

SYD

Sawston Youth Drama

Sawston Youth Drama Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Sawston Youth Drama Ltd. is a community based Performing Arts Youth Group specifically set up for young people between the ages 11-18. The group's aims are to develop skills in all aspects of the performing arts and, by extending access and participation, ensure that every young person within the local community who wants to be involved in the project will be able to take part.

Whenever children and young people come into contact with us we want them to be safe from harm. We recognise that SYD Ltd. is not a child protection agency; however we are committed to working in a child-centred way where the children we work with are valued and respected as individuals, and their views and concerns are listened to. All staff and volunteers should:

- Treat children with respect
- Offer encouragement and praise
- Listen to and take account of children's views
- Take concerns about their welfare seriously

SYD Ltd. upholds the principle that the child's welfare is paramount and that all children whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse.

The word 'child' or 'children and young people' is used to refer to anyone under the age of 18, as defined by the Children Act 1989. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody, does not change his/her status or entitlements to services or protection.

Safeguarding and promoting children and young people's welfare is defined as¹:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the Provision of safe and effective care, and
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Child protection is the activity undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

In addition to this policy and procedure there are other relevant SYD Ltd. policies and procedures that have aspects which relate to safeguarding children and

¹ HM Government (2015) Working Together to Safeguard Children

should be read in conjunction with this document as relevant to your role and responsibilities. These are:

- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Staff Policy for the internet
- Leader Pack

The SYD Ltd. safeguarding policy and procedures will be reviewed on an annual basis unless there is a change in legislation or guidance or an incident that warrants them being reviewed sooner.

Roles and responsibilities for safeguarding within SYD Ltd.

Although all Leaders have a responsibility for safeguarding, there are some specific roles within SYD Ltd. who are there to support, advise and refer on concerns to the authorities should this be necessary.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer will:

- Promote the importance of safeguarding across the organisation
- Manage complaints about poor practice of either staff or volunteers
- Manage allegations or concerns about abuse against SYD Ltd. staff or volunteers
- Ensure that the SYD Ltd. meets the requirements of its insurers regarding its safeguarding responsibilities
- Evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding within the organisation
- Review the safeguarding policy and procedures on an annual basis and update it every two years
- Act as the first point of contact for staff or volunteers concerned about the safety and welfare of a child
- Be responsible for contacting children's social care/police in cases where a child is at risk of harm
- Be familiar with Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures
- Advise and provide guidance to staff concerned about a safeguarding issue
- Support staff/volunteers after they have shared their concerns about a child
- Keep accurate records of concerns about children and actions taken
- Liaise with appropriate local agencies for support and advice and keep a list of local contacts

Relationship with Sawston Village College

Sawston Youth Drama Ltd. has a close working relationship with Sawston Village College. The College provides rehearsal & performances space together with secure storage and administrative support as required. The overwhelming majority of young people who are members of SYD Ltd. attend Sawston Village College.

SYD Ltd. and Sawston Village College have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding that sets out the relationship between them and details the roles of responsibilities of each party, including the approach to safeguarding and child protection. This is consistent with the approach required by “Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015”, the government guidance which applies to all agencies and which is a statutory requirement for schools.

The MoU states that information relating to safeguarding concerns that :- The Designated Safeguarding officer at SYD Ltd. will share any concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead at Sawston Village College. Similarly Sawston Village College will make SYD Ltd aware of information necessary to protect the safety and well-being of any pupils who attend SYD Ltd. All in accordance with government guidance “Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services 2015”.

The guidance states that information will normally be shared with the knowledge and consent of the parties concerned but, where it relates to the welfare of a young person, consent is not always required.

“if it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so, i.e. where there are concerns that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, you would not need to seek consent. A record of what has been shared should be kept.”

Sharing information regarding safeguarding concerns with the College does not negate SYD Ltd’s responsibility to make appropriate referrals to Children’s Social Care and/or the Police, as detailed elsewhere in this policy.

