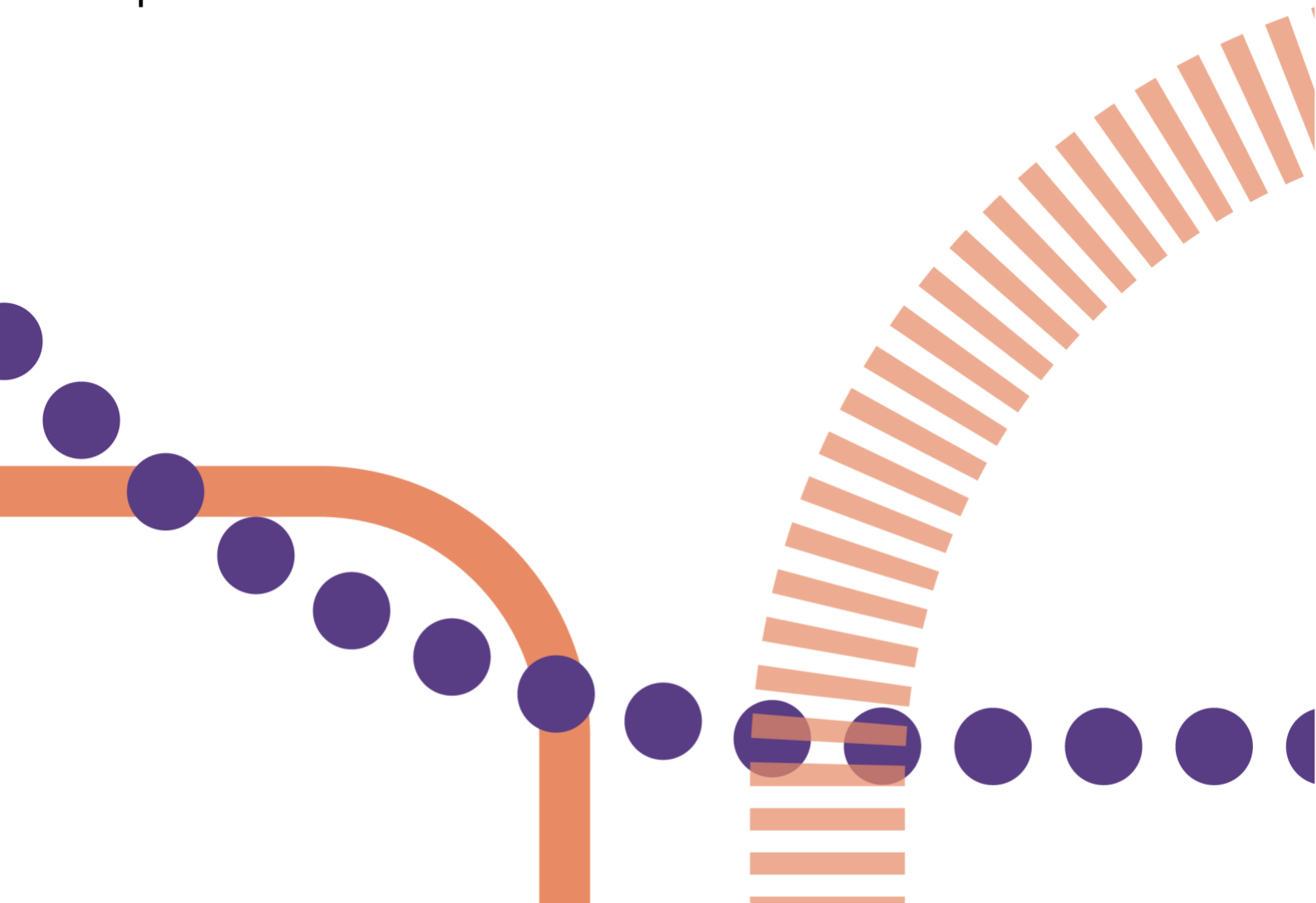


Child neglect literature review

Typologies of neglect

April 2026



This document

This document is an extract from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (CSPRP) literature review on child neglect.

Read the [Child neglect literature review in full](#).

For more resources, visit the [CSPRP website page on child neglect](#).

Types of neglect

Several studies seek to categorise different types of neglect. Debelle and others (2022: 4) define neglect as the 'omission of caretaking behaviour that a child needs for healthy development'. They draw on Knutson and others (2005) and Mennen and others (2010), based on child protection case reviews, to suggest the following typologies:

Typologies of neglect¹

- **Care (or physical) neglect:** carer fails to provide for the child's basic needs, such as food or clothing
- **Environmental neglect:** when a serious health and safety hazard is present in a child's physical surroundings, or the house is not adequate in size or cleanliness
- **Medical neglect:** failure to provide appropriate medical care when a child is in need of a medical assessment or treatment for injury, illness or disability
- **Educational neglect:** carers failing to send the child to school or prevent the child from having a suitable education
- **Supervisory neglect:** concerns a situation where a carer leaves a child alone or in inappropriate substitute care
- **Emotional abuse²:** when children are deprived of their emotional needs (forming secure, positive attachments with adults)

¹ Modified from Debelle and others (2022): 4.

² Debelle and others (2022 suggest including emotional abuse (or a deprivation of emotional needs) within a topography of neglect, drawing on Welch and others (2013).

Omission vs commission

Other reviewers have attempted to categorise neglect on the basis of omission vs commission (Allnock, 2016; Hackett, 2016; Hanson, 2016). Mulder and others (2018: 199) list 'poor quality of supervision, inadequate or insufficient availability of food, lack of school attendance, and lack of required medical attention' as potential negative experiences for the child which would be considered neglectful practices. They cite multiple types and subtypes of child neglect as proposed by different researchers:

- physical
- emotional
- medical
- mental health, and educational neglect (Erickson & Egeland, 2002)
- cognitive neglect (Slack and others, 2003)
- psychological and environmental neglect (Dubowitz and others, 2004)
- lack of supervision (Kaufman Kantor and others, 2004)
- denial of professional care and treatment (Knutson and others, 2004)