



Neglect matters

A guide for young
people about neglect

ChildLine

0800 1111





www.childline.org.uk

**If you don't want anyone to see what
you're reading, you can tear this cover off.**

ChildLine is a service provided by the NSPCC.
NSPCC registered charity number 216401 and SC037717. Stores code NS1695. 4263/10.



Neglect matters

This guide tells you:

- **what neglect is**
- **how to recognise it**
- **who can help**
- **what you can do about it.**

Neglect is very serious, so this guide has been written to help you understand what neglect is and how to get help.

What is neglect?

Neglect is when you are not properly cared for or supervised by your parents or carers.

“I think neglect is when parents ignore you, if you’re bullied at school and you have no one to turn to.”

You are neglected when you don't have:

- clean, warm clothing
- enough food
- a safe place to live
- protection from dangerous situations
- love and affection
- attention when you are very upset
- proper supervision
- enough attention given to your health and diet
- enough attention given to your education.

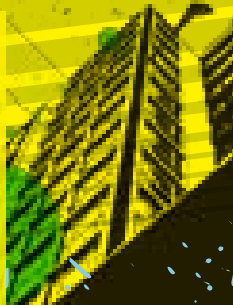
Neglect means serious and usually ongoing failure to meet young people's needs. But sometimes neglecting someone just once can be very serious.

“My name is Jack. I'm 13 and live in London. I've got two younger brothers. My mum is really stressed as we don't have much money. Sometimes she goes out in the evening and leaves me to look after Harry and Isaac, who are eight and nine. I worry about her because I don't know where she has gone and when she will come back. I'm scared one day when she goes out, she will not come back.”

Young people learn to do things and become independent at different rates, so it can be hard to know when neglect is happening.

These are possible signs to look out for:

- wearing clothes that are dirty, are the wrong size or don't keep the person warm or dry
- often not going to school without having a reason for it
- having no friends and being alone a lot
- trying to get attention, eg by bullying other people
- being left at home alone at night time.



At what age can young people be left at home alone?

The law does not say what age parents can leave their children unsupervised – this is because not all young people have the same ability to care for and protect themselves.

“I’m worried about a friend of mine. He keeps missing school and when I went round to his house it was a real state. He said his dad had just gone out but I’m not sure I believed him. He’s getting bullied at school because his clothes smell – I don’t think anyone washes them.”

What causes neglect?

There are lots of reasons why neglect happens. Neglect may happen when parents can't care for you properly because they:

- are ill
- are under stress
- are in a violent relationship
- have drug/alcohol problems
- have money worries
- don't have any support from friends or family nearby to help
- were not properly cared for themselves and don't know how to care for you.



"I think that parents do not always have help, and could have had a difficult time themselves."

Remember that neglect is never your fault

How can neglect affect you?

Not everyone is affected in the same way.

In the short term if you are neglected you might:

- feel unwell physically or emotionally
- run away from home
- get into trouble at school
- harm yourself
- take drugs or drink alcohol
- get in trouble with the police
- be vulnerable and pressurised into doing things you don't want to do.



In the long term neglect can affect your:

- physical and mental health
- chance of getting a job
- ability to develop healthy relationships with other people.



"Speak out!"

Beckie's Story

ISSUE #1: THE HARDEST THING TO DO...

"MUM'S ALWAYS WITH JO... SHE NEVER GIVES ME
A HUG OR WANTS TO KNOW WHAT I'M DOING. SHE
DOESN'T CARE ABOUT ME."



AT HOME...

IN CLASS...



"I'M FEELING REALLY UNHAPPY, THINGS AT
HOME HAVE BEEN BAD FOR AGES BUT I'M
WORRIED ABOUT TELLING ANYONE."

CONTINUES OVER...

LATER IN CLASS...



"HEY BECKIE, ARE YOU OK?
YOU'VE BEEN REALLY QUIET
LATELY. I WAS WONDERING
IF THERE'S ANYTHING
WRONG?"

.....

"HI NAHIMI. I'M HAVING A
FEW PROBLEMS AT HOME,
BUT I DON'T KNOW WHO
I CAN TALK TO ABOUT IT...."

.....

"DON'T WORRY, WHATEVER
IT IS, IT'S OK. PERHAPS
WE SHOULD TALK TO
MISS SWIFT."

AND SO...

"THANK YOU FOR COMING
TO ME, GIRLS. BECKIE,
I'M SURE WE CAN WORK
THINGS OUT. YOU'VE DONE
THE HARDEST PART...
TALKING ABOUT IT."



What can I do about neglect?

Many people overcome bad experiences. This is often because they have special people in their life that support them or they have interests, like music or sport that help them to feel happier.

We all need to look out for people we know to make sure they are safe. If you're worried about someone, talk to them.

Your family, carers and friends all have an important part to play in keeping you safe. So do people like teachers, school nurses, and Connexions workers – they have a duty to look after you if they are worried you are not safe.

A guide to getting help

There are things you can do if you are worried that you or someone you know is being neglected.

- **Think about what your worries are** – if it helps write them down.
- **Talk to someone you trust** – this will help you to think about your concerns and decide if you want to do something about them, or phone a helpline like ChildLine.
- **Take positive action and ask for help** – talk to someone like a teacher, school nurse or a Connexions worker, who will be able to put you (or the person you are worried about) in touch with someone who can help.



**Always know that
there are people
who can help –
don't suffer
in silence**

ChildLine

**Whatever your worry,
it's better out than in.**

ChildLine is the UK's free, confidential helpline for children and young people. We're here for advice and support, by phone and online, 24 hours a day. Whenever and wherever you need us, we'll be there.

Tel: **0800 1111** (open 24 hours)

Website: **www.childline.org.uk**

The number will not show on your phone bill.



Children's social services

Look in a phone book for your local social services.

Police

Call 999 or textphone 18000* in an emergency. Otherwise look in a phone book for your local police station.

Doctors / NHS Direct

Make an appointment with your local doctor or ring NHS Direct for confidential advice.

Tel: **0845 4647** (This call is not free and charges will vary)
Website: **www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk**

Connexions Direct

Provides confidential information, advice and support to young people aged 13 to 19. They can put you in touch with your local service.

Tel: **080 800 13 2 19** free (open 8am to 2am every day)

Textphone: **08000 968 336***

Website: **www.connexions-direct.com**

Special thanks go to the different groups of young people who generously gave their views, time and energy in helping to put this guide together.

*Use textphones if you are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech difficulties.

Beckie's Story draws on what children tell ChildLine but does not describe a specific case. The pictures used are of models whose images are representative of the range of children ChildLine works with.



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Speak to us

0800 1111

Produced in collaboration with:



The
Children's
Society



NSPCC 
Cruelty to children must stop. **FULL STOP.**