

# 7 Minute Briefing Neglect

## What is Neglect?

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment as well as neglect of a child's basic emotional needs or non-organic failure to thrive.

## What Factors contribute to Neglect?

Factors contributing to Neglect may include family violence/modelling of inappropriate behaviour; multiple cohabitation; alcohol and substance misuse; low maternal self esteem; poor parental education, social and emotional maturity; poor experience of caring and experience of abuse in parents' own childhood; health problems during pregnancy; low family income and employment status; single parenting and teenage pregnancy.

## How Can We Manage Neglect?

Effective interventions to achieve the best possible outcome for the child must be based on clear assessment processes. Defining the cause of neglect can help to determine the most effective response. Each intervention must be targeted and tailored to provide the most effective professional response.

## What is Disorganised Neglect and How Should We Respond?

Families have multiple problems and are crisis-ridden, care is unpredictable and inconsistent with a lack of planning and needs having to be met immediately. Parents appear to want help but work is often sabotaged. Children become overly demanding to gain attention; families constantly recreate crisis; parents feel threatened and relationships are based on coercive strategies. Professional support will be long term and needs to attend to feelings, develop trust, express empathy and reassurance, be predictable and provide structure, gradually introducing alternative strategies to build coping skills.

## What is Emotional Neglect and How Should We Respond?

Families may be materially advantaged and physical needs met but with no emotional connection, parents lacking empathy and not psychologically available to the child. Approval and attention is achieved through performance. Children block awareness and expression of feelings and can appear overly resilient and mature. They take on the role of parental care giver with poor social relationships due to isolation. As families appear superficially successful parents feel particularly threatened by any proposed intervention. Separation from the parent is devastating for the child. Parents need to learn to emotionally engage and to have other supports and activities to reduce their withdrawn state.

## What is Depressed Neglect and How Should We Respond?

Parents love their children but do not perceive their needs or believe anything will change. They are passive, helpless, uninterested, unmotivated and closed down to understanding their children's needs. They may go through basic caring functions like feeding and changing but with no response to the child who may give up, becoming withdrawn and sullen or exhibit extreme behaviour. Long term incremental support is needed emphasising strengths and parental education. Medication may be helpful but there may be side effects. Children benefit from access to stimulation and responsive alternative environments.

## What are Our Roles and Responsibilities?

All agencies, whether statutory or voluntary, have a duty to:

- Share information about children who are suspected to be at risk of harm from neglect
- Make a contribution to the assessment process
- Where appropriate take the lead responsibility for co-ordinating the assessment and multi-agency meetings.

# Recommendations, Learning and Actions

Identify the learning or recommendations that are relevant to your team and summarise your teams' discussion on those points.

<b>Name of Organisation:</b>		<b>Team Manager:</b>	
<b>Name of Section and Team:</b>		<b>Contact Details:</b>	
<b>Date completed:</b>			

**What actions have been agreed to improve practice?**

<b>What needs to happen?</b>	<b>Who will do it?</b>	<b>By when?</b>	<b>How will you know when it has been done?</b>	<b>How will you know if it has worked?</b>