



4.6c

Eltham College



CHILD ABUSE

Categories and Recognition

(Taken from the *London Child Protection Procedures 2007 and Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education 2007*)

4.1 DEFINITIONS

4.1.1 'Child abuse and neglect' is a generic term encompassing all ill treatment of children including serious physical and sexual assaults as well as cases where the standard of care does not adequately support the child's health or development.

4.1.2 Children may be abused or neglected through the infliction of harm, or through the failure to act to prevent harm.

4.1.3 Abuse can occur in a family or an institutional or community setting. The perpetrator may or may not be known to the child.

4.1.4 *Working Together to Safeguard Children* sets out definitions and examples of the **four broad categories of abuse which are used for the purposes of registration**:

1. Physical abuse
2. Emotional abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Neglect

4.1.5 These categories overlap and an abused child does frequently suffer more than one type of abuse.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

4.1.6 Physical abuse may take many forms e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

4.1.7 It may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child. This unusual and potentially dangerous form of abuse is now described as fabricated or induced illness in a child (see 9.1).

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

4.1.8 Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child's emotional development, and may involve:

- Conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person
- Imposing developmentally inappropriate expectations
- Causing children to feel frightened or in danger - e.g. witnessing domestic violence
- Exploitation or corruption of children

4.1.9 Some level of emotional abuse is involved in most types of ill treatment of children, though emotional abuse may occur alone.

SEXUAL ABUSE

4.1.10 Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening and includes penetrative (i.e. vaginal or anal rape or buggery) and non-penetrative acts.

4.1.11 It may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic materials, watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

NEGLECT

4.1.12 Neglect involves 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 and development.

4.1.13 This may involve failure to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing, failure to protect from physical harm or danger or failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of a child's basic emotional needs.

4.2 RISK INDICATORS

4.2.1 The factors described in this section are frequently found in cases of child abuse. Their presence is not proof that abuse has occurred, but:

- Must be regarded as indicators of the possibility of significant harm
- Justifies the need for careful assessment and discussion with designated / named / lead person, manager, (or in the absence of all those individuals, an experienced colleague)
- May require consultation with and/or referral to the SSD

4.2.2 The absence of such indicators does not mean that abuse or neglect has not occurred.

RISK INDICATORS

- An explanation inconsistent with an injury OR Several different explanations for an injury
- **Burns** on sites unlikely to be injured accidentally

(It can be difficult to distinguish between accidental and non-accidental burns and scalds, and will always require experienced medical opinion. Any burn with a clear outline may be suspicious.)

- **Bruising** on sites unlikely to be injured accidentally
 - Bruising on the arms, buttocks and thighs may be an indicator of sexual abuse
 - Bruising around the face
 - Two simultaneous bruised eyes, without bruising to the forehead, (rarely accidental, though a single bruised eye can be accidental or abusive)
 - Repeated or multiple bruising on the head or on sites unlikely to be injured accidentally
 - Variation in colour possibly indicating injuries caused at different times
 - The outline of an object used e.g. belt marks, hand prints or a hair brush

- A large number of scars or scars of different sizes or ages, or on different parts of the body, may suggest abuse
- Appears frightened of his/her parent/s
- Significant and inexplicable changes to behaviour
- Significant and inexplicable deterioration in school work
- Prolonged or frequent absences from school
- Child left with adults who are intoxicated or violent
- Child abandoned or left alone for excessive periods
- Self-harm (including eating disorders), self mutilation and suicide attempts
- An anxious unwillingness to remove clothes - e.g. sport (this may be related to their culture or physical difficulties)
- Inappropriate sexualised conduct
- Sexually explicit behaviour, play or conversation, inappropriate to the child's age
- Continual and inappropriate or excessive masturbation
- Low self esteem and lack of confidence
- Withdrawn or seen as a 'loner' – has difficulty relating to others
- Aggressive behaviour towards others
- Scape-goated within the family

For further information:

London Safeguarding Children Board. www.londonscb.gov.uk.
 Every Child Matters. www.everychildmatters.gov.uk.