



Categories of Harm

Types and Indicators of abuse

Signs of abuse can often be difficult to detect. This list aims to help people who come into contact with people with care and support needs to identify abuse and recognise possible indicators.

Abuse is/are criminal offences and require prompt identification and reporting of any concerns.

Different types of abuse

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical abuse• Domestic violence or abuse• Sexual abuse• Psychological or emotional abuse• Financial or material abuse | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modern slavery• Discriminatory abuse• Organisational or institutional abuse• Neglect or acts of omission• Self-neglect |
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Different forms of abuse and the signs

Evidence of any one indicator from the following lists should not be taken on its own as proof that abuse is occurring. However, it should alert staff to make further assessments and to consider other associated factors.

People may be subject to a number of abuse types at the same time; this list is not exhaustive.

Types of physical abuse

- Physical punishments or assault - hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, hair-pulling, biting, pushing, rough handling, scalding and burning
- Inappropriate or unlawful use of restraint – use of seat belts
- Making someone purposefully uncomfortable (e.g. opening a window and removing blankets)
- Isolation or confinement (involuntary)
- Misuse of medication (e.g. sedation) – overuse and under use
- Force feeding or withholding food
- Withholding fluids appropriate to culture, preference or health needs

Signs and indicators

- Unexplained injuries or inconsistency with the account of what happened (i.e. inconsistent with the person's lifestyle)
- Bruising, cuts, welts, burns or marks on the body, clumps of missing hair
- Frequent, unexplained injuries or falls
- Subdued or changed behaviour in the presence of a particular person
- Signs of malnutrition
- Failure to seek medical help
- Injuries at different stages of healing

Types of domestic violence or abuse

Domestic violence or abuse can be characterised by any of the indicators of abuse outlined in this briefing relating to:

Psychological	Physical	Sexual	Financial	Emotional
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Signs and indicators

- Low self-esteem
- Self-blame - Feeling that the abuse is their fault – that they did something to deserve or cause the abuse
- Evidence of physical violence such as bruising, cuts, broken bones
- Verbal abuse and humiliation in front of others – belittling or patronising
- Fear of outside intervention
- Damage to home or property
- Isolation – not seeing friends and family
- Limited access to money, food or resources

Domestic violence and abuse include: - any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. It also includes so called 'honour' -based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

Coercive or controlling behaviour is a core part of domestic violence. Coercive behaviour can include:

- Acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation
- Harming, punishing, or frightening the person
- Isolating the person from sources of support
- Exploitation of resources or money
- Preventing the person from escaping abuse
- Regulating everyday behaviour.

Types of sexual abuse

- Rape, attempted rape or sexual assault
- Inappropriate touch anywhere
- Non- consensual masturbation of either or both persons
- Non- consensual sexual penetration or attempted penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth
- Any sexual activity that the person lacks the capacity to consent to
- Inappropriate looking, sexual teasing or innuendo or sexual harassment
- Sexual photography or forced use of pornography or witnessing of sexual acts
- Indecent exposure

Signs and indicators

- Bruising, particularly to the thighs, buttocks and upper arms and marks on the neck
- Torn, stained or bloody underwear and/or clothing
- Bleeding, bruising, pain or itching in the genital area
- Unusual difficulty in walking or sitting
- Foreign bodies in genital or rectal orifice
- Infections, unexplained genital discharge, or sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy in a woman who is unable to consent to sexual intercourse
- Uncharacteristic use of explicit sexual language or significant changes in sexual behaviour
- Incontinence not related to any medical diagnosis
- Self-harming
- Poor concentration, withdrawal, sleep disturbance
- Excessive fear/apprehension of, or withdrawal from, relationships
- Fear of receiving personal care
- Reluctance to be alone with a particular person/gender or who may look like the perpetrator e.g. uniform, same hair colour etc
- Depression and stress
- Sexually transmitted disease, urinary tract/vaginal infections

Types of psychological or emotional abuse

- Enforced social isolation
- Removing mobility or communication aids or intentionally leaving someone unattended, disadvantaged or reliant on others
- Preventing someone from meeting their religious and cultural needs
- Preventing the expression of choice and opinion
- Failure to respect privacy and choice
- Preventing stimulation, meaningful occupation or activities
- Intimidation, coercion, harassment, use of threats, humiliation, bullying, swearing or verbal abuse
- Addressing a person in a patronising or infantile way
- Threats of harm or abandonment
- Cyber bullying

Signs and indicators

- An air of silence when a particular person is present
- Withdrawal or change in the psychological state or behaviour of the person
- Insomnia
- Low self-esteem
- Uncooperative and aggressive behaviour
- Change in appetite, weight loss/gain
- Signs of distress: tearfulness, anger
- Apparent false claims, by someone involved with the person, to attract unnecessary treatment

Types of financial or material abuse

- Theft of money or possessions
- Accepting tips/gifts
- Fraud, scamming
- Preventing a person from accessing their own money, benefits or assets
- Employees taking a loan or items from a person using the service
- Undue pressure, duress, threat or undue influence put on the person in connection with loans, wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions
- Arranging less care than is needed to save money to maximise inheritance
- Denying assistance to manage/monitor financial affairs
- Denying assistance to access benefits
- Misuse of personal allowance in a care home
- Misuse of benefits or direct payments in a family home
- Someone moving into a person's home and living rent free without agreement or under duress
- False representation, using another person's bank account, cards or documents
- Exploitation of a person's money or assets, e.g. unauthorised use of a car
- Misuse of a power of attorney, or other legal authority
- Rogue trading – e.g. unnecessary or overpriced property repairs