Activities away from Sawston Village College premises

Nearly all of SYD Ltd’s activities take place on Sawston Village College premises. The exception is an annual residential weekend held at Burwell House Cambridge. The same policy and procedures will apply to this activity as to any others, including the requirement to share information with the College Designated Safeguarding Lead as appropriate. The additional vulnerabilities associated with a residential activity make strict adherence to the code of conduct (see below) by all Leaders even more essential.

Recruiting and Supporting Staff

Most people who wish to work with SYD Ltd. will have the best motives for doing so. However, a small number of individuals who want to abuse children do sometimes target certain organisations as a way of gaining access to them. Others, although they do not deliberately set out to harm children, may hold unsuitable attitudes or behave in a way that harms children. Our recruitment processes have been designed to deter these people from applying and will also help to identify unsuitable people that might apply. To that end SYD Ltd will ensure that all Leaders are made aware of the emphasis placed on safeguarding within SYD Ltd, of the expectation of strict compliance with the code of conduct, and DBS checks will be made in all appropriate circumstances

The safeguarding code of conduct

This code will not only help to protect young people, but will also help all Leaders identify any practices which could be mistakenly interpreted and perhaps lead to false allegations of abuse being made. Safer working practices will protect SYD Ltd. by reducing the possibility of anyone using their role within the organisation to gain access to children in order to abuse them. This is because all members of Leaders will be expected to report any breaches of this code by any others working for or on behalf of SYD Ltd.

If in doubt, you should always consider how an action or activity may be *perceived* as opposed to how it is *intended*.

All Leaders are required to:

- Behave in a professional and appropriate manner in all SYD Ltd. sessions and related activities. (For example, it is inappropriate for a leader to meet with a member socially unless it is part of a SYD Ltd. - organised event or the member is a family relative.)
- Do not accept or initiate friendship requests on social media
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with service users. (For example, it is not appropriate for a leader to have an intimate relationship with a member.)
- Work cooperatively with other SYD Ltd. leaders.
- Be familiar with SYD Ltd.'s Child Protection policy and any other relevant policies in the Leader's Pack.
- Record details of any accidents/incidents/complaints in line with SYD Ltd.'s policy document guidelines.
- Always work in an open environment, where possible, avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- Treat all young people equally with respect and dignity.
- Always put the welfare of each young person first.
- Be an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Try to recognise and respect the different developmental needs and capacities of members.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Never engage in rough or physical contact.
- Never make sexually suggestive comments to SYD Ltd. group members, even in fun. Never allow or engage in touching group members in a sexually suggestive manner or engage in sexually provocative games.
- Never swear in front of group members or use sexualised language.
- never reduce a group member to tears as a form of control.

Position of Trust

All Leaders should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their dealings with children and young people. Leaders should be aware that they may be seen as role models by children, and must always act in an appropriate manner. When you are working with children on behalf of SYD Ltd. you are considered to be acting in a position of trust. Broadly speaking, a relationship of trust can be described as one in which one party is in a position of

power or influence over the other by virtue of their work or the nature of their activity. It is vital for all those in positions of trust to understand the power this can give them over those they care for and the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence of this relationship.

Young people of 16 or 17 can legally consent to some types of sexual activity but they may still be relatively immature emotionally. It is essential that those who may be in a position of responsibility and trust recognise this vulnerability and ensure that it is not exploited.

Where a person aged 18 or over is in a specified position of trust² with a child under 18, it is an offence for that person to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of that child, or to cause or incite that child to engage in or watch sexual activity even if the young person is ostensibly consenting.

Any behaviour, which might allow a sexual relationship to develop between the person in a position of trust and the children in their care, must be avoided.

Any sexual relationship within a position of trust relationship is unacceptable so long as the relationship of trust continues.

All those in SYD Ltd. have a duty to raise concerns about behaviour of Leaders, which may be harmful to those in their care, without prejudice to their own position.

Allegations relating to a breach of this code may be reported to the police and children's services and may also be investigated in line with SYD Ltd. disciplinary procedures.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Sharing information appropriately and in a timely fashion is a very important part of keep a child safe from harm. Care must also be taken to ensure that both adults and children's confidentiality is maintained and that information is handled and disseminated on a *need to know basis* only. Individuals must be confident that information held about them by SYD Ltd. will only be disclosed to others either with their consent or when there is a legal duty to do so.

The principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 must be adhered to when handling personal information, that is: personal information is obtained and processed fairly and lawfully; only disclosed in appropriate circumstances; accurate, relevant and not held for longer than necessary; and kept securely. The Act allows for the disclosure (in other words, sharing) of personal information **without consent** of the subject in certain conditions, including for the purposes of the prevention and detection of a crime, for example where there is a child protection concern.

It is best practice to gain verbal or written consent, from a child or parent/ carer before any personal information relating to them is shared with another organisation (such as children's social care). However, you may not need to seek consent to share information if it might be unsafe to seek (e.g. seeking consent might increase the risk to the child) or causes an unjustified delay or if it would

² Sexual Offences Act 2003. Sect 16-19 re-enacts and amends the offence of abuse of position of trust

prejudice the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime. The most important consideration is whether the child needs to be protected. If in doubt, about whether or not to share information with parents about this, advice should be sought from children's social care or the NSPCC Helpline.

The principles for information sharing are that it is necessary and proportionate; relevant; adequate; accurate; timely; secure; and that a record is kept of having shared the information.

In situations where a request is made by another organisation for information about an individual(s), the Designated Safeguarding Officer must be informed, and their decision (including the reasoning for this decision) should be recorded.

Identifying and responding to child protection concerns about a child

SYD Ltd Leaders may, at times, have to respond to concerns about the welfare and safety of children and young people. This could include actual or alleged harm of a child. Alternatively a child we are working with may tell someone of their abuse directly. This section tells you what you must do in the event of having a concern about a child.

Essentially there are 4 key steps to be followed:

- Being alert to signs of abuse and neglect
- Questioning behaviours and listening to the child
- Ask for help
- Referring to children's social care and/or the police

Being alert to signs of abuse or neglect

Child welfare concerns may arise in many different contexts and can vary greatly in terms of their nature and seriousness. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or by a stranger, including via the internet. In the case of female genital mutilation, children may be taken out of the county to be abused. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. An abused child will often experience more than one type of abuse, as well as other difficulties in their lives. Abuse and neglect can happen over a period of time, but can also be a one-off event. Child abuse and neglect can have major long term impacts on all aspects of a child's health, developmental and well-being.

You can become aware of the actual or alleged harm to, or abuse of, a child in a variety of ways:

- A child tells you
- The child's play or behaviour
- The child's appearance, including injuries
- The child's interaction with the parent/carer
- Someone else tells you that they suspect a child is being abused
- The behaviour of another adult towards a child
- You may observe harmful behaviour between a child and adult or between children

There are four broad categories of child abuse and neglect:

- Physical abuse
- Neglect
- Emotional Abuse
- Neglect

It is important to be mindful that some children are particularly vulnerable to abuse because of their age or their living circumstances or characteristics. Disabled children are a greater risk of abuse than non-disabled children. Children living in adverse parental circumstances may also be more at risk, in particular children living in homes where there is domestic violence, substance misuse and /or severe parental mental illness. Children from particularly isolated or new communities may also be at increased risk of abuse as well as those children who display challenging behaviour. Parental behaviour may also indicate child abuse or neglect, so you should be alert to parent-child interactions which are concerning.

All Leaders should be familiar with the definitions and indicators of abuse and neglect.

See Appendix 1 for the definitions of abuse and neglect

See Appendix 2 for the signs which might indicate abuse or neglect

Questioning behaviours and listening to the child

The signs of child abuse might not always be obvious and a child might not tell anyone what is happening to them. Sometimes a child will tell you directly what is happening as a means of getting help. Therefore you should question behaviours if something seems unusual and try to speak to the child, alone, if appropriate, to seek further information.

