



TEA-BREAK GUIDE



Definition of neglect: In England, Neglect has been described as ‘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 can occur during pregnancy, for example as a result of maternal substance abuse or Domestic 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)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

One shared aspect in the majority of definitions is that neglect is an act of omission. It is a failure to do something, to act or to care adequately for a child or young person. Whoever is providing the care, chronic neglect can be viewed as the ‘sustained and chronic breakdown in the relationship of care’ (Tanner and Turney 2003, p.26). This is in contrast to common definitions of abuse, which can be viewed as acts of commission with a degree of intentionality.

Regardless of intent, neglect is seen to occur when a child or young person’s needs are not met. However, different professional definitions of neglect can affect the way that way in which it is understood and responded to, often resulting on an emphasis on physical neglect and a failure to recognise the emotional component (Taylor and Daniel 2003). Howarth (2007, p.27) offers a helpful reminder of the specific needs which are often subsumed under the banner of the failure to meet “basic needs”:

- medical neglect
- nutritional neglect
- emotional neglect
- educational neglect
- physical neglect
- lack of supervision and guidance.

Children and young people who are neglected, and their parents, are unlikely to seek help from child welfare and protection services (Department of Children Schools and Families 2009). Although parents and children may signal neglect to professionals, this can often be done indirectly, and skill is required on the part of practitioners to find ways to support children and adults to discuss their needs and experiences (taken from [Childhood Neglect \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/281123/Childhood_Neglect.pdf))

The NSPCC published a report in December 2023 which documented that there has been a 106% increase in child cruelty and neglect offences in England in the past 5 year, read more here: [106% increase in child cruelty and neglect offences in England in the past 5 years | NSPCC](#)

Training linked to neglect

Graded Care Profile (2) (GCP 2) – This is a tool that can be used by all professionals when concerns around Neglect are identified. Training is available through the NSCP.

[Face to Face Training - Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board \(northamptonshirescb.org.uk\)](#)

[Welcome to GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) also has resources you can access on Neglect and training which could be useful for practitioners - [Childhood neglect: training resources - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Videos are a good way to absorb information so here are some videos that people may find helpful as a learning tool:

- [What is child neglect? - YouTube](#)
- [Infant brain development: Key messages | Research in Practice](#)
- [How might abuse & neglect adversely impact a child or young person's mental health? | NSPCC Learning - YouTube](#)
- [Childhood Trauma and the Brain | UK Trauma Council - YouTube](#)
- [Neglect and poverty aware practice - online learning package | Research in Practice](#)

What resources are available to support practice?

Tea Break guides are great short reads, with lots of useful information; there are lots of specific guides available, many of which link to neglect; here are a few we think are relevant and helpful:

- [Neglect-of-Medical-Needs.pdf](#)
- [Adolescents-and-Neglect \(1\).pdf](#)
- [ACEs.pdf](#)
- [Chronologies \(5\).pdf](#)
- [Disguised-Compliance \(2\).pdf](#)
- [GCP2.pdf](#)
- [Medical-Appointments.pdf](#)
- [Obesity \(2\).pdf](#)

The NSPCC has some really useful tools and information around neglect - for example, this guide tells you what neglect is, what children and young people need, how to recognise neglect, the consequences of neglect and where people can go for help: [neglect-matters.pdf \(nspcc.org.uk\)](#)

Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership also have a neglect procedure - [Neglect \(proceduresonline.com\)](#)

The Social Work Toolbox is a free-to-access resource that has lots of information and tools practitioners can use. If you search on their pages, they come up for a few things that could be useful - like books to use with children, toolkits, videos and lots of other things: [You searched for neglect - Free Social Work Tools and Resources: SocialWorkersToolbox.com](#)

[Working with children experiencing neglect: challenges and solutions - Community Care](#)