

# Recognising Signs of Abuse and Neglect

---

Everyone involved in cricket should always be alert to signs and indicators of abuse.

The presence of one or more of these as outlined below is not proof of abuse, but a child's safety is increased if you share any concerns. Correspondingly a child may be at increased risk of harm if you fail to do so. The definitions, possible signs and indicators detailed here are not exhaustive because the nature and types of abuse are constantly changing. If you witness any of these signs or indicators, even were presented with a plausible explanation (e.g. an accident at home) you should report them. You do not need evidence of abuse to share your concerns. For more guidance on how to report a concern please click [here](#).

The definitions of abuse below are taken from Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023). Additional information regarding definitions of abuse can be found on the [NSPCC website](#). The Wales Safeguarding Procedures includes a separate glossary which can be found [here](#).

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in their family or in an institutional or community setting by those who know them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children. Males and females can be involved in the abuse of children. Abuse can take place in person or online, or technology may be used to facilitate in person abuse.


## Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any deliberate act causing injury or trauma to another person, for example: hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, burning, giving a person medicine that they do not need and/or that may harm them or application of inappropriate restraint measures.

### In cricket, physical abuse may occur if:

- The nature and intensity of training or competition exceeds the capacity of a child's growing body
- The use of drugs or harmful substances are encouraged to enhance performance to enhance performance
- A child is forced or pressured to participate when injured
- Sanctions involve inflicting pain.

### Possible signs and indicators of physical abuse:

- Unexplained marks, injuries, burns or scalds, bite marks, loss of hair in clumps, broken or fractured bones
  - Untreated or recurrent injuries
  - A history of unexplained falls, or minor injuries
  - Injuries found at different states of healing
  - Injury shape similar to an object
  - Refusal to discuss injuries
  - Inconsistent accounts for the cause of injuries
  - Injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
  - Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather
  - Fear of medical help
  - Delays in physical development
  - Drowsiness due to too much medication or lack of medication.
- 

## Emotional Abuse

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such 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 include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or "making fun" of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capacity, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve hearing or seeing the ill treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying) causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

### In cricket, emotional abuse may occur if children:

- Are subjected to repeated criticism, sarcasm, name-calling or discrimination
- Feel pressure to perform to unrealistically high expectations
- Are made to feel like their value or worth is dependent on their sporting success.

### Possible signs and indicators of emotional abuse:

- Isolation
- Fear of making mistakes
- Being over meticulous
- Becoming withdrawn, agitated and/or anxious
- Tearfulness
- Unexplained paranoia or excessive fears
- Low self-esteem
- Struggling to control emotions
- Have difficulty making or maintaining relationships
- Lack of growth or development
- Unexplained speech disorders
- Lack social skills
- Having few or no friends
- Acting or dressing inappropriately for age, gender and/or culture.

## Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is any act which results in the exploitation of children whether with their consent or not, for the purpose of sexual or erotic gratification. This includes non-contact activities, such as indecent exposure, involving children in witnessing sexual acts, looking at sexual images/pornography or grooming them in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Children may not always understand that they are being sexually abused. Sexual abusers can also groom protective adults and organisations in order to create opportunities for abuse to take place.



In cricket sexual abuse can occur if individuals have deliberately targeted activities to gain access to groom, and abuse children. There is evidence that individuals have sometimes ignored governing body codes of conduct and used physical contact within coaching or other roles to mask inappropriate touching of children. Increasingly grooming and sexual abuse is also being perpetrated via inappropriate use of social media. The role of coach falls within the legal definition of “position of trust” meaning that it is illegal for a coach to engage in any sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18 who they are coaching.

#### **Possible signs and indicators of sexual abuse:**

- Genital and stomach pain, itching, bruising, discharge and bleeding, pregnancy, incontinence, repeated urinary infections, and sexually transmitted infections
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Having inappropriate knowledge of sexual behaviour for their age
- A preoccupation with anything sexual
- Inappropriate or unusual changes in the way affection is shown
- Displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour, such as dressing in a sexualised manner or consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- Having nightmares
- Bed-wetting.

