

Recognising abuse

Signs, indicators and types of abuse in Children and Adults

It is important to remember that many children and adults will exhibit some of these signs and indicators at some time, and the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that abuse is occurring.

There may well be other reasons for changes in behaviour such as death, or the birth of a new baby in the family, relationship problems between parents/carers etc. However, you should always report anything that causes you to suspect that abuse may be happening in order for appropriate action to be taken to ensure the welfare and safety of children and adults.

Within the relevant legislation and statutory guidance there are four known categories of abuse identified for children and ten categories of abuse noted for adults.

Children

- Physical
- emotional
- sexual
- neglect

Adults

- Physical
- emotional (or psychological)
- sexual
- financial
- discriminatory
- institutional
- domestic abuse
- modern slavery
- neglect and acts of omission
- self neglect

Different forms of abuse and the signs

Evidence of any one indicator of abuse should not be taken on its own as proof that abuse is occurring. However, it should alert practitioners to make further assessments and to consider other associated factors. The lists of possible indicators and examples of behaviour are not exhaustive and people may be subject to a number of abuse types at the same time.

The signs detailed below may also be indicators of other medical factors and may not necessarily confirm abuse and neglect.

PHYSICAL ABUSE	
Examples include	Signs include
<input type="checkbox"/> Shaking <input type="checkbox"/> Pinching	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body

- Slapping
- Force-feeding
- Biting
- Burning or Scalding.
- Causing needless physical discomfort
- Inappropriate restraint
- Locking someone in a room

- Frequent visits to the GP or A&E
- An injury inconsistent with the explanation offered
- Fear of parents or carers being approached for an explanation
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- Flinching when approached
- Reluctance to get changed or wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- Depression
- Withdrawn behaviour or other behaviour change
- Running away from home/ residential care
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected

EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Examples include

- Intimidation and/or threats
- Bullying
- Rejection
- Shouting
- Indifference and the withdrawal of approval
- Denial of choice
- Deprivation of dignity or privacy
- The denial of human and civil rights
- Harassment
- Being made to fear for one's well being

Signs include

- A failure to thrive or grow
- Sudden speech disorders
- Developmental delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress
- Behaviour change
- Being unable to play or socialise with others
- Fear of making mistakes
- Self harm
- Fear of parent or carer being approached regarding their behaviour
- Confusion

SEXUAL ABUSE

Examples include

- Rape and other sexual offences
- For adults, sexual activity including sexual contact and non-sexual contact that the person does not want, to which they have not consented, could not consent, or were pressured into consenting to.
- Being encouraged or enticed to touch the abuser
- Coercing the victim into watching or participating in pornographic videos, photographs, or internet images
- Any sexual relationship that develops where one is in a position of trust, power or authority

Signs include

- Pain or itching in the genital/anal areas
- Bruising or bleeding near genital/anal areas
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Vaginal discharge or infection
- Stomach pains
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down
- Pregnancy
- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour, e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn
- Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- Nightmares
- Leaving home
- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or development age
- Sexual drawings or language
- Bedwetting
- Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- Self harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts
- Eating problems such as overeating or anorexia

NEGLECT

Examples include	Signs include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Withholding help or support necessary to carry out daily living tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Ignoring medical and physical care needs <input type="checkbox"/> Failing to provide access to health, social or educational support <input type="checkbox"/> The withholding of medication, nutrition and heating <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping someone in isolation. <input type="checkbox"/> Failure to intervene in situations that are dangerous to the person <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate supervision and guidance – leaving the child to cope alone, abandoning them or leaving them with inappropriate carers and failing to provide appropriate boundaries about behaviours such as under age sex or alcohol. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from others <input type="checkbox"/> Dirty or 'smelly' <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of weight, or being constantly underweight <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate dress for the weather <input type="checkbox"/> Complaining of being tired all the time <input type="checkbox"/> Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments <input type="checkbox"/> Having few friends <input type="checkbox"/> Worsening of health conditions <input type="checkbox"/> Pressure sores <input type="checkbox"/> Mentioning their being left alone or unsupervised <input type="checkbox"/> Sore or extreme nappy rash <input type="checkbox"/> Skin infections <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of response to stimuli or contact <input type="checkbox"/> Poor skin condition(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Frozen watchfulness <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety <input type="checkbox"/> Distressed <input type="checkbox"/> Child moves away from parent under stress <input type="checkbox"/> Little or no distress when separated from primary carer <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate emotional responses <input type="checkbox"/> Language delay

