



Identifying Child Abuse

And what you should do

What is Child Abuse?

Any child can be abused anywhere at any time. Children with disabilities are especially vulnerable. Children can be abused by anyone—adults or other children. Child Abuse takes many forms, for example:

Physical Abuse

When children are hurt or injured by others, for example, by hitting, shaking, or squeezing. Signs to look out for

- Unexplained injuries, bruises or marks
- Fear, watchfulness, over-anxiety to please
- Small, round burns or bite marks
- Frequent absences from school

Sexual Abuse

When children are used by others to meet their own sexual needs. This might include sexual activity involving the child or showing the children pornographic material on videos or the internet. Signs to look out for:

- Comments about sexual activity
- Sexual knowledge or comments which are not what you would expect from a child
- Sexual behaviour which is not what you would expect from a child
- Unexpected reactions of fear or wariness to people
- Repeated urinary or genital infections
- Pregnancy/sexually transmitted diseases

Emotional Abuse

When children are persistently denied love and affection. Children will suffer if they are shouted at, made to feel stupid, rejected, used as scapegoats or live in a violent environment. Signs to look out for

- Unexplained gifts of money
- Withdrawn, anxious behaviour, lack of self-confidence
- Self-harm and eating disorders
- Demanding or attention seeking behaviour
- Unwillingness to communicate
- Repetitive, nervous behaviour such as rocking, hair twisting

Neglect

Where no one meets children's basic needs for food, warmth, protection, education and care, including health care

- The child's clothes are often dirty, scruffy or unsuitable for the weather
- No one seeks medical help when the child is ill or hurt
- The child has poor hygiene (smelly, dirty)
- The child is left alone with unsuitable carers

- The child is thin, pale, lacking in energy
- The child has lots of accidents
- The child is exposed to risks or dangers, such as the home being unsafe or drugs/needles being left around

What should you do?

- Listen to the child
- Take what the child says seriously
- Act fast
- Share your worries with Children Social Care, the Police, or the NSPCC—they are there to help you
- Continue to offer the child support

Don't

- Put it off
- Press the child for explanations
- Leave it to someone else to help the child
- Be afraid to voice your concerns, the child may need urgent help and protection

Remember

Any child, anywhere, can be abused at any time. Children with disabilities are especially vulnerable. Child abuse can be committed by anyone—adults or children

What will happen?

The person you speak to will take your concerns very seriously and decide what should happen with the case. It may be referred to children's social care who will contact you.

The worker will check whether the family is known to Children Social Care already.

Enquiries will often begin by asking other people in contact with the child, such as teachers, health visitors or doctors, if they have any concerns for the child.

In most cases there will be a discussion between the worker and the parents and child. Sometimes it soon becomes clear that there is nothing to worry about, but if concern remains about the welfare of the child, procedures will begin immediately.

Because of the confidential nature of this work, you may not be kept informed as the enquiry continues, but your alertness will have been the important first step in protecting the child.

Useful Contacts

Children Social Care

Peterborough

01733 864180

Cambridgeshire

0345 045 5203

Out of Hours (Emergency Duty Team)

01733 234724

Cambridgeshire Constabulary

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If a child / young person is in immediate danger call 999

NSPCC

0808 800 5000

