

NSPCC launches Neglect Matters campaign to raise awareness of child neglect in Bedfordshire

The NSPCC and Bedfordshire safeguarding boards are launching a Neglect Matters campaign to combat child and adolescent neglect across the county.

The children's charity has teamed up with local authorities and health organisations to push the issue of neglect into the public eye and let Bedfordshire's young people know where to find help.

Neglect is the continuing failure to meet a young person's basic needs and is the most common type of child abuse with one in ten children experiencing it.

Neglect happens when parents or carers can't or won't meet a child's needs. Sometimes this is because they don't have the skills or support they need, and sometimes it's down to problems such as mental health issues, drug and alcohol problems or poverty.

A young person who is being neglected may be left hungry or dirty, without adequate clothing, shelter, supervision, medical or health care.

In 2016/17, reports of neglect to the NSPCC's Helpline in Bedfordshire reached record numbers; the NSPCC referred an average of three reports of child neglect every week to Bedfordshire police and social services.

The Neglect Matters campaign launches on October 30 and aims to raise awareness of neglect with free awareness sessions for professionals in Luton, Central Bedfordshire and Bedford.

Local organisations can host the sessions for staff who come into frequent contact with families and children, such as those working in libraries, leisure centres and support roles in children's centres.

As well as helping people to understand the basic signs and symptoms of neglect, the sessions will include information on reaching adolescents. This is because teenagers are often viewed as being more resilient than younger children, but research shows they still need dedicated care to meet their physical and emotional needs, support their education, and keep them safe.

A guide for young people, called *Feeling Invisible*, will also be distributed, and adults in Bedfordshire will be able to get advice about how to recognise neglect in GP surgeries, community spaces such as sports centres and libraries, and online.

The NSPCC's campaigns manager for Bedfordshire, Emma Motherwell, said: "It is so important that we understand the true nature and scale of child neglect in Bedfordshire, so we can collectively tackle the fundamental causes and reach out to young people who need our help.

"Neglect can have a huge impact on a young person's physical and mental health, and can even be an indicator of other forms of abuse. Neglect is the most common reason for taking child protection action.

"If you suspect a young person is being neglected, please contact the NSPCC Helpline, so we can alert the authorities to quickly step in and help them."

Cllr Shan Hunt, Portfolio Holder for Children's Social Care at Bedford Borough Council, said: "No child should ever experience neglect. It is important that people are aware of signs and know how to raise their concerns.

"Ensuring the safety of all children and young people in the Borough is a priority for the Council and has led to the launch of this campaign with the NSPCC so that young people know how and where to find help."

Fran Pearson, Independent Chair, Luton Safeguarding Children Board, said: "Adolescents can sometimes be wrongly perceived as needing less care and support than younger children, and we recognise that some professionals may find it challenging to identify some of the less obvious signs of neglect particularly when it involves teenagers.

"Safeguarding children is everyone's business so it's important that we all - parents, carers and professionals- gain a better understanding of the issues so we can better support our vulnerable young people and let them know that neglect is never their fault and help is available so they don't have to suffer in silence."

Alan Caton OBE, Independent Chair, Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, said: "Neglect can have serious and long-lasting effects on children, so it is important that we are all able to take action to keep children safe.

"Whatever your role, safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and I urge you all to take notice of the campaign and information so that you can play your part."

For more information on the neglect sessions email emma.motherwell@nspcc.org.uk.

Adults can contact the NSPCC Helpline 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on 0800 800 5000, or help@nspcc.org.uk.

Children and young person who are concerned they or a friend are being neglected can call Childline for help on 0800 1111 or visit www.childline.org.uk.

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For further information please contact Jasmine Watkiss in the NSPCC East of England press office on 01733 667247

jasmine.watkiss@nspcc.org.uk.

[Neglect Awareness sessions with Emma Motherwell](#)

As part of the campaign, the NSPCC is offering free Neglect Awareness sessions for people who work in Luton, Central Bedfordshire and Bedford. The sessions are 45 mins to an hour and are suitable for people who come in to frequent contact with families and children as part of their jobs, but do not have safeguarding as their primary role- those working in libraries, leisure centres and support roles in children's centres for example.

By requesting a session, you are providing the location to host the workshop are responsible for inviting your staff/attendees. The workshop space will need to be suitable to show a powerpoint presentation with sound (you will need to provide the screen and speakers/audio).

To book a session: Click on the relevant link below and put the name of your organisation against your preferred date. Sessions will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

Please leave your contact details in the comments box (other participants will not be able to view your details).

- For those working in Luton: <https://doodle.com/poll/bwsmgydscq83ugx9>
- For those working Central Bedfordshire:
<https://doodle.com/poll/x68wmqeza7i2dzym>
- For those working in Bedford:
<https://doodle.com/poll/998847uq2g9b89aq>

About the NSPCC

The NSPCC is the leading children's charity fighting to end child abuse in the UK and Channel Islands. Using voluntary donations, which make up around 90 per cent of our funding, we help children who've been abused to rebuild their lives, we protect children at risk, and we find the best ways of preventing child abuse from ever happening. So when a child needs a helping hand, we'll be there. When parents are finding it tough, we'll help. When laws need to change, or governments need to do more, we won't give up until things improve.

Our Childline service provides a safe, confidential place for children with no one else to turn to, whatever their worry, whenever they need help. Children can contact Childline 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on 0800 1111 or by visiting www.childline.org.uk

Our free helpline provides adults with a place they can get advice and support, share their concerns about a child or get general information about child protection. Adults can contact the helpline 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on 0808 800 5000, by texting 88858 or visiting www.nspcc.org.uk