

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

**Child abuse takes many forms.
There are four broad types of child abuse.**

Physical abuse

This is when a person injures a child or subjects them to physically aggressive acts.

Examples:

Shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, kicking and training, which exceeds the child's development or maturity.

Physical indicators:

- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bite marks, cuts, welts, scratches
- Fractured bones
- Poisoning
- Internal injuries
- Shaking injuries
- Strangulation marks
- Ingestion of alcohol and drugs
- Dislocations
- Head injuries

Behavioural indicators:

- Expressing little or no emotion when hurt
- Offering unlikely explanations for injuries
- Wearing long-sleeved clothes on hot days
- Demonstrating fear of particular caregivers, adults or children
- Demonstrating a fear of their parents or a fear of going home
- Being fearful when other children cry or shout
- Being excessively friendly to strangers
- Being passive and compliant
- Being nervous, hyperactive, aggressive, disruptive
- Telling someone that physical harm has occurred

Emotional or psychological abuse

This is when a person rejects or threatens a child and is often part of a pattern rather than just an isolated incident.

Examples:

Humiliating, terrorising, name-calling, belittlement, inappropriate symbolic acts, taunting, sarcasm, yelling, negative criticism, placing unrealistic expectations on a child, continual coldness from a person.

Physical indicators:

- Delays in physical development
- Failure to thrive
- Speech disorders

Behavioural indicators:

- Stealing food
- Staying at school or other activities outside hours and not wanting to go home
- Lacks trust in other people
- Reluctance to attend an activity at a particular club or organisation
- Tired, lethargic, falling asleep at inappropriate times
- Abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Aggressive behaviour
- Poor peer relationships
- Indiscriminate with affection
- Lack of social skills
- Distress, e.g. frequent crying or apathy
- Demonstrating fear, of parent, caregiver or other adult
- Attention or risk taking behaviour

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE? CONT.

Sexual abuse

This is when a person involves a child in an activity of a sexual nature including both contact and non-contact behaviour.

Examples:

Sexual intercourse, masturbation, kissing or fondling, oral sex, making sexual comments, engaging a person in sexual conversations in-person or via social media, voyeurism, nudity, touching genitals or breasts, encouraging a person to view pornography including child pornography or other inappropriate touching or conversations; and exploiting a person through prostitution.

Often the first indication the child gives is when they tell a person whom they trust that they have been sexually abused.

Behavioural indicators

- Persistent and age-inappropriate sexual activity
- Sexual aggression towards younger or more naive children
- Sexual invitations or gestures to older people
- Sexual interaction involving animals or toys
- Sexual promiscuity or prostitution

Sexual abuse cont.

- Regressive behaviour, such as bedwetting and speech loss
- Challenging and aggressive behaviour
- Fear of people of a particular type or gender
- Suicidal and self-harm behaviour including self-mutilation, drug or alcohol abuse
- Risk taking behaviour such as lighting fires
- Cruelty to animals
- Criminal activity
- Frequent rocking, sucking and biting behaviour

Neglect

This is the persistent failure or deliberate denial of providing a child with the basic necessities of life.

Examples:

Failing to provide adequate food, clean water, adequate supervision, medical attention, shelter or clothing or protecting a child from danger or foreseeable risk of harm or injury.

Physical indicators:

- Suffer from frequent hunger or malnutrition
- Have poor hygiene
- Wear inappropriate clothing
- Remain unsupervised for long periods of time
- Lack proper medical attention
- Experience abandonment by parents/carers
- Fail to thrive

Behavioural indicators

- Stealing food or clothing
- Spending time at school or other external activities beyond the usual hours
- Reluctance to attend an activity at a particular club or organisation
- Tired or falling asleep at inappropriate times
- Abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Aggressive behaviour
- Poor peer relationships
- Indiscriminate with affection
- Desire for adult affection
- Poor emotional response / lack of expression or enthusiasm
- Anxiety about being left
- Frequent rocking and sucking behaviour