

# FACT SHEET: TYPES OF ABUSE<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

This document is a best practice reference document for use by those in the Church who have a role with children, young people and adults.

It contains information about the types of abuse which can occur and how to recognise them, including physical signs and symptoms as well as behavioural changes that you might observe. Bear in mind that children, young people and adults may be subject to one type of abuse or a combination of types of abuse. It is informed by the definitions available in Working Together 2018<sup>1</sup> and the Care Act 2014<sup>2</sup>.

The lists of signs and symptoms below are not exhaustive – there may be other signs or symptoms which are not listed below which could be indicators of abuse. Similarly, some of these signs and symptoms will not always be indicators of abuse. The following lists under each category of abuse contain examples of possible indicators. The presence of one or more of these signs or symptoms does not necessarily confirm abuse.

Please note that many types of abuse are also criminal offences and should be treated as such.

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<sup>1</sup> This document is based on the Church of England's *Type of Abuse Reference Document* which is available from <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/safeguarding/templates-resources>

## Children

Abuse is defined as four categories: physical, sexual, neglect, emotional.

### Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may or may not cause injury and includes physical ill treatment, causing unjustifiable physical discomfort, for example injury, pain or impairment.

Abusive Actions	Signs & Symptoms
Hitting	Cuts, lacerations, puncture wounds, open wounds, bruising, welts, black eyes, burns, bite marks, broken bones and skull fractures
Slapping	
Pushing	Untreated injuries in various stages of healing or not properly treated
Kicking	
Shaking	Poor skin condition or poor skin hygiene
Inappropriate restraint	Dehydration and/or malnourishment without an illness-related cause
Withholding or misuse of medication	Loss of weight
Squeezing	Soiled clothing or bedding
Biting	Broken eyeglasses or frames
Suffocating	Physical signs of being subjected to punishment or signs of being restrained
Poisoning	Inappropriate use of medication, overdosing or under dosing
Drowning	
Killing	Cowering and flinching
Involuntary isolation or confinement	Emotional distress, low self-esteem, untypical self-harm
Inappropriate application of techniques or treatments	Telling you they have been hit, slapped or mistreated
	Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
	Reluctance to get changed, for example in hot weather
	Depression
	Withdrawn behaviour

**Remember:** Most children will collect cuts and bruises as part of the rough-and- tumble of daily life. However, important indicators of physical abuse are bruises or injuries that are either unexplained or inconsistent with the explanation given, or visible on the 'soft' parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely, e.g. cheeks, abdomen, back and buttocks.

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

Children may also display:

Fear of parents being approached for an explanation

Running away from home

## Sexual Abuse

A sexual act carried out without the informed consent (see below) of the other individual is abuse. Such behaviour includes contact and non-contact abuse.

Contact abuse may include rape, indecent assault, being forced to touch another person, sexual intercourse or being pressurised into consenting to sexual acts.

It is also important to remember that it is not just adult men who sexually abuse children – there are increasing numbers of allegations of sexual abuse of children against women and sexual abuse can also be perpetrated by other children or young people.

Abusive Actions	Signs & Symptoms
Rape Sexual assault Kissing Fondling/caressing Involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities Downloading child abuse images Encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways Sending sexualised texts and emails and transmitting sexually explicit images through social media Grooming	Bruises around the breasts or genital areas Unexplained STI or genital infections Unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding Vaginal discharge or infection Torn, stained or bloody underclothing The child telling you they have been sexually assaulted or raped Pain or itching in the genital area Sexually transmitted disease Stomach pains or discomfort when walking or sitting down Pregnancy <b>Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include:</b> Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour 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, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts; Substance abuse Suddenly having unexplained sources of money Not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence) Acting in a sexually explicit way, specifically children towards adults

## **Age of consent**

The age of consent (the legal age to have sex) in England is 16 years old. This applies to both heterosexual and homosexual sex. The laws are there to protect children from abuse or exploitation, rather than to prosecute under 16s who participate in mutually consenting sexual activity. Underage sexual activity may be a possible indicator of child sexual exploitation.

Statutory agencies have agreed that if 13 - 16-year-old sexual activity is discovered then an assessment of risk should be carried out.

