

Appendix 1

Types and Signs of Abuse

Child abuse is a term used to describe ways in which children are harmed by someone often in a position of power. It may not be our responsibility to decide whether child abuse is occurring but we are required to act on any concerns and report it to the appropriate party. The health, safety and protection of a child is paramount.

Abuse:

- a. a form of maltreatment of a child.
- b. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm.
- c. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear or experience its effects.
- d. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others.
- e. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse.
- f. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

1. PHYSICAL ABUSE

- a. Can include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or causing any form of physical harm to a child including through the fabrication of illness.
- b. Possible signs include:
 - Unexplained burns, bleeding, bruises, bites or other injuries.
 - Show signs of discomfort
 - Refusal to discuss injuries
 - Improbable or inconsistent explanations of injuries
 - Untreated injuries or lingering illness
 - Admission of punishment which appears excessive
 - Shrinking from physical contact
 - Fear of returning home or parents being contacted
 - Fear of undressing
 - Keeping arms or legs covered even in warm weather
 - Fear of medical help
 - Aggression/ bullying
 - Over compliant behaviour or inexplicable fear of adults
 - Running away
 - Significant changes in behaviour
 - Deterioration in work and/or change in attitude
 - Unexplained pattern of absences
 - Symptoms of drug or alcohol intoxication or poisoning
 - Violence or aggression towards others including bullying
 - Isolation from peers

2. EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- a. Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.
- b. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.
- c. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as

Approved: August 2025

overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.

- d. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.
- e. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.
- f. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.
- g. Possible signs of emotional abuse include:
 - Continual self-deprecation/describing self in negative ways
 - Over-reaction to mistakes
 - Fear of new situations
 - Inappropriate emotional responses, fantasies
 - Self-harm or mutilation
 - Compulsive stealing/ scrounging
 - Drug/ solvent abuse
 - 'Neurotic' behaviour — obsessive rocking, thumb-sucking
 - Air of detachment 'don't care' attitude
 - Social isolation
 - Attention-seeking behaviour
 - Eating problems
 - Depression, withdrawal
 - Delayed physical, mental or emotional development
 - Running away
 - Appetite disorders – anorexia nervosa, bulimia
 - Soiling, smearing faeces, enuresis

3. SEXUAL ABUSE

- a. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.
- b. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.
- c. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse.
- d. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.
- e. Possible signs include:
 - Bruises, scratches, burns or bite marks
 - Scratches abrasions or persistent infection in the anal or genital regions
 - Pregnancy
 - Sexual awareness inappropriate to the child's age or sexually explicit play
 - Public masturbation
 - Attempts to teach other children about sexual activity
 - Refusing to stay with certain people or go to certain places
 - Aggressiveness including sexual harassment or molestation, anger, anxiety, tearfulness
 - Depression or withdrawal
 - Isolation from peer group
 - Inappropriate drawings, writing or art work
 - Reluctance to undress for PE
 - Refusal to communicate
 - Eating disorders e.g. anorexia nervosa and bulimia

Approved: August 2025

- Self-harm
- Substance abuse
- Acquisition of gifts such as money or a mobile phone from new 'friends'

4. NEGLECT

- a. Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy, for example, as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:
 - provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
 - protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
 - ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
 - ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.
- b. Possible signs include:
 - Constant hunger or stealing, scavenging and/or hoarding food
 - Poor personal hygiene
 - Poor concentration
 - Inappropriate clothing
 - Frequent lateness or non-attendance
 - Untreated medical problems, illnesses or injuries
 - Low self-esteem
 - Poor social relationships
 - Compulsive stealing or scrounging
 - Constant tiredness
 - Failure to achieve developmental milestones or to develop intellectually or socially
 - Responsibility for activity that is not age appropriate such as cooking, ironing, caring for siblings
 - Left home alone for long periods

If a member of staff suspects a combination of types or isn't sure which type of abuse, they see signs of, they should discuss with the DSL so that decisions can be made regarding what information to be placed on any referral.