Property of McSence

Signs and indicators of financial or material abuse

- Missing personal possessions
- Unexplained lack of money or inability to maintain lifestyle and /or pay bills
- Unexplained withdrawal of funds from accounts
- Power of attorney or lasting power of attorney (LPA) being obtained after the person has ceased to have mental capacity
- Failure to register an LPA after the person has ceased to have mental capacity to manage their finances, so that it appears that they are continuing to do so
- The person allocated to manage financial affairs is evasive or uncooperative – lack of or poor recording of expenses
- The family or others show unusual interest in the assets of the person
- Signs of financial hardship in cases where the person's financial affairs are being managed by a court appointed deputy, attorney or LPA
- Recent changes in deeds or title to property
- Rent arrears and eviction notices
- A lack of clear financial accounts held by a care home or service
- Failure to provide receipts for shopping or other financial transactions carried out on behalf of the person
- Disparity between the person's living conditions and their financial resources, e.g. insufficient food in the house
- Unnecessary property repairs

Types of modern slavery

- Human trafficking
- Forced labour
- Domestic servitude
- Sexual exploitation, such as escort work, prostitution and pornography
- Debt bondage – being forced to work to pay off debts that realistically they never will be able to afford

GOV.UK has more information on [identifying and reporting modern slavery](#)

Signs and indicators

- Signs of physical or emotional abuse
- Appearing to be malnourished, unkempt or withdrawn
- Isolation from the community, seeming under the control or influence of others
- Living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation
- Lack of personal effects or identification documents
- Wearing the same clothes
- Avoidance of eye contact, appearing frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers
- Fear of law enforcers / social work

Types of discriminatory abuse

- Unequal treatment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation (known as 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010)
- Abuse, derogatory remarks or inappropriate use of language related to a protected characteristic
- Denying access to communication aids, not allowing access to an interpreter, signer or lip-reader
- Harassment or deliberate exclusion on the grounds of a protected characteristic
- Denying basic rights to healthcare, education, employment and criminal justice relating to a protected characteristic
- Substandard service provision relating to a protected characteristic

Signs and indicators

- Person appears withdrawn and isolated
- Expressions of anger, frustration, fear or anxiety
- The support on offer does not take account of the person's individual needs in terms of a protected characteristic

Types of organisational or institutional abuse

- Discouraging visits or the involvement of relatives or friends
- Run-down, poorly managed or overcrowded establishments
- Authoritarian management or rigid regimes, poor/ lack of leadership and supervision – lack of individual choice
- Insufficient staff or high turnover resulting in poor quality care
- Abusive and disrespectful attitudes towards people using the service
- Inappropriate use of restraints
- Lack of respect for dignity and privacy
- Failure to manage service users with dysregulated behaviour
- Not providing adequate food and drink, or assistance with eating
- Not offering choice or promoting independence
- Misuse of medication – withheld or over-dosed
- Failure to provide care with dentures, spectacles, hearing aids or communication aids
- Not taking account of individuals' cultural, religious or ethnic needs
- Failure to respond or to report abuse
- Interference with personal correspondence or communication
- Failure to respond to complaints or concerns

Signs and indicators

- Lack of flexibility and choice for people using the service
- Inadequate staffing levels
- People being hungry or dehydrated
- Poor standards of care
- Lack of personal clothing and possessions and communal use of personal items
- Lack of adequate procedures - not following organisation policy
- Poor record-keeping and missing documents
- Absence of visitors, little or no social, recreational and educational activities
- Public discussion of personal matters
- Unnecessary exposure during personal care or using the toilet
- Absence of individual care plans
- Lack of management overview and support

Types of neglect and acts of omission

- Failure to provide or allow access to food, shelter, clothing, heating, stimulation and activity, personal or medical care
- Providing care in a way that the person would not choose for self
- Failure to administer medication as prescribed – under and over-dose
- Refusal of access to visitors / professionals
- Not taking account of individuals' cultural, religious or ethnic needs
- Not taking account of educational, social and recreational needs
- Ignoring or isolating the person
- Preventing the person from making their own decisions
- Preventing access to glasses, hearing aids, dentures, etc.
- Failure to ensure privacy and dignity

Signs and indicators

- Poor environment – dirty or unhygienic
- Poor physical condition and/or personal hygiene – individual/home equipment
- Pressure sores or ulcers
- Malnutrition or unexplained weight loss / excess weight gain
- Untreated injuries and medical problems
- Inconsistent or reluctant contact with medical and social care organisations
- Accumulation of untaken medication
- Uncharacteristic failure to engage in social interaction
- Inappropriate or inadequate clothing

Types of self-neglect

- Lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health and safety
- Neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, oral care, health, home or surroundings
- Inability to avoid self-harm
- Failure to seek help or access services to meet health and social care needs
- Inability or unwillingness to manage one's personal affairs

Signs and indicators

- Poor personal hygiene
- Unkempt appearance – clothing
- Lack of essential food, clothing or shelter
- Malnutrition and/or dehydration – excessive weight gain or loss
- Living in squalid or unsanitary conditions
- Neglecting household maintenance
- Hoarding
- Collecting a large number of animals in inappropriate conditions – not coping with pet care needs
- Non-compliance with health or care or social services/social work
- Inability or unwillingness to take medication or treat illness or injury