

**Recognising Abuse**

**Guidance**

Document Control

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1. **Summary**

This document provides clear definitions of abuse and guidance on the signs of abuse and should be read in conjunction with the following University of Derby Safeguarding Policies:

* Procedure for raising safeguarding concerns
* Procedure for handling safeguarding allegations against a member/members of staff
* Procedure for safeguarding lead and officers.

Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human or civil rights, by any other person or persons. Professionals should not limit their view of what constitutes abuse or neglect, as they can take many forms and the circumstances of the individual case should always be considered.

All staff (paid & unpaid) have a responsibility to safeguard children and adults at risk

1. **A Child at Risk**

In this document, child refers to anyone aged under 18 years. I

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

The following types of abuse and neglect are identified within the statutory guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019* and the *Care Act 2014*, but should not be considered exhaustive;

* Physical Abuse
* Domestic Abuse
* Sexual Abuse
* Sexual Exploitation
* Psychological Abuse
* Financial or Material Abuse
* Modern Slavery
* Discriminatory Abuse
* Organisational Abuse
* Neglect and Acts of Omission
* Self- Neglect

1. **An Adult at Risk**

An adult at risk is any person who is aged 18 years or over who may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

Throughout this guidance we have used the term adult to refer to an adult at risk.

1. **Definitions and Types of Abuse**

It is accepted that any definition has its limitations in terms of accuracy and relevance. However, the following definitions are offered to increase understanding.

* 1. **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s or an adult’s physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development. It may involve an individual being denied access to adequate food, shelter, clothing, or appropriate medical care or treatment; or someone failing to protect them from physical harm or danger.

* 1. **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse might involve assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions such as shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm. Physical abuse can include making someone purposefully uncomfortable (e.g. opening a window and removing blankets), involuntary isolation or confinement, misuse of medication (e.g. over-sedation), forcible feeding or withholding food. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child or adult whom they are looking after.

* 1. **Domestic abuse**

An incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse by someone who is or has been an intimate partner or family member regardless of gender or sexuality or age. Domestic Abuse includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse, so called ‘honour’ based violence, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Forced Marriage. Domestic abuse affecting young people can also occur within their personal relationships, as well as in the context of their home life.

* 1. **Sexual Abuse**

Any form of sexual activity with a person under 16 years of age is sexual abuse, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

Sexual activity with a person over the age of 16 years, but under the age of 18 years, is regarded as abuse where there has been a use of force or where the other person is in a position of power and/or trust

Sexual activity with a person over 18 years of age is regarded as abuse when it takes place without consent or where the person is unable to give informed consent. This will only be a safeguarding concern if the adult is an adult at risk.

The activities may include physical contact or non-contact activities: rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the has not consented or was pressured into consenting. Sexual abuse can take place on-line and technology can be used to facilitate off-line abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely committed by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse as can children.

The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue, and the evidence shows girls, children with SEND and LGBT children are at greater risk.

* 1. **Sexual exploitation**

Sexual exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive using exploitative situations and relationships (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. Vulnerable people may receive ‘something’ (e.g. accommodation, alcohol, affection, money) as a result of performing, or others performing on them, sexual activities. Over recent years online exploitation and ‘grooming’ have become more prevalent and are a method whereby vulnerable people are targeted by individuals or groups target with the intention of abusing them or causing them harm.

* 1. **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is ‘unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’ that can occur online and offline regardless of age, gender or sexuality. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a person’s dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment. It may include: sexual comments, sexual “jokes” or taunting, sharing sexual images, physical contact or upskirting.

* 1. **Emotional / Psychological Abuse**

Psychological abuse includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child or adult which may cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the person’s emotional or psychological health or development. It may involve causing them to repeatedly feel unhappy, anxious, humiliated, frightened or in danger. It may involve conveying to them that they are worthless, unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed upon the person. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), or the exploitation or corruption of children and/or adults.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child or adult, though it may occur alone.