Self –Neglect (Adults)

Can sometimes be as a result of a person's choice of lifestyle and covers a wide range of behaviour including:

Examples include	Signs include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Little or no personal care <input type="checkbox"/> Refusing medication or refusing to stay on medication <input type="checkbox"/> Disorientated or incoherent <input type="checkbox"/> Unsafe living conditions <input type="checkbox"/> Inability to manage finances and property <input type="checkbox"/> Isolation <input type="checkbox"/> Hoarding when it becomes extreme (including animal hoarding). <p>In these circumstances there is no abuser.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> poor grooming, dirty or ragged clothes, unclean skin and fingernails <input type="checkbox"/> unwilling to accept medical care <input type="checkbox"/> unable to focus, carry on normal conversation or answer basic questions about date, place, and time <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of food or basic utilities in the home, unclean living quarters, rodents or other vermin <input type="checkbox"/> Hoarding animals or trash, inability to get rid of unneeded items <input type="checkbox"/> Inability to manage finances and property: not paying bills, repeatedly borrows money, gives money or property away <input type="checkbox"/> Little contact with family or friends, no social support <input type="checkbox"/> Living in grossly unsanitary conditions <input type="checkbox"/> Suffering from untreated illness or disease/condition <input type="checkbox"/> Suffering from over or under eating to the extent that if untreated the adult's physical or mental health could be impaired <input type="checkbox"/> Creating a hazardous situation that would likely cause serious physical harm to the adult or cause substantial loss of assets

Adults may experience several other types of abuse as detailed below:

FINANCIAL ABUSE	
Examples include	Signs include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Being over charged for services <input type="checkbox"/> Being tricked into receiving goods or services that they do not want or need <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate use, exploitation, or misappropriation of property and/or utilities <input type="checkbox"/> Theft <input type="checkbox"/> Deception <input type="checkbox"/> Fraud <input type="checkbox"/> Exploitation or pressure in connection with wills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of basic requirements e.g. food, clothes, shelter <input type="checkbox"/> Inability to pay bills. <input type="checkbox"/> Unexplained withdrawals from accounts. <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistency between standard of living and income <input type="checkbox"/> Reluctance to take up assistance which is needed <input type="checkbox"/> Unusual interest by family and other people in the person's assets <input type="checkbox"/> Recent changes in deeds <input type="checkbox"/> Power of Attorney obtained when person lacks capacity to make the decision.

DISCRIMINATORY	
Examples include	Signs include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use of inappropriate "nick names" <input type="checkbox"/> Use derogatory language or terminology <input type="checkbox"/> Enforcing rules or procedures which undermine the individual's well being <input type="checkbox"/> Denial to follow one's religion <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of appropriate food <input type="checkbox"/> Denial of opportunity to develop relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Denial of health care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Being treated unequally from other users in terms of the provision of care, treatment or services <input type="checkbox"/> Being isolated <input type="checkbox"/> Derogatory language and attitude by carers <input type="checkbox"/> Dismissive language by staff <input type="checkbox"/> Hate campaigns by neighbours or others <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorating health <input type="checkbox"/> Indicators of other forms of abuse

ORGANISATIONAL ABUSE	
Examples include	Signs include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Service users required to 'fit in' excessively to the routine of the service <input type="checkbox"/> More than one individual is being neglected <input type="checkbox"/> Everyone is treated in the same way <input type="checkbox"/> Other forms of abuse on an institutional scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Inflexible daily routines, for example: set bedtimes and/or deliberate waking <input type="checkbox"/> Dirty clothing and bed linen <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of personal clothing and possessions <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate use of nursing and medical procedures <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of individualised care plans and failure to comply with care plans <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate use of power, control, restriction or confinement <input type="checkbox"/> Failure to access health care, dentistry services etc <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate use of medication. <input type="checkbox"/> Misuse of residents' finances or communal finances <input type="checkbox"/> Dangerous moving and handling practices <input type="checkbox"/> Failure to record incidents or concerns

Other types of abuse

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is defined as:

Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if: (a)A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and (b)the behaviour is abusive. This includes physical, emotional, economic, sexual abuse and controlling and coercive behaviour. Personally connected’ means: intimate partners, ex-partners, family members or individuals who share parental responsibility for a child

Domestic abuse is an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer.

Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence)
- Psychological and/or emotional abuse
- Physical or sexual abuse.
- Financial or economic abuse.
- Harassment and stalking.
- Online or digital abuse.

