

“All partners are committed to working together so that every child in Salford is safe, well and able to reach their full potential.”

Thriving Families and Neglect Strategy 2023 – 2026

Supporting the City to ensure children's needs are met and to tackle childhood neglect.

Defining Unmet Need and Neglect

All grown-ups everywhere have a duty to uphold Article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

The statutory definition of neglect is laid out in [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#):

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- a. provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- b. protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- c. ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- d. ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

In simple terms, neglect is when a child is not getting the important things that they need like clean, warm clothes or enough to eat, or love. It is when a child is not being looked after properly by their parents and it might include not being kept away from dangerous situations, inadequate supervision or not being taken to the doctor when they are ill or hurt. Whilst the statutory definition refers to '*persistent failure to meet needs*', neglect can be episodic or cumulative. It can also be intentional or unintentional.

In Salford, we believe that in order to tackle neglect, we need to change our language and strengthen the way we work with parents who may be unable to meet the needs of their children for some, or all of the time.

A parent/carers may not be meeting their child's needs in a number of ways, as the table below shows. Appendix 1 provides more detail of what this may present as at different ages.

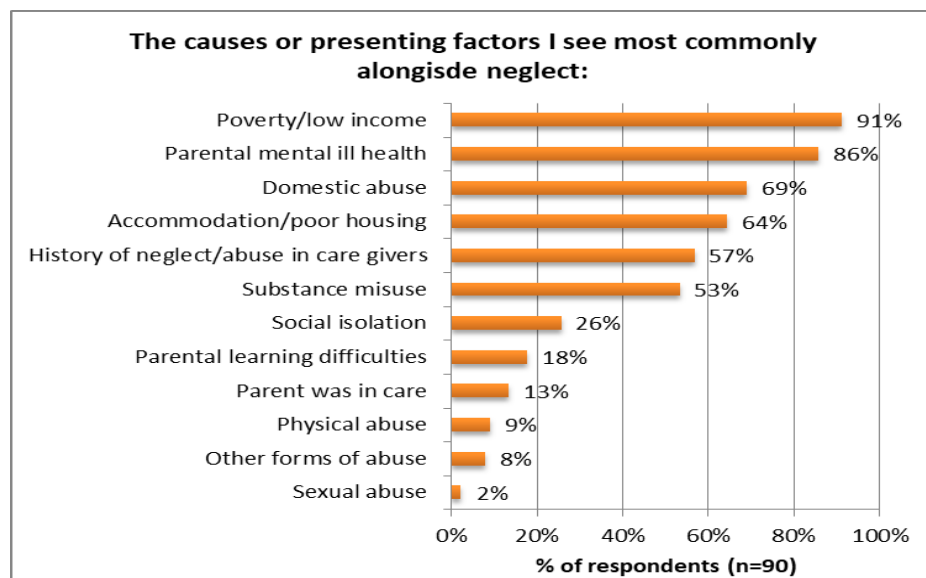
Type	Features associated with type of neglect
Educational neglect	A parent/carers fails to provide a stimulating environment or show an interest in the child's education at school/education provision. They may fail to respond to any special needs and fail to comply with state requirements about school attendance.
Emotional neglect	A parent/carers is unresponsive to a child's basic emotional needs. They may fail to interact or provide affection, undermining a child's self-esteem and sense of identity. (Most experts distinguish between emotional neglect and emotional abuse by intention; emotional abuse is intentionally inflicted, emotional neglect is an omission of care.)
Medical neglect	A parent/carers minimise or deny a child's illness or health needs and/or fails to seek appropriate medical attention or administer medication and treatment.
Nutritional neglect	A child does not receive adequate calories or nutritional intake for normal growth (also sometimes called 'failure to thrive'). At its most extreme, nutritional neglect can take the form of malnutrition or obesity.
Physical neglect	A parent/carers does not provide appropriate clothing, food, cleanliness and/or living conditions.
Supervisory neglect	A parent/carers fails to provide an adequate level of supervision and guidance to ensure a child's safety and protection from harm. For example, a child may be left alone, abandoned, left with inappropriate carers, or they may not be provided with appropriate boundaries about behaviours (for example, under-age sex or alcohol use) may not be applied

What We Know About Neglect

In October 2019, a Needs Assessment was undertaken by the Salford Safeguarding Children Partnership to understand the local demographic in relation to Neglect.

