

Services For Education

SAFEGUARDING SUBSCRIPTION RESOURCES

AFFLUENT NEGLECT

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What is Affluent Neglect?

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 neighborhoods.

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.

Affluent neglect is characterised by emotional distance, lack of supervision, and material indulgence. Neglect in affluent families is made more complex because of differing values.

Affluent parents have a more relaxed attitude to drug use, sexual activity and sexuality, and as a consequence their children are exposed to more risks.

Typically, it is thought that some affluent parents are often 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.

Affluent parents often do 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 is amplified among this demographic due to the pressure of upholding an image of success and perfection. Highly educated and successful parents may even be more prone to neglecting their children 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 it's too late.

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 develop an accurate understanding of 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, 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.

If you need extra support on this topic, please contact us at safeguarding@servicesforeducation.co.uk



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