

# Child Neglect

Practitioner Forum - Child Neglect

24/6/2025

# Objectives


- ▶ Define neglect
- ▶ Identify signs and symptoms
- ▶ Understand cause and risk factors
- ▶ Prevention and intervention strategies
- ▶ Neglect tool



“The persistent failure to meet a child’s physical and/or emotional needs likely to result in serious impairment of the child’s health or development. ...

It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment ...”

*Department of Health*



“...it may also  
include neglect  
of, or  
unresponsiveness  
to a child’s basic  
emotional  
needs...”

*Department of Health*

# Definition of neglect from a child's prospective.

Adapted from responses in child welfare interviews NSPCC, UK

“ Neglect is when nobody takes care of you, even when they are supposed to”

“Its like being invisible. People see you, but don’t really see you”

“Neglect is being alone all the time, even when you are with people”

“Its when no one cares about you and you have to do everything yourself, even if your are too young”

# Childs voice

“I grew up with that kind of feeling of hunger, but not just hunger for food, she says with a hunger for care, for kindness, for acknowledgement , for information, for stimulation”

“I was expected to learn to read and write and I am literally sitting there just worried about what is happening to my Mum at home, are the police at the door, is Dad being arrested, is mum alive”

“There was food in the house, but they wouldn’t feed me”

“ I couldn’t focus on what the teacher was saying. All I could think about was when I’d eat again”

# Signs, Symptoms and impact of neglect

## Physical

- ▶ Consistent hunger, stealing food, low weight
- ▶ Over eating
- ▶ Poor hygiene
- ▶ Poor sleep
- ▶ Skin conditions
- ▶ Poor dental health
- ▶ Inappropriate clothing
- ▶ Constant fatigue
- ▶ Developmental delays
- ▶ Frequent accidents (due to lack of supervision)
- ▶ Untreated illnesses

## Emotional

- ▶ Unusual attachment between child and caregiver

Attachment and neglect are deeply connected, especially in early life. Neglect can disrupts the development of secure attachment.

- ▶ Low self esteem
- ▶ Difficulty regulating emotions
- ▶ Difficulty managing stress
- ▶ Poor emotional literacy
- ▶ Experiencing bullying
- ▶ Bullying others
- ▶ Social withdrawal
- ▶ High anxiety
- ▶ Aggression, defiance or antisocial behaviour
- ▶ Difficulty concentrating



## Educational

- ▶ Delayed brain development especially in areas related to memory attention and language
- ▶ Lower IQ
- ▶ Difficulty with executive function (planning organizing, focusing)
- ▶ Frequent absence from school
- ▶ Not being able to get to school
- ▶ 100% attendance at school
- ▶ Poor peer relationships
- ▶ Trouble trusting teachers or adults
- ▶ Lack of school supplies or correct uniform
- ▶ Difficulty keeping up with school work
- ▶ Home work not completed frequently

We miss neglect not because it isn't happening - but because it doesn't shout. It whispers, slowly and quietly until the damage is deep.

- ▶ It is often invisible
- ▶ Neglect can be chronic and cumulative, it builds up subtly
- ▶ Children often do not speak up
- ▶ Perception of child development which may mask neglect
- ▶ lack of curiosity deeper questions
- ▶ Overlooked ACE's (adverse childhood experiences)
- ▶ Lack of staff training
- ▶ High workload, not enough time to follow up
- ▶ Focus is on more urgent, visible cases
- ▶ Gaps in communication between services
- ▶ Excuses are accepted too easily
- ▶ Misinterpreted or normalized
- ▶ Parents may appear functional
- ▶ Interventions by professionals masking neglect

# Cause

Neglect doesn't usually result from a single cause. It is often the result of **complex, overlapping factors** involving caregivers, environments, and systems.

- ▶ Mental health difficulties
- ▶ Substance misuse
- ▶ History of being abused and or neglected themselves
- ▶ Lack of parenting skills or knowledge
- ▶ Unrealistic expectations of children
- ▶ Domestic abuse (Interpersonal personal violence)
- ▶ Poverty or financial stress
- ▶ Housing instability
- ▶ Exposure to community violence or crime