It is challenging to quantify child neglect. We do not know the exact prevalence of neglect or number of parents who are unable to meet their children's needs in Salford. Rawson *et al*, 2011 found that 4% of under 11s and 11% of 11- to 17-year-olds had experienced neglect at some point during their lives.

The Needs Assessment and Analysis highlighted a number of presenting factors that are commonly observed alongside neglect issues.



The needs assessment identified key factors which are *root causes* of, *presenting factors* or consequences (*Effects/ Impacts*) of children's needs not being met.

Root Causes:

Child's disability, nutritional neglect, adverse childhood experiences including parental mental health, alcohol and drug misuse, domestic abuse, parents living away from the family home such as separation, in prison, working across borders, diverging opinions about risk and thresholds by professionals, housing issues, debt issues, chaotic lives, parental capacity/understanding, professionals not taking into account historical concerns.



Presenting Factors:

Poor school readiness, behaviour or change in behaviour, poor communication skills, obesity, parent or child not engaging with professionals or services such as education, health or support services. Not brought to, or attending appointments, self-reporting and disguised non-compliance, episodic neglect (bouncing), drift.



Effects/Impact:

Developmental delay or disability, focus on parental needs rather than outcomes for the child, poor health, poor self-esteem or emotional literacy, poor educational attainment, poor life chances into adulthood, death.

Categorising these causes helps us to focus our strategy, to target our partnership response to tackling neglect in all forms.

SOCIAL FACTORS: <i>changes to the underlying needs faced by the local community and parents in Salford that results in changes to the numbers of children and families requiring help</i>	SYSTEM FACTORS: <i>the way that the system of services in Salford responds to families requiring help</i>	PRACTICE FACTORS: <i>the way that professionals work with families.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population and Demographics • Poverty • Housing • Adverse Childhood Experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sharing • Leadership • Service commissioning and provision across the system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Models of practice • Doing 'to' or 'with' • Skills and knowledge of professionals

Salford's Neglect Needs Assessment tells us that:

- Some of the wider determinants such as poverty, childhood obesity, dental decay, homelessness, school readiness and school attendance are worse in Salford than the national average.
- Recording was made available for social care to record completion of the Thriving Families Tools in June 2022.
- During the period of April 2022- March 2023 the Bridge screened 21499 MASH episodes. Of these, 11.9% (2568) had a contact reason of Neglect.
- More than half of the Neglect MASH assessments were recorded with the outcome of NFA. 17% were referred to Children's Social

Care for assessment and 18% either progressed to Early Help or were linked to existing Early Help plans.

- Data submitted for the CIN census 901.04.21-31.03.22) recorded 536 assessments with neglect identified as a risk factor. This represented 13% of the assessments completed in the year.
- On 31.03.23 there were 328 children subject to a child protection plan, of which 139 (42%) had a category of neglect.

Our needs assessment and local data correlates with the findings from Turney and Taylor (2014) and Brandon et al (2008) who conclude that child neglect is a complex phenomenon with a range of possible inter-connecting 'causes', and this complex interplay of factors can compromise parents' abilities to offer satisfactory care to their children.

In Salford, professionals take their responsibility to keep children safe very seriously. We have a strong culture of partnership working and all professionals are committed to working together to ensure that all children, regardless of their background are safe, well and able to reach their full potential.

Professionals in Salford are confident in accessing specialist advice and services when supporting children experiencing neglect. Agencies work well together in Salford and respondents shared that they feel equipped to work with children at risk of, or experiencing child neglect and their families.

The Salford Partnership Way

All partners are committed to working together so that every child in Salford is safe, well and able to reach their full potential.

Within this vision we believe in:

► **A child centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.** For our strategy, this means ensuring we remain focussed on the lived experiences and how they are feeling.

► **Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each citizen, practitioner and organisation should play their part.** For our strategy, this means that our entire community of people must interact with children for them to grow in a safe and healthy environment.

The Safeguarding Partnership principles guide our strategy and plan:

- 1) **Empowerment:** People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and with informed consent
- 2) **Prevention:** It is better to take action before harm occurs
- 3) **Proportionality:** The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented
- 4) **Protection:** Support and representation for those in greatest need
- 5) **Partnership:** Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting safeguarding issues
- 6) **Accountability:** Accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice.