* 1. **Financial or Material Abuse**

Financial Abuse includes misappropriation of an individual’s funds, benefits, savings etc. or any other action that is against the person’s best financial interests. This may include theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property, financial transactions or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

* 1. **Modern slavery**

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment

* 1. **Institutional Abuse**

Abuse can occur in an institution where there is a regime or culture which is abusive. Abuse can occur when the individual’s wishes and needs are sacrificed for the smooth running of an institution, organisation or home. Institutional abuse can occur through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

* 1. **Discriminatory Abuse**

Discriminatory Abuse includes psychological abuse and harassment, physical actions, isolation, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage or civil partnership or religion. Discriminatory abuse can occur when actions/decisions are made that are based not on a person’s ability or needs but in relation to their race, sex, disability etc.

The signs of Discriminatory Abuse may be similar to the signs of other forms of abuse, for example, physical or psychological abuse.

* 1. **Bullying**

Bullying can include (but is not limited to): use of social media sexual violence and/or sexual harassment; verbal abuse, verbal threats, physical threats, emotional abuse, physical abuse; sexting and initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

* 1. **Self-neglect**

Self-neglect is when an individual fails to look after their basic needs, such as personal hygiene, appropriate clothing, feeding or tending appropriately to any medical conditions they have.

* 1. **Homelessness**

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to the welfare of a child or adult. Indicators of a risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour and eviction processes.

* 1. **Child Criminal Exploitation: County Lines**

Criminal exploitation of children is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines criminal activity, drug networks or gangs that groom and exploit children and young people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns

* 1. **Risk of Radicalisation**

Radicalisation a process through which a person comes to support extreme ideologies and then may become involved with terrorist groups or acts. Extreme ideologies may include religious beliefs, political beliefs and/or prejudices against particular groups of people. People may be radicalised in many different ways, and over different time frames from as little as a few hours, days or it may take several years. Radicalisation may be through family members or friends, intimate relationships, direct contact with extremist groups, or through the internet. Extremist messages or membership of an extremist group can offer a sense of purpose, community and identity which may be appealing, especially if someone is experiencing challenges in their life.

**4.17. Gender Based Violence**

Gender-based violence is a term that covers different types of abuse because of the victim’s gender including domestic violence, harassment and stalking, rape and sexual assault, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, honour-based abuse and trafficking.

Gender-based abuse can occur in same sex relationships and can be experienced by transgender people. While men are at less risk of GBV, it is important to note that men can be abused in similar ways.

**4.18. Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)**

VAWG is a term that refers to violence against females and incorporates any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to females.

‘**Honour-based Violence’ (HBV) or ‘Honour-Based’ Abuse (HBA)**

HBV/ ‘HBA is a crime or incident, which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community’ (NPCC, 2008).

Honour-based violence takes many forms and is often committed with the approval and/or collusion of the family and community members. Victims of HBA/HBV are more usually female but it is important to recognise that males can also be victims.

Examples may include murder, un-explained death (forced suicide), fear of/actual forced marriage, controlling sexual activity, domestic violence, child abuse, rape, kidnapping, false imprisonment, threats to kill, assault, stalking and harassment and forced abortion, isolation, withdrawal of medical care or other support.

There is no religious or cultural reason for Honour-based Violence

**4.20. Forced Marriage**

Forced Marriage is a marriage without the consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor in a forced marriage one or both spouses either do not, or cannot, consent to the marriage. (https://www.anncrafttrust.org/what-is-forced-marriage/)

There is no religious basis for Forced Marriage and it is different to an arranged marriage.

Forced marriage can involve physical, psychological, emotional, financial and sexual abuse including being held unlawfully captive.

A forced marriage includes marrying someone who lacks the mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether they are pressured to or not) (The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014)

**4.21. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or Female Circumcision**

FGM is a procedure where the female genitals are deliberately cut, injured or altered without medical reason or medical intervention. It usually takes place on young females before puberty. FGM typically occurs to girls whose mothers/ grandmothers/ extended female family members have had FGM themselves, or if their father comes from a community, where it is carried out. It is often the older females within the community who participate in the procedure, which is very painful and traumatic and will affect the health and emotional wellbeing of the individual for life.

There is no religious text that requires FGM.