## **Neglect**

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet the basic needs of children. Neglect may involve failing to provide adequate food or shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect children from physical and emotional harm or danger or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, basic emotional needs.

In cricket, it may involve failing to ensure that children are safe and adequately supervised, that their basic physical needs are met or exposing them to unnecessary risks.

#### **Possible signs and indicators of neglect:**

- Poor hygiene
- Looking unkempt
- Being smelly or dirty
- Frequent tiredness
- Being hungry or not given money for food
- Malnutrition
- Having unwashed clothes
- Ill-fitting or inappropriate clothing such as no warm clothes in winter
- Stealing food and/or money
- Being left alone for a long time
- Being withdrawn, depressed or anxious
- Finding it hard to concentrate or take part in activities
- Untreated injuries and medical problems
- Parents or carers absent or unsupportive or disengaged.

## Other Safeguarding Issues

The contexts of children's lives are always changing and so it is important to be aware of other safeguarding issues that may impact children:

### Bullying

Bullying is repeated behaviour intended to intimidate or upset someone and/or make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe, for example: name calling, exclusion or isolation, spreading rumours, embarrassing someone in public or in front of their peers, threatening to cause harm, physically hurting someone, or damaging their possessions.

Bullying in cricket could be a parent who pushes their child too hard, a coach who shouts at, or humiliates children, or a child that actively seeks to make playing sport a difficult or unhappy experience for others.

#### Possible signs and indicators of bullying:

- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Being frightened of certain people, places, or situations
- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing or property
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations.

### Grooming

Grooming is the process of gaining the trust of an individual, and sometimes their family, to exploit, abuse or traffic them. Grooming can happen both online and in person.

#### Possible signs and indicators of grooming:

- Being very secretive about how they are spending their time, including when online
- Having money or new things like clothes and mobile phones that they can't or won't explain
- Being upset, withdrawn, or distressed
- Sexualised behaviour, language, or an understanding of sex that's not appropriate for their age, understanding and/or culture
- Spending more time away from home or going missing for periods of time
- Talking about a new friend, girlfriend, boyfriend or partner and it's not clear who they are or how they met them
- Having an older boyfriend or girlfriend
- Underage drinking or drug taking
- Grooming can also lead to radicalisation.

## Online Abuse

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web, like computers, tablets, and mobile phones. It can happen anywhere online, including social media, text messages and messaging apps, emails, online chats, online gaming, and live-streaming sites.

Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know or from strangers. It might be part of other abuse, which is taking place offline, like bullying or grooming. Or the abuse might only happen online. Children might experience different types of online abuse, such as: cyberbullying, emotional abuse, grooming, radicalisation, consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude images, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

### Possible signs and indicators of online abuse:

- Spending more or less time online or on their devices
- Spending a lot more or a lot less time than usual online, texting, gaming, or using social media
- Seeming distant, upset, or angry after using the internet or texting
- Being secretive about who they are talking to and what they are doing online or on their mobile phone
- Having lots of new phone numbers, texts or email addresses on their mobile phone, laptop, or tablet
- Appearing controlled by their phone
- Switching to a new screen when someone comes near the computer or device
- Seeming upset or frustrated after going online or gaming.

## Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Both CCE and CSE are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. CSE and CCE can affect children, both male and female and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation.

### *Child criminal exploitation*

Some specific forms of CCE can include children being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines, working in cannabis factories, shoplifting, or pickpocketing. They can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others.

Children can become trapped by this type of exploitation, as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt. They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives or begin to carry a knife for a sense of protection from harm from others. As children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals, (particularly older children), and they are not treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced. They may still have been criminally exploited even if the activity is something they appear to have agreed or consented to.

It is important to note that the experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys. The indicators may not be the same, however professionals should be aware that girls are at risk of criminal exploitation too. It is also important to note that both boys and girls being criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.



### *Child sexual exploitation*

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet.

CSE can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence and may happen without the child's immediate knowledge for example through others sharing videos or images of them on social media. CSE can affect any child who has been coerced into engaging in sexual activities. This includes 16 and 17-year-olds who can legally consent to have sex. Some children do not realise they are being exploited and may believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship.