SSCP Strategic Priorities

In Salford we recognise that safeguarding children can only be achieved by inter-agency and community partnership working. All children, regardless of their age and background deserve high quality and effective support as soon as a need is identified. Professionals working with children and their families in Salford take their responsibility to keep children safe very seriously and all partners are committed to working together so that every child in Salford is safe, well and able to reach their full potential.

In July 2022, the SSCP came together to agree the strategic business priorities for the partnership for the next 3 years (for 2023-2026).



Progress on Last Strategy

Neglect has been a priority for the SSCP since 2014. In October 2018, a short ILAC inspection of the local authority Children's Services in Salford found that *"The Response to neglect requires improvement"*. The inspection highlighted that *"The Local Authority's neglect tool is not consistently used to good effect by social workers or partners. This sometimes leads to delays in escalating concerns about children who experience inconsistent and neglectful parenting"* (OFSTED, 2018).

In 2019, Salford commissioned an independent needs assessment to understand the prevalence, causes, services and outcomes. This insight led to the development of the Thriving Families and Neglect Strategy (2020-2023). The strategy detailed Salford's key objectives during this time period and informed the action plan to drive work.

The multi-agency neglect sub group co-ordinates the partnership approach to tackling neglect and helping families to thrive in Salford. The sub group aims to improve the recognition of neglect in families and seeks to improve the partnership response to supporting children who experience neglect to improve their outcomes.

The SSCB/ SSCP annual reports detail the journey travelled and significant progress that the partnership has made in strengthening the multi-agency response to identifying and responding to child neglect in the City.

During this time, activities have included practitioner events, practice weeks, developing tools and resources and improving the workforce development training offer.

Some key achievements from the last 3 years include:

- Neglect strategy focuses on helping families to thrive.
- Multi agency workshops held to promote the use of the Thriving Families Tool.
- Neglect Champion introduced to provide support as part of the early help team in the Bridge.
- Work undertaken to raise awareness of the complex relationships between poverty and neglect.
- Educational neglect included in Education inclusion briefings to over 400 professionals.
- Neglect Systems Leaders group established to drive forward the strategic objectives across the partnership.
- Neglect Audit undertaken to understand the local themes in practice and to drive a culture of continuous improvement.
- GP's have received safeguarding training about neglect.
- Good multi- disciplinary attendance at the Neglect Sub Group.

Despite these achievements, we recognise that there is more work to be done to ensure that we have a whole- system approach to tackling neglect in Salford.

The revision and re-launch of this strategy, as well as providing a strong reinforcement of the statutory requirements in Working Together (2018), aligns our partnership approach with the overall strategic priorities for the Salford Safeguarding Partnership. The strategy details our ambition over the next three years, in our journey of continuous improvement, to ensuring the partnership response to identifying and responding to child neglect is robust and effective.

Priority 1: Preventing Childhood Neglect

“We want to empower families and communities to meet their child’s needs. We want everyone who comes into contact with children and young people to recognise signs of neglect and know how to respond. We want to eradicate or minimise the impact of social, economic and parental factors resulting in unmet needs and neglect.”

In Salford, we will adopt a whole system approach to tackling childhood neglect and helping families to thrive, underpinned by the principle that “Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility”. The central aim of our approach is to prevent childhood neglect. We must ensure that all professionals who have contact with children and young people are equipped with the right safeguarding knowledge and skills to intervene as early as possible. Effective prevention must involve all agencies across sectors, and work at national levels.

Having a robust understanding of childhood neglect is crucial for driving effective prevention. Professionals must be skilled and confident in recognising and responding to childhood neglect.

It is vital that neglect at all ages and stages, including pre-natal is understood, identified and addressed in a timely manner. This can be more difficult where the family is socially isolated, does not engage with professionals or attend appointments, educated through elective home education, missing out on education, or does not understand what their child needs.

The Support and Safeguarding in Salford: Helping children to thrive guidance has been produced by the SSCP to ensure that the right support, from the right people is available at the right time for children and their families. The guidance places emphasis on support available for families and safeguarding processes. It helps professionals to understand when a child may need additional support to be able to reach their full potential.

