

Definitions

Abuse is 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 (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Child protection is the protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides for the protection of children in and out of the home.

Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.

Safeguarding means:

- protecting children from abuse and maltreatment
- preventing harm to children's health or development
- ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes.

Significant harm

The Children Act 1989 introduced Significant Harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children. Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse and Neglect are all categories of Significant Harm.

Physical abuse includes hitting, shaking, kicking, punching, scalding, suffocating and other ways of inflicting pain or injury to a child. It also includes giving a child harmful substances, such as drugs, alcohol or poison. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

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 (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

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. 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. These may include 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 cyber bullying), 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 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 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.

Young Bullying involves the persistent physical or verbal abuse of another child or children. It is characterised by intent to hurt, often planned, and accompanied by an awareness of the impact of the bullying behaviour. The children in our care have not reached a stage of cognitive development where he or she is able to plan to carry out a premeditated intent to cause distress to another. However, the children may come into contact with older children capable of bullying and need to be taught coping strategies.

Safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via **peer on peer** abuse (children abusing other children). This could include, but is not limited to: bullying (including cyber bullying), gender based violence/sexual assaults, harassment and child/youth produced imagery "sexting" etc. Any peer on peer abuse will be dealt with via the setting's Promoting positive behaviour policy or the broader child protection procedure, as appropriate. We will also ensure that the needs of children and young people who abuse others will also be considered along-side those who have been abused.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Criminal Exploitation of Children

Children may be vulnerable to neglect, abuse or exploitation from within their family and from individuals they come across in their day-to-day lives or on-line.

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. Criminal exploitation of children is also a safeguarding concern and will require a discussion with the DSL who will seek advice from agencies and professionals; including, reference to the Local Safeguarding Partnership procedures. This will mean a referral to the police and Starting Point and supporting the child in a sensitive manner.

Vulnerable children Children are supported, age appropriately, to understand and recognise risk and are aware of who to talk to if they have a concern. A number of common barriers exist that could prevent children from telling about being abused. Staff should be alert to the needs of children who may be vulnerable and will have to overcome additional barriers; this could include a child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs
- has special educational needs
- is a young carer
- is showing signs of engaging in antisocial or criminal behaviour
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child such as substance abuse, adult mental health, domestic violence and is showing early signs of abuse or neglect.