



**BASINGSTOKE MOTOR CLUB**  
IF YOU'D RATHER DRIVE IT THAN POLISH IT

# Introduction to safeguarding

## Definition of abuse

Child abuse is any action by another person – adult or child – that causes significant harm to a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional, but can just as often be about a lack of love, care and attention. We know that neglect, whatever form it takes, can be just as damaging to a child as physical abuse.

An abused child will often experience more than one type of abuse, as well as other difficulties in their lives. It often happens over a period of time, rather than being a one-off event. And it can increasingly happen online.

It is estimated that over half a million children are abused in the UK each year (NSPCC).

## Main types of abuse:

- **Sexual abuse** – intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, fondling, flashing, showing pornographic images, inappropriate touching.
- **Grooming** – befriending, gaining trust of young person and / or family in order with the intention to commit an offence.
- **Physical abuse** – hurting or injuring a child, giving them alcohol or drugs.
- **Neglect** – adults failing to meet a child's basic needs (food, warm clothing, failing to provide medical attention, leaving them 'home alone' inappropriately), exposing them to risk of injury.
- **Emotional** – emotional ill-treatment, bullying, deliberate rejection (low warmth, high criticism environment), humiliation, threats, ignoring.

## Signs that a young person is being abused:

- Unexplained bruising.
- Continually suffering physical ailments with no medical explanation.
- Sexually explicit behaviour and language.
- Unaccounted for sources of money or presents.
- Fear of going home to parents or carers or of them being contacted.
- Changes over time in manner and appearance (e.g. losing weight, becoming dirty or disheveled, constant tiredness, always hungry).
- Drinks alcohol regularly from an early age.
- Is concerned for younger siblings without explaining why.
- Becomes secretive and reluctant to share information.
- Telling you about being asked to 'keep a secret' or dropping hints or clues about abuse.
- Talks of running away.
- Shows challenging / disruptive behaviour at school.
- Starts to bully or abuse others
- Is reluctant to get changed for sports etc.

## **Long term effects of abuse and neglect include:**

- Emotional difficulties such as anger, anxiety, sadness or low self-esteem
- Mental health problems such as depression, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), [self-harm](#), suicidal thoughts.
- Drugs or alcohol problems .
- Disturbing thoughts, emotions and memories that cause distress or confusion
- Poor physical health such as obesity, aches and pains.
- Relationships problems or struggling with parenting.
- Worrying that their abuser is still a threat to themselves or others.
- Learning difficulties, lower educational attainment, difficulties in communicating.
- Behavioural problems including anti-social behaviour, criminal behaviour.

## **Grooming**

- Children and young people can be groomed or by someone they have met - for example a family member, friend or professional.
- Children and young people can also be groomed online.
- Groomers may be male or female.
- They could be any age.
- Many children and young people don't understand that they have been groomed, or that what has happened is abuse.

## **How grooming happens**

Grooming happens both online and in person. Groomers will hide their true intentions and may spend a long time gaining a child's trust. They may also try to gain the trust of the whole family so they can be alone with the child.

## **Groomers do this by:**

- Pretending to be someone they are not (e.g. online).
- Offering advice or understanding.
- Buying gifts.
- Giving the child attention.
- Using their professional position or reputation.
- Taking them on trips, outings or holidays.
- Using secrets and intimidation to control children.

Once they have established trust, groomers will exploit the relationship by isolating the child from friends or family and making the child feel dependent on them. They will use any means of power or control to make a child believe they have no choice but to do what they want. These people may introduce 'secrets' as a way to control or frighten the child. Sometimes they will blackmail the child, or make them feel ashamed or guilty, to stop them telling anyone about the abuse.

Groomers may try to get into voluntary organisations to get access to vulnerable people as they believe the safeguarding procedures in these organisations aren't as strong. As staff should think the unthinkable, have a healthy scepticism and maintain a respectful uncertainty about their colleagues.

## **How common is grooming?**

This isn't known because often children don't tell anyone what is happening to them. Children may not speak out because they are:

- Ashamed.
- Feeling guilty.
- Unaware that they're being abused.

- Believe they are in a relationship with a 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend'.

## **What to do if you have concerns**

It is not your responsibility to decide whether or not a child or young person is being abused, but it is your responsibility to act upon any concerns.

- Share your concerns with the BMC Child Safety Officer (currently Kirstie Brown – 07899 700170) or the chair of BMC. Always check out any concerns – it's better to be safe than sorry.
- If the adult you're concerned about is the person in the organisation you would normally go to, to seek advice, ring Social Services or the police.
- Make a note of your concerns – it may be that you need to keep a watching brief over time and things shouldn't be forgotten.
- If you don't think your concerns are being taken seriously, it is OK to call social services and report your concerns – you can do this anonymously. This will be passed to social workers who are trained to deal with this. Your specific concern may not be enough for them to take direct action, but your concerns will be noted and may help build a picture. Your information will always be welcome.
- Don't feel intimidated by social services or the police – they are sensitive to people's fears and trained to make difficult decisions. Your views will be taken seriously, but any actions taken will be determined by the best interests of the child.
- Think about who else you share your views with – it may be that others need to know there are concerns so that they can keep an eye out, but they may not need to know everything. Be careful not to stigmatise the young person or adult.

## **What to do if a young person tells you about abuse**

### **Do:**

- Make sure the young person knows you believe them and don't think they're to blame
- Stay calm and listen
- Treat any action seriously and always take action
- Explain to the young person that you must share this information
- Tell the young person what you're going to do
- Write down a record of the disclosure as soon as possible
- Keep things confidential – only named officers & professionals should know
- Speak to the BMC Child Safety Officer or make a referral to Social Services or the police

### **Don't:**

- Cast doubt on what you're being told
- Promise to keep this a secret
- React in a way which will upset the young person more
- Panic
- Try to deal with this on your own
- Make promises you can't keep or say things you're not sure of about what will happen
- Challenge the suspected abuser – you could put the young person in more danger
- Tell people who don't need to know
- Investigate yourself, or examine / interrogate the young person

BMC Child Safety Officer: Kirstie Brown 07899 700170