Actions to be taken:

- Undertake a training needs analysis of the current workforce development offer and address any gaps in provision
- Ensure that Salford’s partnership workforce and families have an increased awareness and understanding of childhood neglect.
- Develop information for children and families to help them to identify and understand what is neglect.
- Targeted training to raise awareness of assessment tools.
- Support in early identification of families to offer support.
- Take action to mitigate the impact of poverty.

Impact Measures:

- We will monitor the number of professionals accessing training across the partnership and seek to understand how this directly impacts practice (through evaluation).
- Undertake practitioner surveys at regular intervals to gauge workforce confidence in responding to neglect.
- Review data in relation to the number of families accessing support at an early intervention level.

Priority 2: Protecting Children from Childhood Neglect

“We will work in partnership to protect children from the risks associated with Childhood Neglect. We will address gaps in service provision and seek to overcome factors which prevent parents/carers from meeting the needs of their children. We will ensure that assessments and work with families is timely, effective and strengths based”.

The complex nature of childhood neglect means that tackling it is beyond the capacity of any single agency. Multi agency working and information sharing at strategic and operational levels are key to all parts of our response. We will empower parents and carers to meet the needs of their children independently wherever possible.

We will ensure that our existing strategies, plans and commissioning which support parent’s ability to meet their children’s needs are aligned. We will escalate gaps in provision where necessary to bring about changes to overcome any factors which prevent children’s needs from being met and contribute to the rise of neglect.

We will proactively work together to horizon scan for emerging risks and threats to our children and young people to make sure that we are in apposition to respond appropriately.

We want families and professionals to have access to evidence-based approaches and tools and be confident in using these to support practice. We will seek to understand the effectiveness of our

safeguarding practice to ensure that this is robust in assessing and responding to indicators of neglect. We will use this intelligence to target improvement activity and strengthen our partnership approach.

We will learn from case review activity and seek to embed best practice approaches. We will highlight effective practice and share learning across the partnership.

Actions to be taken:

- Develop a directory of services for key professionals and parents experiencing difficulties that may compromise their abilities to meet the needs of their children.
- Multi agency audit of neglect cases to gain insight into practice approaches and drive continuous improvement.
- Review and update local practice guidance and policies.
- Monitor data in relation to neglect to understand the level of need in Salford and use this to guide our multi agency approach and response.

Impact Measures:

- Parents and communities will have access to the right support at the right time and will tell us that they feel supported.
- S11 returns and practitioner surveys will give assurance of strengths based approaches to tackling neglect.
- Evidence of more thriving families assessment tools being completed.

Priority 3: Communications and Engagement

“We want to improve the information provided to parents, carers and the wider public about Neglect, so that key adults are empowered with advice and tools that they need to keep children safe. We want all professionals to work with families in a strengths-based way that takes into account risk and protective factors”

To deliver on our objectives, the Neglect sub group will have a dedicated proactive communications approach that focuses on priority audiences; building on existing Government campaigns to share and reinforce key messages.

The SSCP partners believe in, and utilise a strengths-based model of practice, and our approach to neglect should reflect this. Families will be helped to understand why changes are required and supported to engage with any work identified.

We know that a parent’s ability to meet their children’s needs may not be consistent and involve more than one episode of neglect. We want to reduce the number of ‘episodes’ of neglect or escalation of issues that a child may experience by ensuring our professionals, tools and interventions are able to identify risk and protective factors, and ensure that improvements are able to be sustained.

All professionals must remain clear and supported that where the safeguarding and criminal definitions of neglect are met, it is absolutely right that we take immediate action to protect children.

Actions to be taken:

- Neglect sub group to link with the SSCP Communications sub group to target messages using existing communications channels to ensure maximum reach and impact.
- SSCP to continue to improve engagement with all partners and sections of the community to raise awareness of childhood neglect.
- We will maintain a repository of learning on the SSCP website.
- Ensure that assessments promote equality and diversity.
- Ensure assessments reflect a THINK FAMILY approach.

Impact measures:

- The SSCP will observe an improvement in the work that we do, adding to professional skills and experience; and helping colleagues to improve (captured through existing QA mechanisms, reviewing website analytics, stakeholder interviews and feedback channels).
- There will be a culture shift to working in partnership with families, resulting in consistent better parenting approaches.
- We will observe a reduction in episodes of neglect and escalation of issues (through data analysis).