Risks to be considered include:

- Whether the child is competent to understand, and consent to, the sexual activity they are involved in
- Whether the sexual activity is with someone of a similar age, ability and aptitude
- Whether there is a power imbalance
- Whether there any coercion or bribery, overt aggression, misuse of alcohol or other substances acting as a disinhibitor
- Whether the sexual partner is known by one of the statutory agencies

To help protect younger children the law says anyone under the age of 13 can never legally give consent. This means that anyone who engages in any sexual activity with a child who is 12 or younger is breaking the law. Sexual activity with a child who is under 13 should always result in a child protection referral. The law gives extra protection to young people who are over the age of consent but under 18. It is illegal:

- To take, show or distribute indecent photographs of a child (this is often called sexting).
- To pay for or arrange sexual services of a child.
- For a person in a position of trust (for example teachers or care workers) to engage in sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18 who is in the care of their organization.

The *Sexual Offences Act 2003* applies in England and Wales. It gives more information about specific offences and the related penalties.

## **Age of criminal responsibility for children**

The age of criminal responsibility in England is 10 years old. This means a child is considered capable of committing a crime and old enough to stand trial for a criminal offence. Their case will be dealt with by a youth court and if they are convicted, their sentence will take their age into account.

## Neglect

Neglectful behaviour is any pattern of activity by another person, which seriously impairs an individual.

Abusive Actions	Signs & Symptoms
<p>Neglect involves persistently failing to provide necessities, for example:</p> <p>Adequate food</p> <p>Clothing</p> <p>Shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)</p> <p>Personal care</p> <p>Failure to protect a child or vulnerable adult from physical or emotional harm or danger</p> <p>Failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate caregivers</p> <p>Failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment</p> <p>Deliberately withholding essential aids – for example visual or hearing aids</p> <p>Denying social, religious or cultural contacts</p> <p>Denying contact with family</p> <p>Lack of appropriate supervision</p>	<p>Dirt, faecal or urine smell, or other health and safety hazards in the vulnerable person's living environment</p> <p>Rashes, sores, lice on the vulnerable person;</p> <p>Inadequate clothing</p> <p>Untreated medical condition</p> <p>Poor personal hygiene</p> <p>Over or under medication</p> <p>Lack of assistance with eating or drinking</p> <p>Unsanitary and unclean conditions</p> <p>Constant hunger, this may sometimes lead to the person stealing food</p> <p>Loss of weight, or being constantly underweight or obesity</p> <p><b>Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect may include:</b></p> <p>Complaining of being tired all the time</p> <p>Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments</p> <p>Having few friends</p> <p>Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised</p>

## Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of an individual causing severe and persistent effects on the person's emotional and psychological wellbeing and for children impacting negatively on emotional development.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in most types of abuse although emotional abuse may occur alone.

Abusive Actions	Signs & Symptoms
Threats and verbal abuse Humiliation Blaming Controlling Pressurising and coercion Intimidation and causing fear Ignoring the person Not giving the person a chance to express their views Lack of love or affection Making someone feel worthless Lack of privacy or choice Causing/forcing isolation/ withdrawal from family/friends and support networks. Imposing developmentally inappropriate expectations e.g. interactions beyond the child's developmental capability, overprotection, limitation of exploration and learning, preventing the child from participation in normal social interaction Causing children to feel frightened or in danger e.g. witnessing domestic abuse, seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another	Feelings of helplessness Hesitation in talking openly Implausible stories Confusion or disorientation Anger without an apparent cause Sudden changes in behaviour The person becoming emotionally upset or agitated Unusual behaviour (sucking, biting or rocking) Unexplained fear Denial of a situation The person becoming extremely withdrawn and non-communicative or nonresponsive Telling you they are being verbally or emotionally abused <b>Changes in behaviour which can also indicate emotional abuse may include:</b> Being unable to play Fear of making mistakes Sudden speech disorders Self-harm Fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour Developmental delay in terms of emotional progress

## Domestic Abuse

Witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse, and teenagers can suffer domestic abuse in their relationships.

## Bullying and Cyberbullying

Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else – such as name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone. It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It's usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally. Bullying that happens online, using social networks, games and mobile phones, is often called cyberbullying. A child can feel like there's no escape because it can happen wherever they are, at any time of day or night.

## Online Abuse

With the ever-growing use of the internet, mobile telephones and online gaming (e.g. Xbox/ PlayStation), there has been a corresponding rise in the use of the internet and other electronic communication to target, groom and abuse children. Adults may target chat rooms, social networking sites, messaging services, mobile phones, online gaming sites and the internet generally. Children are particularly vulnerable to abuse by adults who pretend to be children of similar ages when online and who try to obtain images or engineer meetings.

