## Signs and Indicators of Child Abuse

### Physical Abuse

| Actions and behaviour of adult/carer | Minor injuries  
Serious injuries e.g. those resulting in fractures or head injuries  
Premeditated sadistic injuries  
Burns and scolds  
Bites  
Repeated abuse resulting from lack of control  
Injury resulting from physical chastisement  
Genital / anal area injuries  
Shaking  
Poisoning  
Physical assaults regarded as bullying  
Suffocating  
Factitious illness – parent /carer manufactures the symptoms of an illness in the child  
Female circumcision  
Death |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Physical signs on child / young person | Unconscious  
Multiple bruising / scratching  
Injuries of different ages  
Adult bite marks  
Outline bruising, e.g. belt, hand print, shoe mark  
Bruises to eyes and ears  
Finger tip bruises  
Burns and scalds on hands, feet, buttocks, groin, cigarette burns  
Difficulty in moving limbs  
Blood in white of eyes, small bruises on head, bruises on rib cage – may be associated with shaking injuries  
Injuries and / or fractures in babies and children who are not mobile  
Torn fraenulum  
Drowsiness e.g. from head injury or poisoning  
Female genital mutilation |
| Behaviour and emotional state of child / young person | Aggressive  
Withdrawn  
Fearful: ‘frozen watchfulness’  
Low self esteem  
Poor concentration  
Poor self image |
| **Neglect** |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| **Actions and behaviour of adult / carer** | Abandonment or desertion  
Living alone  
Malnourishment, lack of food, inappropriate food or erratic feeding  
Lack of warmth  
Lack of adequate clothing  
Unhygienic home conditions  
Lack of protection or exposures to dangers, including moral danger or lack of supervision appropriate to child’s age and development stage  
Persistent failure to attend school  
Non-organic failure to thrive  
Leaving child alone to care for younger brothers / sisters  
Lack of appropriate stimulation  
Lack of protection from dangerous substances, e.g. fire, drugs, household chemicals  
Lack of appropriate medical care when required |
| **Physical signs on child / young person** | Delayed physical development; underweight and of small stature  
Hands and feet which are cold and puffy  
Chronic nappy rash  
Slow growth in both height and weight  
Frequently smelly  
Persistently dirty, unkempt appearance  
Persistently hungry  
Non-organic failure to thrive  
Impairment of health  
Death |
| **Behaviour and emotional state of child / young person** | Low self esteem  
Destructive tendencies  
Neurotic behaviour  
Running away  
Stealing and / or hiding food  
Indiscriminately seek affection from unfamiliar adults  
Impairment of intellectual behaviour  
Long term difficulties with social functioning, relationships and educational; progress. |
## Sexual Abuse

| Actions and behaviour of adults / carer | Inappropriate fondling  
| | Mutual masturbation  
| | Digital penetration  
| | Oral / genital contact  
| | Anal or vaginal intercourse  
| | Exploitation from pornography  
| | Encouraging children / young people to become prostitutes  
| | Encouraging children to witness intercourse or pornographic acts  
| | Leaving a child in the care of a known sex offender  
| | Internet child pornography  |

| Physical signs on child / young person | Injuries to the genital / anal area  
| | Sexually transmitted diseases  
| | Pregnancy  
| | Bruises, scratches, burns or bite marks  
| | Eating disorders  
| | Self Harm e.g. suicide, self mutilation, substance misuse  
| | Bleeding from vagina or anus  
| | Pain in passing urine or faeces  
| | Persistent discharge  
| | Warts in genital or anal area  |

| Behaviour and emotional state of child / young person | Frequent masturbation  
| | Nightmares and disturbed sleeping patterns  
| | Persistent offending, non school attendance, running away  
| | Wetting, soiling, smearing excreta  
| | Significant changes in child’s behaviour  
| | Sexual awareness which is inappropriate to child’s age and developmental stage  
| | Sexual aggressive towards other children  
| | Low self esteem  
| | Limited attention span  
| | Aggression  
| | Withdrawn  
| | Isolation  
| | Depression  |
## Emotional Abuse

| Actions and behaviours of adult / carer | A child is rejected by parent / carers  
Parents behave in a cold, hostile and / or unpredictable way towards the child  
Parents behave in an emotional inconsistent way towards the child  
A child is criticised and blamed unreasonably. Scapegoating may occur within families where the same child receives more than his fair share of blame and is seen to be the cause of all the family’s problems  
A child is ridiculed and mocked  
A child is denied opportunities to gain new experiences  
A child is denied opportunities to relate to others  
Lack of opportunity to fulfil intellectual development  
A child is denied the opportunity to organise and achieve levels of responsibility appropriate to their age. |
| Effects of emotional abuse | The child may become timid and withdrawn and avoid making relationships with peers and adults. There may be little spontaneous conversation and avoidance of eye contact  
The child appears frightened, easily startled by loud noises. He/she is soon in tears and may twitch and tremble  
The child has outbursts of verbally or physically aggressive behaviour  
The child seeks affection inappropriately  
The child feels confused and insecure  
The child has difficulty in making and sustaining relationships |