## **Child-on-Child Abuse**

This form of abuse occurs when there is any kind of physical, sexual, emotional, or financial abuse or coercive control exercised between children. This can take many forms. It is important that all staff and volunteers understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children, many of which are listed below, that are abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and an environment that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

### **Child-on-child abuse includes:**

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice based and discriminatory bullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise
- Causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- Sexual violence (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)
- Sexual harassment such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes, and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- Upskirting which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

## **Preventing Radicalisation**

Children may be susceptible to extremist ideology and radicalisation.

The following information is taken from Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 with definitions from the Government's Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales.

**Extremism** is the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. This also includes calling for the death of members of the armed forces.

**Radicalisation** refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups.



**Terrorism** is an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people; causes serious damage to property; or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. The use or threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, or ideological cause.

Although there is no single way of identifying whether a child is likely to be susceptible to an extremist ideology, there are possible indicators that should be taken into consideration alongside other factors and contexts. Background factors combined with specific influences such as family and friends may contribute to a child's vulnerability. Similarly, radicalisation can occur through many different methods (such as social media or the internet) and settings (such as within the home).

More information on possible risk indicators can be found [here](#).

## Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse refers to any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between people who are, or who have been in a relationship, regardless of gender or sexuality. It can include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, or financial abuse which can continue even after a relationship has ended. It also includes so-called "honour" based violence and victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

Children never just 'witness' domestic abuse; it always has an impact on them. Exposure to domestic abuse or violence in childhood is child abuse. Children may experience domestic abuse directly, but they can also experience it indirectly by hearing the abuse from another room, seeing a parent's injuries or distress afterwards, finding disarray like broken furniture or being hurt from being nearby or trying to stop the abuse.

### Possible signs and indicators that a child has witnessed domestic abuse:

- Aggression or bullying
- Anti-social behaviour, like vandalism
- Anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts
- Attention seeking
- Constant or regular sickness, like colds, headaches, and mouth ulcers
- Bed-wetting, nightmares, or insomnia
- Drug or alcohol use
- Eating disorders
- Problems in school or trouble learning
- Tantrums
- Withdrawal.



## So-Called ‘Honour’-Based Abuse (Including Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage)

So-called ‘honour’-based abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving ‘honour’ often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take. All forms of HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA, or already having suffered HBA.

### Female Genital Mutilation (“FGM”)

Female genital mutilation (“FGM”) involves procedures that intentionally alter or injure female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The procedure has no health benefits for girls and women. The Female Genital Mutilation Act makes it illegal to practise FGM in the UK or to take women and girls who are British nationals or permanent residents of the UK abroad for FGM whether or not it is lawful in another country.

#### Possible signs and indicators of FGM:

- Difficulty walking, sitting, or standing
- Spending longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet
- Difficulties urinating or incontinence
- Unusual behaviour after a lengthy absence
- Reluctance to undergo normal medical examinations
- Asking for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear

#### Possible warning signs that FGM might be about to take place are:

- A planned summer trip to a country known to practise FGM
- Talk about visiting relatives for a special procedure, ceremony, or event
- Mention of a female relative coming to visit
- Asking for help from a trusted adult if she feels at risk of danger
- A holiday that includes additional time away before, or at the end of, the longer school holidays, encroaching on the normal school terms
- The family preparing to take the girl abroad ‘on holiday’ e.g., arranging vaccinations or advising of a prolonged absence
- Referencing FGM, female circumcision, cutting or it’s other alternative names listed in the National FGM Centre’s guidance.

### Forced Marriage

Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England and Wales. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). Nevertheless, some perpetrators use perceived cultural practices to coerce a person into marriage. Any organisation that comes into contact with children can play an important role in safeguarding children from forced marriage.

Since February 2023 it has been a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even if violence, threats, or another form of coercion are not used.



## **Safeguarding Adults**

If you wish to find more about the categories of harm that relate to adults, then please visit the [Ann Craft Trust website](#) which has several useful resources.

