

GENERAL INDICATORS:

The following may occur to any children being abused but are particularly important in cases of sexual or emotional abuse where outward physical signs may not be present:

- Onset of enuresis - day or night
- Sleeping and eating disturbance
- Recurrent abdominal pains
- Recurrent headaches
- Social withdrawal
- Restlessness and aimlessness
- Inexplicable school failure
- Poor trust and secretiveness
- Indiscriminate and careless sexual behaviour
- Drug abuse
- Running away
- Self-mutilation and other forms of self-harm
- Hysterical fits, faints, etc.

OTHER FACTORS

May potentially impact upon children. These include:

Drug or alcohol use, learning disability, disability or chronic ill health, mental ill health (concerning the parent/carer, child, or their living situation).

Acute family stress such as domestic violence, racism or other discrimination, homelessness, oppressive/disruptive behaviour by a child, can all seriously impact on a child's well-being.

CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Parents should normally be consulted and their agreement sought to Children's Social Care being contacted. However this should not be done if to do so would place a child at risk of increased harm, interfere with criminal enquiries or raise concerns about the safety of staff members.

If in doubt, discuss with Children's Social Care.

Parent's lack of agreement should not prevent a referral to Children's Social Care, about possible harm to a child, at the earliest opportunity.

REFERRALS

Record your decisions and discussions with your manager/supervisor as soon as possible and retain all original notes (these may be disclosable in future court proceedings).

All referrals should be made by telephone and followed up in writing within 24 hours.

Nottingham City Children's Social Care: 915 5500.
Nottingham City Child Protection Register: 915 9300.

Further copies of this card are available from:

NCSCB Administrator
Nottingham City SCB
The Lindens,
379, Woodborough Road,
Nottingham
NG3 5GX

NSCB Administrator
Nottinghamshire SCB
County Hall
West Bridgford
Nottingham NG2 7QP

0115 915 9314

0115 977 3935

For all statutory, non statutory agencies and voluntary organisations.



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INDICATORS OF POSSIBLE CHILD ABUSE

DON'T IGNORE THEM

Individual factors or indicators of abuse may not be particularly worrying in isolation, but in combination they can suggest that there is serious cause for concern. You should be alert to the indicators overleaf and if you encounter any of them:

- take any immediate necessary action to protect the child;
- ensure immediate medical attention if necessary;
- bring your concerns to the immediate attention of your supervisor/line manager and together consult your agency's copy of the **Interagency Guidance on the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and SCBs Child Protection Procedures**, if available, alongside your own agency's practice guidance where this exists;
- if you think a child has been or is at risk of abuse or you are not sure, refer to your local Children's Social Care Office or Emergency Duty Team (out of office hours), or refer to the Police. Do not delay this if your line manager is not available. (see consent and confidentiality at end of leaflet).

Remember that child abuse happens to children of both sexes, at all ages, all cultures, religions, social classes, and both to children with and without disabilities.

CHILD PROTECTION IS EVERYONES RESPONSIBILITY

IDENTIFYING CHILD ABUSE

Identification of child abuse is difficult. As well as the indicators given below consider the following:

- Always listen carefully to the child, particularly to what is said spontaneously.
- Record carefully what the child has said and how and when the account was given. Whenever possible avoid questioning a child. If questions are asked record them and any response to them. **Retain original notes, they may be needed in court.**
- Beware of any failure or delay by adults in seeking medical assistance for the child.
- Beware of vague explanations which are lacking in detail.
- Beware of explanations that are inconsistent with what you observe or know, especially of the child's development and mobility.
- Take note of any inappropriate responses from adults who are involved in the care of the child.
- Note if there is any history or pattern of unexplained injury or illness.
- Remember that when the care of an abused child has been shared between parents and others the source of the abuse can be more difficult to determine.

Indicators of PHYSICAL ABUSE:

Bruises:

To the eyes, mouth or ears

Fingertip bruising (grasp mark)

Bruises of different ages in the same place
Outline bruises (prints of hands, belts, shoes etc.)
Bruises without obvious and verifiable explanations
Bruises to non-mobile babies (consider the possibility of shaking)

Burns, bites and scars:

Clear impressions of teeth (more than 3cms across unlikely to have been made by a child)
Burns or scalds with clear outlines
Small round burns which may be from cigarettes
Large number of different aged scars
Unusual shaped scars
Scars that indicate the child did not receive medical treatment

Fractures:

Fractures in children under one year
Alleged unnoticed fractures - fractures cause pain and it would be difficult for a carer to be unaware of the child's distress at the time of the injury - HOWEVER fractures in young children heal quickly and babies may be able to use a fractured limb without pain within a few days, this may mask a healing fracture.

Other injuries:

Poisoning, injections, ingestion or other applications of damaging substances (including drugs and alcohol).
Female genital mutilation, including female circumcision
Signs of shaking, including:

- any bruising to a young baby – particularly the trunk/arms/face
- facial petichiae (small blood spots)

Indicators of NEGLECT:

Children who are:

Not receiving adequate food consistent with their potential growth
Exposed through lack of supervision to injuries, including ingestion of toxic substances

Exposed to inadequate, dirty and/or cold environments
Abandoned or left in circumstances without appropriate adult supervision which are likely to endanger them
Prevented by their carers from receiving appropriate medical advice or treatment

Indicators of SEXUAL ABUSE:

Sexual transmitted diseases
Recurrent urinary infections
Genital and rectal itching and soreness
Unexplained bleeding and discharges
Bruising in the genital region
Sexual play/masturbation that is judged to be inappropriate to a child's age, development and circumstances
Sexually explicit behaviour
Young children with an inappropriate level of sexual knowledge.
Sexual abusive behaviour towards other children, particularly those younger or more vulnerable than themselves
Unexplained pregnancy

Indicators of EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

Abnormally passive, lethargic or attention seeking behaviour
Specific habit disorders e.g. faecal smearing, excessive drinking, eating unusual substances, and self-harm
Severely delayed social development, poor language and speech development not otherwise explained
Excessively nervous behaviour such as rocking or hair twisting
Low self esteem