



# Child Protection Refresher for International Schools 2022

## Introduction

Learning about abuse can be distressing, and for some, it may remind them of past experiences such as being abused as a child, or failing to act when they suspected a child was suffering abuse. If this applies to you, it may be helpful to talk to someone who is experienced in providing support.

For example:

- **The National Association for People Abused in Childhood** [napac.org.uk](http://napac.org.uk)
- **The INHOPE Foundation** [inhope.org](http://inhope.org)
- **Europol** [europol.europa.eu/report-a-crime/law-enforcement-reporting-channels-child-sexual-coercion-and-extortion](http://europol.europa.eu/report-a-crime/law-enforcement-reporting-channels-child-sexual-coercion-and-extortion)
- **Child Helpline International** [www.childhelplineinternational.org/child-helplines/child-helpline-network/](http://www.childhelplineinternational.org/child-helplines/child-helpline-network/)
- **The Brave Movement** [www.bravemovement.org/](http://www.bravemovement.org/)

Please also find out about the support agencies available in your own country. It is important to be aware that not all countries have well developed and coordinated child protection support services. It is the duty of the designated senior person for child protection to establish what safeguarding and child protection support services are available in your country.

Welcome to your Child Protection Refresher course in partnership with Global Safeguarding, a specialist safeguarding agency that works around the world to eliminate all forms of abuse and exploitation.

## Terminology

The course refers to 'children and young people'. In line with most of legal international practice and for child protection purposes. The term 'child' is any person who is under the age of 18 years. The term 'young people' refers to the period of transition from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood.

By the end of this course, you should understand:

- types of abuse and signs of abuse
- how to respond when you have a concern
- how to follow safeguarding procedures
- safe working practices
- current safeguarding concerns.

This will help you embed safeguarding into everyday practice.

## International Task Force on Child Protection

In 2014 the International Task Force on Child Protection was established. They work with international schools and associations as well as transnational government agencies, setting out clear objectives to address child protection within the international school community.

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## Module 1 – Back to Basics

No one person or organisation can offer complete protection for children and young people, but everybody has a responsibility to protect and safeguard children, with any actions taken in the best interests of the child.

*'The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.'*  
Article 3 UNCRC

### Safeguarding or child protection?

It is important to note the difference between the terms 'safeguarding' and 'child protection'.

**Safeguarding** is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.

This means:

- protecting them from abuse and maltreatment
- preventing harm to their mental and physical health or development
- ensuring they grow up in a safe environment
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

UNICEF defines child protection as preventing and responding to violence, exploitation, and abuse against children. This includes commercial exploitation, trafficking, child labour, and harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation.

**Child protection** forms a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. Effective child protection processes are an essential part of the wider work to safeguard and promote welfare; they also reduce the need for action to protect children from harm.

### What is maltreatment?

Child maltreatment includes any type of abuse or neglect of a child or young person caused by inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm. The way maltreatment is described can vary depending on the country. It is important that you understand what terminology is used, both formally and informally in the country where you work. In some societies abusive practice may not be considered to be abusive such as a physical chastisement or child marriage.

Abuse is mistreatment by any other person or persons that violates a person's human and civil rights. The abuse can vary, from treating someone with disrespect in a way that significantly affects the person's quality of life, to causing actual physical or mental suffering.

Children and young people may be abused in a family or in an institutional, education or community setting by those known to them or by others unknown to them, including on the internet. Abuse can and does happen to children from any background, culture, class, ethnicity, or faith.

There are many children who experience abuse or neglect but do not come to the notice of people who can help them. Children who disclose abuse are often not believed by adults who should protect them. Abusers can go to great lengths to conceal their abuse.



Children can also abuse their peers on and offline. This can take the form of verbal abuse, harassment, sexual assault, and the non-consensual sharing of indecent images.

Knowing what to look for is vital for the early identification of abuse and neglect so that staff can identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection.

When considering the possibility of abuse, it is important to evaluate what you know about the child, then consider both the physical and behavioural signs that are giving you cause for concern.

