

NEGLECT & THE OLDER CHILD

01: Background

Whilst there is no agreed definition for the age of an older child, neglect in the older child can be broken down as:

- Educational** - Little or no support around school life, or aspirations.
- Emotional** - Failure to respond to the need for affection & interaction.
- Environmental** - Failure to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter, including unhygienic or unsafe living conditions.
- Medical** - Illness denied or minimised, with a lack of access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- Supervisory** - Failure to protect from harm, absence of behavioural rules or lack of interest in the child's relationships and activities.

07 Further Reading

The first 3 papers provide more detail on neglect and the older child, and the 4th on disguised compliance mentioned in 02: *why it matters*:

- [Growing Up Neglected - A Multi-Agency Response to Older Children](#)
- [Adolescent Neglect - Briefing for Professionals](#)
- [NSPCC - What is Neglect?](#)
- [NSPCC - Disguised Compliance](#)

06: Who to Contact

If you suspect neglect is occurring - report it. Working with parents to improve the way they are parenting, by improving relationships and communication at home it is possible to reduce the chance of neglect reoccurring.

As a member of the public, you can report neglect and any other safeguarding concerns by contacting the **MASSH on 0161 217 6028**

As a professional first assess the level of need and then if required contact us using the online form:

<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/contacting-the-massh>

Footnotes

- *Children of the Affluent: Challenges to Well-Being* - Luthar and Latendresse, 2005
- *Family support in cases of emotional maltreatment and neglect.* - Thoburn et al, 2000
- *Prevalence and risk of violence against children with disabilities: a systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies* - Jones et al, 2012
- *Gender differences in the association between emotional maltreatment with mental, emotional, and behavioral problems in Swedish adolescents* - Johan Melander, HagborgInga Tidefors and Claudia Fahlke 2016

02: Why it Matters

Neglect in older children sometimes goes **unseen**, and work with parents to address neglect does not always happen. The presenting issues may be worked with rather than the underlying cause and resultant trauma. There may also be disguised compliance on the part of the parent.

Neglect has a negative effect on **behaviour and health** and makes children more **vulnerable** to risks such as exploitation outside the home. Neglect has also been linked to an increased likelihood of experiencing other forms of abuse or of becoming a future perpetrator. In its most extreme form it can lead to death.

03: When it Happens

Neglect can happen in any environment, but these factors make it more likely:

1. **Changes** in the family dynamic
2. **Parents** living with their own **issues**
3. **Stress** triggers within the family
4. **Lack** of wider **support**
5. Young Persons **Negative Behaviour**

Additionally disabled young people, boys, older children, those in care, those in poverty, and asylum seekers are at greater risk of neglect. Those in affluent families are at greater risk of emotional neglect, than other forms of neglect. The links in section 07 and research listed in the footnotes provide evidence to these points.

04: Child's Response

Older children experiencing neglect will commonly exhibit one or more of these responses:

1. **Anger** or aggression.
2. Early sexual activity, substance misuse, offending, and/or other **unsafe or risky** behaviours.
3. **Hunger** or a lack of personal **hygiene**.
4. **Isolation** from peers.
5. **Lack of communication**.
6. **Staying out** late – vulnerability to exploitation, ASB, substance misuse, violence etc.
7. Tiredness, **depression** or self-harming.

When working with children exhibiting these behaviours, it is important to consider neglect as a possible underlying cause of the effect and trauma, and to seek to understand the child's lived experience. Chronologies may support in the identification of a pattern of neglect.



05: What to Do

It is important that those who work with young people or their parents maintain their **professional curiosity** by asking the right questions to understand if neglect is happening, involving professionals and agencies where it is required. If children are experiencing neglect we need to **work with** those with parental responsibility. When supporting older children, who may have little trust of adults including professionals, include them in decision making, they are likely to have opinions about which of the multi-agency team would work with them best. Ensure you capture the **voice of the child**, but be aware that those experiencing neglect may not identify it as such - research shows that children are least likely to recognise neglectful parenting compared with other forms of abuse.