

Beech Lodge School

Categories of Abuse

Child abuse falls into one or more of four categories: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

It may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates symptoms of, or induces illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child's emotional development, and may involve:

- Conveying to a child that s/he is worthless, unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as s/he meets the needs of another person
- 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 a child to feel frightened or in danger e.g. witnessing domestic violence, seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another
- Exploitation or corruption of a child

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in most types of ill treatment of children, though emotional abuse may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not s/he is aware of what is happening.

- Activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. 'Penetrative acts' include 'rape' (forced penetration of vagina, anus or mouth with a penis) and 'assault by penetration' (sexual penetration of vagina or anus of a child with a part of the body or an object).
- Sexual activities may also include non-contact activities, e.g. involving a child in looking at / production of abusive images, watching sexual activities or encouraging her/him to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. It may include use of photos, pictures, cartoons, literature or sound recordings via internet, books, magazines, audio cassettes, tapes or CDs.
- Children under sixteen years of age cannot lawfully consent to sexual intercourse, although in practice may be involved in sexual contact to which,

as individuals, they have agreed. A child of under thirteen is considered in law incapable of providing consent.

Neglect

Neglect is one of the four categories of child abuse (along with physical, sexual and emotional abuse). It is defined as **the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs**, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health and development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse and once the child is born, neglect may involve failure to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing or shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Meet or respond to basic emotional needs
- Ensure adequate supervision including the use of adequate care-takers
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- Ensure that her/his educational needs are met
- Ensure that her/his opportunities for intellectual stimulation are met

Abandoned children

The Children's Services Department has the responsibility to care for children who are abandoned by their parents or carers.

Hygiene

Children's Services sometimes receives enquiries from professionals (teachers, health visitors or others) concerned about the hygiene of a child's home, or about a child who often appears to be unkempt. Whilst these signs are not necessarily conclusive proof of neglect, they can suggest cause for concern.

Allegations of chronic or periodic neglect – including insufficient supervision; poor hygiene, clothing or nutrition; failure to seek or attend treatment or appointments; or domestic chores inappropriate to a child's age – can lead the Children's Services Department to carry out an initial assessment of the child's needs (under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989).