## Forms of child abuse

There are four main types of child abuse. The following signs of abuse are not exhaustive. Remember that a child may be experiencing more than one type of abuse.

It is important to remember children often get bumps and bruises during their everyday play or social interaction, but it does not mean that they are being abused. All injuries need to be considered in the light of the age of the child, their stage of development, their social background, where injuries are on their body, and any explanation given.

Child abuse can be:

- physical
- sexual
- emotional
- neglectful behaviour towards a child or young person.

## Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve:

- hitting
- shaking
- throwing
- drowning
- burning or scalding
- suffocating
- 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. It can also include the inappropriate use of restraint.

## Possible signs of physical abuse

Physical signs may include:

- bruises
- scald and burn marks
- broken or fractured bones
- poisoning or over-medicating
- injuries that are inconsistent with the explanation given
- bruising to babies that are immobile.



Emotional and behavioural signs may include:

- flinching when touched
- inability to recall how injuries occurred
- avoiding getting changed for sport or other activities
- wearing trousers and shirts or blouses with long sleeves even on hot sunny days, although consider this in the light of the individual child (e.g. some children are dressed modestly for religious and/or cultural reasons)
- reluctance to go home
- excessively eager to please
- being aggressive or withdrawn
- poor attendance to school
- changes in their behaviour
- attempts to run away.

## Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves someone forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. This may not necessarily involve a high level of violence and the child may or may not be aware of what is happening.

Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour, and both the instigator and the person it is intended towards may find it distressing.

Sexual activities may involve physical contact, including:

- rape and sexual assault
- non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing
- making a child undress or touch someone else.

It may also include non-contact activities, such as:

- watching sexual activities
- encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways
- inappropriate role play
- involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images
- forcing a child to take part in sexual activities or conversations online or through a smartphone.

## Possible signs of sexual abuse

Signs may include:

- a change in behaviour; a child may start to become withdrawn, become aggressive or have difficulty in sleeping
- physical problems such as soreness, bleeding and bruising in the genital area, or sexually transmitted infections
- sexual knowledge, language, and behaviours beyond their age
- self-harming
- fear or avoidance of being with a person or a group of people
- being withdrawn

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- disturbed sleep
- sexualised drawings
- issues at school, such as difficulty in learning and concentrating
- being secretive about who they are talking to and what they are doing online.

### Note

Many children who are sexually abused will have no visible signs at all.

### Emotional and psychological

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe adverse effects on the child's health and emotional development.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may also occur alone.

Emotional abuse may involve:

- conveying to a child they are worthless or unloved
- not giving the child the opportunities to express their views
- deliberately silencing them, degrading, or making fun of them
- age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on the child
- rejecting or ignoring a child completely
- preventing the child from interacting socially
- being absent.

### *Possible signs of emotional abuse*

Signs of emotional abuse may include:

- delayed development
- avoiding home
- lack of trust with adults
- appearing anxious and/or withdrawn
- difficulty in forming friendships
- inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour
- unexplained underachievement at school
- running away from home or missing from school.

### Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic needs and is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy because of maternal substance misuse.

Neglect can be categorised into:

- **Physical** – A child's basic needs are not met such as food, clothing, and shelter.
- **Educational** – A parent does not ensure their child is given an education.
- **Emotional** – A child does not get the nurture and stimulation they need.
- **Medical** – A child is not given proper health care.
- **Affluent** – Refers to the neglect in wealthier families and is often linked to emotional neglect.



Neglect can be caused **intentionally**; for example, withholding food or deliberately not providing adequate clothing, or **unintentionally**, also known as passive neglect. This can occur if a parent does not have the ability to provide the care a child requires.

### *Possible signs of neglect*

Physical signs may include:

- untreated medical conditions
- unkempt appearance and poor personal hygiene
- inadequate clothing
- health and development problems
- untreated skin or hair problems (rashes, sores, flea bites, head lice)
- constant hunger.

Behavioural signs may include:

- demanding constant attention and affection
- changes in behaviour such as becoming withdrawn, anxious and/or aggressive
- missing or irregularly attending school
- low self-esteem
- changes in eating habits.

