

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

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Childcare Services

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**Child Protection Definitions**

**Types of Abuse**

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect
- Bullying
- Exploitation
- Other forms of harm

**Definitions of Abuse**

**Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering.

This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

**Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued in so far as they meet the needs of another person.

It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened, or in danger, or the exploitation of children.

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

Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose children to emotional abuse.

**Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities.

The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts.

They may include activities such as involving children looking at, or the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional, and/or psychological needs which is likely to result in significant harm.

It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate foods, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision.

It may also include non-organic failure to thrive:

Children who significantly fail to reach normal growth and developmental milestones (i.e physical growth; weight; motor, social and intellectual development) where physical and genetic reasons for the failure have been medically eliminated and a diagnosis of non-organic failure has been established.

### **Bullying**

Bullying is considered to be a form of abuse. It involves repeated acts over a period of time attempting to enforce one person's (or group's) power over another person (or group).

Bullying consists of three basic types of abuse – emotional, physical and verbal and typically involves methods of intimidation, humiliation and degradation which are detrimental to a child/ young person's well-being.

Bullying can occur in any context in which human beings interact and some examples are:

Peer Abuse – a child/young person bullying another child/young person, an adult bullying another adult i.e in the work place.

An adult bullying a child – i.e. calling a child names, threatening to put a child into a group away from peers into a group of younger children, social isolation, criticism, physical abuse, intimidation, humiliation, discrimination, scapegoating.

It also has to be taken into account that our society uses a variety of technology and so cyber-bullying needs to be included in this spectrum.

Under all forms of bullying can be examples of racist and sexist behaviour.

### **Exploitation**

Exploitation is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person, for personal gain.

It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging or other financial fraud or child trafficking.

It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation.

Exploitation can also be of a sexual nature.

## **Signs and Indicators of Abuse**

Indications that a child is being abused may not be the presence of a severe injury. Concerns may become apparent in a number of ways.

### **Indicators**

- Bruises or marks on a child
- Remarks made by a child, his parents or friends
- Overhearing a conversation by the child or his parents
- Observing the child is being scapegoated or has a poor relationship with his parents
- Children having sexual knowledge or exhibiting sexualised behaviour which is unusual for his age/level of development
- Child not thriving or developing a rate appropriate to his age and stage of development
- Observation of a child's behaviour and any significant changes in behaviour
- Indications that the family is under stress and needs support in caring for their children
- Repeat visits to GP or hospital

### **Children from Ethnic Minorities**

It is important when working with families and children from Ethnic Minorities that Ethnicity is taken into account if concerns should arise, particularly if the concerns are considered to be that of a physical injury.

It can be difficult to identify skin markings on children from different ethnic backgrounds due to differences of the skin. Skin conditions may be mistaken for bruising and so further advice should be sought from a health professional.

### **Children with a Disability**

**In recognising child abuse, all staff and volunteers should be aware that children who are disabled can be particularly vulnerable to abuse.**

**The same safeguarding principles should apply with regard to definition, observations and indicators of abuse with disabled children as to children without a disability.**

With disabled children there may be a requirement for a high level of physical care, therefore they may have less access to protection.

Recognition of abuse can be difficult in that:

- Signs may be confusing
- The child may not recognise the behaviour as abusive
- The child may have problems with communication and be unable to disclose abuse
- There may be a dependency on several adults for intimate care
- There may be reluctance on the part of staff to accept that children who are disabled maybe abused.

**Signs and symptoms of any type of abuse are indicators and highlight the need for further investigation and assessment.**