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## Types And Indicators Of Abuse

Abuse, or more specifically child abuse, according to the NSPCC (2017) is defined as When a person – adult or child – harms a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional, but can also involve a lack of love, care and attention. Neglect can be just as damaging to a child as physical or sexual abuse.

There are many recognised types of abuse including financial abuse, institutional abuse and domestic violence to name a few, although they are all characterised in their own way, they all come under four main categories/types of abuse. The four types are physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

Some of the symptoms of abuse can be indicative of more than one type. Some of the indicators of abuse are;

- Physical abuse: this is when a child is directly or indirectly physically harmed by another, this includes “spitting or throwing things at you, making you swallow something that hurts or makes you feel ill, including giving you medicine when you're not ill or don't need it” (Childline no date). Physical abuse can be indicated by unexplained bruises or cuts; reluctance to change clothes in front of anyone; flinching at sudden movements or touch; and regular unexplained illness.
- Emotional abuse: this is when a person constantly criticises a child, mocks, teases or ignores them. Emotional abuse can also be an effect of marital domestic violence if the child sees or hears the abuse or knows that it happens. Indicators of emotional abuse can include sudden withdrawal from family life; not continuing with hobbies or activities they once enjoyed; having negative feelings or always speaking in a negative way; low self-worth/thinking they're useless or unwanted/unloved.
- Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse in relation to children is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (no date) as:

The involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. (p.75)

Some indicators of sexual abuse include complaining of pain or soreness in the genital or anal region, low mood or withdrawal, sexualised behaviour or language, sexually transmitted disease and pregnancy. (NHS 2016)

- Neglect: Neglect is when care givers do not meet the basic needs of the child, this includes but not limited to not keeping a child safe from harm, not providing food, clothing and or warmth. If a child presents as hungry, tired or unwashed; or they speak of the parents not being at home or being cared for by people they do not know, it could indicate that there is a safeguarding concern with regard to neglect.

The different types of abuse often overlap, for example: Sexual abuse can also involve physical and emotional abuse, there may also be neglect as the care giver is failing to meet the basic

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needs of the child by not keeping them safe, as such, a number of indicators may be present, therefore, more than one kind of abuse should be looked at.

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