

Affluent Child Neglect Practitioners Briefing

Definition of child neglect - Working Together 2023 defines neglect as: The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment).
- Protect a child from emotional and physical harm or danger.
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers).
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- Provide suitable education.
- It may include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Neglect usually happens over a period of time although sometimes it is a one-off event. There are different types of neglect: physical (including nutritional and protection from online harm), medical, emotional (including social and identity neglect) and educational. A child who is neglected will often suffer from other abuse as well, both inside and outside of the home. **It is the cumulative effect of neglect which has the most impact.**

Wealthier families may have the material resources to hide physical and supervisory neglect while being psychologically or emotionally neglectful. There are a few risks that c/yp from all walks of life face; being a child in an affluent family is often perceived to protect those children from some of these dangers. C/yp from wealthier, more "stable" families aren't as sheltered from neglect as is often assumed. **Signs to look out for?** It can be difficult to differentiate when their home environment lacks emotionally nurturing parenting behaviours. C/yp may withdraw from social activities or appear isolated, act out in school or at home, struggle with drug or alcohol abuse, engage in risky behaviours, have difficulty forming attachments and/or show little empathy for others. Parental emotional neglect maybe due to not spending enough quality time with their child and putting excessive pressure on them to be a high achiever. There may be a more relaxed attitude to drug use, sexual activity, and sexuality, and therefore c/yp are exposed to more risks.

Why is affluent neglect often overlooked? - There are several barriers that may prevent more affluent children, who are experiencing neglect, from accessing the support they need. Firstly, their symptoms may be harder to spot as the type of neglect experienced by c/yp is often emotional. In some cases, the children who come to practitioners' attention had affluent home environments consisting of excellent housing, a nutritious diet, first-class educational opportunities, and access to a range of enrichment opportunities. The nature of emotional neglect can make it much harder to identify than other types of neglect. For example, due to the family having hired help to care for the c/yp they may present as clean, well-dressed, and properly fed when they are experiencing emotional neglect. Staff may not be adequately trained to identify and intervene with cases of emotional neglect. Wealthy families are also often not 'on the radar' of protective services. There may also be increased hostility towards agencies, such as social services, from more affluent families, making it more difficult to improve outcomes for c/yp in these circumstances. Schools and school staff may miss important pieces of the puzzle when they assume that children from wealthy families are less at risk than those from poorer backgrounds. These c/yp may be coming in with new clothes bearing expensive brand labels. It is easy to make presumptions from these indicators that a c/yp is being well looked-after. C/yp attending boarding school are even more difficult to identify as neglected, their parents may often live out of the area or even out of the country. This adds another layer of complexity and can prove challenging, not only for identifying issues in their home life, but also for working with parents to improve the c/yp's outcomes.

Engaging Parents - Working with affluent parents suspected of neglect can be a challenging process. Overcoming resistant behaviour from parents who have the resources to challenge decision making is often a difficult task. It is therefore important that practitioners have the requisite skills, knowledge and competence to successfully engage with these families. It is essential that practitioners can identify any factors that could potentially contribute to affluent parental neglect, such as economic stresses, parental attitudes towards raising children or other familial dynamics. Through careful observation and assessment of the situation it may be possible to develop an accurate understanding of why a family is experiencing problems and what interventions may be necessary. Practitioners should always ensure that their approach is tailored to each individual family's circumstances and take into consideration any cultural needs which may have an impact on how they function. Supportive management enables practitioners to feel supported when facing challenging situations with higher risk levels associated with affluent families and allows them access to additional professional advice if needed.

Hostility of parents is usually seen where parents are often affronted that their parenting is being questioned, or that they are being accused of neglecting their children. As a result, any questions that practitioners have about their parenting are often met with hostility and conflict, and parents are strongly resistant to any intervention. Practitioners may feel that there is a power shift and that the parents are in control. Practitioners need to be prepared for challenge to their professional/social status, and experience. To recognise legal threats, non-compliance, scrutiny of their practice, escalations to senior managers, and complaints for what they could be, a diversion and seek support from their manager.



Considering affluent child neglect is the act of neglecting children/young people (c/yp) from wealthy families, which can include emotional neglect, lack of supervision, and exposure to vulnerabilities. It can be difficult to identify because the signs are not as obvious as in cases of poverty-related neglect. Affluent child neglect can have long-term effects on a c/yp's physical and mental health. Some of the consequences of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) include brain development changes, changes in how the body responds to stress, and long-term mental and physical health problems. Some challenges to identifying and addressing affluent child neglect include **Unconscious bias**: Wealthy families may not appear disadvantaged, so their problems may not be taken seriously. **Societal perceptions**: Children from affluent backgrounds are often seen as "better off". **Parental resistance** Affluent parents may use their resources to challenge decision-making, such as by threatening legal action. **Limited research**: There is limited research on affluent child neglect. **Socio-economic biases**: Socio-economic biases may play a role in which families are scrutinised by child protection services.

The impact of affluent neglect - emotional neglect, exposure to the trio of vulnerabilities (ACEs), and lack of supervision sometimes faced by c/yp from affluent families can affect brain development and change how their body may respond to stress. Parental emotional neglect due to not spending enough quality time with the child and putting excessive pressure on the child to be a high achiever which can sometimes lead to psychological and emotional problems for c/yp. Wealthier parents may have a more relaxed attitude to the risks their children take or aren't sufficiently present or available to know about what their children are doing. This often leads to increased risks for their children, who often may have the financial access to facilitate drug abuse and the independence to engage in harmful sexual activity.

Responding to affluent neglect - It is important for practitioners to understand the complexities of affluent neglect and feel confident to access support via supervision. The use of the GCP2 assessment tool can also assist in highlighting neglectful situations. Alongside the Day in the Life tool which can help us understand what life is like for a child. If concerned about supervision exploitation tool can also be considered.

Find out more about NEGLECT

- [Pan Bedfordshire Child Neglect Strategy](#)
- [Pan Bedfordshire Neglect guidance](#)
- [Safeguarding children in affluent families](#)
- [The Relationship Between Poverty and Child Abuse and Neglect: New Evidence \(March 2022\)](#)
- [Neglect is also Child Abuse: Know All About It | NSPCC](#)
- **GCP2 training: Bedford Borough based practitioners: [CLICK HERE](#), Central Bedfordshire based practitioners: [CLICK HERE](#) and Luton based practitioners: [CLICK HERE](#)**