Priority 4: Listening and Responding to the Voice of Children and Young People

“We want to listen and engage with children and young people to ensure that we understand what matters to them. We want to use this information to inform our services. We will feed back to children and young people to give them some assurance”.

The Youth Council reminded us that collectively, all grown-ups everywhere have a duty to uphold Article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. This underpins our neglect strategy.

Young People told us what they think are the most important needs to be met for them to thrive and not to be neglected.



Developed by Salford Youth Council
October 2019



In Salford, we recognise the importance of on-going engagement with children and young people, and we will seek to engage with them as this strategy is implemented.

We want this priority to consider the various methods in which we capture feedback and the lived experiences of children. We want these approaches to be trauma-informed to try to prevent children from having to repeat their stories. We want the partnership to be culturally aware and hold each other to account to make sure that feedback and ideas from young people are taken forward, to improve how we deliver services.

Actions to be taken:

- Regular consultation with key stakeholders (including children and young people) to understand what matters to them.
- The Neglect sub group will consider findings from existing feedback channels via the Listening Hub and Voice of the Child sub group and use this intelligence to inform the work plan.
- Use listening loops to feed-back to children and young people in a “You said, We did” format.
- Promote cultural competence across the partnership.

Impact measures:

- Children and young people will tell us that they feel listened to and be able to contribute to the work of the partnership.
- Services will adapt and develop based on feedback from children and young people.

Priority 5: Safeguarding Effectiveness

“We will hold ourselves to account to learn from data and insight gathered across the system, quality assure safeguarding practice and monitor performance across the partnership to improve outcomes for children and young people. We will ensure that there is robust leadership driving good practice and improvement in tackling neglect”.

We will continue to strengthen the leadership of neglect across the City. Our identified ‘system leaders’ will drive our strategy and actions and provide specialist advice in their field, in addition to the Neglect champions who form our SSCP neglect sub-group.

Organisational and professional support for our skilled and knowledgeable workforce will include a range of development opportunities for professionals across the city; and opportunities to learn from practice through case discussions.

Agencies should ensure their workforce is properly skilled to be able to identify and act on indicators of neglect in the families they work with. This includes pathways and their role in multi-agency support. It also means that the workforce should be confident in knowing when and how to share concerns about a child’s welfare where child protection concerns may be apparent.

We expect each organisation and its leaders to ensure communication, implementation and embedding of this strategy, tools, and ways of

working. We expect them to review their own effectiveness on a regular basis.

The SSCP is committed to quality assuring safeguarding practice and monitoring performance across the system. We will monitor the effectiveness of local, inter- agency safeguarding arrangements and identify and report on good practice and areas for improvement in an open and transparent manner.

The Neglect sub- group will consider evidence from local reviews and national inspection reports and inquiries and advise the SSCP on any action required to improve safeguarding standards in Salford.

Actions to be taken:

The Neglect sub group will embed the comprehensive set of processes which enable the partnership to be assured about the effectiveness of safeguarding in multiple ways including but not limited to:

- True to Us exercises in response to national and local case reviews.
- Single agency audit
- Multi agency audit
- Section 11 self-assessment
- Practitioner Forums
- Performance data reporting (linked with other sub groups).

Impact measures:

- Regular review of partnership data to support early identification of need and to monitor use of assessment tools.

How We Will Achieve Our Objectives

Our **Neglect Work Plan** includes details of what we are going to do, how we will make this happen, any external factors and resources required to do so and how this will be different for children now and in the longer term. The plan will develop over the lifetime of this strategy to ensure that as a City we are able to respond to changes and new ideas to meet our objectives.

Governance and measuring effectiveness

This strategy will be owned and overseen by the Salford Safeguarding Children Partnership and its Neglect Sub Group. The SSCP will monitor progress through spotlight reports to the partnership. This agenda will be shared with wider system governance in recognition of the significant scope that thriving families and neglect has.

We will assure ourselves of the quality of our multi-agency response to neglect across services and demonstrate that our work has individually, and collectively impacted positively on outcomes and quality of life for children.

