

## Definitions of Abuse

Child abuse is a general term used to describe where a child may experience harm, either by deliberate harmful acts, but more usually as a result of failure on the part of a parent/carer or organisation/community to ensure a reasonable standard of care and protection for that child, and where that care and protection is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust.

### **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse of a child is the actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power, or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents. Physical abuse may involve hitting, kicking, slapping, shaking, poisoning, pinching, whipping, throwing, 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.

### **Sexual abuse**

Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice in consenting to. This may include, but is not limited to, rape, oral sex, penetration, or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching. It may also include involving children in looking at, or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities and encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. The recent use of technology such as the internet by adults to entice children to meet or participate in virtual sex is also an abuse.

### **Neglect**

Neglect or negligent treatment is the inattention or omission on the part of the caregiver to provide for the development of the child in: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers and which causes, or has a high probability of causing, harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible.

### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies. Emotionally abusive acts include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, scape-goating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing, or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

### **Sexual exploitation**

Child sexual exploitation includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the exploitation of a child through prostitution and trafficking of children through sexual abuse and exploitation. It usually involves a child being manipulated or coerced, and the abusive relationship between victim and perpetrator involves an imbalance of power where the victim's options are limited. It is a form of abuse that can be misunderstood by children and adults as consensual.

Child sexual exploitation manifests in different ways. It can involve an older perpetrator exercising financial, emotional or physical control over a young person. It can involve peers manipulating or forcing victims into sexual activity, sometimes within gangs and in gang-affected neighbourhoods. It may also involve opportunistic or organised networks of perpetrators who profit financially from trafficking young victims between different locations to engage in sexual activity with multiple men.

### ***Commercial or other exploitation of a child***

This refers to the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. Children being recruited in to the army or other armed groups would also come under this category.

### ***Traditional Harmful Practices***

Traditional harmful practices are cultural practices which may put the child at risk of harm. Examples are Child Marriage where a child (usually the female) is bound into a contract of marriage through kidnapping, coercion, or compulsion and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

### ***Internet Abuse and Abusive Images of Children***

Abusive images of children (commonly known as child pornography) is defined as any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for the purpose of sexual gratification. Technology has also meant that children are now subject to additional abuse through the internet. There is a trade in the transmittal of abusive images of children. Digital and phone cameras have made it possible for some children's images to be distributed across the internet without their knowledge. Children may also be at risk of coming into contact with people who want to harm them through their use of the internet.

### ***Abuse linked to belief in 'possession', 'witchcraft' or related to spiritual or religious belief***

Abuse linked to the belief in 'possession', 'witchcraft' or other spiritual beliefs can occur when communities or individuals believe that a child is in possession of evil spirits. In the case of child abuse it generally occurs when the child is being viewed as 'different': the child could be disobedient, ill or disabled. These beliefs can lead to practices that may be harmful to children including severe beating, burning, starvation, isolation, cutting or stabbing. These practices can lead to extreme cruelty and even death of children. Ritualistic ceremonies or other practices to hurt children can also be part of this harmful practice.

### ***Spiritual abuse***

Spiritual abuse occurs when someone in a position of spiritual power or authority in a faith-based environment, misuses their power or authority, and the trust placed in them, with the intention of controlling, coercing, manipulating or dominating a child. Spiritual abuse is always about the misuse of power within a framework of spiritual belief or practice, in order to meet the needs of the abuser (or enhance his or her position) at the expense of the needs of the child. Spiritual abuse results in spiritual harm to a child and can be linked to other abuse such as physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

### ***Abuse of trust***

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. An abuse of trust could be committed by, for example, a teacher, humanitarian or development worker, sports coach, scout leader, faith leader. It is important those in a position of trust have a clear understanding of the responsibilities this carries and clear guidance to ensure they do not abuse their position or put themselves in a position where allegations of abuse, whether justified or unfounded, could be made. The relationship may be distorted by fear or favour. It is vital for all those in such positions of trust to understand the power this gives them over those they care for and the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence. This is particularly important in the context of humanitarian aid, when those in positions of power also control aid and resources.

### ***Bullying***

Bullying can take the form of physical intimidation or verbal intimidation, including racist and sexist remarks, or emotional intimidation such as isolating or excluding someone. It is difficult to define but always involves a less powerful person experiencing deliberate hostility.