



Manual for Safeguarding Children

During this module, you will be asked some questions to simply provoke thought and test your current knowledge please have a notepad or supervision workbook to hand to make notes. Your performance will only be measured by the answers you select when completing the knowledge test at the end of the module.



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Special Note

This is a bolt-on manual to the Safeguarding of an adult manual

This manual is to be completed in conjunction with the Safeguarding of an Adult
Manual



Preface

Protecting children from abuse and neglect is a collective responsibility that we all share. Even if your job primarily entails assisting adults, it is incumbent upon you to safeguard any children you encounter during your work or those you suspect might be in jeopardy due to the adults you are assisting.

The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 define a child as anyone under the age of 18.

Established in 1989, The Children Act was designed to create a comprehensive structure for ensuring the care and protection of children. It assigns responsibilities to various entities in the United Kingdom, such as local authorities, courts, parents, and other agencies, with the ultimate goal of safeguarding children and promoting their well-being.

The Children Act 2004 complements the 1989 Act and reinforces the principle that every organization working with children has an obligation to assist in safeguarding and promoting children's welfare.

For further information on Child protection and legislation, visit the government's website: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>

Children possess certain rights, which encompass their entitlement to maintain connections with both parents, their human identity, and their basic necessities such as physical protection, food, state-provided education, healthcare, appropriate laws based on their age and development, equal protection of civil rights, and freedom.

As a caregiver, your primary duty is to take action if you suspect any form of abuse or neglect.

The purpose of this guide is to alleviate any confusion you may have regarding the following aspects:

- Identifying abuse or neglect
- Knowing when to report concerns
- Identifying the appropriate individuals to report concerns to
- Sharing relevant information.

Good children's services are critical, but adults' services also have a crucial role to play in determining children's achievements and future life chances.

Even the best children's services can only ever mitigate the impacts of parental problems such as domestic violence, learning disability or substance misuse.'

(Think Family: Improving the life chances of families at risk. Cabinet Office, 2008)

In your local vicinity, the safeguarding of children will be overseen by a Local Safeguarding Partnership, previously known as the Local Safeguarding Children Board. These partnerships are established as multi-agency entities with the primary objective of ensuring the protection and well-being of children. Mandated by the Children Act 2004, they serve to promote collaboration among local authorities, health services, educational establishments, and other relevant parties, all working collectively to address the requirements of children. The guidelines for modifying these arrangements can be found in the 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (Aug 2018 update)'.

In recent years, serious case reviews investigating the circumstances leading to the deaths of children due to abuse or neglect have revealed recurring deficiencies in communication and cooperation among various services and agencies. These reviews consistently demonstrate that sharing information could have resulted in taking appropriate measures to prevent the child's demise.

Children who have experienced neglect or abuse, along with their families, frequently come into contact with social services, police, NHS, and health visitors. Events that might appear unremarkable in isolation can take on a different significance when viewed as part of a pattern or when additional information about the child's situation is available.

For instance:

- A child who endures recurring minor injuries might visit different doctors or hospitals where each incident is treated as an isolated event. Staff members may readily accept parents' explanations if they remain unaware of other similar occurrences.
- Nursery workers who express concerns about a child's emotional and social development might find reassurance in the child's apparent loving relationship with their mother, without knowing that police are regularly called to domestic abuse incidents at her home.

Children Protection Role

In various ways, you may have an impact on a child's safety or become aware of potential risks to a child. Here are some examples:

- If the person you are assisting is a parent, they might benefit from advice or support in raising their child.
- If the person you are supporting receives visits from children, their situation or behavior could potentially put the children at risk, such as leaving medication lying around or engaging in alcohol or drug abuse.
- During your visits to an individual, you might observe or hear things that indicate a child is at risk from someone else.
- Concerns may arise about the person's behavior, indicating that they could pose a danger to children who visit them or come into contact with them in the community.

Thorough and holistic risk assessments of all the people you support are crucially important and should encompass all aspects of their lives, needs, and their potential impact on other vulnerable individuals. If you are assisting someone with physical and/or mental health needs who also has children living with them, careful consideration should be given to providing support that ensures the children's safety and promotes their emotional and physical well-being.