## Adults

There are many different types of abuse and they all result in behaviour towards a person that deliberately or intentionally cause harm. It is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights and in the worst cases can result in death.

The types of abuse are:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological or emotional abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Modern slavery
- Discriminatory abuse
- Domestic violence or abuse
- Neglect or acts of omission
- Self-neglect

### Who abuses adults?

Potentially anyone, adult or child, can be the abuser of an adult. Abuse will sometimes be deliberate, but it may also be an unintended consequence of ignorance or lack of awareness. Alternatively, it may arise from frustration or lack of support. The list can include:

- Relatives
- Neighbours
- Paid Carers
- Workers in places of worship
- People who are themselves vulnerable and/or are users of a care service
- Confidence tricksters who prey on people in their own homes or elsewhere

### Relatives who are main carers

Carers can experience considerable stress, exhaustion and frustration without respite or support. This can lead to unintended poor care or abuse. Relatives who are the main carers may also be subject to abuse by those for whom they are caring. This abuse is often endured for long periods and unreported.



## Physical Abuse

Abusive Actions	Signs & Symptoms
Hitting Slapping Pushing Kicking Pinching Hair pulling Physical sanction Incorrect moving or handling technique which causes distress Misuse of medication Inappropriate restraint Isolation Confinement	Cuts, lacerations, puncture wounds, open wounds, bruising, welts, black eyes, burns, bite marks, broken bones and skull fractures Untreated injuries in various stages of healing or not properly treated Poor skin condition or poor skin hygiene Dehydration and/or malnourishment without an illness-related cause Loss of weight Soiled clothing or bedding Broken eyeglasses or frames Physical signs of being subjected to punishment or signs of being restrained Inappropriate use of medication, overdosing or under dosing Cowering and flinching Emotional distress, low self-esteem, untypical self-harm Telling you they have been hit, slapped or mistreated Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts Reluctance to get changed, for example in hot weather Depression Withdrawn behaviour

## Sexual Abuse

Abusive Actions	Signs & Symptoms
Rape Sexual assault Kissing Fondling/caressing Looking at/production of, sexual images Sexual photography Sexual acts to which the adult has not consented, or consent was forced Inappropriate or offensive language Inappropriate touching Indecent exposure	Bruises around the breasts or genital areas Unexplained STI or genital infections The vulnerable adult telling you they have been sexually assaulted or raped Pain or itching in the genital area Sexually transmitted disease Stomach pains or discomfort when walking or sitting down Pregnancy

## Psychological Abuse

Abusive Actions	Signs & Symptoms
Threats and verbal abuse Humiliation Blaming Controlling Pressurising and coercion Intimidation and causing fear Ignoring the person Not giving the person a chance to express their views Lack of love or affection Making someone feel worthless Lack of privacy or choice Causing/forcing isolation / withdrawal from family/friends and support networks.	Feelings of helplessness Hesitation in talking openly Implausible stories Confusion or disorientation Anger without an apparent cause Sudden changes in behaviour The person becoming emotionally upset or agitated Unusual behaviour (sucking, biting or rocking) Unexplained fear Denial of a situation The person becoming extremely withdrawn and non-communicative or nonresponsive Telling you they are being verbally or emotionally abused

## Financial/material abuse

The wilful extortion or manipulation of the vulnerable person's legal or civil rights must be construed as abuse. Such activity may include misappropriation of monies or goods, the misuse of finances, property or possessions, or withholding money, the exploitation of a person's resources or embezzlement. Such abuse may involve the use of a position of authority or friendship to persuade a person to make gifts, to leave legacies or change a will.

Abusive Actions	Signs & Symptoms
Theft Fraud Financial exploitation Pressure to change financial arrangements Pressure to sell/change arrangements around the ownership of property Pressure in connection with wills, inheritance or other financial transactions Misuse of possessions Refusing/restricting the vulnerable adult's access to cash, bank accounts or financial documentation	Signatures on cheques or other important documents that do not resemble the adult's signature or which are signed when the adult cannot write  Any sudden changes in bank accounts including unexplained withdrawals of large sums of money  The inclusion of additional names on an adult's bank account  Abrupt changes to or creation of wills  The sudden appearance of previously uninvolved relatives claiming their rights to a vulnerable person's affairs or possessions  The unexplained sudden transfer of assets to a family member or someone outside the family  Numerous unpaid bills, overdue rent, when someone is supposed to be paying the bills for the vulnerable person  Unusual concern from someone that an excessive amount of money is being expended on the care of the vulnerable person  Lack of amenities, such as TV, personal grooming items, appropriate clothing, that the vulnerable person should be able to afford  The unexplained disappearance of funds or valuable possessions such as art, silverware or jewellery  Deliberate isolation of a vulnerable person from friends  and family resulting in the caregiver alone having total control