### *Specific safeguarding issues*

Child protection concerns are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another; a child that is being sexually exploited will often also experience physical and emotional abuse. In this section we will look at a range of specific safeguarding issues.

### *Honour-based abuse*

So-called 'honour-based' abuse encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and or the community. Abuse committed in the context of preserving 'honour' often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators from different countries.

Crimes committed in the name of so-called honour may include:

### *Female genital mutilation (FGM)*

FGM involves procedures that include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. It is also known as 'female circumcision' or cutting.

### *Indicators of FGM*

Girls who are threatened with or have undergone FGM may:

- be withdrawn from education, restricting their education and personal development
- go to school or college but absent themselves from lessons, possibly spending prolonged periods in the toilets
- have extended absence from school or college

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- have a sudden decline in performance, aspiration, or motivation
- not turn up for health appointments
- feel unable to disobey their family
- be generally anxious, depressed or emotionally withdrawn
- be anxious leading up to holidays.

### *Breast ironing or flattening*

This is the practice where a pubescent girl's breasts are ironed, massaged, and flattened to delay the development of the breasts. The process normally starts at the first sign of puberty and can go on for many years. Breast ironing is a form of physical abuse.

### *Forced marriage*

A forced marriage is where one or both people do not or cannot consent to marriage and pressure or abuse is used. Indicators of forced marriage:

- anxiety, depression, being emotionally withdrawn
- low self-esteem
- absence from school or permission sought for extended leave.

### *Domestic abuse*

The United Nations defines domestic abuse as

*“any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”*

Exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on a young person, witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse. In some cases, they may blame themselves for the abuse or may have to leave the family home as a result. Domestic abuse can also take place as a form of honour-based abuse.

Behavioural signs may include a young person

- being withdrawn
- being angry
- being anxious or depressed
- having a fear of being abandoned
- experiencing problems in college or at work
- suffering nightmares or poor sleep patterns
- using drugs or misusing alcohol
- self-harming; for example, eating disorders, cutting
- experiencing general poor health.

Men can also experience domestic abuse and young boys may be living in a family home where domestic abuse is taking place. Although mainly perpetrated against women and girls by men, domestic abuse can take place within same sex relationships.



Abuse within a family can also include child-to-parent abuse. Child-to-parent abuse can involve children of all ages, including adult children, and abuse toward parents, siblings, grandparents as well as other family members. Like other forms of abuse, child-to-parent abuse is characterised by shame and stigma which could mean parents are less likely to report the abuse.

### Child exploitation

Child exploitation refers to a child or young person being used for someone else's gain. It is a form of abuse which can involve sexual, abusive, or manipulative behaviour. It normally occurs due to an 'imbalance of power', such as age, physical strength, gender, cognitive ability, or access to resources such as food, clothes, and a place to stay.

Child exploitation occurs online and offline, by groups and individuals, and affects both males and females.

Child exploitation includes:

#### *Child sexual exploitation*

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It can include seemingly consensual relationships or sexual activity in exchange for attention, a place to stay, gifts, money, cigarettes, or illegal substances. Children often trust their abuser; they may believe they are in a loving, caring relationship. Sexual exploitation is sometimes experienced by children who are trafficked into another country.

#### *Indicators of child sexual exploitation*

In addition to the general signs of sexual abuse, behavioural signs of child sexual exploitation include:

- being absent from school
- having an older boyfriend or girlfriend
- alcohol and drug misuse
- mood swings
- inappropriate sexualised behaviour.

#### *Child criminal exploitation*

This is a form of abuse in which an individual is coerced to commit an offence for the benefit of an individual or group who hold more power than they do. Younger siblings are often recruited through fear of violence against the family or the exploitation of their brother or sister.

#### *Child trafficking and modern slavery*

Child trafficking is a very serious issue that can have a devastating and lasting impact on its victims.

External human trafficking can involve crossing international borders and is more widely known and understood.

Internal human trafficking can take place between towns and cities, between different roads and streets and houses on the same street.

