

Signs of Abuse in Children



Knowing the signs of abuse can help keep children safe

Children may show signs of abuse in their body, behaviour, emotions or relationships

1 PHYSICAL ABUSE

POSSIBLE SIGNS INCLUDE:

- Unexplained bruises, cuts burns or marks
- Marks in the shape of objects (e.g hand, belt, cigarette)
- Injuries in different stages of healing
- Frequent "accidents" or injuries
- Fear of going home or of certain people
- Wearing long sleeves or clothes to hide injuries



Any injury a child cannot explain or that doesn't fit the explanation should be taken seriously

2 EMOTIONAL ABUSE

POSSIBLE SIGNS INCLUDE:

- Low self esteem or lack of confidence
- Excessive fear, anxiety or worry
- Self-harm or threats of self-harm
- Extreme withdrawal or isolation
- Overly compliant, eager to please
- Constant criticism of themselves
- Eating disorder
- Not feeling good enough



Emotional abuse can affect a child's mental health and sense of self-worth

3 NEGLECT

POSSIBLE SIGNS INCLUDE:

- Poor hygiene, smelly or dirty
- Inadequate or inappropriate clothing for the weather
- Constant hunger or stealing food
- Untreated medical or dental problems
- Tired, lacking energy
- Left alone for long period of times
- Lack of supervision



Neglect can impact a child's health, development and ability to learn

4 SEXUAL ABUSE

POSSIBLE SIGNS INCLUDE:

- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviour
- Sexualised behaviour or language
- Pain, itching or injury in genital area
- Blood in underwear
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Sudden changes in mood or behaviour
- Fear of certain people or places



Children often show changes in behaviour rather than disclose sexual abuse



Other Behavioural Warning Signs

- Extreme changes in behaviour or personality
- Aggressive outbursts or anger
- Difficulty concentrating or declining school performance
- Running away or going missing
- Substance misuse
- Risk-taking behaviour
- Not wanting to be alone with someone
- Sudden loss of interest in activities they usually enjoy



Changes To Look Out For

A change in a child's usual behaviour is the first clue something is wrong.

Look for:

- Changes lasting more than a few days
- Happening in different settings (home, school, online)
- A combination of several signs not just one
- A gut feeling- if something doesn't feel right, it's okay to ask and act



Who Might Abuse A Child?

Abuse can be carried out by someone the child knows or trusts including:

- Family members
- People in position of trust (e.g teachers, coaches, youth workers)
- Family friends or neighbours
- Other children or young people



Abuse can happen anywhere: At home, in school, online or in the community

What to do if you are concerned



1. Notice

Trust your instincts. Look for signs or changes in behaviour.



2. Listen

Listen to the child. Let them know you believe them



3. Record

Write down your concerns, including dates and examples



4. Report

Share concerns with safeguarding lead or child protection team



5. Refer

Follow local safeguarding procedures. In an emergency call 999.



YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Take all concerns seriously
- Act early- your concern could change a child's life
- Work together to keep children safe



Get Help

If a child is in immediate danger, call 999

For advice or to report a concern, contact 01454 866000 Or 01454 615165 out of hours

For more information, please visit:
South Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children's Partnership
<http://sites.southglos.gov.uk/safeguarding/children/i-am-a-parentcarer/recognising-abuse/>