FGM is illegal in UK. Regulated health and social care professionals and teachers are required now to report cases of FGM in girls under 18s, which they identify in the course of their professional work to the police, within one month of discovery.

**4.22. Breast Flattening or Breast Ironing**

Breast Flattening is the process during which a young girl’s breasts are flattened in order to delay the development of the breast. Breast Flattening usually starts at the first signs of puberty and takes place over a long period, often years. The act is typically carried out by female relatives and is common in families where mothers/ grandmothers/ extended female family members undergone Breast Flattening, or if their father comes from a community, where it is carried out.

Breast Flattening can occur through a variety of methods including:

Ironing (i.e. using heated implements to burn and compress the breast tissue)

Pounding and pummelling (i.e. using fists, hammer stones or other implements)

Binding (i.e. using elastic belt or binder to press the breasts)

There is no religious text that requires Breast Flattening

It is important to recognise that some young people may bind their breasts using constrictive methods due to gender transformation or identity.

**4.23. Private Fostering**

Private fostering is an informal arrangement made by parents/guardians for a child to live with other people. A child is deemed ‘privately fostered’ if they are under 16 years old (or 18 years if the child is disabled) and they are being cared for and provided with accommodation by someone who is not a close relative\* and the arrangement is expected to last for 28 days or more.

(\*Close relatives are parents, grandparents, aunt, uncle or step parent (by marriage) but not a cousin, grand aunt or a family friend.)

Each party involved in the private fostering arrangement has a legal duty to inform the relevant local authority at least six weeks before the arrangement is due to start. This enables the local authority to monitor the reasons for the arrangement ensure the child is safe.

However, many private fostering arrangements are ‘hidden’ and not brought to the attention of local authorities. This means that children are at risk of exploitation and harm.

**4.23 Sexting**

Sexting is when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others,or sends sexually explicit messages. Sexting can occur via any device that allows media and messages to be sent/shared.

Creating or sharing explicit images of anyone under 18 years is illegal, even if the person doing it is also under 18 years old

Sexting includes:

* being partly or completely naked, or in your underwear
* posing in a sexual position
* sending ‘nudes’ or ‘dick pics’
* talking about sexual things you’re doing or want to do
* doing sexual things on a live stream

1. **Possible Indicators of Abuse in Children**

This section provides more detail in relation to the range of indicators and signs that may be associated with abuse.

All staff should be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns.

* 1. **Common Signs**

Some common signs that there may be something concerning happening in a child’s life include:

* Unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
* Becoming withdrawn
* Seeming anxious
* Becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
* Lacking social skills and having few friends, if any
* Having a poor bond or relationship with a parent
* Having knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
* Children missing from education, running away or going missing
* Choosing to wear clothes which cover their body.

These signs don’t necessarily mean that a child is being abused, there could be other things happening in their life which are affecting their behaviour.

**5.2. Physical Abuse**

Most children will have cuts and bruises and injuries, and these should always be interpreted in the context of the child’s medical / social history, developmental stage and the explanation given. However, some children will present with injuries (including cuts and bruises) that are more likely to have been deliberately inflicted rather than accidental.

Important indicators of physical abuse include but are not limited to: cuts, bruises or injuries that are either unexplained or inconsistent with the explanation given, injuries that are often visible on the ‘soft’ parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely such as cheeks, abdomen, back and buttocks. A delay in seeking medical treatment when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern.

**5.2.1. The physical signs of abuse may include**:

* Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body.
* Multiple bruises maybe in clusters.
* Cigarette burns.
* Human bite marks.
* Broken bones.
* Scalds, particularly those with upward splash marks.
* Multiple burns with a clearly demarcated edge.

**5.2.2. Changes in behaviour that can also indicate physical abuse**:

* Fear of parents or carer being approached for an explanation.
* Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts.
* Flinching/withdrawing when approached or touched.
* Reluctance to get changed or remove clothing (such as cardigan or coat in hot weather).
* Withdrawn behaviour.
* Running away or truanting – Unexplained absence from home, school other programmed activities.
  1. **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse can be difficult to identify as there are often no outward physical signs. Indications may be a developmental delay due to a failure to thrive and grow, however, children who appear well-cared for may nevertheless be emotionally abused by being taunted, or belittled. They may receive little or no love, affection or attention from their parents or carers. Emotional abuse can also take the form of children not being allowed to mix or play with other children.