## Modern Slavery<sup>2</sup>

Modern slavery encompasses:

- Human trafficking
- Forced labour
- Domestic servitude
- Sexual exploitation, such as escort work, prostitution and pornography
- Debt bondage – being forced to work to pay off debts that realistically they never will be able to

### Possible indicators of modern slavery

- Signs of physical or emotional abuse
- Appearing to be malnourished, unkempt or withdrawn
- Isolation from the community, seeming under the control or influence of others
- Living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation and or living and working at the same address
- Lack of personal effects or identification documents
- Always wearing the same clothes
- Avoidance of eye contact, appearing frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers
- Fear of law enforcers

## Discriminatory Abuse

Discriminatory abuse is Unequal treatment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation (known as ‘protected characteristics’ under the *Equality Act 2010*). It may be persistent conduct or an isolated incident.

Abusive Actions	Signs & Symptoms
Racism Sexism Harassment or deliberate exclusion on the grounds of a protected characteristic	Lack of choice Lack of privacy and dignity Lack of personal belongings Tendency for withdrawal and isolation Use of punishments – e.g. withholding food and drink Lack of disabled access Expression of anger/frustration/fear/anxiety Being refused access to services or being excluded inappropriately Lack of access to communication aids, not allowing access to an interpreter, signer, or lip-reader Lack of access to healthcare, education, employment and criminal justice relating to a protected characteristic Substandard service provision relating to a protected characteristic

The indicators of discriminatory abuse may take the form of any of the other types of abuse already mentioned. The difference lies in that the abuse is motivated by discriminatory attitudes, feelings or behaviour towards an individual.

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<sup>2</sup> Further Home Office information on identifying and reporting modern slavery can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/modern-slavery>

## Domestic Abuse

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is: any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse perpetrated by those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, neglect, financial or material abuse, spiritual abuse, or digital abuse.

### Controlling Behaviour

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

### Coercive Behaviour

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

### Neglect and acts of omission

Abusive Actions	Signs & Symptoms
Ignoring medical needs	Weight loss
Failing to seek medical help	Hunger
Failing to ensure basic needs are met	Thirst/dehydration
Denying social, religious or cultural contacts	Poor personal hygiene
Denying contact with family	Rashes/pressure sores/lice
Lack of appropriate supervision	Unsanitary conditions
Deliberately withholding essential aids	Inadequate clothing
Excluding person from their home	Poor environment – dirty or unhygienic
	Pressure sores or ulcers
	Untreated injuries and medical problems
	Inconsistent or reluctant contact with medical and social care organisations
	Accumulation of untaken medication
	Uncharacteristic failure to engage in social interaction

## Self-neglect

Abusive Actions	Signs & Symptoms
Lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health and safety Neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings Inability to avoid self-harm Failure to seek help or access services to meet health and social care needs Inability or unwillingness to manage one's personal affairs	Very poor personal hygiene Unkempt appearance Lack of essential food, clothing or shelter Malnutrition and/or dehydration Living in squalid or unsanitary conditions Neglecting household maintenance Hoarding Collecting a large number of animals in inappropriate conditions Non-compliance with health or care services Inability or unwillingness to take medication or treat illness or injury

## Organisational Abuse

This includes neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home. This may range from one-off incidents to ongoing ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

## Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse is not covered by the standard statutory definitions of abuse but is of concern both within and outside faith communities including the Church of England. Independent Christian Safeguarding Chairty *thirtyone:eight* defines spiritual abuse in this way:

Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional and psychological abuse. It is characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. Spiritual abuse can have a deeply damaging impact on those who experience it. However, holding a theological position is not in itself inherently spiritually abusive, but misuse of scripture, applied theology and doctrine is often a component of spiritually abusive behaviour.<sup>3</sup>

Churches need to be sensitive so that they do not, in their pastoral care, attempt to 'force' religious values or ideas onto people, particularly those who may be vulnerable to such practices. Within faith communities harm can be caused by the inappropriate use of religious belief or practice; this can include the misuse of the authority of leadership or penitential discipline, oppressive teaching, or intrusive healing and deliverance ministries, which may result in vulnerable people experiencing physical, emotional or sexual harm. If such inappropriate behaviour becomes harmful it should be referred for investigation in the usual way. Careful supervision and mentoring of those entrusted with the pastoral care of adults should help to prevent harm occurring in this way. Other forms of spiritual abuse include the denial to vulnerable people of the right to faith or the opportunity to grow in the knowledge and love of God.'