Exploitation

Exploitation is a form of abuse where someone is forced or coerced into doing things for the benefit of others

- exploitation is often a gradual process
- people are groomed and introduced to new ideas, behaviours and activities, making these appear normal and acceptable
- these behaviours and activities may seem exciting or give someone something they are looking for – including money, gifts or a sense of belonging
- people may not recognise that they are being exploited until their situation becomes very serious
- exploitation can take many forms, can take place in a range of situations, and can involve many groups of people.

Common forms of exploitation

Criminal exploitation	being forced to take part in criminal activities such as transporting or selling illegal items (e.g. drugs); participating in violent or acquisitive crime; or grooming and exploiting other people.
Debt bondage	present in many forms of exploitation. People may accumulate ‘debts’ during exploitation, such as payments for transport and accommodation, or ‘free’ drugs and money. People may be forced to carry out work, favours or criminal activities to pay off their debts and may be threatened with violence if they do not.
Drug trafficking	being forced to transport drugs to areas where they can be sold and distributed. This can involve county lines activities (where drug gangs transport drugs to towns and cities along ‘deal lines’). Drug trafficking can be a form of modern slavery and human trafficking if people are forced to travel to take part in the transportation and sale of drugs.
Financial exploitation	being deceived or coerced into handing over monetary funds or assets to others. This can happen through scams, fraud, blackmail, or through accruing debts.
Labour exploitation	being forced to work for little or no pay, often in poor conditions. People experiencing labour exploitation may have limited freedom and may be forced to live with other workers. Labour exploitation is a form of modern slavery.
Modern slavery	having control or ownership over another person and using this power to exploit them. Modern slavery can include human trafficking, enslavement, domestic servitude and forced labour.

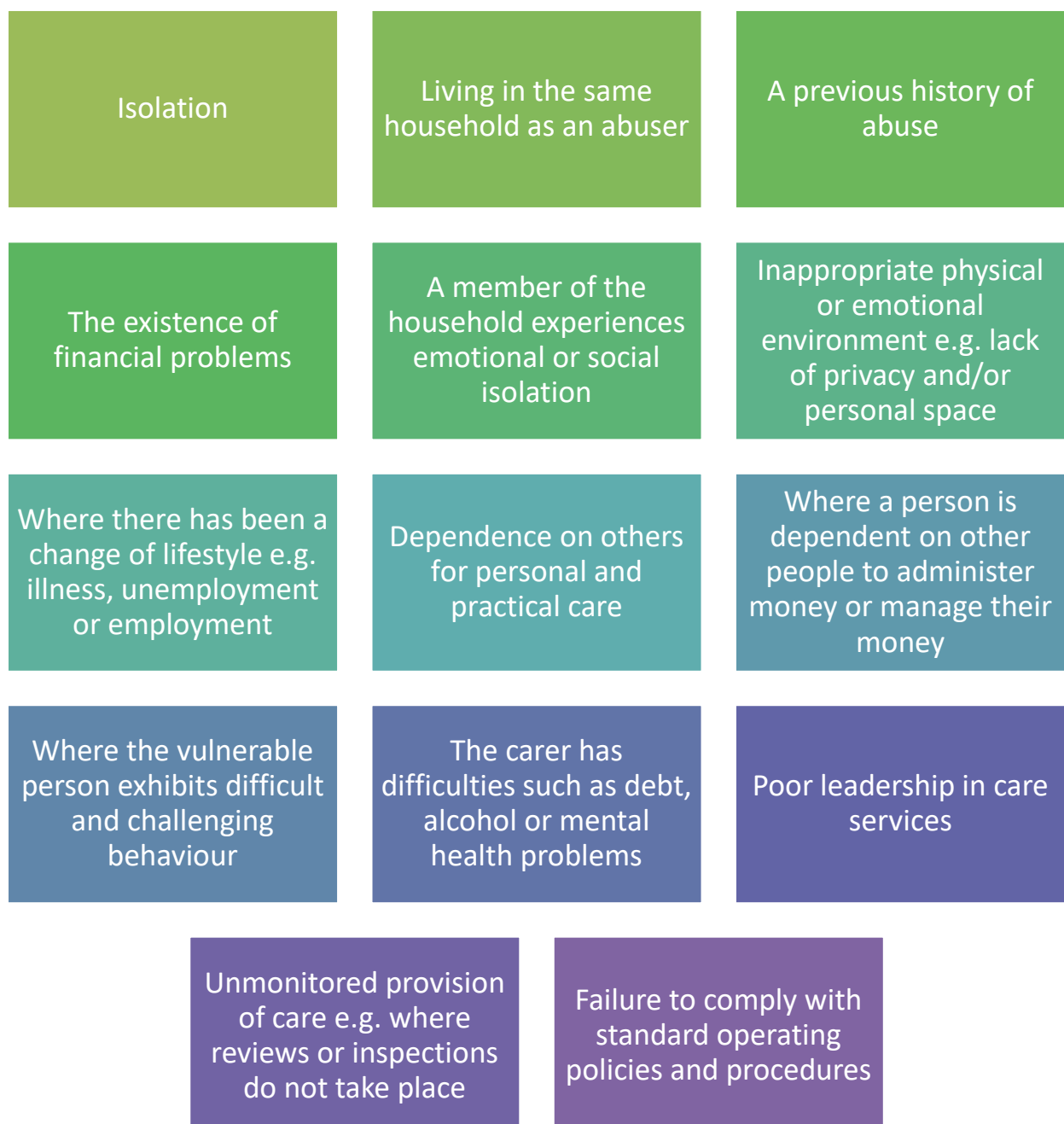
Radicalisation	the process through which people come to support increasingly extreme political, religious or other ideals. This can lead them to support violent extremism and terrorism.
Sexual exploitation	a form of sexual abuse where people are encouraged, manipulated or forced to participate in sexual acts. They may be threatened with violence and may be groomed by offers of affection, money or gifts.

