

Signs of Child Abuse & Neglect

High Risk Factors

- Domestic Abuse
- Parental substance misuse
- Poor parental mental health
- Parents with learning difficulties
- Children with disabilities
- Families with past history of child abuse

Sexual Abuse

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.

There are few physical signs, more likely to notice emotional and behavioural factors.

- Aggressive/disruptive behaviour.
- Withdrawn/clingy.
- Self-harming, incl. eating disorders, headbanging etc.
- Sexually concerning behaviours in drawings/playing with toys.
- Trouble sleeping/mood swings.
- Sexualised conduct not in keeping with age/development stage.
- Soiling/smearing faeces/bed wetting/ recurrent UTI's/soreness in genital area.
- Reluctance to remove clothing for swimming or PE.
- Signs of exploitation—unexplained gifts/ money/going missing etc.

The internet has increased the risk of non-contact sexual abuse and children must be alert to these dangers when online. 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

- Developmental delay with no medical explanation.
- Disassociation/lack of normal response, not crying, not jumping at loud noise etc.
- Low self esteem/self harm.
- Overly affectionate to strangers.
- Extreme emotional outbursts/challenge authority.
- Lack of confidence/social skills/friends.
- Doesn't want to go home/have friends to visit.
- Regressing to younger child behaviours.
- Reckless to own or others safety.
- Difficulty making and maintaining relationships.
- "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 the child's size/ weather.
- Underweight for age but eats well in school.
- Frequent school absences/ poor punctuality.
- Parents are dismissive/ uninterested.
- Developmental delay.
- Poor health/not taken to GP or dentist when needed.
- Emotionally needy/obsessive behaviour/self harm.
- Persistently dirty/body odour.
- Accidental Injuries indicating a lack of supervision.
- Regular tiredness/infections.
- Using drugs/alcohol.

DSL's See Wakefield Neglect Toolkit.

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

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 and scalds without reasonable explanation or parents and child's story differs.
- Bite marks.
- Fractures/bruising in non-mobile children.
- 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.
- Signs of poisoning—drowsiness/seizures/ vomiting/breathing problems.
- Talk of punishment which seems excessive/fear of parents/others.
- Arms and legs are kept covered.
- Concerned about younger siblings without saying why.
- Reluctance to remove clothing for swimming or PE.
- Parents are uninterested/undisturbed by an injury or accident.

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