

Brief Guidance: Using the Neglect Screening Tool in Practice

Purpose:

The neglect screening tool is designed to help professionals identify if a child or young person's needs are not being met by their parent or carer.

Neglect is often a pattern of unmet needs over time, rather than a single event.

The tool is not a diagnostic instrument, but a structured prompt to support professional judgement, consolidate thinking, and inform next steps—including consultation with Children's Social Care if necessary.

How to Use the Tool:

Gather Information:

Complete the tool using information from your direct observations, records, and conversations with the child, family, and other professionals. The tool prompts you to consider key areas such as physical care, safety, emotional warmth, stimulation, guidance, and boundaries

Professional Judgement:

Use the tool as an aide-memoire to structure your thinking. Any one sign, or even several in combination, may not in themselves indicate neglect—context and professional judgement are essential. Discuss your findings with colleagues or safeguarding leads as needed

Scaling and Evidence:

For each area, rate your level of concern (e.g., 1 = immediate action needed, 5 = some action required, 10 = no concerns). Provide brief evidence or reasoning for your rating, drawing on facts and observations

Consultation and Next Steps:

The tool is intended to support, not replace, immediate referrals if safeguarding issues are identified. If your concerns meet the threshold for significant harm, follow the safeguarding procedures and have a telephone conversation with Children's Social Care without delay

Documentation:

Record the child's details, your role, and the date of completion. Note whether the parent/carers has been spoken with, and document your rationale for each area assessed

Key Points to Remember:

- The tool is a prompt for structured reflection, not a checklist to be completed in isolation.
- Use it to support early identification and intervention, not just when concerns are severe.
- Always act immediately if you believe a child is at risk of significant harm.