



Abuse and Neglect - Factsheet

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1.0	Jan 2020	B. Ewing	New Version
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Formal definitions taken from 'Children First' guidance notes.

Information is included regarding vulnerable adults.

Definition of 'Neglect'

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, and/or medical care.

Harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child.

Whether it is significant is determined by the child's health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point, but it can be a one of incident. For example, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries may not be having his or her needs met in terms of necessary supervision and safety. A child whose height or weight is significantly below average may be being deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

Definition of 'Emotional Abuse'

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a parent/carer and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's developmental need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms. Examples may include:

- i. The imposition of negative attributes on a child, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- ii. Conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions;
- iii. Emotional unavailability of the child's parent/carer;
- iv. Unresponsiveness of the parent/carer and/or inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child;
- v. Premature imposition of responsibility on the child;
- vi. Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself or herself in a certain way;
- vii. Under- or over-protection of the child;
- viii. Failure to show interest in, or provide age-appropriate opportunities for, the child's cognitive and emotional development;
- ix. Use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures;
- x. Exposure to domestic violence;
- xi. Exposure to inappropriate or abusive material through new technology

Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. Examples of these include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, and oppositional behaviour. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

Definition of 'Physical Abuse'

Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

Physical abuse can involve:

- i. severe physical punishment;
- ii. beating, slapping, hitting or kicking;
- iii. pushing, shaking or throwing;
- iv. pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling;
- v. terrorising with threats;
- vi. observing violence;
- vii. use of excessive force in handling;
- viii. deliberate poisoning;
- ix. suffocation;
- x. fabricated/induced illness;
- xi. allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

Definition of 'Sexual Abuse'

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. Examples of child sexual abuse include:

- i. exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child;
- ii. intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- iii. masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
- iv. sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal;
- v. it may also include showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse;
- vi. consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls in ROI. An Garda Síochána will deal with the criminal aspects of the case under the relevant legislation. The age of consent in NI and the rest of the UK is 16. A coach or leader in a voluntary sports club having sexual relationships with a 16 to 18year old in is not illegal but viewed as an abuse of trust. Though

this abuse of trust provision does not legally apply to coaches or volunteers in NI, RI would remove any coach who abused their position of trust as a breach of the code of conduct.

It should be noted that the definition of child sexual abuse presented in this section is not a legal definition and is not intended to be a description of the criminal offence of sexual assault. It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse even if the young person concerned does not themselves recognise it as abusive.

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 or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as:

- Child labour including slavery or servitude engagement in criminal activity
- Organised begging
- Benefit or other financial fraud
- Child trafficking or child sexual exploitation, which includes inciting, encouraging, propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in sexual acts. Sexual exploitation also occurs when a child is involved in the exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, video tape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of the image by computer or other means.

It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

In addition, the following types of abuse are also to be considered as relevant to both young people and vulnerable persons:

Financial or Material Abuse

Financial abuse/material abuse is actual or attempted theft, fraud or burglary. It is the misappropriation or misuse of money, property, benefits, material goods or other asset transactions which the person did not or could not consent to, or which were invalidated by intimidation, coercion or deception. This may include exploitation, embezzlement, withholding pension or benefits or pressure exerted around wills, property or inheritance.

Discriminatory Abuse

Including - the abuse of a person because of their ethnic origin, religion, language, age, sexuality, gender or disability.

Institutional Abuse

Institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult by a regime or individuals in settings which adults who may be at risk reside in or use. This can occur in any organisation, within and outside the health and social care sector. Institutional abuse may occur when the routines, systems and regimes result in poor standards of care, poor practice and behaviours, inflexible regimes and rigid routines which violate the dignity and human rights of the adults and place them at risk of harm. Institutional abuse may occur within a culture that denies, restricts or curtails privacy, dignity, choice

and independence. It involves the collective failure of a service provider or an organisation to provide safe and appropriate services, and includes a failure to ensure that the necessary preventative and/or protective measures are in place.

Not included in the formal Adult Safeguarding guidance but also relevant are:

- Domestic violence and abuse: Domestic violence and abuse is threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on one person by another where they are or have been intimate partners or family members, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation. Domestic violence and abuse is essentially a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person over another. It is usually frequent and persistent. It can include violence by a son, daughter, mother, father, husband, wife, life partner or any other person who has a close relationship with the victim. It occurs right across society, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnic or religious group, sexual orientation, wealth, disability or geography.
- Human trafficking: Human trafficking involves the acquisition and movement of people by improper means, such as force, threat or deception, for the purposes of exploiting them. It can take many forms, such as domestic servitude, forced criminality, forced labour, sexual exploitation and organ harvesting. Victims of human trafficking can come from all walks of life; they can be male or female, children or adults, and they may come from migrant or indigenous communities.
- Hate crime: Hate crime is any incident which constitutes a criminal offence perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by prejudice, discrimination or hate towards a person's actual or perceived race, religious belief, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion or gender identity.
- Cyber Bullying: Cyberbullying occurs when someone repeatedly makes fun of another person online or repeatedly picks on another person through emails or text messages, or uses online forums with the intention of harming, damaging, humiliating or isolating another person. It can be used to carry out many different types of bullying (such as racist bullying, homophobic bullying, or bullying related to special educational needs and disabilities) but instead of the perpetrator carrying out the bullying face-to-face, they use technology as a means to do it.

Victims of domestic violence and abuse, sexual violence and abuse, human trafficking and hate crime are regarded as adults in need of protection. There are specific strategies and mechanisms in place designed to meet the particular care and protection needs of these adults and to promote access to justice through the criminal justice system. It is essential that there is an interface between these existing justice-led mechanisms and the statutory adult protection arrangements.

Indicators of Abuse

The following is a list of some indicators of abuse, but it is not exhaustive:

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unexplained bruising in soft tissue areas ▪ Repeated injuries ▪ Black eyes ▪ Injuries to the mouth ▪ Torn or bloodstained clothing ▪ Burns or scalds ▪ Bites ▪ Fractures ▪ Marks from implements ▪ Inconsistent stories/excuses relating to injuries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unexplained changes in behaviour - becoming withdrawn or aggressive ▪ Difficulty in making friends ▪ Distrustful of adults or excessive attachment to adults ▪ Sudden drop in performance ▪ Changes in attendance pattern ▪ Inappropriate sexual awareness, behaviour or language ▪ Reluctance to remove clothing
Additionally for Vulnerable Adults	
Physical	Behavioural
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not paying bills, not having normal home comforts. ▪ The person not receiving the care services they require, their carer being overly critical or making insulting remarks about the person, the person being made to dress differently from how they wish. ▪ Vulnerable adult has no personal clothing or possessions, there is no care plan for him/her, s/he is often admitted to hospital ▪ Instances of staff/volunteers having treated him/her badly or unsatisfactorily or acting in a way that causes harm; poor staff morale, high staff turnover and lack of clear lines of accountability and consistency of management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having unusual difficulty with finances, not having enough money, being too protective of money and things they own.