

**Audience** Groups 1-6 (Working Together 2010)

**Methods** Individual activity, small group discussion, large group discussion

### Preparation

You will need to prepare the set of flip charts with the appropriate headings in advance and to make sure that there are sufficient pens for all participants and additional flip paper in case it is required. You could instead give participants post-it notes to write on and stick under relevant headings.

### Links to Common Core

**Common Core 3** Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child (skills: personal skills). Understand the different forms and extent of abuse and their impact on children's development.

## Childhood Neglect: Improving Outcomes for Children

### Learning Outcomes

To identify family and environmental factors which may contribute to neglect.

### Process

Have available 7 pieces of flip chart paper each headed with one of the factors from the family and environmental factors domain:

- family history and functioning
- wider family
- housing
- employment
- income
- family and social integration
- community resources.

Give a pen to each participant. Ask participants to focus specifically on their experience of child neglect, and to move around the room and note under the headings any issues that exacerbate or contribute to elevated risk of neglect. Encourage them to move quickly and to consider all of the headings. This part should be light and fun.

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### Time

Total :1 hour

Individual activity 20 mins

Small group discussion 20 mins

Large group discussion 20 mins

Assessing family and  
environmental factors  
which affect the child  
and parenting capacity

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## Process Continued ▾

Then break the large group into 7 small groups and allocate each group to a heading. Ask each small group to distil the notes on the flip chart into a few key themes and messages ready for feedback and discussion in the large group.

Bring the group together for a discussion about the impact of family and wider environmental factors and to consider ways in which they can be alert to children who may be neglected.

There are a number of issues in relation to neglect that you can note in discussion:

- **Family history and functioning** – it is especially important to note the impact of patterns over time and ways in which chronic experiences can affect parenting capacity, for example, inter-generational patterns of neglect are common.
- **Wider family** – families where children are neglected are often isolated from extended family, or else have complex or troubled relationships with family. Parents may have deliberately cut ties with family members who have been abusive or neglectful in the past.
- **Housing** – housing difficulties can contribute to the risk of neglect, but are often under-recognised by practitioners. Not only can poor housing have a direct effect upon children's health, it can add stress upon parents and undermine parenting capacity. It is worth having extensive discussion about the ways in which good links can be made with housing officers who are often in a position to recognise neglected children.
- **Employment** – parents of neglected children are more likely to be unemployed, more likely to have experienced difficulties at school and more likely to lack qualifications and skills for work.
- **Income** – neglect is highly associated with poverty and deprivation and this is an issue often less recognised by practitioners. Poverty is often the back-drop for neglect and it is easy for practitioners to stop noticing the impact upon individual families.
- **Family and social integration** – families where children are neglected are often alienated from the community. This alienation can both contribute to and result from neglect. For example, unsupervised children can cause difficulties in the neighbourhood leading to conflict. Parental substance misuse and domestic abuse can be associated with behaviours, such as lack of cleanliness and piled up rubbish, that neighbours find anti-social, and can cause strife in local communities.
- **Community resources** – services and resources may be available in the neighbourhood, but it is a feature of neglect that parents often find it difficult to make use of services and resources that are on offer. Neglected children often live in neighbourhoods with poor resources for children, and they are unlikely to receive help from parents to access resources.