**5.2.1. Changes in behaviour which can indicate emotional abuse include:**

* Becoming isolated.
* Fear of making mistakes.
* Sudden speech disorders.
* Self-harm.
* Fear of parent or carer being approached regarding their behaviour.
* Developmental delay in terms of emotional progress.
* Parents or carers who inappropriately withdraw their attention from their child.
* Parents or carers blaming their problems on their child.
* Parents or carers who humiliate their child, for example name-calling or making negative comparisons
  1. **Sexual Abuse**

Adults who use children to meet their own sexual needs may abuse both girls and boys of any ages. These abusers may be an older child or an adult of any gender, sexual orientation, race, religion. They may a stranger or someone known to them. In other words, there is no defined descriptor.

Indications of sexual abuse may be physical; behavioural or emotional.

In all cases, children who tell about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is important, therefore, that they are listened to and taken seriously.

**5.3.1. The physical signs of sexual abuse may include**:

* Pain or itching in the genital area or anus.
* Bruising or bleeding near genital area or anus.
* Sexually transmitted disease.
* Vaginal discharge or infection.
* Stomach pains.
* Discomfort when walking or sitting down.
* Pregnancy.

**5.3.2. Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include**:

* Becoming aggressive or withdrawn.
* Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people.
* Having nightmares.
* Running away from home.
* Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age, or developmental level.
* Sexual drawings or language.
* Bedwetting.
* Eating problems such as overeating or anorexia.
* Self-harm.
* Suicide attempts
* Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about.
* Substance or drug abuse.
* Having unexplained sources of money or receiving gifts.
* Not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence).
* Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults.

**5.3.3. Emotional Signs**

Unusual levels of anxiety or fear.

* High levels of unexplained distress
* Unexplained fluctuating mood.
  1. **Neglect**

It can be difficult to recognise neglect, but its effects can be long term and damaging for children.

**4.4.1 The physical signs of neglect may include**:

* Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children.
* Losing weight,or being constantly underweight.
* Inappropriate clothing for the weather.
* Unkempt clothing or appearance.

**4.4.2 The behavioural signs of neglect which may include:**

* Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised.
* Not having many friends.
* Complaining of being tired all the time.
* Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments
* Children who drink alcohol or use other substances.
* Children who are concerned for younger siblings without explaining why
* Children who talk about running away or run away.
* Children who are regularly missing from school or other programmed activities.
  1. **Sexual Exploitation:**

Some of the following signs may be indicators of sexual exploitation:

* Children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions;
* Children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation;
* Children who have older boyfriends or girlfriends, as friendships or intimate relationships;
* Children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant;
* Children who suffer from changes in emotional well-being;
* Children who misuse drugs and alcohol;
* Children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and
* Children who regularly miss school or education or don’t take part in education.

**5.6. Possible signs of Radicalisation**

There is no specific profile for a person likely to become involved in extremism or a single indicator of that person adopting violence in support of extremist ideas.

Radicalisation can be difficult to spot, but signs that could indicate that someone is being radicalised include:

* A change in behaviour (unexplained change in behaviour)
* Changing their circle of friends
* Isolating themselves from family and friends
* Talking as if from a scripted speech
* Unwillingness or inability to discuss their views
* A sudden disrespectful attitude towards others and others viewpoints
* Increased levels of anger
* Increased secretiveness, especially around internet use

However, these signs don’t necessarily mean a child is being radicalised – sometimes it may be normal teenage behaviour or a sign that something else is wrong

1. **Abuse in Adults**

Staff should be aware that abuse to adults can occur in a range of circumstances including.

* Domestic violence where there is an adult meeting safeguarding criteria in the family.
* A student on placement presenting a safeguarding concern to adults at risk
* A person discloses that they or another person has abused an adult or expresses that they have harboured thoughts or feelings of harming and or neglecting an adult at risk.
* The behaviour of a person may place an adult at risk.

