

Safeguarding Children & Young People

Foundation Level Safeguarding Awareness

a guide for those whose work brings them into contact with children and young people, parents or carers



This guide can be freely used by Solihull staff and volunteers in the statutory, voluntary, community or independent sectors. It is recommended that this information is used – as a minimum – for induction of new staff and/or volunteer's. Please refer to the Solihull LSCB Competency Framework for further information

<http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/SocialServicesAndHealth/JointCompetencyFrameworkfinal.pdf>

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Introduction

Most children and young people generally enjoy a safe childhood within their own family. Sadly, for some, this is not the case.

If your work brings you in contact with children or young people, or their parents and carers, it is important that you are aware of your role in noticing the signs that something may be wrong and know how to report your concerns so that children and young people can be safeguarded and supported.

Background to Safeguarding Children & Young People

Each child and young person is unique and their needs and circumstances need to be considered individually. The list below gives a general overview of what is known about child abuse and neglect.

- Children and young people of any age and from any background or circumstance can be harmed.
- Some children, for example very young children or disabled children are more vulnerable to abuse and neglect.
- Harm can be caused deliberately or by failure to meet a child's needs, e.g. failure to provide food or appropriate clothing
- Children's welfare can also be impaired if a parent/carer is living with domestic abuse, is misusing substances, has mental or physical health difficulties which impact on their ability to provide safe care to their children.
- Children can be harmed by people known to them or more unusually by strangers. This can include by men and women or other young people.
- The effects of harm to children and young people can be severe and last into adulthood.

'safeguarding is everyone's responsibility'



What is child abuse?

The four main forms of harm to children and young people are described below. They can occur singly or in combination. All of these apply for any child and young person up to the age of 18 years when they legally become an adult.

Physical abuse

Hitting, shaking, biting, squeezing and burning and are all forms of physical abuse. Fabricating the symptoms of or deliberately inducing illness in a child is also referred to as physical abuse.

Sexual abuse

This could involve activities which involve physical contact, such as sexual intercourse or masturbation but could also include non-contact activities such as showing children indecent images. 'Grooming', or preparing children for sexual abuse is illegal and would constitute sexual abuse.

Neglect

This involves failures to meet a child's basic needs, for example not providing food, stimulation, a safe living environment, appropriate clothing or access to medical care. Children might also be left alone or under the supervision of inappropriate carers or not protected from danger. Failure to provide boundaries, care, love or affection is called 'emotional neglect'. Neglect can occur during pregnancy due to the mother's use of alcohol or drugs.

Emotional abuse

This is persistent emotional ill-treatment which damages a child's emotional development. It involves treating children and young people as though they are worthless, unloved or inadequate or limiting their exploration and learning through over-protection. Severe bullying, or children seeing or hearing ill-treatment of someone else (e.g. exposure to domestic abuse in the home) is also seen as emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse is always present when a child is experiencing physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect.



What are the possible signs of abuse and neglect?

Many children and young people indicate their distress through their behaviour, their appearance or how they are growing and developing. Sometimes concerns can be raised due to the way that their parents/carers are behaving.

Because all children and young people are so different, the signs and indicators of harm are varied and no one checklist can cover all eventualities. Some of the signs and indicators in the list below may have other explanations which are not related to abuse and neglect. The important thing is to be aware of the signs and indicators and to raise your concerns if you are worried about a child. Remember, it is not for you to make a 'diagnosis' or undertake inquiries, simply for you to raise the concerns for the relevant professionals to address.

- Physical injuries such as bruises, cuts, burns, broken bones on the child. If injuries are on parts of the body not normally injured in accidents; if the explanations provided for the injuries seem unlikely or if there are on-going injuries, this should raise concerns.
- Sexually explicit behaviour or language (for example, playing games and showing sexual awareness which is inappropriate for the child's age).
- Continual masturbation; aggressive and inappropriate sexual play.
- Weight loss or failure to gain weight.
- Concerns about development e.g. in growth, speech, mobility.
- Inappropriate clothing (e.g. for the child's size or for the weather).
- Ill-kempt, dirty.
- Often hungry.
- Poor attendance at school.
- Medical problems untreated, routine medical checks unattended.
- Changes in the child's behaviour; aggressive behaviour; overly passive/compliant behaviour.
- Running away, suicidal thoughts or behaviour, self-harm.
- Difficulties with eating (e.g. cramming food or loss of appetite).
- Difficulties with sleeping (e.g. disturbed sleep; nightmares; bed-wetting).
- Fear of particular people, places or situations.

If you work with adults who are parents/carers, do remember that children can be harmed when there is domestic violence and abuse in the family; when they have a parent who misuses drugs or alcohol or when their parent has a mental illness.

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What to do if I'm concerned about a child?

It is important that you address your concerns about children and young people without delay.

Tell your manager or your agency's designated safeguarding lead/person/officer

Call the NSPCC Helpline.

The NSPCC Helpline is a free source of support or advice about safeguarding concerns or a place where you can report concerns. It is open 24 hours a day, all year round.

Telephone: 0808 800 5000
Text: 88858
Email: help@nspcc.org.uk
Online: nspcc.org.uk/reportconcern

Call Solihull Children's Social Work Services.

During working hours, call the Duty, Assessment & Referral Team (DART)
Telephone: 0121 788 4333

During evenings and weekends, call the Emergency Duty Team (EDT)
Telephone: 0121 605 6060

Call the West Midlands Police in an emergency.

Telephone: 999

Access Solihull Safeguarding Children Board procedures on our website:

<http://solihulllscb.proceduresonline.com/index.htm>