

## Indicators of abuse

There are some general indicators that a child or young person may be suffering from some kind of harm - such as: aggression, anxiety, attention problems, self-harm, or social withdrawal.

No one symptom is proof that abuse has occurred, and a child may endure abuse without developing any symptoms at all.

## Children's response to abuse

Children have different levels of resiliency or hardiness and different personality attributes, so different children respond differently to similarly abusive situations. On the whole, in trying to understand why the abuse is happening, children suffering abuse develop a range of anti-social and self-destructive behaviours and thoughts.

## Safeguarding: important principles

When thinking about safeguarding, there are four important principles to remember:

- Child abuse exists
- Safeguarding is a multi-agency operation
- No one should make decisions about child abuse on their own
- Most parents have a right to know what is being discussed

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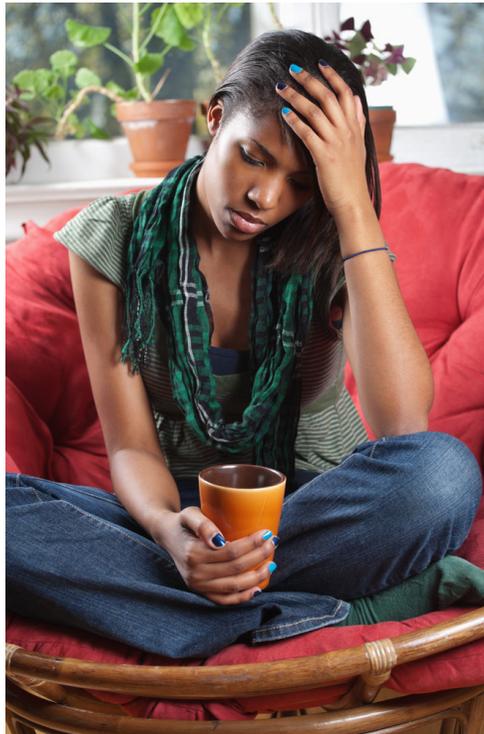
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## Abuse: key messages

Here are four key messages about child abuse:

- Abuse can be perpetrated by anyone anywhere
- There is often more than one type of abuse in any situation
- Abuse is not always intentional – it can be the result of often well-meaning ignorance
- We all have a duty to report any concerns or suspicions that a child may have been or may be abused



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# Child Abuse Awareness

## Refresher Guide

## What is meant by safeguarding?

Safeguarding is a broad term used to describe services, philosophies and procedures aimed to protect children from harm.

It also incorporates the additional aims of:

- Preventing impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

## What are we safeguarding children from?

Because the term safeguarding is broad, it means different things to different people, depending on their beliefs, role and perspective.

However, in general, we are safeguarding children from:

- Abuse by adults
- Abuse by their peers
- Abuse by society
- Self-abuse (or harm)



## Definition of child abuse

The Children Act 1989 states that child abuse should be considered to have happened when someone's actions has caused a child to suffer 'significant harm' to their health or development.

## Definition of significant harm

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of 'significant harm' as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children.

## Parenting and abuse

There are many reasons why significant harm is defined - not least because of issues around poor parenting. All parents upset their children sometimes. Saying "no" and managing difficult behaviour is an essential part of parenting. Tired or stressed parents can lose control and can say or do things they regret, and may even hurt the child.

If this happens often enough, this can seriously harm, or 'significantly harm', the child.

## How to establish whether there is significant harm

To understand and establish significant harm, it is necessary to consider a whole range of factors, including the parent's failure to provide adequate care, the risk of future harm and the child's development within the context of their environment.

If you are unsure whether the threshold for significant harm to a child has been met you should seek advice.

## Children's social care

Where it has been established that a child is at risk of significant harm, Children's Social Care become responsible for co-ordinating an assessment of the child's needs, parenting capacity and wider family circumstances.

Where actual or significant harm is suspected, Children's Social Care together with the Police initiate child protection procedures.

## Is there really a problem?

According to the NSPCC:

- One in six children are sexually abused before the age of sixteen

According to the Home office:

- Every 10 days in England & Wales one child is killed by a parent
- 36% of all rapes are committed against children under the age of 16 - more than a third of all rapes
- 72% of sexually abused children did not tell anyone about the abuse at the time



## Who abuses children?

Children are usually abused by someone in their immediate family circle.

This can include parents, brothers or sisters, babysitters or other familiar adults.

It is quite unusual for strangers to be involved.

95% of children who call the NSPCC ChildLine know their abuser, be they parents, teachers, friends of the family or other relatives.

## Forms of abuse

There are different forms of abuse and everyone who works with children needs to recognise the possible signs and indicators that a child is suffering abuse, or is at risk of abuse, and understand the effects that abuse can have on children.

Forms of abuse include:

- Physical abuse or physical injury
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual abuse
- Faltering growth or non-organic failure to thrive
- Other forms of abuse, such as bullying, cyberbullying, harassment and self-harming