

Transforming Lives.

Safeguarding and recognising abuse



saha

Salvation Army Housing Association

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding means protecting people's health, well-being and human rights and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. By people, we mean adults, the elderly and children.

What is abuse?

Abuse is any action that intentionally harms or injures another person. There are several types of abuse: Discriminatory abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, financial abuse, institutional abuse and neglect.



Discriminatory Abuse

Discrimination of one form or another underlies most forms of abuse. It includes racist or sexist remarks or comments based on a person's impairment, disability, age or illness, religion and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment. This may also include isolation or withdrawal from religious or cultural activity, services or supportive networks.

Physical Abuse

Being physically hurt or harmed, or put at risk of harm, either deliberately or through rough, careless or thoughtless behaviour. This might involve punching; kicking, biting, burning, scalding, shaking, throwing or beating with objects such as belts, whips, or sticks.

Sexual Abuse

This includes all unwanted sexual acts or being made to do something that you don't want to, didn't or couldn't agree to. Sexual abuse doesn't have to be physical, for example it could include jokes or comments or being made to watch, look at or listen to something that makes you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. Abusers can be men, women or other children.

Emotional or Psychological Abuse

Being humiliated or put down or made to feel anxious, frightened or intimidated. E.g. being called stupid or made to feel worthless or useless. Emotional abuse is often the first sign of other forms of abuse happening. Emotional abuse is where repeated verbal threats, criticism, ridicule, shouting, lack of love and affection causes a severe adverse effect on a child's emotional development. It includes telling children that they are worthless, unloved, inadequate or valued only as they meet the needs of another person.

Financial Abuse

Includes theft, fraud or exploitation and the misuse of position or authority for financial gain. It may be someone using or putting pressure on you to use your money in a way that you don't want or isn't in your best interests.

Institutional Abuse

Abuse which occurs within institutional settings often includes more than one type of harm as a result of rigid or insensitive routines, unskilled, intrusive or invasive interventions or an environment that allows inadequate privacy or dignity. It involves the collective failure of a service organization to provide an appropriate professional service to people who may be at risk of harm as a result of abuse or neglect. It can be seen in processes, attitudes and behaviour that amount to discrimination through prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping.

Neglect

Includes ignoring a person's medical or physical care needs, withholding the necessities of life, such as medication, food and drink and heating and failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services. Concerns or allegations of physical or sexual abuse are often seen as more serious than neglect. But long standing physical neglect is often a major factor in deaths from abuse. Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect is when a parent or carer fails to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment), medical care, or protection from physical and emotional harm or danger.

Effects of Abuse

Abuse has a devastating impact on its victim. It can create wide ranging and long lasting physical, emotional and psychological scars. The results of domestic violence or abuse can be very long-lasting. People who are abused by a spouse or intimate partner may develop sleeping problems, depression, anxiety attacks, low self-esteem and lack of trust in others. Children who witness domestic violence may develop serious emotional, behavioural, developmental, or academic problems. As children, they may become violent themselves, or withdraw. Some act out at home or school; others try to be the perfect child. Children from violent homes may become depressed and have low self-esteem. As they develop, children and teens who grow up with domestic violence in the household are more likely to use violence at school or in the community in response to perceived threats, more likely to attempt suicide, more likely to use drugs and may be more likely to commit crimes.

Recognising a Safeguarding / Abuse situation

It can be difficult recognising when an adult or child is suffering abuse. The rule of thumb is, if it doesn't feel right, tell somebody. There are several indications that abuse is happening:

Signs of possible discriminatory abuse:

- Lack of respect shown to an individual
- Failure to respect dietary needs
- Failure to respect cultural and religious needs
- Signs of a substandard service offered to an individual
- Exclusion from rights and services afforded to citizens e.g. health, education, employment, criminal justice and civic status

Signs of possible physical abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them, finger marks, slap marks
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally, soles of the feet, palms of the hands or back
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Bruises, bites, burns and fractures, for example, which do not have an accidental explanation
- The person gives inconsistent accounts for the cause of injuries
- Multiple injuries at different stages of healing
- Excessive requests for repeat medication or under use of medication

Signs of possible sexual abuse

- Any allegations made by a child or adult concerning sexual abuse
- A child has an excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and inappropriate knowledge of adult sexual behaviour for their age, or regularly engages in sexual play inappropriate for their age
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains
- A child is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia

Signs of possible emotional or psychological abuse

- Depression, aggression, extreme anxiety, changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sleep or speech disorders
- Negative statements about self
- Highly aggressive or cruel to others
- Extreme shyness or passivity
- Anxious about being away from the home

Signs of possible financial abuse

- Direct or indirect disclosure or allegation
- Build up of unpaid bills
- Bills or payments made that the person is unable to account for
- Increase in mail for catalogues of other junk mail without apparent reason
- Evidence of lack of food or drink or other necessities
- Money or possessions missing without a reasonable explanation
- Person lacks belongings or services they should be able to afford
- The person's access to their money is unreasonably restricted
- The person has no control over personal funds or bank accounts
- Unusual or inappropriate bank account activity
- Receipts indicating unusual or inappropriate purchases

Signs of possible institutional abuse:

- Other forms of abuse occurring
- Individual staff callousness or brutality
- Low standards of care
- Poor morale among staff team
- Pilfering by staff
- Vindictiveness towards complainants
- Failure to deal with concerns and complaints effectively or objectively
- Cold, dismissive or intolerant attitude by carer

Signs of possible neglect

Clothing that is dirty, too big or small, or inappropriate for weather conditions

A child is frequently left unsupervised or alone

Untreated illnesses, infected cuts or physical complaints which the carer does not respond to

Frequently hungry

The person appears dirty, shabby or unkempt

The person is left in a state of poor personal hygiene

Poor physical condition e.g. bed sores, unwashed ulcers

Previously arranged or agreed visits to provide essential care for the person are missed without sufficient prior warning

Sensory deprivation e.g. not ensuring the person has their false teeth, glasses, hearing aids etc.

Not ensuring the person has access to food and drink as they require it

What to do if you think somebody is being abused

If a person does not tell you but you suspect that they are being abused, you can contact social services or the police. Getting involved does not mean that you have to solve the situation.

Do not put yourself at risk. Always contact the police if you are concerned for the person's immediate safety or social services if they are not in immediate danger but you are concerned about them. If you have a social landlord such as a Housing Association, and you have concerns about a neighbour, you can raise your concerns with them and they should act on appropriately.



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