

Safeguarding Guidance Note A– Types of Abuse and Neglect

Physical Abuse*

Physical abuse occurs when someone hurts another person on purpose. It can include hitting, slapping and punching, kicking, shaking, poisoning, burning and scalding, biting and scratching, breaking bones or drowning. It can also include making up the symptoms of an illness or causing a person to become unwell.

Signs of physical abuse can include bruises, fractures, burns or scalds, bite marks and other scarring, the effects of poisoning (e.g. vomiting, drowsiness or seizures), breathing problems from drowning, suffocation or poisoning.

Sexual Abuse*

Sexual abuse: involves forcing or enticing someone to take part in sexual activities and may not necessarily involve violence and irrespective of whether the victim is aware of what is happening.

Sexual abuse can involve:

- physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex);
- non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing;
- non-contact activities, such as involving victims in watching sexual activities or creating or watching sexual images or footage, encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming them in preparation for abuse;
- online activities, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse.

Sexual abuse can be perpetrated by both males and females and also by children (i.e. U18s); the sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in educational establishments.

Child Sexual exploitation (CSE)

Child Sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse which happens when a child is coerced, manipulated or deceived into sexual activity in exchange for things like gifts, drugs, money, status and affection. Children are often tricked into believing they're in a loving relationship so the sexual activity may appear consensual. They may trust their abuser and not understand that they are being abused. This is a type of abuse called

grooming

Abusers often use violence and intimidation to frighten a child, making them feel as if they've no choice. They may lend them large sums of money they know can't be repaid or use financial abuse or blackmail to control them. Exploited children may be made to 'find' or coerce others to join groups.

Although the age of consent is 16 years old, children who are 16 or 17 can be exploited and it is illegal to sexually exploit anyone under the age of 18.

Emotional or psychological abuse*

Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when perpetrators employ a range of personalised, psychological tactics to manipulate and frighten a person, distorting their thoughts and changing their sense of self in order to maintain control.

It involves the regular and deliberate use of a range of words and non-physical actions used with the purpose to manipulate, weaken or frighten a person mentally and emotionally; and/or distort, confuse or influence a person's thoughts and actions within their everyday lives, changing their sense of self and harming their wellbeing.

Perpetrators use a wide range of hidden tactics to maintain control and brainwash their victim, presenting insults as a joke, gaslighting, and presenting different versions of events.

Neglect or acts of omission*

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet someone's basic needs e.g., leaving them hungry or dirty, without proper clothing, shelter, supervision or health care. Neglect can have long term effects on a person's physical and mental wellbeing.

Neglect can be difficult to spot but there are generally four types of neglect.

- Physical neglect, where someone's needs for food, clothing or shelter, are not met or they aren't properly supervised or kept safe.
- Emotional neglect, where a person does not get the nurture and stimulation they need, often through ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them.
- Medical neglect, where someone isn't given proper health care, e.g., dental care or refusing/ignoring medical recommendations.

Educational neglect, where a parent does not ensure their child is given an education.

Self neglect*

Self neglect occurs when an adult over 18 is unable, or unwilling, to care for their own essential needs or manage their personal affairs. It includes neglecting their own personal hygiene, health or surroundings, refusing much-needed support and

neglecting their home (e.g., obsessive hoarding).

Self neglect can sometimes indicate mental health difficulties or other illnesses and can be influenced by having been the victim of abuse or neglect in the past. It can have serious implications for the health and wellbeing of the person concerned and for the people who care for and support them.

Financial or Material Abuse (including “mate crime”)*

Financial abuse involves having money or other possessions stolen (or “borrowed” without giving them back), being defrauded, being put under pressure in relation to money or other property or having money or property misused. It is a common type of abuse within domestic abuse, bullying situations or within “mate crime”, where victims are targeted for “befriending” with a view to exploiting them. People can be forced or tricked into selling their home or assets without consent, making bad investments or changes to wills, property or inheritance.

Financial abuse is subtle and can be difficult to detect. It often takes place where there is an unequal balance of power and where the victim is more vulnerable (e.g., due to a learning disability, illness or being frail/elderly).

