



Adolescent Neglect Campaign

What is Adolescent Neglect

○ Neglect is: ‘The persistent failure to meet a young person’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the young person’s health or development.’

Adolescent Neglect can sometimes go unseen, however older children still need care and support.

Neglect can present as challenging behaviour e.g. poor engagement with education, violence and increased risk-taking (offending or anti-social behaviour, substance misuse, early sexual intercourse), with the young person incorrectly being seen as ‘the problem’.

Adolescence is a time of increasing independence and exploration or risk-taking. This can lead to actions being written off as ‘typical teenage behaviour’ instead of a sign of neglect. Their behaviour should be seen in context of their lived experience and potential trauma and issues such as mental health should not be taken at face value but explored.

During adolescence, the brain goes through neurobiological remodelling.

It’s a critical period for the development of emotional regulation and higher executive functioning (including decision-making, cognition, impulse control, and attention span, attachment)

Neglect in older children adversely affects this process and can build on the harms of earlier life neglect. Good Care in this period can lessen the effects of previous adverse experience.



| | TRUE | FALSE |
|--|------|---|
| Neglected older children are vulnerable to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Criminal exploitation ○ Sexual Exploitation, ○ Radicalisation ○ Substance misuse ○ Mental health difficulties (including self-harm.) | ✓ | |
| Neglect may lead a young person to look outside the family home for a sense of belonging and identity, leading to risks such as radicalisation and exploitation | ✓ | |
| Young people may under-estimate neglect and whether their parents or carers behaviours are neglectful. | ✓ | |
| Neglect is a persistent state | | ✓ Neglect can be acute or chronic (A combination of different aspects of poor care and support over time or individual events such as forcing a young person to leave home). |
| Contexts of adolescent neglect may involve other forms of harms or abuse | ✓ | |
| Adolescents become resilient to neglect and it is less harmful than other forms of maltreatment. | | ✓ |
| Risky Behaviours are always a normal part of adolescent development | | ✓ |
| Neglect can present as internalised, non-communicative, such as tiredness or self-harm | ✓ | |

Signs for professionals to recognise Adolescent Neglect

- Young person is truanting or persistently kept out of school
- Persistently not brought to health appointments
- Goes missing
- Offending
- Substance misuse
- Depression, self harm
- Isolated from peers or bullied
- Anger, violence
- Hunger, lack of personal hygiene
- Early 'consensual' sexual activity; teen pregnancy and birth
- Parents have their own problems such as substance misuse, mental or physical ill health
- Change occurs for a family - unanticipated events e.g. separation, divorce, new partner, redundancy, the onset of illness, or a bereavement can all reduce parents' capacity to provide adequate care and support.
- Disabled young people are more likely to experience neglect.
- Boys are more likely to be neglected in terms of supervision and monitoring.
- Living in a more affluent family may also link to experiencing more emotional neglect.

How to proceed when you are concerned about neglect

Neglect is a pattern not a 'snapshot'. Chronologies can establish patterns of behaviour across all family members over time.

Challenging teenage behaviour is a possible effect of neglect, not a cause of it. Understanding the 'lived experience' of a young person and what they feel is neglectful behaviour or conditions is particularly important.

Take opportunities to build safe and meaningful relationships with adolescents in which they can recognise their vulnerabilities.

Available support and resources for young people and adults

- Visit the Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership website for Neglect Presentations and the Adolescent Neglect Training Package
www.coventry.gov.uk/cscpresources
- See the Recognising Neglect in Older Children One Minute Guide
www.coventry.gov.uk/omgrnoc
- Call the NSPCC on **0808 800 5000** or visit
www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/neglect
- Early Help
www.coventry.gov.uk/earlyhelp
- Change Grow Live for Drug and Alcohol advice
www.changegrowlive.org/drug-alcohol-service-coventry/info
- Growing up neglected: a multi-agency response to older children
www.unicefirc.org/publications/pdf/adolescent_brain_a_second_window_of_opportunity_a_compendium.pdf