

# NUTRITIONAL NEGLECT

not providing a good balanced diet for normal growth (possibly leading to failure to thrive or obesity)



## What could that look like?

A parent/ carer failing to provide the right quality and quantity of food for a child's growth & development. A parent providing too much sugary or fatty food, relying on takeaways and process food high in sugar and salt; failing to recognise the need for a spread of nutrition is required; including fruit, vegetables (either fresh or frozen), protein, and carbohydrates. A parent underfeeding their child or overfeeding.

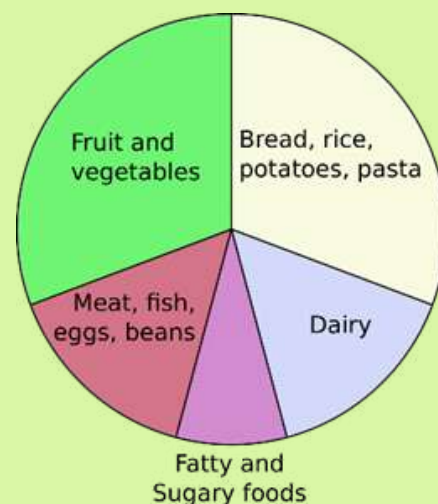
## What are the impacts on the child?

Children can die from malnutrition, and several child safeguarding practice reviews have highlighted that food had been purposefully withheld and/or the child has been given large quantities of salt. Poor eating habits can be developed that mean children don't receive the nutrients they need for healthy growth & development. This can lead to being underweight or overweight, which can go on to have far reaching health conditions, including heart disease, strokes, and diabetes. Children who are poorly nourished tend to have weaker immune systems which increases their chance of illness. They are also likely to lack the energy they need throughout the day to do things that matter, which can then leave them with poor mental health & wellbeing, impacting on anxiety levels and sleep patterns.

## What action can be taken?

Each situation will require careful consideration of the impact, severity, and duration of possible harm a child is experiencing from lack of nutrition. It is very likely that other types of neglect or abuse may occur simultaneously. Professionals should consider the guidance for the threshold of need of the child and take the appropriate action. The [neglect screening tool](#) may be of assistance. Some specific points to consider:

The eat well plate diagram gives good guidance on the general variety and proportion of food that should be eaten. It's a good idea to try and get this balance right every day, although not always in every meal. This does take thought and planning and Solihull has an [eat well move more](#) programme for families of children aged 4-16 who would like support and guidance to make healthy lifestyle choices.



Children who have diagnosed medical conditions may require specific diets. It is a good idea for coordination of help and support of all agencies to ensure that health professionals can provide the right advice to all involved, and a more formal referral for support can be made quickly if concerns arise.

There are often misconceptions that poverty equates to neglect. There needs to be an understanding that resources and opportunities are shaped by the way the economy and society are structured and by political decisions about the distribution of resources. A lack of resources within a household will be compounded by a lack of resources in the local community. Practitioners should recognise that those experiencing poverty understand it best and there is a need to work collaboratively to identify what is happening and needed. For many being a parent is a core part of their identity and they will take sacrifices themselves to promote their child's wellbeing, which makes them particularly sensitive to the slightest suggestion that they are unable or unwilling to provide appropriate care. Adding to financial strain and practical struggles can also be acute stigma and shame and many will not claim the financial support they are entitled to. More information about financial support in Solihull is available through [here2help](#), which includes help with food.

