

Handout 5.2: Six categories of neglect

What we may see, know about or suspect in school.

Note there are overlaps between categories. Neglect may arise for many different reasons. Most parents do not wish to intentionally neglect their children, but our focus must be on the impact on the pupil.

PHYSICAL

- poor personal hygiene – hair, clothes, skin
- pale or sallow complexion
- body odours
- poorly fitting or inadequate clothing or footwear
- poor standard of hygiene or safety at home
- inadequate sleeping arrangements
- lack of stairgate/fireguard, etc
- no uniform
- regular hunger
- collected from school and/or looked after at home by range of different people who may be inappropriate carers or lack maturity to keep the child safe
- problems caused by pets that are uncared for and possibly a risk (sometimes pets seem to be better cared for)
- exposure to drugs and drug-related equipment and/or alcohol
- exposure to prescription medication (such as anti-depressants)
- prone to illness and infection

MEDICAL

- dental and/or medical appointments missed, or never made
- optical, auditory, speech and language, or other therapy advice not adhered to or appointments missed
- advice from or request to meet school nurse ignored
- head lice uncontrolled
- vaccinations not completed
- over/under-, administration of prescribed medication
- poor understanding of medical needs arising from disability

EMOTIONAL

- lack of concern for the child's feelings
- never giving praise
- constant belittling or bullying
- lack of stimulation
- inconsistent attention – loving/aggressive

- failure to understand how the other types of neglect affect the child's self-esteem and sense of worth
- no sense of belonging to the family
- erratic and unpredictable parenting
- poor attachments
- threats, rejection or frightening behaviour from parents

EDUCATIONAL

- no lesson equipment or constantly lost
- no PE kit
- indifference to child's academic performance – never or rarely attend parents' evenings
- no response to requests for meetings or to return telephone calls
- regular unexplained and unauthorised absence
- little support to complete homework
- home/school contact book never completed/often lost
- lack of understanding or concern for child's disability or SEN
- child missing school or unable to concentrate due to caring responsibilities at home
- permitting regular truanting

NUTRITIONAL

- regular inadequate/poor-quality packed lunch
- unhealthy diet
- complete absence of exercise
- concerns about the child's weight – very underweight or very overweight
- child regularly having to make their own meals (and possibly for siblings) due to the incapacity or unavailability of the parent
- lack of food or cooking equipment at home

LACK OF SUPERVISION AND GUIDANCE

- few boundaries at home – no rules to follow
- child out alone at times/in places inappropriate to their age or maturity
- use of inadequate or inappropriate carers
- antisocial behaviour and vandalism
- repeated involvement of police
- exposure to dangerous people
- encouraged into crime