Recognizing Children at Risk

Take a minute to think about why children in particular may be vulnerable to abuse or neglect. Write some of your thoughts in your notebook or supervision folder.

All children are vulnerable to abuse or neglect because they lack the physical strength, knowledge, experience and mental resilience necessary to protect themselves from harm and meet their own needs in appropriate ways. Even older children, who may outwardly resemble adults, lack the emotional maturity to protect themselves from the effects of inadequate parenting or manipulative adult behaviors.

While every child can be at risk, some will be more vulnerable than others. Factors that could increase children's risk of harm include:

- Living in a household where domestic abuse occurs
- Having parents who have physical disabilities or poor mental health
- Being born with a physical disability or learning difficulties
- Having parents who have learning disabilities
- Living in poverty
- Living in a household where drugs and/or alcohol are abused
- Being isolated from the community e.g., through cultural differences or as a result of language barriers

Who Are Abusers?

Consider the following when reflecting on why children, especially, might be susceptible to abuse or neglect. Take a moment to jot down your thoughts in your notebook or supervision folder.

Children, owing to their limited physical strength, knowledge, experience, and mental resilience, are inherently prone to abuse or neglect as they lack the means to shield themselves from harm or fulfill their needs appropriately. Even older children, though they might appear adult-like on the surface, lack the emotional maturity required to safeguard themselves against the consequences of inadequate parenting or manipulative adult behaviors.

While all children face some degree of risk, certain factors may render some more vulnerable than others. These factors include:

- Residing in a household where domestic abuse takes place
- Having parents with physical disabilities or poor mental health
- Being born with physical disabilities or learning difficulties
- Having parents with learning disabilities
- Living in poverty
- Being part of a household where substance abuse occurs
- Facing isolation from the community due to cultural differences or language barriers

It is essential to keep in mind that while these factors may indicate an increased risk for a child, many children who grow up in such circumstances or cope with physical and mental health issues still have positive childhoods, free from any form of abuse or neglect.

It is important to remember that while any of these factors may indicate that a child is at increased risk, many children who live in these circumstances or who are affected by physical and mental illness, have perfectly good childhoods and **do not** experience any form of abuse or neglect.

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Abuse Classification

Children you come into contact with may experience four primary forms of abuse:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect

Keep in mind that virtually all the signs and symptoms mentioned in the following sections might have a harmless justification. Nevertheless, if they raise any worries, it is crucial to share them with someone.

Physical Abuse

Physical harm is inflicted upon the child as a consequence of this kind of mistreatment. The injuries can manifest as bruises, burns, bite marks, cuts, or fractures, either as a singular act of violence or as an ongoing pattern of abuse. The harm can be intentional, such as purposefully burning a child with cigarettes, or it can occur due to negligence, like a caregiver failing to ensure the safety of a child, resulting in burns from excessively hot bathwater.

It's crucial to recognize that physical abuse isn't always readily apparent. Abusive behaviors can also encompass not seeking medical attention for an ill child, administering unnecessary medication, withholding necessary medication, using force to feed the child, or handling the child roughly.

Indications/Symptoms

- Observable physical injuries, like bruises, bites, or burns, are especially concerning if they exhibit an unusual form, such as finger imprints or circular burn patterns.
- Displaying signs of flinching in response to raised voices or sudden movements made by others.
- Demonstrating visible anxiety or nervousness in the presence of a specific individual.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse, which is also referred to as psychological or mental abuse, can profoundly impact a child's physical and emotional well-being. For a child to thrive, experiencing love, secure relationships with appropriate boundaries, and a sense of value are essential. Emotionally abusive actions encompass the use of belittling and demeaning language, rejection, indifference, verbal aggression, inconsistency (alternating between affection and apathy), and hindering the child from forming positive relationships with others. This form of abuse is frequently employed by the perpetrator to shape the child's behavior.

Indications/Symptoms

- Stillness and obedience in conduct
- Infliction of harm upon oneself
- Diminished sense of self-worth
- Engagement in substance abuse (drugs/alcohol)
- Acts aimed at seeking attention
- Absence of trust

Sexual Abuse

According to the NSPCC, a child undergoes sexual abuse when they are coerced or convinced to participate in sexual activities, which can occur both physically and online. Sometimes, the child might not grasp that they are being abused, remaining unaware of the wrongness of the situation or being fearful of speaking out.