If a child says or indicates that he or she is being abused, or information is obtained which gives concern that a child is or maybe being abused, the person receiving this information should

- Stay calm
- Listen to the child
- Take what the child says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a child who has a speech disability and/or differences in language;
- Keep questions to the absolute minimum necessary to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said;
- Reassure the child that you will take action to keep them safe, but do not promise that you won't tell anyone, as you may need to do so in order to protect the child.
- Make a record of what has been said, heard and/or seen

Asking for help

Concerns about a child's welfare can vary in terms of their nature and seriousness, how they are identified and over what duration they have arisen. Sometimes the nature of the concern is unclear or you may have doubts about what to do next. In such instances you should ask for help by speaking with your Designated Safeguarding Officer or the NSPCC Helpline.

Referring to children's social care and/or the police

It is not the responsibility of anyone working with SYD Ltd. to decide whether or not a child is being abused or neglected. However, it is your job to pass on the information to those who are qualified to do so.

If you become aware of any concern relating to the welfare of a child then you should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible and in all instances within 1 working day. The concern will then be discussed and a decision made as to whether to refer the concern to children's social care and/or the police.

Children's social care has a statutory duty under the Children Act 1989 to ensure the welfare of each child. When it receives a child protection referral it has a legal responsibility to make enquiries in order to protect the child. This may involve talking to the child and family and gathering information from other people who know the child. The enquiries may also be carried out jointly with the police. In some circumstances there will be a child protection conference and possibly court proceedings but this is rare. In most cases the local authority will seek to offer the child and the family help and support (often referred to as 'early help').

How to make a referral

It is SYD Ltd. policy that all concerns about children are reported as soon as possible and within one working day.

The person who identifies the concern should record the details of the concern. The Designated Safeguarding Officer will decide whether or not it is appropriate to make a referral to children social care or the police. As part of making this decision The Designated safeguarding Officer may consult with children's social care or the NSPCC Helpline. All referrals must be made within 24 hours of the concern or disclosure coming to light.

Written details of the referral must be sent to children's social care within 48 hours of contacting them by phone.

If it is decided that a referral to children's social care or the police is not required the safeguarding advisor record the reasons why it was decided that no referral was necessary.

The person who raised the concern in the first place will need feedback and possibly support.

Once a referral has been made to children's social care the social worker has a day to decide what further action is necessary to take and should inform the referrer of this. If the designated safeguarding officer has not heard anything back from

the social worker within three working days s/he should follow this up and note the outcome.

If further signs of potential abuse and neglect are identified again, then report and refer again as per this procedure.

Medical emergency with suspicion of abuse

A child requiring urgent medical attention should be escorted to the nearest accident and emergency department by two Leaders from SYD Ltd. Where possible the child should be accompanied by a parent or carer. If a parent or carer unreasonably refuses to allow necessary medical treatment, the police should be contacted immediately. Whoever is escorting the child must remain with the child until their safety is assured. The safeguarding officer should be contacted as soon as is practical and they should make the necessary referral to children's social care immediately.

Recording information – keep it clear and simple

Information may need to be passed to the children's social care or the police. To be as helpful as possible the information should include:

- The nature of the allegation or concern;
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries;
- The child's account, if he or she can give them, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred;
- Any times, dates, or other relevant information;
- Whether the parent, carer, child or adult is aware of the referral having been made
- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion, or hearsay.

However, do not delay reporting the matter by trying to obtain more information. All records of safeguarding concerns and referrals should be stored securely in a locked file for 25 years with access strictly controlled.

Managing safeguarding allegations against Leaders

Child abuse can and does occur outside the family setting. Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, child abuse also occurs within organisations as well as in other settings. This could involve anyone working with children in a paid or voluntary capacity.

Evidence indicates that abuse which takes place within an organisation is rarely a one-off event. It is crucial those involved in SYD Ltd. are aware of this possibility and that all allegations are taken seriously and appropriate action taken.

The procedures should be followed all cases in which it is alleged that a member of SYD Ltd. Leaders has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

The procedures are:

If a Leader has a concern about the behaviour of another Leader s/he should discuss it with the Designated Safeguarding Officer. If the concern is about the behaviour of the Designated Safeguarding Officer then you can report the matter directly to their Deputy.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer should be informed of situations even if it is unclear if the allegation constitutes abuse or not, and the action to be taken is not obvious. The Designated Safeguarding Officer needs to consider who else needs to be informed bearing in mind the need to maintain confidentiality.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer will require a written account from the Leader about the allegation and a summary of any available additional information including the names and addresses of any potential witnesses. Both documents should be signed and dated.

