

# A Brief Guide to Types of Abuse



The abuse of a child or adult involves significant harm that will have an impact on them not just whilst it is happening but potentially for the rest of their lives. Any action that causes significant harm, whether intentional or unintentional, is abuse.

Someone up to the age of 18 is a child. Promoting a Safer Church (2017) defines a vulnerable adult as someone aged 18 or over whose ability to protect themselves is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or illness, old age, emotional fragility or distress or otherwise, either temporarily or indefinitely. Both need special care and protection.

Anyone can perpetrate abuse – a child or adult of any gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, religion, ethnicity or culture.

Knowledge of, and sensitivity to, racial, cultural and religious patterns is crucial to good safeguarding practice – **BUT** none of these can ever be used to justify or condone the abuse of a person.

*The following categories of abuse apply to both adults and children:*

### **Physical Abuse ...**

... is the causing of physical harm to a person and can include fabricating or inducing illness in a child, inappropriate restraint, the misuse of medicines or force-feeding or inappropriate physical sanctions.

### **Neglect ...**

... includes failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional, educational or medical needs or withholding adequate care (medical, emotional, physical) of a vulnerable adult which means their basic needs are not met. A mother can neglect her unborn child through substance misuse and an adult can self-neglect (personal hygiene, malnutrition, health, hoarding etc).

### **Emotional/Psychological Abuse ...**

... includes making a person feel worthless, humiliated, ashamed, afraid or silencing them to the extent that it affects their emotional health and development. It can include bullying or harassment, control or coercion, depriving a person of social contact with others, seeing/hearing the ill-treatment of another, age or developmentally inappropriate expectations or overprotection.

### **Sexual Abuse ...**

... of a child includes both physical sexual abuse and non-physical sexual abuse – making, watching, distributing sexual images of a child, sexting, grooming for sexual abuse or encouraging sexually inappropriate behaviour. Child Sexual Exploitation can include organised gangs manipulating or coercing young people into sexual activity, even if this appears consensual. Sexual abuse of an adult occurs when informed consent for sexual activity (including non-contact sexual activity such as indecent exposure) is not freely given - e.g. when a person is controlled or coerced, or they lack cognitive capacity to give consent. Sexual activity with a child under 18 or a vulnerable adult for whom you have pastoral responsibility will always be sexual abuse

## Domestic Abuse ...

... includes any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises that children are victims of domestic abuse as well as their parents or carers, through direct, or in-direct, connection with the abuse.

**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. It includes enforced accountability, requirements for secrecy, silence or obedience, coercion to conform, using sacred texts to control, using religious belief to justify abuse – such as using physical or emotional harm to ‘deliver’ a person from evil spirits or witchcraft - or for the control or coercion of a person.

**Grooming ....** is using a power imbalance in a relationship to control or coerce a person into doing something they do not want to do or gaining a person’s total trust or ‘love’ so that they will do anything their abuser asks

**The internet, social media, smart phones etc ...** can be used by adults and children to form relationships in order to abuse or to disclose abuse or to perpetrate abuse – such as distributing images or bullying

**The trafficking ...** of adults and children can be for sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, ‘sweat-shop labour’ or any other form of exploitation

*The following additional categories of abuse apply to adults:*

## Financial Abuse ...

... is misusing or refusing access to someone else’s money, property or possessions, or manipulating or extorting someone into handing over their money

## Institutional/Organisational Abuse ...

... occurs when an organisation’s policies and practices are more important than the individual person’s needs and wishes so that good standards of care according to individual choice are not provided

## Discriminatory Abuse ...

... includes any form of abuse that is based on a person’s race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, culture or ethnicity

## Signs of Abuse

There are many different signs of abuse some of which may indicate that something other than abuse is happening in the person's life. We should always be concerned when a person's:

- behaviour changes or is out of character for them
- appearance or hygiene deteriorates
- behaviour is fearful
- trying to hide something
- physical injuries have no satisfactory explanation or occur repeatedly

It is reasonable to say, 'That bruise looks painful, how did it happen?' or 'You don't seem yourself at the moment, are you okay?' to explore concerns

*If you work with children or vulnerable adults, you must complete basic awareness and foundations safeguarding training at <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/> and understand and be able to recognise what abuse is and the signs to look for. For a more detailed guide to abuse see Section 2: Definitions of the Church's Safeguarding Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults guidance in the safeguarding e-manual at <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual>.*

## Report

**NEVER** promise to keep a secret

**ALWAYS** report any concerns, disclosures and allegations however 'small' they may seem

**TELL** your Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator ...



... or Vicar, or when the concern is about them/you can't get in touch with them/you don't want to tell anyone at your church, tell the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.

If you need immediate advice and can't wait to get in touch with any of the above call the duty social care team or police on 101

If a situation is not safe and someone is in danger or needs immediate help call the police on 999

**Ensure you know how to contact your Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator, Vicar  
Police and Local Authority Social Services**

## Other Useful Contacts:

Diocesan Safeguarding Officer:	07324 993844	Elder Abuse:	<a href="https://wearehourglass.org/action-elder-abuse-now-hourglass">https://wearehourglass.org/action-elder-abuse-now-hourglass</a>
Domestic Abuse:	0808 2000 247	NSPCC:	<a href="https://www.nspcc.org.uk/">https://www.nspcc.org.uk/</a>
ChildLine:	0808 11 11	Samaritans:	116 123