Children are trafficked for many reasons including:

- sexual exploitation
- domestic servitude

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- labour
- benefit fraud
- criminal activity such as pickpocketing, theft, and working in cannabis farms
- being exploited in the sex industry.

#### [Further information](#)

Europol is the European Union's law enforcement agency. On their website you can find cases of child exploitation.

#### [Extremism and radicalisation](#)

**Radicalisation** is the process by which a person comes to support the extreme ideologies that are mainly associated with terrorist groups. Radicalisation often occurs as people search for identity, meaning, and community, and therefore young people may be particularly vulnerable.

**Extremism** is the vocal or active opposition to societal values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

**Non-violent extremism** can create an atmosphere in a community which can popularise the view of terrorism which terrorists can then exploit.

**Terrorism** is the use or threat of action, designed to influence any international government organisation or to intimidate the public. It must also be for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, racial, or ideological cause.

#### [Child abduction and community safety incidents](#)

Child abduction is the unauthorised removal or retention of a minor from a parent or anyone with legal responsibility for the child. Child abduction can be committed by parents or other family members; by people known but not related to the victim and by strangers.

#### [Online abuse](#)

Helping children and young people develop the skills to keep themselves safer online is essential. Due to lack of life experience children can be unaware of the risks, and their perception of risk can be different to that of adults.

Whilst the internet has entertaining, engaging and educational content, it also has illegal and inappropriate content which all has the potential to be viewed by a child. This not only has safeguarding implications but can also have a negative impact on a child's wellbeing and mental health.

#### [Further information](#)

Online sexual coercion and extortion is one of the crimes of the digital age. It affects adults and children, and it is facilitated by technological expansion, growing internet coverage and the widespread availability of mobile devices.

#### [Child-on-child abuse](#)

Child-on-child abuse can be defined as any form of physical, sexual, emotional, financial, and/or coercive control exercised between children and young people; this includes intimate and non-intimate relationships. This means that a young person's experience of child-on-child abuse can fit within several definitions of violence or abuse.

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Child-on-child abuse can impact upon children and young people in many ways. The child or young person may think that it is a component of normal friendships or relationships.

### *Sexual violence and sexual harassment*

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any gender. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and harassment can occur face-to-face, online, physically, or verbally. It should not be tolerated, nor should it be seen as 'part of growing up', or 'just having a laugh'.

### Children at risk

Anyone from any background can be abused or exploited. But there are several factors that can increase a child's vulnerability.

These can include:

- a disrupted or chaotic family life
- poor mental health or poor parental mental health
- homelessness
- exclusion from school
- going missing from school or college.

There are certain groups that are known to be more vulnerable.

These include:

### Unaccompanied and separated children

Children separated from their parents and families because of conflict or natural disasters are among the most vulnerable. They are at risk of abuse, exploitation and being trafficked.

They may also assume adult responsibilities, such as protecting and caring for younger sisters and brothers.

### Children missing from education

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. They may be at risk of being a victim of sexual exploitation, radicalisation, forced marriage or female genital mutilation.

### Guardianship

Within the International School setting there is a concept akin to Private Fostering. Children are left in the care of extended family or family friends. This is often done without the knowledge of the school and the school only finds out when they need to contact home due to a medical or academic concern.

Children with learning disabilities, sensory impairment and concentration difficulties are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and their vulnerability to drugs, violence, psychological bullying and pornography is increased.

Children with learning disability and undiagnosed special educational needs are less likely:

- to recognise abuse as wrong
- to know their rights
- to report it
- to be regarded as competent witnesses.

### Children with medical conditions

Children with medical conditions may be the subject of discrimination, bullying or may face mental health challenges. They may also have gaps in their learning due to missing long periods of education due to their medical needs.

### Summary

Abuse affects children deeply as they grow up, and feelings of being 'useless', 'worthless', or 'damaged goods' are often carried over into adult life.

Because you have regular or daily contact with the learners to whom you have a responsibility, you are well placed to notice their physical presentation, emotions, behaviours, and when they may need help or support.

You are now ready to complete the corresponding questionnaire. Click **Questionnaire 1** to begin the questions.