BE CURIOUS and act against child neglect

Child abuse can take many forms. You will be aware of what constitutes child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation – but are you as aware of the signs of child neglect?

Child neglect is the most frequent type of abuse of children and is the most common reason for a child to be the subject of a child protection plan or on a child protection register in the UK.
Children's social care investigates many of these cases every day, and if it is severe enough the police will be involved in the investigations.

Often cases of child neglect can be improved or completely resolved with the support of children's social care before they become more serious, so it is important that professionals are able to identify the early signs and report minor concerns early on.

What is child neglect?

Child neglect is a form of child abuse and is the on-going failure to meet a child's basic needs, including;

- **Physical neglect;** failing to provide food, clothing or shelter. Failing to adequately supervise a child or provide a safe place to live

- **Emotional neglect;** failing to provide love, care and attention, and failing to support and nurture a child

- **Educational neglect;** failing to ensure a child receives an education

- **Medical neglect;** failing to provide adequate health or dental care, including refusal of care or ignoring medical requirements.

Neglect can happen over a period of time, but can also be a one-off event. A child who is neglected may often suffer from other forms of abuse as well.

Neglect is dangerous and can cause serious, long-term damage – even death.

Be Curious: spot the signs

Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. Children should have the support to develop and flourish physically, socially, and emotionally.

You should be aware of how to spot the signs of neglect and act.
Be curious: when in contact with children and families always look for signs of neglect.

There's often no single sign that a child or family need help so if you think something doesn't seem quite right, don't ignore it. Look further and report any concerns to the appropriate agency.

Signs of neglect

Poor appearance and hygiene including;
- being smelly or dirty
- having unwashed clothes
- having inadequate clothing, e.g. not having a winter coat
- seeming hungry or turning up to school without having breakfast or without lunch money
- having frequent and untreated nappy rash in infants.

Health and development problems including;
- untreated injuries, medical and dental issues
- repeated accidental injuries caused by lack of supervision
- recurring illnesses or infections
- not been given appropriate medicines
- missed medical appointments such as vaccinations
- poor muscle tone or prominent joints
- skin sores, rashes, flea bites, scabies or ringworm
- thin or swollen stomach
- anaemia and/or tiredness
- faltering weight or growth and not reaching developmental milestones (known as failure to thrive)
- poor language, communication or social skills
- being withdrawn or often being angry, aggressive or may self-harm.

Housing and family issues including;
- living in an unsuitable home environment, e.g. dog mess being left or no heating
- living in dangerous conditions, e.g. around drugs, alcohol and/or violence
- being left alone for a long time
- taking on the role of carer for other family members.

Children living in a household where there is domestic abuse are known to be vulnerable. Allowing a child to witness violence or severe abuse between parents or adults, ignoring, insulting, or threatening the child with violence, not providing the child with a safe environment and adult emotional support, and showing reckless disregard for the child's well-being are all forms of abuse and neglect.

Worried about a child? Tell Someone

In the course of your professional work you may see or suspect neglect. Please take responsibility for any safeguarding concerns by raising them with your manager or senior staff and ensure they are reported to children's social care or the police.