

Appendix 15: Categories and Signs of Abuse in Children

Abuse

A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical Abuse

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child so as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. 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. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children, including interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Neglect

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 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)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

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. 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. 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. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity

appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. Taken from Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

Domestic Abuse

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.

Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional and psychological abuse. It is characterized by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. The target experiences spiritual abuse as a deeply personal attack. This may include manipulation and exploitation, enforced accountability, censorship of decision-making, requirements for secrecy and silence, pressure to conform, misuse of Scripture or the pulpit to control behaviour, requirement of obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that the abuser has a 'divine' position, isolation from others, especially those external to the abusive context.

Abuse Using Social Media

Online abuse and any type of abuse that happens on the web, whether through social networks, playing online games or using mobile phones. Children and young people may experience cyber bullying, grooming, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or emotional abuse.

Child Trafficking

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in human beings".

Possible Indicators of Abuse - Children

Identifying abuse is not easy, and the indicators given here are examples only. Some of the indicators can occur in more than one type of abuse and it must be borne in mind that there can sometimes be other non-abusive explanations. However, they may alert you to the need to be aware of the possibility of abuse, to be observant and to record any concerns. If in doubt, you should always seek advice from a safeguarding professional.

Physical

- bruising in unusual places, patterns or shapes
- burns and scalds, especially in significant shapes (e.g. iron or cigarette end)
- adult human bite marks
- serious injury where there is a lack of, or an inconsistent explanation
- untreated injuries
- unusual fractures.

Children may be:

- unusually fearful with adults
- unnaturally compliant with their parents/ carers
- wearing clothes that cover up their arms and legs
- reluctant to talk about or refuse to discuss any injuries, or fearful of medical help
- aggressive towards others.

Emotional

- behaviour extremes: children may be overactive or withdrawn
- lack of confidence or self-worth
- lack of concentration

- physical indicators without an apparent cause
- difficulty in trusting adults or very anxious to please adults
- reluctance to go home; fear of parents being contacted
- social isolation
- behaviour that expresses anxiety (e.g. rocking, hair-twisting or thumb sucking)
- self-harming behaviour
- substance misuse
- sleep and/or eating disorders
- school non-attendance
- running away

Neglect

- children whose personal hygiene and state of clothing is poor
- children who are constantly hungry and frequently tired
- developmental delay
- low self-esteem
- social isolation
- poor skin tone and hair tone.
- untreated medical problems
- failure to thrive with no medical reason
- poor concentration
- frequent accidents and/or accidental injuries
- eating disorders
- begging and stealing.

Sexual Abuse

- Changes in behaviour – a child may start being aggressive, withdrawn, clingy, have difficulties sleeping or start wetting the bed
- Avoiding the abuser – the child may dislike or seem afraid of a particular person and try to avoid spending time alone with them
- Sexually inappropriate behaviour – or sexually explicit language
- Physical problems – health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas or sexually transmitted infections, or pregnancy
- Problems at school – an abused child may have difficulty concentrating and learning and their grades may start to drop
- Giving clues – children may also drop hints and clues that the abuse is happening without revealing it outright