1. **Indicators, signs and symptoms**

**7.1 Physical Abuse**

Any injury should be interpreted in the context of the person’s medical/social history and the explanation given.

Important indicators of physical abuse are bruises or injuries that are either unexplained or inconsistent with the explanation given; these can and are often be visible on the ‘soft’ parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely (e g, cheeks, abdomen, back and buttocks).

Additionally, a delay in seeking medical treatment when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern.

**7.1.1 The physical signs of abuse may include:**

* No explanation for injuries.
* Inconsistent account of injuries.
* Injuries are inconsistent with the person’s lifestyle.
* Bruising, cuts, welts, burns and/or marks on the body or loss of hair in clumps.
* Frequent injuries.
* Unexplained falls.
* Subdued or changed behaviour in the presence of a particular person.
* Signs of malnutrition.
* Failure to seek medical treatment or frequent changes of GP.

**7.1.2 Changes in behaviour that can also indicate physical abuse**:

* Aggressive or withdrawing behaviour or severe temper outbursts.
* Flinching when approached or touched.
* Reluctance to get changed,or remove clothing for example in hot weather.
* Withdrawn behaviour.

**7.2. Sexual Abuse**

Adults of any gender, sexual orientation, race or religion may be sexually abused.

It is important that anyone reporting sexual abuse is listened to and taken seriously.

**7.2.1 The physical signs of sexual abuse may include**:

* Pain or itching in the genital area or anus.
* Bruising or bleeding near genital area or anus.
* Sexually transmitted disease.
* Vaginal discharge or infection.
* Stomach pains.
* Discomfort when walking or sitting down.
* Pregnancy.

**7.2.2 Changes in behaviour which may indicate sexual abuse includes:**

* Uncharacteristic use of explicit sexual language or significant changes in sexual behaviour or attitude.
* Incontinence not related to any medical diagnosis.
* Self-harming.
* Poor concentration, withdrawal, sleep disturbance.
* Excessive fear/apprehension of, or withdrawal from, relationships.
* Fear of receiving help with personal care.
* Reluctance to be alone with a particular person.
* Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour.
* Anxiety.
* Eating problems such as overeating or anorexia.
* Feeling suicidal.
* Substance or drug abuse.
* Reports from others of risk taking sexual behaviour.

**7.3 Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse can be difficult to identify as there is often no outward physical signs.

**7.3.1 Changes in behaviour or communication which can indicate emotional abuse include:**

* Fear of making mistakes
* Self-harm.
* Apologising for the behaviour of someone else
* Withdrawing from usual activities or social group
* Lack of motivation
* Anxious behaviour

**7.4 Domestic Abuse**

**7.4.1 Changes in behaviour which can indicate domestic abuse include**

* Low self-esteem.
* Feeling that the abuse is their fault.
* 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.
* Limited access to money.
* Self-neglect

**7.5 Neglect**

**Some indicators of neglect may include:**

* Unkempt clothing or appearance.
* Constant hunger
* Losing weight, or being constantly underweight.
* Inappropriate clothing.
* Mentioning being inappropriately left alone or unsupervised.
* Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments
* Inappropriate living conditions

**7.6 Sexual Exploitation**

Some of the following signs may be indicators of sexual exploitation:

* Unexplained gifts or new possession
* Access to unexplained money
* Associating with people involved in exploitation
* Frequently experiencing sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy.
* Changes in emotional well-being
* Alcohol of substance misuse
* Going missing for periods of time

**8 Talking about concerns**

The signs of abuse aren’t always clear. If you have any concerns, follow the Procedure for Raising Safeguarding Concerns.

A conversation with the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or officer may assist you in understanding the concern.

**Further Reading:**

* Procedure for Raising Safeguarding Concerns – for Staff, Students and Third Parties
* Procedure for Handling Safeguarding Allegations against a Member/Members of Staff
* Procedure for Safeguarding Co-ordinator and Deputy Team
* External Speakers Policy (University of Derby)
* External Speakers Policy (Buxton & Leek College)