Throughout history, certain 'categories' of children have been insufficiently protected from sexual abuse. It's crucial to remember that regardless of how 'mature' a child may seem, it is the responsibility of adults to shield them from inappropriate sexual knowledge and behavior until they reach the age of 16.

While a 12-year-old child may be considered sexually mature based on cultural or biological definitions, they are still in the process of understanding how relationships function. Hence, they must be able to trust the adults around them to ensure their safety.

It is of utmost importance that adults in positions of trust refrain from exploiting their authority by engaging in sexual activity with the children they are duty-bound to protect. Children may test boundaries and sometimes exhibit sexualized behavior, but this doesn't imply that they comprehend the physical or psychological consequences of sexual relationships.

Sexually abusive conduct encompasses acts such as incest (sexual activity between close family members), exposing a child to pornography, luring children into performing sexual acts in exchange for money or drugs, and coercing children into engaging in sexual acts or posing for sexually explicit photographs.

Indications/Symptoms

- A preschool-age child exhibiting sexualized language or behavior
- Behavioral shifts, such as withdrawal or engagement in risky activities like drinking or drug use
- Sudden possession of new items, clothes, or money
- Presence of bruising or bite marks in intimate areas
- Sexual infections
- Displaying nervousness, fear, or inappropriately flirty behavior towards specific individuals or certain types of people.

Neglect

Neglect may arise due to emotional detachment or insufficient knowledge on the part of the child's parents or caregivers, as well as their struggles with poor mental health or difficulties coping with the physical, financial, and emotional responsibilities of parenting.

It is essential to understand that neglect does not always imply a lack of love, and in such cases, parents or caregivers might benefit from assistance and access to appropriate services to effectively meet their children's needs. For instance, a parent suffering from depression may face challenges in handling everyday demands, including fulfilling their child's requirements.

Indications/Symptoms

- The child exhibits signs of malnutrition and dehydration.
- Their clothing appears dirty, ill-fitting, or in a state of disrepair.
- They seem inadequately dressed for the prevailing temperature.
- There are indications of developmental delay.
- The presence of untreated nappy rash causes skin irritations.
- Signs suggesting support for extremism are noticeable.
- The child engages in scavenging for food from bins or the floor.

- Frequent accidental injuries suggest a lack of appropriate supervision.
- There is regular, unusual, or inappropriate use of the internet.

How and When to Report Concern?

In case you suspect a child may be at risk, either due to observed signs or symptoms mentioned earlier, or based on information received from a customer, it is crucial to report your concerns promptly to your line manager. Clearly communicate the reasons for your concerns and the basis for them, allowing your manager to determine appropriate action.

Should you witness abuse that causes harm to a child and appears to be or might be a criminal offense, take immediate action to protect the child and call emergency services at 999. If a child discloses abuse to you, respond promptly and appropriately to safeguard them (refer to the guidelines below).

If uncertain about reporting concerns, engage in a discussion with your manager, taking into account the following points:

- Why do your concerns exist?
- Are others also concerned?
- What potential situations could the child be facing? Are there innocent explanations?
- Maintain an open-minded approach.
- What information do you possess?
- Have you already taken any steps to address your concerns?
- Have you discussed the concerns with the parents and the child?
- Consider the potential impact on the child.

Remember, you can seek advice from other agencies without divulging specific details about the child or the person you support.

Not all investigations into child abuse and neglect result in legal action or the removal of children. If the root cause is ignorance or lack of support, parents and caregivers will receive assistance to ensure the child's safety and enhance their physical and mental well-being.

The recent update to the Children Act emphasizes certain vulnerabilities that increase a child's need for protection: disability, criminal behavior, and drug/alcohol misuse. Do not hesitate to raise genuine concerns regarding the safety of a child. If any of the aforementioned points still give you cause for worry about the child's welfare, it is your responsibility to first communicate your concerns to your manager. It is possible that the concerns may be unfounded, but your actions could also have a significant positive impact on a child's life, possibly even saving it.

