

Types and Signs of Child Abuse & How to Report a Concern

General signs of abuse

Children who suffer abuse may be afraid or unable to tell anybody about the abuse. They may struggle with feelings of guilt, shame or confusion – particularly if the abuser is a parent, caregiver or other close family member or friend. Many of the signs that a child is being abused are the same regardless of the type of abuse. Anyone working with children or young people needs to be vigilant to some of the common indicators that there may be something concerning happening in a child's life:

- unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
- becoming withdrawn
- seeming anxious or depressed
- becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
- physical marks/injuries (burns, scars, fractures)
- lacks social skills and has few friends if any
- poor bond or relationship with a parent
- knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
- running away or going missing
- always choosing to wear clothes which cover their body
- malnutrition or unexplained weight loss

These signs do not necessarily mean that a child is being abused. There may well be other reasons for changes in a child's behaviour such as a bereavement or relationship problems between parents/carers. In assessing whether signs are related to abuse or not, they need to be considered in the context of the child's development and situation. However, these signs should be monitored and any concerns reported.

Domestic Abuse

Witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse, and teenagers can suffer domestic abuse in their relationships. Children who witness domestic abuse may:

- Become aggressive
- Display anti-social behaviour
- Suffer from depression or anxiety
- Not do as well at school - due to difficulties at home or disruption of moving to and from refuges

On-line Abuse

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the web, whether through social networks, playing online games or using mobile phones. A child may be experiencing abuse online if they:

- Spend lots, much more or much less time online, texting, gaming or using social media
- Are withdrawn, upset or outraged after using the internet or texting
- Are secretive about who they're talking to and what they're doing online or on their mobile phone
- Have lots of new phone numbers, texts or e-mail addresses on their mobile phone, laptop or tablet

Sexual Abuse

A child is sexually abused when they are forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This doesn't have to be physical contact, and it can happen online. Children may:

- They might avoid being alone with people, such as family members or friends
- They could seem frightened of a person or reluctant to socialise with them

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is deliberately hurting a child causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts. For example:

- Physical symptoms
- Bruises
- Burns or scalds
- Bite marks
- Fractures or broken bones
- Other injuries and health problems

Emotional Abuse

Children who are emotionally abused suffer emotional maltreatment or neglect. It's sometimes called psychological abuse and can cause children serious harm. Children may:

- use language, act in a way or know about things that you wouldn't expect them to [know for their age](#)
- struggle to control strong emotions or have extreme outbursts
- seem isolated from their parents
- lack social skills or have few, if any, friends

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a type of sexual abuse in which children are sexually exploited for money, power or status.

Definition:

- *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."*

Child Trafficking

Child trafficking is a type of abuse where children are recruited, moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold.

Grooming

Children and young people can be groomed online or in the real world, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons.

Non-Recent Abuse

Non-recent child abuse, sometimes called historical abuse, is when an adult was abused as a child or young person under the age of 18. Sometimes adults who were abused in childhood blame themselves or are made to feel it's their fault. But this is never the case: there's no excuse for abuse.

You might have known you were abused for a very long or only recently learnt or understood what happened to you. Whether the abuse happened once or hundreds of time, a year or 70 years ago, whatever the circumstances, there's support to help you. It's never too late.

Neglect

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs. It's dangerous and children can suffer serious and long-term harm. Children who are neglected may have:

- Poor appearance and hygiene
- Health and development problems
- Housing and family issues

Bullying and Cyber-Bullying

Bullying can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It's usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally. Types include:

- sending threatening or abusive text messages
- creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- trolling – the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- shaming someone online
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- encouraging young people to self-harm
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name
- sending explicit messages, also known as sexting
- pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations.

(Definitions have been taken from *NSPCC Definitions and signs of child abuse August 2019*)

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If you cannot reach any of the team by phone, please email all 3 members marking the email as 'High Priority'. For full details of how to report a safeguarding concern, please see the flowchart below.

Contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line

Call: 0800 028 0285

Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Safeguarding Reporting Procedure

The below flowchart demonstrates the process by which child protection concerns should be reported to The Tutor Trust, and how we will address them:

