

PHYSICAL NEGLECT

failure to provide appropriate clothing, cleanliness, living conditions & access to exercise.

What could that look like?

- A parent not ensuring a child has clothing that looks cared for, fits, and is appropriate for the weather.
- A parent not providing for the child's hygiene and exercise needs; not encouraging the development of a hygienic or exercise routines.
- A parent failing to maintain the facilities, amenities, décor and cleanliness of the family home to make it safe for a child, for example hoarding.

What are the impacts on the child?

There is more likelihood of accidents occurring in a home that is not maintained. Accidents to children are a significant issue, being a major cause of preventable death, serious injury and long-term disability. Under 5's are particularly at risk of being injured in the home, threats to breathing such as suffocation, strangulation and choking causing the highest number of deaths.

How children see themselves has been proven to have a long-term impact on their mental health. Children with clothes that don't fit, aren't looked after and are not suitable for the weather, may develop illness from cold or heat, but the clothes they wear, and their hygiene will also influence how people relate to them and could result in them experiencing ridicule and bullying. This can leave a child feeling incredibly insecure, and this feeling can stay with them through life, as even if the bullying stops for a while, they are aware that it could start at any time. It can have an emotional impact leaving them feeling isolated, unaccepted, angry, and withdrawn.

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 physical neglect. 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:

If families are living in privately rented property that is of a poor standard, they should discuss this with their landlord. In Solihull if the situation does not improve, they can seek support from [citizen's advice](#) and/or [environmental health](#).

Carbon monoxide is an odourless, tasteless, and invisible gas that is dangerous and can be created from faulty gas appliances. Fitting a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm in a home is a great way of keeping a family safe; anyone completing a GCP2 with a family can request a free CO alarm (maximum 1 per household).

Hoarding is a fire hazard. Smoke detectors are also an important safety asset; West Midlands Fire Service may also provide support on a range of subjects linked to fire risk through their [safe and well](#) service.

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](#).

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

