Recognising neglect

A quick reference guide to help professionals identify the different types of neglect.

Educational

- Persistent, unexplained school absence and/or chronic lateness
- Limited parental engagement with the learning process and educational services
- Lack of support for a child's educational process or needs

Emotional

- Lack of warmth, praise or affection
- Exposure to chronic hostility, rejection or indifference
- Child withdrawn, anxious or overly compliant
- Low self-esteem and difficulty forming relationships

Physical

- Poor hygiene, strong odour or an unsanitary home
- Insufficient clothing for the weather
- Hunger, hoarding food or poor nutrition
- Untreated medical or dental issues
- Frequent accidental injuries
- Developmental delays

Environmental

- Excessive dirt or clutter
- Strong odours from waste, food or animals
- Limited space for the child to eat, sleep and play
- Evidence of substance misuse
- Violence and criminal activity

Supervisory Safety

- Left alone or with unsuitable carers
- Access to dangerous objects, substances or environments
- Frequent accidents or injuries
- Lack of boundaries online
- Given inappropriate responsibilities

Medical

- Missed medical or dental appointments
- Untreated injuries or illnesses
- Failure to follow prescribed treatments
- Refusal of essential medicine
- Poor management of chronic conditions

Adolescent

- Lack of parental engagement and supervision
- Staying out late without a clear explanation or parental concern
- Limited response to poor school attendance
- Unmet health needs
- Given inappropriate responsibilities
- Unsafe peers, environments, relationships or online risks
- Breakdown of relationships

What professionals should do, as outlined by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel:

- Name neglect explicitly in records and discussions
- See the child - in person and alone where appropriate
- Observe the home environment
- Use multi-agency chronologies
- Proactively share information, especially around compensatory care
- Consider cultural and disability contexts
- Be mindful of the difference between poverty and neglect
- Use structured assessment tools

Tameside Safeguarding Children Partnership

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