Bitesize Briefing: Educational Neglect

GATESHEAD safeguarding children partnership



1 What is Educational Neglect?

Educational neglect occurs when:

- A caregiver fails to ensure that a child receives a suitable education, either through regular school attendance or appropriate alternative provision (e.g. Elective Home Education).

and/or

- Fails to support the child's learning and developmental needs.
- Does not engage with educational support services.

Educational neglect can look different depending on the child's age, stage of development and their specific educational needs/circumstances.

2 Signs of Educational Neglect

- The child is of compulsory school-age and is not enrolled at a school;
- Long delays in enrolment after moving or changing schools;
- Frequent, unexplained absences or patterns of truancy;
- Poor or no communication from caregiver regarding attendance;
- Declining or failing to follow through with recommended assessments or interventions, such as EHCPs;
- Failure to accommodate or provide the necessary resources for learning disabilities;
- Poor attainment;
- No evidence of home support for learning;
- Emotionally-based school avoidance;
- Caregiver expresses negative attitudes towards education or teaching staff;
- Caregiver refuses to attend school meetings or engage with educational support services;
- Issues that can impact learning (e.g. trauma, mental health or behavioural challenges) go unresolved.

3 The Impact of Educational Neglect



- Children may fall behind in basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- Reduced access to higher education and employment opportunities.
- Delayed social development and isolation.
- Low self-esteem and mental health issues.
- Increased risk of anti-social behaviour.
- Increased demand on other services, such as the criminal justice system, health services and children's services.
- Increased vulnerability to other types of abuse.
- Delayed brain development.
- Perpetual cycle of disadvantage (e.g. poverty and social exclusion).

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4 Contributing Factors to Educational Neglect

Professional & Agency Factors

- Viewing non-attendance as a 'school issue', rather than a safeguarding concern;
- Lack of training or awareness;
- Misunderstanding cultural or contextual factors;
- Inadequate information-sharing/unclear policies;
- Unsuitable alternative provision.



Systemic & Contextual Factors

- Poverty or housing instability;
- Cultural or language barriers;
- Inconsistent definitions of educational neglect;
- A child's experience of other types of abuse;
- Poor multi-agency coordination, such as excluding education from safeguarding plans or meetings.

Parent/Carer Factors

- Parental attitudes and beliefs about education (e.g. negative past experiences);
- Poverty and financial hardship;
- Parental mental health or substance misuse;
- Poor routines and boundaries in the home;
- Difficult relationships with professionals.



Young Person Factors*



- Frequent school moves or instability at home;
- SEND, trauma or mental health needs that are not being met;
- Lack of agency and voice in planning and support;
- Caring responsibilities;
- Unaddressed physical health conditions.

**Whilst the child or young person is never responsible for educational neglect, they may face additional challenges that contribute to or worsen the situation.*

5 Learning & Development: Reflection Questions and Additional Training for Practitioners

How does educational neglect intersect with other forms of harm or disadvantage?

How can we distinguish between a child who is ***absent from school*** and ***absent from learning***? Is the difference important in this context?

What systemic changes could be made to prevent educational neglect before it begins?

How do your own values around achievement, engagement and success influence your response to potential educational neglect?

Free E-Learning Courses

We do not currently offer an e-learning module on educational neglect. However, we have a range of related courses to support your understanding of neglect more broadly:

Neglect
Emotional Abuse
Hidden Harm: Parental Substance Misuse, Parental Mental Ill Health and Domestic Abuse



Guidance Document and Toolkit
Working Together to Improve School Attendance