Recognising child abuse

‘Practical’ guidance
• The child might not feel able to tell anyone what's happening to them
• Sometimes, children don't even realise that what's happening to them is abuse
• unexplained changes in behaviour
• becoming withdrawn
• seeming anxious
• becoming aggressive
• lacks social skills and has few friends, if any
• poor relationship with a parent
• knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
• running away or going missing
• overly dressed for the weather and occasion
There are different types of child abuse and the signs that a child is being abused may depend on the type.

- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
Neglect

This is when adults consistently or repeatedly fail to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs which could result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development e.g. failure to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing; failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger; or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include refusal to give love, affection and attention.
Neglect

Poor presentation and hygiene
Health and development problems
Housing and family issues
Change of behaviour

The next slides will details the sings of neglect on each of the four areas indicating child neglect
Neglect

Poor presentation and hygiene

- being smelly or dirty
- being hungry or not given money for food
- having unwashed clothes
- having the wrong clothing, such as no warm clothes in winter
- having frequent and untreated nappy rash in infants.
Neglect • Health and development problems

- anaemia
- body issues, such as poor muscle tone or prominent joints
- medical or dental issues
- missed medical appointments, such as for vaccinations
- not given the correct medicines
- poor language or social skills
- regular illness or infections
- repeated accidental injuries, often caused by lack of supervision
- skin issues, such as sores, rashes, flea bites, scabies or ringworm
- thin or swollen tummy
- tiredness
- untreated injuries
Neglect

Housing and family issues

- living in an unsuitable home environment, such as having no heating
- being left alone for a long time
- taking on the role of carer for other family members.
Neglect

Change of behaviour

- becoming clingy
- becoming aggressive
- being withdrawn, depressed or anxious
- changes in eating habits
- displaying obsessive behaviour
- finding it hard to concentrate or take part in activities
- missing school
- showing signs of self harm
- using drugs or alcohol
When someone physically hurts or injures children by hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning or otherwise causing harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child whom they are looking after e.g. Munchausen’s Syndrome by proxy.
Physical abuse

- hitting with hands or objects
- slapping and punching
- kicking
- shaking
- throwing
- poisoning
- burning and scalding
- biting and scratching
- breaking bones
- drowning
Physical abuse

- bruises
- broken or fractured bones
- burns or scalds
- bite marks
- scarring
- the effects of poisoning, such as vomiting, drowsiness or seizures
- breathing problems from drowning, suffocation or poisoning
Physical abuse

Head injuries in babies and toddlers

- swelling
- bruising
- fractures
- being extremely sleepy or unconscious
- breathing problems
- seizures
- vomiting
- unusual behaviour, such as being irritable or not feeding properly
Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child so 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. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children or even the over protection of a child.
Emotional abuse

- humiliating or constantly criticising a child
- threatening, shouting at a child or calling them names
- making the child the subject of jokes, or using sarcasm to hurt a child
- blaming and scapegoating
- making a child perform degrading acts
- not recognising a child's own individuality or trying to control their lives
- pushing a child too hard or not recognising their limitations
Emotional abuse

- exposing a child to upsetting events or situations, like domestic abuse or drug taking
- failing to promote a child's social development
- not allowing them to have friends
- persistently ignoring them
- being absent
- manipulating a child
- never saying anything kind, expressing positive feelings or congratulating a child on successes
- never showing any emotions in interactions with a child, also known as emotional neglect
Emotional abuse

- seem unconfident or lack self-assurance
- struggle to control their emotions
- have difficulty making or maintaining relationships
- act in a way that's inappropriate for their age
Emotional abuse

Signs in babies and toddlers

- be overly-affectionate to strangers or people they don't know well
- seem unconfident, wary or anxious
- not have a close relationship or bond with their parent
- be aggressive or cruel towards other children or animals
Emotional abuse

Signs in older children

- use language you wouldn't expect them to know for their age
- act in a way or know about things you wouldn't expect them to know for their age
- struggle to control their emotions
- have extreme outbursts
- seem isolated from their parents
- lack social skills
- have few or no friends
This is where children and young people are abused by adults (both male and female) or other children who use them to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse, kissing and sexual fondling. Showing children pornographic material (books, videos, pictures) or taking pornographic images of them are also forms of sexual abuse.
Sexual abuse

Contact abuse

- sexual touching of any part of a child's body, whether they're clothed or not
- using a body part or object to rape or penetrate a child
- forcing a child to take part in sexual activities
- making a child undress or touch someone else
- touching, kissing and oral sex
Sexual abuse  Non-contact abuse

- exposing or flashing
- showing pornography
- exposing a child to sexual acts
- making them masturbate
- forcing a child to make, view or share child abuse images or videos
- making, viewing or distributing child abuse images or videos
- forcing a child to take part in sexual activities or conversations online or through a smartphone
Sexual abuse

Emotional and behavioural signs

- avoiding being alone with or frightened of people or a person they know
- language or sexual behaviour you wouldn't expect them to know
- having nightmares or bed-wetting
- alcohol or drug misuse
- self-harm
- changes in eating habits or developing an eating problem
• bruises
• bleeding, discharge, pains or soreness in their genital or anal area
• sexually transmitted infections
• pregnancy
If a child talks to you about abuse or neglect it's important to:

- listen carefully to what they're saying
- let them know they've done the right thing by telling you
- tell them it's not their fault
- say you'll take them seriously
- don't confront the alleged abuser
- explain what you'll do next
- report what the child has told you as soon as possible
Thank you!

Please visit childhub.org for more information on how to keep children safe.