

# Services For Education

SAFEGUARDING SUBSCRIPTION RESOURCES

## AFFLUENT NEGLECT

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When most people think of child neglect, they picture schools in low-income neighborhoods or children who are homeless. However, child neglect can happen in any community, even in affluent neighbourhoods. Affluent neglect is often hard to spot because the signs are not as obvious as they are in cases of poverty-related neglect.

This type of neglect can have severe consequences for children, so it's important for adults to be aware of the signs and how they can help.

### What is Affluent Neglect?

Affluent neglect can be characterised by emotional distance, lack of supervision, and material indulgence. Neglect in affluent families is complex as it doesn't mirror society's typical view of neglect.

Affluent parents may not recognise that despite their children having material security, the children may be more exposed to risks such as drug use or early sexual activity often as a result of less supervision and seeking connection with others who may pose a risk to safety.

Some affluent parents may become more emotionally disconnected from their children because they work very long hours, which means that their children are often left alone, or with a range of paid carers. In some cases affluent parents may not spend enough quality time with their children and put excessive pressure on their children to be high achievers.

This can lead to psychological and emotional problems for the children in adulthood.

### Why is it so Hard to Spot?

Affluent neglect is often hard to spot because of our own unconscious bias. Wealthy and privileged families may not appear disadvantaged in the traditional sense; they may not struggle with poverty, homelessness, or lack of access to food and health care.

This type of neglect is further compounded by societal perceptions that children from affluent backgrounds are "better off," so, any significant problems are not taken seriously or seen as a priority for intervention. The stigma associated with mental health issues can be amplified among this demographic due to the pressure of upholding an image of success and perfection.

Highly educated and successful parents may be more prone to neglecting their children's emotional health as they put an emphasis on achievement which can lead to fewer opportunities for attention and support.

All these factors make it increasingly difficult to notice signs of neglect among affluent households, which means that unless proactive measures are taken to address these issues early on, they can go unseen until a child is suffering significant harm.

## What Should You Look Out For?

There are several things you can look for that may indicate a child is being neglected:

- ◆ Withdrawing from social activities or appearing isolated
- ◆ Acting out in school or at home
- ◆ Struggling with drug or alcohol abuse
- ◆ Engaging in risky behaviors
- ◆ Having difficulty forming attachments
- ◆ Showing little empathy for others

## Engaging Parents.

Working with affluent parents suspected of neglect can be a challenging process. Overcoming resistant behaviour from parents who have the resources to challenge decision-making is often a difficult task. It is therefore important that staff have the requisite skills, knowledge and competence in order to be successful in engaging with these families.

It is essential that staff can identify any factors that could potentially contribute to affluent parental neglect, such as economic stresses, parental attitudes towards raising children or other familial dynamics. Through careful observation and assessment of the situation, it may be possible to understand why the family is experiencing problems and what interventions may be necessary.

Staff should always ensure that their approach is tailored to each individual family's circumstances and take into consideration any cultural issues which may have an impact on how the family functions.

Supportive management enables staff to feel supported when facing challenging situations with higher risk levels associated with affluent families and allows them access to additional professional advice if needed.

Organisational cultures of support, purposeful informal conversations about cases with colleagues, good supervision, knowledge, confidence, responsive managers and themed learning activities are key to your ability to work in this complex field. If you suspect that a child is being neglected, there are things you can do to help, always follow your safeguarding recording and reporting processes and talk to your DSL for support and advice.

If you need extra support on this topic, please contact us at [safeguarding@servicesforeducation.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@servicesforeducation.co.uk)



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