A particular aspect of Spiritual Abuse relating to children has been addressed in the *Department of Health Safeguarding Children from Abuse Linked to a Belief in Spirit Possession (2007)*.

The term 'belief in spirit possession' is defined as the belief that an evil force has entered a child and is controlling him or her. Sometimes the term 'witch' is used and is defined as the belief that a child is able to use an evil force to harm others. There is also a range of other languages that is connected to such abuse. This includes black magic, kindoki, ndoki, the evil eye, djinns, voodoo, obeah, demons, and child sorcerers. In all these cases, genuine beliefs can be held by families, carers, religious leaders, congregations, and the children themselves that evil forces are at work. Families and children can be deeply worried by the evil that they believe is threatening them, and abuse often occurs when an attempt is made to 'exorcise', or 'deliver' the child. Exorcism is defined as attempting to expel evil spirits from a child. Whilst the number of identified cases is small, the nature of the child abuse can be particularly disturbing and the impact on the child is substantial and serious. (*DoH Safeguarding Children from Abuse Linked to a Belief in Spirit Possession, 2007*).

Abusive Actions	Signs & Symptoms
Mistreating a person in the name of God, faith or religion – the exact nature of the mistreatment may fall within the definition of one of the other abuse types.	Special relationships, especially where there is an imbalance of power Inappropriate or untrained exercise of exorcism and/or deliverance ministry Misuse of authority e.g. by dictating exactly what a person should believe Extreme pastoral interference in personal issues including how someone should express their faith Telling someone that if they pray harder/believe more they will be healed Making someone feel inferior in their faith

<sup>3</sup> <https://thirtyoneeight.org/media/2191/spiritual-abuse-position-statement.pdf>

## Additional Vulnerabilities

There are certain risk factors that may place individuals at particular risk of being abused. The presence of one or more of these factors does not automatically imply that abuse will result but increases the likelihood:

- Where there exists an imbalance of power and control
- Where there is a dependency on other(s)
- The need for help with intimate personal care e.g. managing incontinence, washing and dressing
- Strain of prolonged caring at the expense of care-giver's own needs/high stress levels
- Difficult carer/service-user relationship
- Role reversal and the need for intimate personal assistance, e.g. daughter or son providing personal assistance for a parent
- Living in the same household as a known abuser
- Where there is a history of family abuse
- People with a history of alcohol, drug or other substance abuse
- Unsuitable or dangerous environment, e.g. lack of personal space
- People who have independent support (i.e. no-one/no outside body monitoring this)
- Absence of support
- Lack of awareness of the rights of a service user or of what constitutes abuse or dignity
- Staff shortages, lack of staff awareness, training and supervision
- Lack of privacy
- Financial problems
- Where there is a change in the lifestyle of a member of the household, e.g. employment, unemployment, illness
- Cultural differences and language barriers
- Emotional or social isolation
- Communication difficulties
- Where the individual's behaviour is challenging or unpredictable or difficult to manage
- Revenge and/or anger
- A reduction in physical, mental or emotional capacity caused by external events, such as bereavement or previous abuse or other traumatic incidents

## Additional Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

Other indications that abuse may be occurring:

- The vulnerable adult or child may not be allowed to speak for themselves, or see others, without the parents or caregivers being present
- Attitudes of indifference or anger towards the child or vulnerable adult
- Family member or caregiver blames the child or vulnerable adult (e.g. accusation that incontinence is a deliberate act)
- Aggressive behaviour (threats, insults, harassment) by the parent or caregiver towards the child or vulnerable adult
- Previous history of abuse of others on the part of the caregiver
- Inappropriate display of affection by the caregiver
- Flirtations, coyness, etc. which might be possible indicators of an inappropriate sexual relationship
- Social isolation of the family or restriction of activity of the child or vulnerable adult by the caregiver
- Conflicting accounts of incidents by the family, caregivers or the child or vulnerable adult
- Inappropriate or unwarranted defensiveness by the caregiver
- Indications of unusual confinement (closed off in a room, tied to furniture, change in routine or activity)
- Obvious absence of assistance or attendance