Domestic Abuse*

Domestic abuse can involve psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse and generally occurs within the home environment. It includes any incident (or pattern of incidents) of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse, normally between family members, and can be linked with so called ‘honour’ -based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

Coercive/controlling behaviour is a core part of domestic violence and can include:

- acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation
- harming, punishing, or frightening the person
- isolating the person from sources of support
- exploitation of resources or money
- preventing the person from escaping abuse
- regulating everyday behaviour.

Children (i.e. under 18s) can be victims of domestic abuse by witnessing the abuse of others at home and can suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (e.g., teenage relationship abuse).

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is when a female's genitals are deliberately altered or removed for non-medical reasons. It is also known as 'female circumcision' or 'cutting' but has many other names.

FGM can happen at different times in a girl or woman's life, including when a baby is new-born, during childhood or as a teenager, just before marriage and during pregnancy.

In the UK, it is a criminal offence and must be reported to the Police. Helping someone else perform FGM or helping a girl to perform FGM on herself are also both illegal in the UK, even if the girl is located outside the UK.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Child Criminal Exploitation is the term used to describe specific types of abuse where children under 18 are forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through "County Lines", working in cannabis factories, shoplifting or pickpocketing or even vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others.

CCE can affect girls and boys differently, depending on the intentions of the perpetrator, but research has shown that they are both likely to be at higher risk of sexual exploitation. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

Perpetrators of CCE often threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt and may carry weapons, as a result, to protect themselves from others. Although children affected by CCE often commit crimes, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals.

Discriminatory abuse*

Discriminatory abuse may include unequal treatment based on any of the 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010 (e.g. their age, disability, gender and gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation). Hate crimes are often linked to this type of abuse.

Discriminatory abuse can include being subject to insults, verbal or physical bullying or harassment or other ill-treatment (including damage to property) due to these personal characteristics. Victims might be denied access to communication aids (e.g. not allowing access to an interpreter, signer or lip-reader, hearing aid, etc.) or other required medical aids or disability aids (e.g. wheelchair, walking frame, etc.), or be denied rights to healthcare, education, employment and criminal justice relating to a protected characteristic.

Organisational/institutional abuse*

Organisational/institutional abuse centres on poor professional practice arising from the structure, policies and procedures in an organisation, which can deny or restrict the

dignity, privacy, choice, independence or fulfilment of adults at risk.

Cases can involve the physical, psychological or financial abuse of service users, failure to meet their basic needs or act on allegations of abuse, the misuse of their medication, interference with correspondence/communications, or the inappropriate use of restraint. Cases can sometimes affect several people, such as in care homes or hospitals which may become run-down or overcrowded, with staff shortages, rigid regimes, poor quality catering, etc.

Modern Slavery*

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour and includes human trafficking, where when victims are taken between countries or around a country so they can be exploited.

Exploitation can take many forms, including sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude, forced criminality and the removal of organs. Traffickers often use grooming techniques to gain the person's trust, including their family or community. Physical, sexual and emotional violence are used to control victims of trafficking.

Children are often trafficked for child sexual exploitation, forced labour, criminal activity (such as pick pocketing or transporting drugs), benefit fraud, forced marriage or domestic servitude (such as cleaning, cooking and childcare). Trafficked children are also more likely to be physically and emotionally neglected.

Radicalisation

Children and adults can both be at risk of radicalisation into terrorism or extremism, when they begin to see violence and/or extreme methods as legitimate means to achieve certain goals associated with particular views and/or ideologies. People may become unhealthily involved in a range of radicalising causes, such as religious radicalisation, far right activity climate action or animal rights extremism.

Anyone can become radicalised although research shows that recruiters to extreme and terror groups deliberately target children under 18 and people with learning difficulties. There is no fixed pattern to how radicalisation may occur – it can take place face-to-face, via the internet and individuals can radicalise themselves.

**These types of abuse are classed as the "Ten Types of Abuse" under the Care Act 2014, which applies to adults over 18.*

Sources and Further Information:

NSPCC website: [Types of Abuse and Neglect Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024](#)

Social Care Institute for Excellence: [Types and Indicators of Abuse affecting Adults](#)

UK Government: [Modern Slavery Statutory Guidance](#)

UK Government Dept. for Education: [Managing the Risk of Radicalisation in your Educational Setting](#)