The Strategic Effectiveness Sub-Group, Neglect Sub-Group and our Youth Council we will consider how we are doing and where we can do better. We will also consult with children, young people, families and professionals about what has helped make the most difference and how supported they feel.

Further information

Toolkit links on website

(<https://safeguardingchildren.salford.gov.uk/professionals/neglect/>)

Worried about a child

(<https://safeguardingchildren.salford.gov.uk/professionals/>)

Salford Safeguarding Children Partnership

Tel: 0161 603 4322

Email: sscp@salford.gov.uk

Visit: <https://safeguardingchildren.salford.gov.uk/>

Twitter: @salfordscp #safeinsalford
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Appendix 1: Ways in which children and young people can experience neglect

Experiences of neglect by Horwath's classifications by age group. These are examples only intended to give an overview of what children may experience rather than provide an exhaustive list of ways in which neglect may be present

	Medical	Nutritional	Emotional	Educational	Physical	Lack of supervision
Infancy; 0-2 years	Includes failure to notice that a baby is unwell, and failure to seek medical treatment. Not attending routine health screening appointments may be indicative.	Under-nourishment leads to restricted growth and brain development. There can be a link between neglect and obesity, e.g. if parents use sweets as 'pacifiers'.	Lack of stimulation can prevent babies from 'fixing' neural connections. Infant attachments are damaged by neglect, which makes learning skills more difficult	Some parts of the brain, e.g. cortex, are dependent on experience and stimulation to develop. Language relies on reinforcement and feedback from carers.	Dirty home conditions may affect infant immune system; lack of changing and nappy rash; lack of encouragement may delay skill development.	Babies should be supervised at all times, particularly when lying on surfaces they could fall from or in the bath. If babies feel abandoned, this can affect the development of attachments.
Pre-school; 2-4 years	May include missed health and dental appointments, and failure to seek medical treatment following accidents or for routine conditions such as head lice or squints.	Not eating 1200 – 1500 calories per day, and/ or unregulated amounts of fat and sugar in the diet, which can lead to heart problems, obesity and tooth decay.	Neglected children without a secure attachment may experience difficulties playing with their peers, sharing feelings and thoughts, coping with frustration and developing empathy.	Neglect can be a significant factor in delaying a child's language development e.g. through the amount and quality of interactions with carers. This delay affects their education.	Child may present as dirty or malnourished, and living conditions may be poor. Child may not have been toilet trained, sleeping sufficiently or have adequate boundaries.	Home may lack safety devices e.g. stair gates, dangerous items such as drugs or knives may be within reach, child may not have appropriate car seat, child may be left home alone.
Primary; 5-11 years	Children may have more infections and illnesses than their peers due to poor treatment, or lack of prevention e.g. through hand washing, good diet or adequate sleep.	Food isn't provided consistently, leading to unregulated diets of biscuits and sweets. Concerns should not just focus on weight; children of normal weight could still have unhealthy diets.	Insecure attachment styles can lead to children having difficulties forming relationships, and may express their frustration at not having friends through disruptive behaviour.	Neglected children can experience a number of disadvantages at school, including low educational aspirations, lack of encouragement for learning and language stimulation.	Ill-fitting, inadequate or dirty clothing, poor personal hygiene, lack of sleep, lack of routines or boundaries which can lead to frustration with school rules and boundaries.	Primary school children may be left home alone after school, or expected to supervise younger children. They may be left to play outside alone or to cook meals without supervision.
Adolescent; 12+ years	Poor self-esteem and recklessness can lead to ignoring or enduring health problems rather than accessing services. There may also be risk-taking behaviour e.g. in sexual activity.	Adolescents may be able to find food, but lack of nutritious food and limited cooking experience can lead them to unhealthy snacks, which affects both health and educational outcomes.	Peer groups and independence are important at this age; young people who are isolated by neglect (e.g. through poor hygiene) will struggle. Conflict with carers may also increase.	Likely to experience cognitive impairment e.g. in managing emotion, challenging behaviour in school. Low confidence and academic failure can reinforce negative self-image.	Adolescents' social development is likely to be affected by their living conditions, inadequate clothing, poor hygiene and body odour. This can affect their self-esteem.	Neglected adolescents may stay out all night with carers not aware of their whereabouts, which can lead to opportunities for risk-taking behaviours that can result in serious injury.