# ACEs

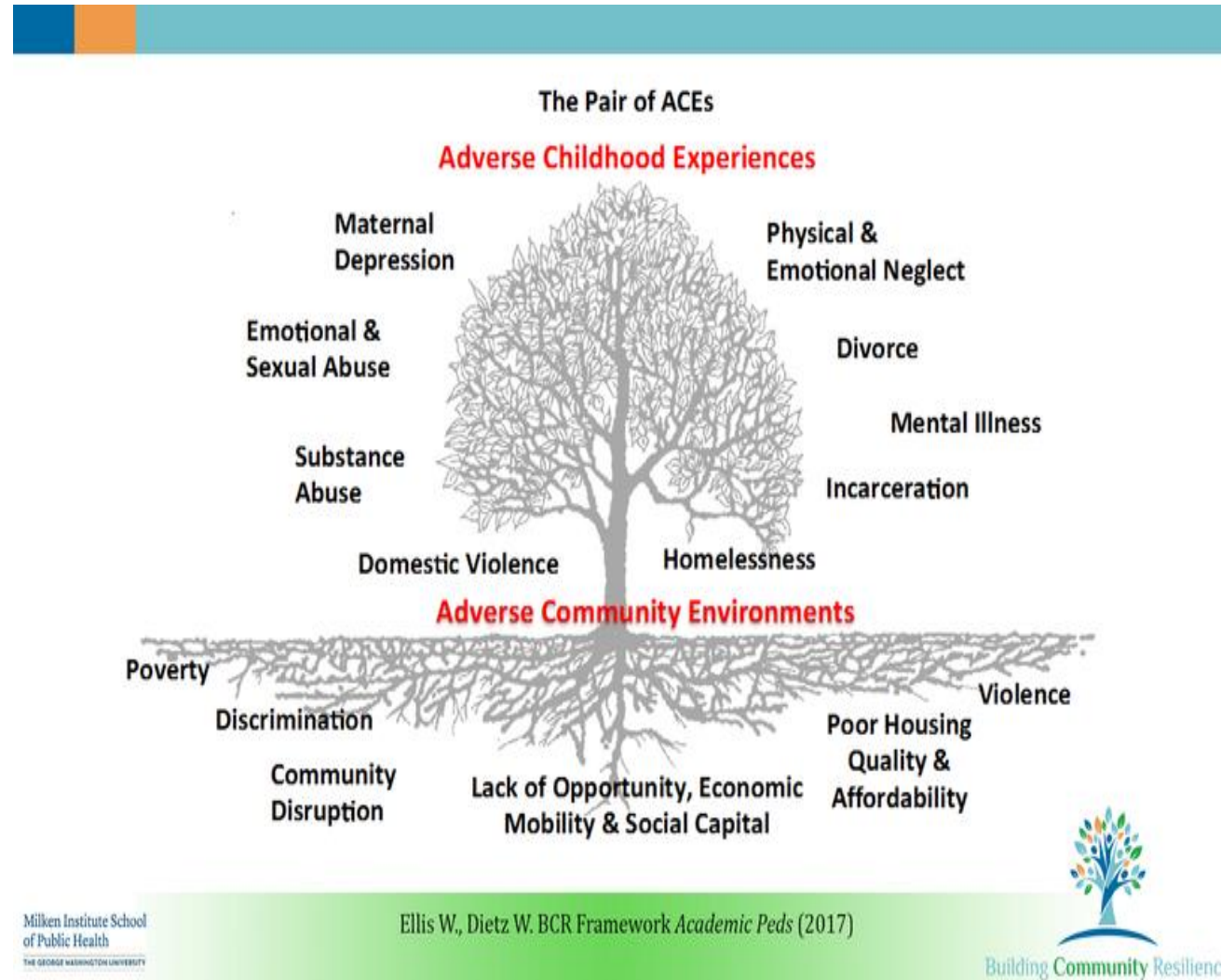
## Adverse childhood experiences.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are “highly stressful, and potentially traumatic, events or situations that occur during childhood and/or adolescence.

- ▶ Physical abuse
- ▶ Sexual Abuse
- ▶ Emotional Abuse
- ▶ Living with someone who abused drugs
- ▶ Living with someone who abused alcohol
- ▶ Exposure to domestic violence
- ▶ Living with someone who has gone to prison
- ▶ Living with someone with serious mental illness
- ▶ Losing a parent through divorce, death or abandonment

# Adverse childhood experiences

ACEs are traumatic events that occur before the age of 18 and can affect mental, emotional and physical health.



# How do we build a picture. We can't prevent what we don't know

- ▶ Genogram
- ▶ Ecomaps
- ▶ Whole family assessment health, environment, housing, finances
- ▶ Environment
- ▶ Society
- ▶ Record keeping
- ▶ Neglect tool
- ▶ Chronology

# Chronology example

## Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Chronology Template

The purpose of a chronology is to record significant events that have had, or continue to have a significant impact (positive or otherwise) on the child.

