# Annex D Signs of Abuse

Concerns of harm and abuse can be disclosed to you, or observed directly by you, or reported to you by another person. Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. A person may abuse or neglect a child or adult at risk by inflicting harm or by failing to prevent harm. Individuals may be abused in a family or an institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

## Types of abuse

It is generally recognised that there can be many forms of harm and abuse. The most common forms are explained below.

**Physical abuse**

Can include but may not be limited to hitting, pushing, pinching, biting, shaking, throwing, hair-pulling, poisoning, misuse of medication, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, inappropriate restraint or otherwise causing physical harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a person (most likely a parent or carer) fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness, particularly in a child.

**Sexual abuse**

Can include but may not be limited to rape or sexual assault, forcing, or enticing a child, young person or adult at risk to take part in sexual activities, which they have not or could not have consented or where pressurised into consenting, including prostitution, whether or not the individual is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They can include non-contact activities, such as for example, involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online activities, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways and sexual exploitation.

**Child sexual exploitation (CSE)**

A type of sexual abuse. When a child or young person is exploited, they're given things, like gifts, drugs, money, status, and affection, in exchange for performing sexual activities.

**Psychological or emotional abuse**

Can include but may not be limited to threats of harm or abandonment; deprivation of social or any other form of contact; humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, or harassment; verbal abuse; prevention from receiving services or support. It may involve conveying to individuals that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may also feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed upon children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill- treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing individuals to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption, particularly of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

**Neglect or acts of omission**

Can include but may not be limited to the persistent failure to meet an individual's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of health or development. Neglect can include preventing access to health, social care, or educational services; withholding the necessities of life, such as food, drink, or heating, failure to ensure adequate supervision or neglect of basic emotional needs. Neglect may occur during pregnancy because of maternal substance abuse.

**Self-neglect**

A form of neglect which is caused by the individual themselves, usually as a result of a mental or physical illness that has an effect on the person’s physical abilities, energy levels, attention, organisational skills, or motivation. This could be intentional or non-intentional.

**Online abuse**

Includes 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 and it can happen anywhere online, including social media, text messages and messaging apps, emails, online chats, online gaming, live-streaming sites. Individuals 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.

**Discriminatory abuse**

The unequal treatment of an individual based on one or a number of their protected characteristics under UK law. This includes age, disability, gender and gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation. I could include unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone’s dignity or creates a hostile environment for them. This could also be classified as a hate incident or hate crime.

**Domestic violence or abuse**

All forms of abuse can be experienced in a family setting by a partner, family member, or with someone with whom there is a relationship including same sex relationships from the age of 16 years upwards.

**Financial or material abuse**

Can include theft, fraud or exploitation; pressure in connection with wills, property, or inheritance; misuse of property, possessions, or benefits.

**Forced Marriage**

Occurs where one or both parties do not, or cannot consent to the marriage and where duress is a factor.

**Female genital mutilation (FGM)**

Involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

**Institutional abuse**

Can include poor practice, disrespect and unethical practice, ill treatment, and professional misconduct. Any of these forms of abuse can be deliberate, or be the result of either ignorance, or lack of training, knowledge or understanding.

**Modern Slavery**

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

## Signs of abuse

Signs of abuse can often be difficult to detect. Although not an exhaustive list, some signs to look for in contact with individuals at risk of harm or abuse include:

* Unusual injuries including bruises, burns, fractures or bite marks.
* Consistently poor hygiene, poor living conditions or inappropriate clothing.
* Communicating aggressively or using sexual language.
* Appearing withdrawn, guarded, anxious or frightened, particularly around certain individuals.
* Unexplained falls.
* Subdued or changed behaviour in the presence of a particular person.
* Limited access to money.
* Withdrawal or change in the psychological state of the person.
* Low self-esteem.
* Uncooperative and aggressive behaviour.
* A change of appetite, weight loss/gain.
* Signs of distress: tearfulness, anger.
* Living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation and or living and working at the same address.
* Isolation – not seeing friends and family.
* Fear of outside intervention.
* Hearing or seeing shouting, violence or intimidation
* Adults keeping children (or adults in need of support) from view

The NSPCC provides [comprehensive information](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/) about the types of child abuse and what signs to look out for. The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) describes the [signs and indicators for abuse](https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/introduction/types-and-indicators-of-abuse) against adults at risk, under the various types for abuse on their website.

Evidence of any one indicator should not be taken on its own as proof that abuse is occurring. However, it should alert people to make further assessments and to consider other associated factors. The lists of possible indicators and examples of behaviour are not exhaustive and people may be subject to a number of abuse types at the same time.

It is not the responsibility of staff, volunteers, or students at Edge Hill University to decide whether abuse has taken place. It is however the responsibility of staff, volunteers, and students to report any concerns they may have or allegations they have heard about a child or adult at risk’s welfare and safety as per the Safeguarding procedure.