'Think Family' & be alert to the risks to children through parental risk factors. Don't normalise neglect because of poverty or pay less attention to the risk of neglect by affluence. Follow procedures set out in the [Worried about an Adult or Child Flowchart](#)

5. Voice of the Child

Be sensitive to the wider context of the child's life and how this impacts them. It is vitally important to take time to listen to the children we work with, understand what lies behind the behaviours they present with, and avoid jumping to conclusions, making assumptions or offer solutions. Talk and listen to children, adapting communication to enable the child to express their voice. Recognise children's behaviour as a means of communication. Understand and respond to behavioural indicators of abuse. Listen, respond and record what is being communicated verbally and non-verbally

[Ofsted –The voice of the child: learning lessons from serious case reviews](#)

1. What is Cumulative Harm?

Cumulative harm refers to the effects of multiple adverse circumstances and events in a child's life. The relentless daily impact of these negative experiences on the child can be profound and challenging: diminishing a child's sense of safety, stability, wellbeing and happiness.

Neglect is the most common form of child abuse. The impact of neglect often grows and snowballs (**cumulative**), advancing gradually and sometimes hardly noticed with the risk that agencies do not intervene early enough to prevent harm.

2. Impact

Children may often be able to overcome single or moderate risks, but when risk factors accumulate, children's capacity to survive rapidly diminishes.

A Toxic stress response can occur when a child experiences frequent, and prolonged adversity. This can disrupt the development of the brain and other organ systems and increase the risk for stress-related disease/cognitive impairment, well into the adult years.

3. Snowballing affect

It can have a cumulative toll on an child's physical and mental health which may last for a lifetime.

The more number of adverse experiences in childhood (ACEs), the greater the likelihood of developmental delays and poor health, educational and social outcomes.

It compromises children's emotional health & wellbeing which impacts on their success in adulthood and their ability to parent in the future.

Cumulative neglect increases vulnerability to further abuse and exploitation.

4. Key Issues

Include adverse family circumstances (domestic violence, mental health, poverty) along with the complex and cumulative nature of neglect.

The invisibility of some children and young people to the system are a concern and adolescents living in situations of neglect may be particularly vulnerable.

Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the impact of cumulative negative experiences. For example if home, school and friendships are not a safe place then in the current environment of online contact respite is very limited for them.

Cumulative Harm