



Indicators of Abuse

Indicators of Emotional Abuse

- Acceptance of excessive punishment
- Over reaction to mistakes
- Continual self- deprecation
- Sudden speech disorders
- Fear of new situations
- Behaviour such as rocking, hair twisting and thumb sucking
- Self- mutilation
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Drug solvent abuse
- Running away
- Compulsive stealing, scavenging

The above is only a sample list and is not exhaustive

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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.

Indicators of Emotional Abuse

- The imposition of negative attributes on a child, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming.
- Conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviour or actions.
- Emotional unavailability of the child's parent/carer
- Unresponsiveness of the parent/carer and/or inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child.
- Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child, capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself or herself in a certain way.
- Under or over-protection of the child,
- Use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures
- Exposure to domestic violence,
- Exposure to inappropriate or abusive material through new technology

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Indicators of Neglect

- Constant hunger
- Constant tiredness
- Frequent lateness or non- attendance
- Destructive tendencies
- Low self esteem
- No social relationships
- Running away
- Compulsive stealing or scavenging

Physical observations

- Poor personal hygiene
- Poor state of clothing
- Emaciation, pot belly, short stature
- Poor skin tone and hair tone
- Untreated medical problems

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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 and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, and/or medical care.

Indicators of Neglect

- Wears soiled clothing or clothing that is significantly too small or large, or is often in need of repair
- Seems inadequately dressed for the weather
- Always seems to be hungry, hoards, steals or begs for food, comes to school with little or no food
- Often appears listless and tired, with little energy
- Frequently reports caring for younger siblings
- Demonstrates poor hygiene, smells of urine or faeces, has dirty or decaying teeth,
- Seems emaciated or has a distended stomach (indicative of malnutrition), often appears listless and tired, with little energy
- Has unattended medical or dental problems; such as infected sores
- States that there is no one at home to provide care,
- Presents with frequent accidents and or minor injuries, growth not within the expected range

The above is only a sample list and is not exhaustive

Indicators of Physical Abuse

- Bruises and welts on body, face, upper arm, shoulders and neck, consistent with gripping. Finger- tip bruising/finger marks
- Cuts and abrasions
- Fractures or sprains, particularly spiral fractures
- Abdominal injuries
- Head injuries
- Burns or scalds, especially cigarette burns or burns caused by lengthy exposure to heat
- Human bites
- Swelling and lack of normal use of limbs
- Untreated injuries
- Any serious injury with no, inconsistent or conflicting explanation

Behavioural observations

- Unusually fearful with adults
- Unnaturally compliant to parents
- Refusal to discuss injuries / fear of medical help
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Aggression toward others
- Wears clothing to cover up parts of their body

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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:

- Severe physical punishment
- Beating, slapping, hitting, kicking
- Pushing, shaking or throwing
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling
- Terrorising with threats
- Observing violence
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning or suffocation
- Fabricated/induced illness

The above is only a sample list and is not exhaustive



Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Damage to genitalia, anus or mouth
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Unexpected pregnancy in very young girls
- Soreness in genital area, anus or mouth
- Unexplained recurrent urinary tract infections and discharges or abdominal pain

Behavioural observations

- Sexual knowledge inappropriate for age
- Sexualised behaviour in young children
- Sexually provocative behaviour / promiscuity
- Hinting at sexual activity
- Inexplicable falling off in sporting performance
- Sudden apparent changes in personality
- Lack of concentration, restlessness, aimlessness
- Socially withdrawn
- Overly compliant behaviour
- Acting out, aggressive behaviour
- Poor trust in significant adults
- Regressive behaviour, onset of wetting, by day or night
- Onset of insecure, clinging behaviour
- Arriving early at events / clubs / sessions, leaving late, running away from events etc if challenged
- Suicide attempts, self- mutilation, self -disgust
- Eating disorders, hysteria attacks in adolescents

The above is only a sample list and is not exhaustive

Possible indicators of inappropriate behaviour

People who pose a threat to children can be very skilled at avoiding detection. Continued vigilance is important and there are some behaviours which may alert you to the possibility of abuse. You should be particularly vigilant if someone:

- Pays an unusual amount of attention to children and provides them with presents, money or 'favours';
- Seeks out vulnerable children;
- Seeks opportunities to spend significant amounts of time alone with a single children or a small group of children on a regular basis;
- Encourages secretiveness about their activities and time spent with children;
- Takes a child or children to his/her own home;
- Is vague about previous employment;
- Has an unusual amount of physical contact with a child or children;
- Touches child in an inappropriate manner;
- Talks to children in an inappropriate manner;
- Avoids close supervision and management of work.



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Sexual Abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others

- Exposure of sexual organs/any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
Masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation
- Sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal.
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes inciting, encouraging, propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in, prostitution or other sexual acts.
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purpose of the criminal law, the age of the consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. An Garda Síochána will deal with the criminal aspects of the case under the relevant legislation