

Neglect: What It Is & How We Can Help



This guide is here to help you understand what neglect means and what you can do if it happens to you or someone you know.



*This document has been reviewed by a young person in the Children in Care Council.



Our Pledge: What we want to say to you

We believe that every child deserves to grow up in a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment, free from harm. We want your voice to be heard, your needs to be met, and we want your well-being at the heart of everything we do.

We want to:

Listen to You: Your experiences, thoughts, and feelings matter. We will ensure that your voice is heard in decisions that affect you.

Keep You Safe: We will work together to identify neglect early and take action to protect you.

Support You: We will provide the right help at the right time, so that you and your family get the support you need.

Respect You: We will treat you with respect, fairness and recognise your different needs.

We will Speak Up For You: No matter who you are or where you come from, you deserve fair treatment and the right support.

What does neglect mean?

Neglect happens when a child or young person doesn't get the care, support, and attention they need to be healthy, happy, and safe. It might mean:

- Not having enough food or clean clothes.
- Being left alone a lot or feeling unsafe at home.
- Not getting help when feeling sick or upset.
- Not being listened to or supported by the adults in their life.
- It's important to know: Neglect is never your fault. Every child deserves to be cared for.



For Example

👦 Sam, 10 years old – Sam often comes to school hungry and wears the same clothes every day. His parents are hardly home, and when they are, they don't ask him about his day or make sure he eats. Sam feels tired all the time and doesn't like asking for help.

👁️ Why is this neglect?

Sam isn't getting the food, care, or attention he needs to be healthy and happy. Adults around him (like teachers or a sports coach) can help by noticing and speaking up.

How might neglect feel?



Neglect can look different for everyone, but it might make you feel:

- Hungry, tired, or unwell because your basic needs aren't met.
- Lonely or ignored because nobody is paying attention to how you feel.
- Scared or unsafe if you're left alone a lot or don't have someone to help when you need it.
- Embarrassed or different if you don't have what you need at school or home.

Being treated this way is not okay, and there are people who care and want to help.



For Example

👤 Sophia, 11 years old – Sophia loves drawing and always tries to show her parents her artwork. But her parents never look up from their phones or say anything encouraging. When Sophia is upset, she is told to “stop being dramatic” or “deal with it.” At school, Sophia feels invisible and doesn’t bother speaking up in class anymore.

😬 Why is this neglect? Sophia isn’t getting the love, attention, or emotional support she needs. Every child deserves to feel heard, valued, and cared for.





Different Kinds of Neglect



Neglect can happen in different ways:

- Physical Neglect – Not having enough food, warm clothes, or a safe place to sleep.
- Emotional Neglect – Not feeling loved, listened to, or supported.
- Medical Neglect – Not getting help from a doctor when feeling sick or injured.
- Educational Neglect – Not being helped to go to school or learn properly.
- Supervisory Neglect – Being left alone in unsafe situations.

Some children might experience one type of neglect, while others might experience more than one.



What Can I Do If I Feel Neglected?



If something doesn't feel right, you are not alone. There are people who can help:

Talk to a trusted adult – This could be a teacher, school counsellor, family friend, coach, or club leader.

Call a helpline – Childline (0800 1111) is free and private.

Speak to a doctor, nurse, or social worker – They are trained to help children.

Tell a friend – They might be able to help you find an adult to talk to.

Talking about neglect might feel difficult, but asking for help is a strong and brave thing to do.

Looking out for someone



You might notice that a friend, classmate, or neighbour seems:

- Always tired, hungry, or wearing the same clothes.
- Sad, quiet, or withdrawn.
- Not coming to school much.
- Worried about going home.
- Left alone a lot.

If you're worried about a friend, you can:

1. Talk to them – Let them know they're not alone.
2. Encourage them to talk to a trusted adult.
3. Tell a teacher, coach, or safe adult if they need help.

You don't have to solve the problem alone—just letting someone know can make a big difference.



You have the right to be safe

Every child and young person has the right to be cared for and feel safe. That means:

- Having enough food and clean clothes.
- Feeling supported at home and school.
- Seeing a doctor when needed.
- Having adults who look out for you.
- If you ever feel unsafe, ignored, or alone, please talk to someone. You deserve to be cared for.

Where Can I Get Help?

☎ Childline – 0800 1111 (Free & private)

📠 NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) – 0808 800 5000

(A charity who focus on protecting children & young people)

🌐 Visit your school's safeguarding lead – They are there to help.

💬 Talk to someone you trust – A teacher, youth worker, or family/friend.