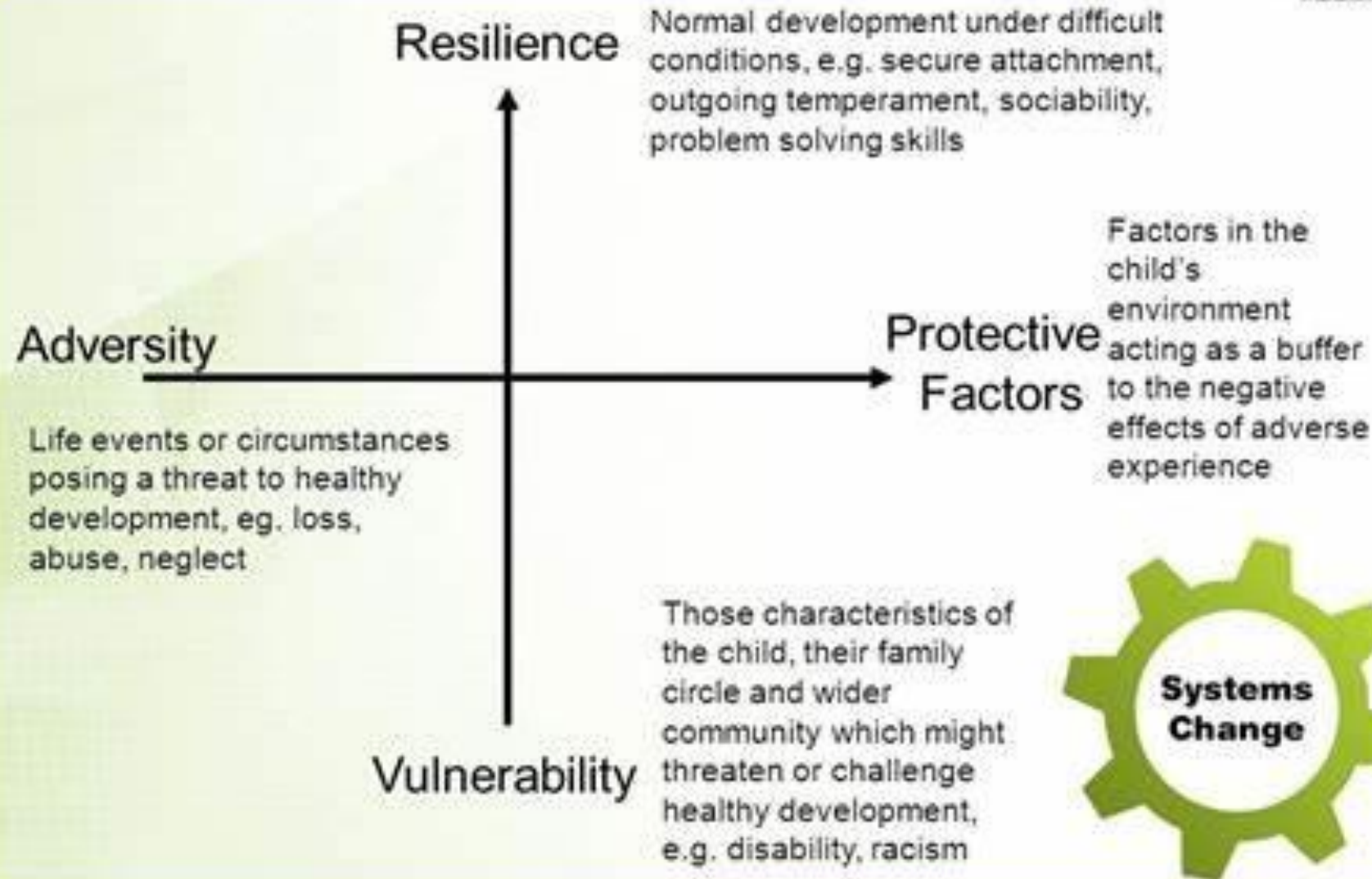
Further guidance on completion can be found in [SSP chronology guidance - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

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# The Resilience Matrix?

getting  
it right  
for every child  
in Lancashire



# Neglect tool

## Open tool

- ▶ To help practitioners to identify neglect at an early stage
- ▶ Alert the need for further action
- ▶ Identify with agency/organisation/practitioner will progress further assessment
- ▶ [Neglect screening tool - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

# Skills needed to use the neglect tool

- ▶ Effective communication skills
- ▶ Rupture and repair skills
- ▶ Time management
- ▶ Non judgemental approach
- ▶ Curiosity
- ▶ Understanding of neglect

# Resources

## SSP Web Pages:

- ▶ [Neglect - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- ▶ [Professional curiosity - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- ▶ [Information sharing and consent - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

## Other resources mentioned during the session:

- ▶ [Community Partners information sharing form | Wiltshire Police](#)
- ▶ [https://www.google.com/search?q=Cafcass+adolescent+wellbeing+questionnaire&rlz=1C1GCEB\\_enGB1013GB1054&oq=Cafcass+adolescent+wellbeing+questionnaire&gs\\_lcrp=EgZjaHJvb](https://www.google.com/search?q=Cafcass+adolescent+wellbeing+questionnaire&rlz=1C1GCEB_enGB1013GB1054&oq=Cafcass+adolescent+wellbeing+questionnaire&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvb)
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