

Signs of Child Abuse & Neglect

Sexual Abuse

(Child until 18 years old)

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities including non-contact activities, such as looking at or making indecent images.

- Aggressive/disruptive behaviour.
- Withdrawn/mood swings.
- Self-harming, incl. eating disorders, head banging.
- Sexually explicit behaviours not in keeping with age or developmental stage.
- Sexual contact with younger children or older adults.
- Soiling/smearing faeces/bed wetting.
- Signs of exploitation—unexplained gifts/money, excessive secrecy online, missing from school.
- Trouble sleeping/Running Away/Missing.
- Regular drug/alcohol use from early age.
- Pregnancy/STI's/sore in genital area.
- Concerned about younger siblings without saying why.

The internet has increased the risk of non-contact sexual abuse and students must be alert to these dangers when online, including sharing nudes and semi nudes. Staff should be alert to signs of grooming for Child Sexual Abuse Material CSAM/Indecent Images of Children IIOC.

It is important staff understand normal sexual behaviours for the age range they work with e.g. Brook Traffic Lights tool

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child

- Extreme emotional outbursts/challenge authority.
- Development delay with no medical explanation.
- Low self-esteem/self-harm.
- Overly affectionate to strangers.
- Disassociation/lack of normal response, not crying, not jumping at loud noise etc.
- Lack of confidence/social skills/friends.
- Doesn't want to go home/have friends to visit.
- Regressing to younger child behaviour.
- Reckless to own or others safety.
- Difficulty maintaining relationships.
- Seems isolated from parents.
- "Attention" seeking behaviours i.e. Attachment seeking behaviours.



Neglect

Neglect is the failure to meet a child's physical and or psychological needs.

- Inadequate/unwashed clothing for size/weather.
- Underweight for age but eats well in school/doesn't have lunch or money for food.
- Frequent school absences/poor punctuality.
- Developmental delay.
- Parents are dismissive/uninterested.
- Poor health/not taken to GP or dentist when needed.
- Emotionally needy/obsessive behaviour.
- Persistently unkempt/body odour.
- Accidental Injuries indicating a lack of supervision.
- Regular tiredness/infections.

DSL's see Wakefield Neglect toolkit

(NB Children do not "get used to" neglect.)

High Risk Factors

- Domestic Abuse – at home or in peer relationships
- Parental substance misuse
- Poor parental mental health
- Parents with learning difficulties
- Children with disabilities
- Families with past history of child abuse

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse involves any action that causes physical harm to a child including fabricating the symptoms of or deliberately inducing illnesses.

- Bruising of various ages/burns/bites without reasonable explanation or parents and child's story differs.
- Overmedication/force feeding.
- Injuries in unusual areas or outline of implement e.g. cigarette, hair straightener, belt. Genital area—FGM.
- Refusal to discuss injuries/inconsistent explanations.
- Parents claim fits/episodes at home which are never observed in school.
- Indicators of poisoning—vomiting, drowsiness, seizures, breathing problems.
- Talk of punishment which seems excessive/fear of parents/others.
- Concerned about younger siblings without saying why.
- Reluctance to remove clothing for swimming or PE.

Further Information

Often signs and indicators cross over different categories. Remember children can be abused outside the home and by other children. SEND children may develop at different rates to peers. However staff must be alert to general changes in Behaviour/Mental Health and bear in mind that challenging, disruptive behaviour can be a sign of abuse.

Be Professionally Curious and Record and Report any concerns immediately to DSL's as outlined in your policy.

For more information see

Keeping Children Safe in Education. KCSIE