If the concern is in respect of a named child/ren then the parents or carers of the child should be contacted, as soon as possible, following advice from children's social care.

There may be circumstances where allegations are about poor practice rather than child abuse but, where there is any doubt, the Designated Safeguarding Officer should seek advice from the designated officer(s)³ in the local authority.

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned and to protect the integrity of the investigation process.

It is acknowledged that feelings generated by the discovery that a Leader is, or may be abusing a child, will raise concerns among other Leaders, including the difficulties inherent in reporting such matters. However, it is important that any concerns for the welfare of the child should be reported and acted upon immediately.

SYD Ltd. will fully support and protect any Leader who, in good faith, reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be abusing a child.

What happens next?

Where there is a complaint of abuse against a Leader, there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation
- A child protection investigation or enquiry
- A disciplinary investigation or enquiry by SYD Ltd.

If the SYD Ltd. removes an individual from work with young people (or would have, had the person not left first) because that person poses a risk of harm to children, the SYD Ltd. must make a referral the Disclosure and Barring Service in order that they can consider if the individual should be barred from, or have

³ This role was previously referred to as the LADO. Different LAs may refer to it differently from now onwards.

conditions imposed in respect of working with children. It is an offence to fail to make a referral without a good reason.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer is responsible for making the referral to the DBS and the referral form can be found on the DBS website.

SYD Ltd. may seek the advice about this from the designated officer in the local authority.

A decision about making a 'referral to bar' has to be made within 30 days of the final outcome of the investigation/inquiries.

Referral to the Charities Commission

The Charities Commission require notification of suspicions, allegations and incidents of abuse or mistreatment of 'vulnerable beneficiaries'. Therefore the Designated Safeguarding Officer in conjunction with the chair of the trustees would need to consider the issue of notification to the Charities Commission⁴ of such incident.

Secure storage of concern/referral information

If, as a result of the discussion, a referral is made using the procedures as set out above, a copy of the referral form must be kept together with this record. It should include the name and role of the person to whom the referral was made, their telephone number and the time and date. Where the concern relates to an allegation or concern about a member of staff then the record should be kept until the person reaches normal retirement age or for 10 years if that is longer.

Managing bullying behaviour

Definition

Bullying may be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name calling) and emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group). The damage inflicted by bullying (including bullying via the internet) can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm).

SYD Ltd. will not condone bullying inflicted on or by children.

Any physical violence by children on their peers during activities at SYD LTD should be stopped immediately. Any sexist, racist or other derogatory remarks will be highlighted as unacceptable.

Where bullying outside SYD Ltd. activity is highlighted by a child as an issue, the SYD Ltd. staff member will discuss the issue with the Safeguarding Officer in order to explore possible action. This may include notifying the parent or carer of the issue.

⁴ See Charities Commission (2013) Reporting Serious Incidents – Guidance for Trustees

Appendix 1

Definitions of child abuse and neglect⁵

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve:

conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.

age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.

seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.

serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing, non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE is a form of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power, status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assault. In some cases young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status. Consent cannot be given, even where a child may believe they're voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them. CSE doesn't always involve physical contact and can

⁵ HM Government (2015) Working Together to Safeguard Children

happen online. A significant number of children who are victims of sexual exploitation go missing from home, care and education at some point.

Neglect

Neglect is 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 or development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Appendix 2

Possible Indicators of child abuse and neglect

The following information should help you to be more alert to the signs of possible abuse and neglect.

Physical Abuse:

Most children will collect cuts and bruises in their daily life. These are likely to be in places where there are bony parts of their body, like elbows, knees and shins. Some children, however, will have bruising which can almost only have been caused non-accidentally. An important indicator of physical abuse is where bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation does not fit the injury or when it appears on parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely, e.g., on the cheeks or thighs. A delay in seeking medical treatment when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern. Bruising may be more or less noticeable on children with different skin tones or from different racial groups and specialist advice may need to be taken. Bruising patterns also depend on a child's mobility so, for example, bruising in babies should be a great cause for concern if they are not yet mobile.