Understanding your responsibilities is crucial if you find that your Line Manager fails to take appropriate action in response to your concerns. It is not acceptable to simply think or say, "I've done my part" or "I've fulfilled my responsibilities."

In such a situation, you have various options and opportunities to escalate your concerns to a higher authority, such as your Line Manager's manager or directly to organizations like the NSPCC, Local Authority Children Services, or the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Ensure you research the Local Safeguarding Children Board in your area and use your notepad or supervision folder to jot down pertinent information, such as the team's name, contact details, and core objectives.

If you believe that a child is facing significant risk of harm, it is imperative to promptly get in touch with the local safeguarding children board.

If, after discussing concerns with your manager, it is agreed that further action is required, it is advisable to be transparent about your intentions and discuss them with the relevant parties, such as the customer and/or the at-risk child. Obtaining consent before sharing concerns with other agencies is the preferred approach unless it poses a potential risk to the child.

When contacting your local authority about a child at risk, they will request personal details about the child and their situation. While maintaining customer confidentiality is essential, there is also a responsibility to share information with other agencies when necessary to safeguard a child or vulnerable adult. Consent from the individuals involved is not mandatory. Only share relevant information with appropriate agencies, including the police, local child safeguarding providers, or other professionals involved with the child and their family.

The government's guide for Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents, and caregivers provides a clear 7 golden rules notice for sharing information.

7 Golden Rules for Sharing Information

[\(Link to HM Gov. 7 Golden Rules\)](#)

1. It is important to remember that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018, and human rights law serve as a framework to ensure appropriate sharing of personal information about living individuals, rather than acting as barriers to justified information sharing.
2. Right from the beginning, be transparent and truthful with the individual (and/or their family when relevant) about the reasons, details, methods, and recipients of the information that will be or could be shared. Seek their consent, except in cases where it may be unsafe or unsuitable to do so.
3. In case of any uncertainty regarding the information to be shared, seek guidance from other professionals or your information governance lead, while ensuring the individual's identity is not disclosed whenever possible.
4. Whenever possible, obtain consent before sharing information and honor the preferences of those who do not consent to information sharing. However, if there is a lawful basis to share information without consent, such as when safety is at risk, rely on the facts of the situation to make an informed judgment. Clearly communicate the basis for sharing personal information with others. Be mindful that individuals may not anticipate their information being shared when consent is not provided.
5. Prioritize the safety and well-being of the individual and others potentially affected by their actions when making decisions about information sharing.
6. Ensure that the information you share is necessary, proportional, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely, and secure. Share information only with those who genuinely require it for the intended purpose, and maintain its accuracy and currency. Adhere to the principles of necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely, and secure information sharing.
7. Keep a detailed record of your decision-making process, whether it involves sharing information or not. If you decide to share information, document what information was shared, with whom it was shared, and the purposes for which it was shared.

Expected Outcomes

- If you have concerns about a child's welfare, the first step is to discuss these concerns with your manager.
- Following the discussion, you both agree that it's necessary to make a referral to social services. This referral should be initiated with a phone call and followed by a written report within 48 hours.
- Once the referral is submitted, the social care team will acknowledge receipt and have one working day to determine the appropriate course of action.

- The action taken will depend on the urgency of the risk to the child and the nature of the concerns raised. In certain cases, you may be asked to share relevant information during meetings or even provide evidence if a prosecution becomes necessary.

It is important to be aware that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into effect in 2018, governs the sharing of data. However, GDPR does not prohibit organizations from collecting and sharing personal information, especially in situations where a child's safety is at risk. In such cases, it may not be necessary to obtain explicit consent before sharing information.



Conclusion

The safety and well-being of children fall under the collective responsibility of all adults. Childhood abuse and neglect lead to enduring physical and mental health issues, give rise to preventable fatalities and contribute to a perpetuating pattern of disrupted family dynamics and inadequate parenting. If you encounter a child in potential jeopardy, it is incumbent upon you to respond to your apprehensions, regardless of your connection with the child or their family. Your information could prove critical.



References

Working Together to Safeguard Children HM Government, 2018

What to do if you are Worried a Child is Being Abused HM Government, 2006

Information Sharing: Guidance for Practitioners and Managers HM Government, 2018 Children Act 1998
www.legislation.gov.uk