People can experience many forms of exploitation at once.

For example: someone who is forced to work in a business for lower than the legal minimum wage (**modern slavery**) may be transported across the country to different locations where they can be exploited (**human trafficking**), they may be **sexually exploited** by their enslavers and their money may have been stolen from them (**financial exploitation**)

Risks that increase the likelihood of abuse happening

There are certain situations and factors that put adults at particular risk of abuse. If one or more of these factors are present, it does not mean that abuse will occur but it will increase the risk:



Increased Risk to Vulnerable Children

There are many issues that may contribute to child abuse, but some factors increase the risk to children and make them more vulnerable to abuse. They can be found in the background of parents, in the environmental situation and in attributes of the child themselves.

Parental factors:

- Parent has a mental illness
- Parent is misusing drugs or alcohol
- Parent has already abused a child
- Parent has previously had children removed
- Unwanted pregnancy/terminations
- Parent has a background of abuse when growing up
- Parents have unrealistic expectations of the child and lack parenting knowledge
- Parent is isolated and has little support
- Parent has a learning difficulty/disability

Environmental factors:

- Overcrowding in the house
- Poverty or lack of opportunity to improve the family's resources
- Domestic abuse is present
- A non-biological adult (i.e. unrelated) living in the house
- Family is experiencing multiple stresses

Child factors:

- Baby is sickly, colicky or unwanted
- Child has a physical or learning disability
- Lack of attachment between child and parent
- Child resides in care, particularly residential
- Child is excluded from mainstream school
- Child uses drugs/alcohol
- Child goes missing
- Child is living in private fostering arrangements

It is possible to limit the situations where the abuse of children and adults at risk may occur, by promoting good practice to all staff and elected members.

Training

NCASP provide number of E-Learning and training courses via Learning Together

- see: [Learning Together – Safeguarding Adults and Children](#)
- The training reflects lessons from case reviews and the outcomes of national enquiries.
- All training is multi-agency.

How do I access the training?

- Application is via ncc.learningpool.com.
- or email: learningandod@northumberland.gov.uk

Raising a safeguarding concern / referral

- [Report concerns about a child](#)
- [Report concerns about an adult](#)

Onecall is one number for all adult social care, children's services and community health enquiries helping the most vulnerable people to keep safe and well. Telephone number **01670 536400** (24-7)

Procedures

- [Children Safeguarding Procedures](#)
- [Safeguarding Adults Procedures](#)

Websites

- [Northumberland Children and Adults Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- [Safeguarding Adults](#)
- [Safeguarding Children](#)
- [Domestic Abuse](#)

7 Minute Briefings:

- [Self Harm \(CYP\)](#)
- [Transitional Safeguarding](#)
- [Professional Curiosity](#)
- [CARE – Caring about Adversity, Resilience and Empowerment](#)
 - [Animation: CARE](#)
- [Self-neglect](#)
 - [Animation: Self-neglect](#)
- [Making Safeguarding Personal](#)
 - [Leaflet: How to recognise signs of abuse and neglect](#)