The physical signs of abuse may include:

- unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body
- bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips (from slapping or pinching)
- cigarette burns
- bite marks (child, adult or animal)
- broken bones
- scalds
- female genital mutilation

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate physical abuse:

- fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- flinching when approached or touched
- reluctance to get changed, for example in hot weather
- depression
- withdrawn behaviour
- running away from home

Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse can be difficult to identify, and often children who appear well cared for may be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. They may receive little or no love, affection or attention from their parents or carers or they may be seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of someone else. Emotional abuse can also take the form of children not being allowed to mix/play with other children and being isolated from others.

The physical signs of emotional abuse may include:

a failure to thrive or grow, particularly if the child puts on weight in other circumstances
e.g. in hospital or away from their parents care
sudden speech disorders
developmental delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate emotional abuse include:

neurotic behaviour e.g. sulking, hair twisting, rocking
being unable to play
fear of making mistakes
sudden speech disorders
self-harm behaviours
fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour

Sexual Abuse:

Adults, who use children to meet their own sexual needs, abuse both girls and boys of all ages, including infants and toddlers. Usually, in cases of sexual abuse it is the child's behaviour which may cause you to become concerned, although physical signs can also be present. In all cases, children who tell about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is important, therefore, that they are listened to and taken seriously.

The physical signs of sexual abuse may include:

Children with physical sexual health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas, sexually transmitted infections or underage pregnancy.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include:

sexual knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age
children who use sexual language or have sexual knowledge that you wouldn't expect them to have
children who ask others to behave sexually or play sexual games
bedwetting
eating problems such as overeating or anorexia
self-harming behaviours
being secretive
suddenly having unexplained sources of money
not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence)
sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour
having nightmares
running away from home

The following signs may be indicators of sexual exploitation. Children who:

appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions
associate with other young people involved in exploitation
have older boyfriends or girlfriends
suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant
suffer from changes in emotional well being
use drugs and alcohol
go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late
who regularly miss school or education or don't take part in education.

Neglect

Neglect can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise, yet have some of the most lasting and damaging effects on children. Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet the child's basic physical or psychological needs, which is likely to damage the child's health or development.

The physical signs of neglect may include:

constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children
constantly dirty or 'smelly'
loss of weight, or being constantly underweight
inappropriate dress for the weather conditions

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect may include:

complaining of being tired all the time
not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments
having few friends
being left alone or unsupervised

These definitions and indicators are not meant to be definitive but only to serve as a guide to assist you. It is important too, to remember that many children will exhibit some of these indicators at some time, and that the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that abuse is occurring. There may well be other reasons for changes in behaviour such as a death or the birth of a new baby in their family, relationship problems between their parents/carers etc.

Additional vulnerabilities

It is important to be mindful that some children are particularly vulnerable to abuse because of their age or their living circumstances or characteristics:

Disabled children are a greater risk of abuse than non-disabled children.

Children living in homes where there are adverse parental circumstances may also be more at risk, in particular children living in homes where there is domestic violence, substance misuse and/or severe parental mental illness.

Children from particularly isolated or new communities may also be at increased risk of abuse as well as those children who are disruptive and challenging.

The types of abuse and risks to children change with their age:

For example, very young children are vulnerable because of their being so dependent and having limited contact with other adults in their lives.

In contrast young people are more at risk of harmful behaviour from their friends (including sexual abuse, bullying and domestic violence) or from rivals if they are involved in any gangs.

Young people living in care or from disadvantaged communities are particularly prey to child sexual exploitation.

Young people are also at risk online in a number of ways eg seeing illegal content, being groomed for a sexual relationship or for the purpose of religious radicalisation or cyberbullying by their peers.

Some children and young people are also vulnerable to abuse because of particular practices in their community namely: female genital mutilation and forced marriage. Such practices may be defined as 'cultural' however in the UK they are illegal.