

Safeguarding Factsheet – Signs and Indicators

Physical Abuse

Deliberately physically hurting someone and could include hitting, smacking, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning suffocating, confinement to a room or cot or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour

Physical examples/indicators might include (but are not limited to):

- Unexplained bruises and injuries (including bite marks and scarring),
- unexplained burns,
- unexplained fractures,
- Improbable excuses or refusal to explain injuries,
- bald patches on scalp

Behavioural examples/indicators might include (but are not limited to):

- Fear of physical contact,
- self-destructive tendencies,
- afraid to go home or stay at home, poor self esteem
- manipulative behaviour (by the abuser)

Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment including deliberately telling the individual that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate, not giving opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate, causing the person frequently to feel frightened or in danger, that the individual is valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person

Physical examples/indicators might include (but are not limited to):

- Eating disorders,
- bedwetting,
- self-harm,
- attention seeking behaviour,
- vomiting
- sudden speech disorders
- removing mobility or communication aids or intentionally leaving someone unattended when they need assistance
- intimidation, coercion, harassment, use of threats, humiliation, bullying, swearing or verbal abuse
- cyber bullying

Behavioural examples/indicators might include (but are not limited to):

- mood changes,
- depression,
- failure to communicate,
- rocking,
- thumb sucking
- persistently running away/leaving home,
- truancy in children
- delinquency
- signs of distress: tearfulness, anger

Note - Domestic abuse, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose people to emotional abuse

Sexual Abuse

When a person or people use and exploit others sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. It may involve contact abuse and non-contact abuse.

Contact abuse includes penetrative and non-penetrative acts

Non-contact abuse could include:

- looking at pornographic material
- watching sexual activities,
- involvement in the in the production of pornographic material
- encouraging the individual to behave in sexually inappropriate ways

Indicators of sexual abuse may include (but are not limited to):

- being overly affectionate,
- medical problems e.g. chronic itching, genital pain, sexually transmitted infections,
- personality changes (becoming insecure or clinging,
- lack of trust or mood swings),
- sudden loss of appetite,
- simulating sexual acts with others
- uncharacteristic use of explicit sexual language or significant changes in sexual behaviour or attitude
- self-harming
- reluctance to be alone with a particular person
- excessive fear/apprehension of, or withdrawal from, relationships

Child specific indicators:

- sexually knowledgeable inappropriate to a child's age,
- drawing sexually explicit pictures

Neglect

The failure to provide for someone's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development.

This could include

- failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing
- failing to protect the individual from physical harm or danger,
- failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment,
- lack of stimulation or lack of appropriate supervision
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Physical examples/indicators might include (but are not limited to):

- being underweight,
- always hungry,
- poor physical condition and/or personal hygiene
- having untreated medical problems
- being inappropriately or inadequately dressed,
- poor environment – dirty or unhygienic

Behavioural examples/indicators might include (but are not limited to):

- begging or stealing food,
- always arriving early or leaving late,
- being overtired
- listless
- frequent unexplained absences
- inconsistent or reluctant contact with medical and social care organisations

Exploitation

The intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over another; to take selfish or unfair advantage, for personal gain.

This can include (but is not limited to):

- forced labour,
- slavery,
- servitude
- engagement in criminal activity,
- begging, benefit or other financial fraud
- trafficking,

Indicators might include (but are not limited to):

- signs of physical or emotional abuse,
- appearing to be malnourished, unkempt or withdrawn,
- isolation from the community, seeming under the control or influence of others,
- living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation and or living and working at the same address (including multiple occupancy housing),

- lack of personal effects or identification documents,
- always wearing the same clothes,
- avoidance of eye contact, appearing frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers,
- fear of authorities (Social Services/PSNI).

Note –

- Trafficking includes the movement of people from one place to another and while most think of it in the context of international boundaries, it also includes town to town – (Banbridge to Portadown) or county to county (Down to Armagh)
- Exploitation can be sexual in nature e.g. Child Sexual Exploitation.

Financial Abuse

The actual or attempted theft, fraud or burglary including exploitation, embezzlement, withholding benefits or pension or coercion.

Indicators might include (but are not limited to):

- Unexplained withdrawals from the bank,
- Unusual activity in the bank accounts,
- unpaid bills, unexplained shortage of money,
- reluctance on the part of the person with responsibility for the funds to provide basic food and clothes etc.,
- fraud scams (including online relationships) or theft.

Institutional Abuse

The mistreatment or neglect of an adult by a regime or individuals in settings which adults who may be at risk reside in or use.

Indicators within organisations/groups might include (but are not limited to):

- lack of consideration of the individual's dietary requirements,
- name calling,
- inappropriate ways of addressing people,
- lack of adequate physical care,
- unkempt appearance
- inflexible/non-negotiable systems and routines within the organisation/group
- public discussion of personal matters
- people being hungry or dehydrated

Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

Threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former partner or family member'.

Indicators might include (but are not limited to):

- Low self-esteem
- Physical evidence of violence such as bruising, cuts, broken bones
- Verbal abuse and humiliation in front of others
- Fear of outside intervention
- Damage to home or property
- Isolation – not seeing friends and family (outside COVID-19)
- Limited access to money

Note - The indicators for all the other forms of abuse previously covered, may be an indication of Domestic Abuse.