

## Appendix I: Forms and signs of abuse

It is generally accepted that there are four forms of abuse. However, in some cases negative discrimination and bullying can have severe and adverse effects on a child or vulnerable adult. Rotarians are committed to protecting children and vulnerable adults from all forms of abuse. A fifth form of abuse common with vulnerable adults is financial abuse.

Recognising child abuse is not easy and it is not a person's responsibility to decide whether or not a child or vulnerable adult has been abused. It is a person's responsibility to pass on any concerns to the appropriate body that will initiate an investigation. The Club Safeguarding Officer should be aware of the local arrangements.

It should be recognised that abuse does not always happen in person, face to face. With today's technical environment, abuse can be online and this should be borne in mind when considering the signs of abuse.

The signs of abuse listed are not definitive or exhaustive. The list is designed to help a Rotarian to be more alert to the signs of possible abuse.

Children and vulnerable adults may display some of the indicators at some time; the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that abuse is occurring. Any of these signs or behaviours must be seen in the context of the whole situation and in combination with other information related to the circumstances. There can be overlap between different forms of abuse.

### Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child or vulnerable adult such as to cause severe and adverse effects on their emotional development. It may involve conveying that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed. It may also cause feelings of fright or being in danger, or the corruption or exploitation of a child or vulnerable adult. It is the most common form of abuse of the elderly.

It may include the persistent failure to show self-respect, build self-esteem and confidence that may be caused by:

- Exposure to humiliating or aggressive behaviour or tone.
- Failure to intervene where self-confidence and worth are challenged or undermined.

### Signs of possible emotional abuse

#### Children

- Low self-esteem.
- Continual self-deprecation.
- Sudden speech disorder.
- Significant decline in concentration.
- Immaturity.
- 'Neurotic' behaviour e.g. rocking.
- Self-mutilation.
- Compulsive stealing.
- Extremes of passivity or aggression.
- Running away.
- Indiscriminate friendliness.

#### Vulnerable adults

- Appearing depressed, withdrawn, frightened, agitated, anxious or aggressive.
- Feeling isolated
- Unexpected or unexplained change in behaviour.

## **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child or vulnerable adult's basic physical and/or psychological needs. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter, warmth, clothing and cleanliness. It may also include leaving a child home alone, exposure in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury or the failure to ensure that appropriate medical care or treatment is received.

It could include the lack of care, guidance, supervision or safeguarding that may be caused by:

- Exposure to unnecessary cold or heat.
- Exposure to unhygienic conditions, lack of food, water or medical care.
- Non-intervention in bullying or taunting.

Neglect, as well as being the result of a deliberate act, can also be caused through the omission or the failure to act or protect.

### **Signs of possible neglect**

- Inadequate food, hunger.
- Constant tiredness.
- Poor state of clothing or personal hygiene.
- Frequent lateness or unexplained non-attendance at school.
- Untreated medical problems; sores, ulcers.
- Low self-esteem.
- Poor peer relationships; difficult to stimulate socially.

## **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse may involve the actual or attempted physical injury to a child or vulnerable adult by hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise harming them.

It may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after.

Physical abuse may also be a deliberate act, omission or failure to protect.

### **Physical abuse in sport**

This may include bodily harm caused by lack of care, attention or knowledge that may be caused by:

- Over training or dangerous training of athletes.
- Over playing an athlete.
- Failure to do a risk assessment of physical limits or pre-existing medical conditions.
- Administering, condoning or failure to intervene in drug use and misuse.

### **Signs of possible physical abuse**

Most children sustain cuts and bruises throughout childhood. Vulnerable adults also have accidents. These are likely to occur in bony parts of the body like elbows, shins and knees. In most cases injuries or bruising are genuinely accidental. An important indicator of physical abuse is where bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation does not fit the injury or the injury appears on parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely, eg on the cheeks or thighs. The age and capabilities of the person child must also be considered. Signs of possible physical abuse include:

- Unexplained injuries or burns, particularly if they are recurrent.
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries.
- Refusal to discuss injuries.
- Fear of parents, relatives or carers being approached for an explanation.
- Untreated injuries, or delays in reporting them.
- Excessive physical punishment to themselves.
- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather.
- Avoidance of swimming, physical education etc.

- Fear of returning home.
- Aggression towards others.
- Running away.

When considering the possibility of non-accidental injury it is important to remember that injuries may have occurred for other reasons such as skin disorders, rare bone diseases.

### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities whether or not they are aware of or consent to what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They also include non-contact activities such as forcing children or vulnerable adults to look at or be involved in the production of pornographic material, to watch sexual activities or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

It also could include contact and non-contact be caused by:

- Exposure to sexually explicit inappropriate language, jokes or pornographic material.
- Inappropriate touching.
- Having any sexual activity or relationship.
- Creating opportunities to access children or vulnerable adults' bodies.

Boys and girls, men and women can be sexually abused by males and/or females, including persons to whom they are not related and by other people. This includes people from all walks of life.

Not all children or vulnerable adults are able to tell that they have been sexually assaulted. Changes in their behaviour may be a signal that something has happened. It is important to note that there may be no physical or behavioural signs to suggest that a child or vulnerable adult has been sexually assaulted.

A child or vulnerable adult who is distressed may display some of the following physical, behavioural or medical signs that should be a warning sign. It is the combination and frequency of these that may indicate sexual abuse. Advice should always be sought.

### **Signs of possible sexual abuse**

- Lack of trust in adults or over familiarity with adults.
- Fear of a particular adult.
- Social isolation - withdrawn or introversion.
- Sleep disturbance (nightmares, bed-wetting, fear of sleeping alone, needing a night light).
- Running away from home.
- Girls taking over age inappropriate responsibility in household relationships.
- Sudden school problems e.g. falling standards, truancy.
- Reluctance or refusal to participate in physical activity or to change clothes for games.
- Low self-esteem.
- Drug, alcohol or solvent abuse.
- Display of sexual knowledge inappropriate to the child's age.
- Unusual interest in the genitals of adults, children or animals.
- Fear of bathrooms, showers, closed doors.
- Abnormal sexual drawings.
- Fear of medical examinations.
- Developmental regression.
- Poor peer relationships.
- Sexualised behaviour inappropriate to the child's age.
- Compulsive masturbation.
- Stealing.
- Irrational fears.
- Psychosomatic factors e.g. recurrent abdominal or headache pain.

- Eating disorders.
- Bruises, scratches, bite marks to the thighs or genital areas.
- Anxiety, depression.
- Discomfort/difficulty in walking or sitting.

### **Financial abuse**

This is the second most commonly reported form of abuse against older people. It may also involve theft, fraud, forgery or embezzlement. It does not have to be large sums of money or assets: small amounts taken regularly can soon add up to a large amount.

### **Signs of possible financial abuse**

- Lack of money for basic necessities such as food, heating, clothes despite an adequate income.
- A sudden, unexplained change in financial circumstances.
- Inability to explain what is happening to income.
- Reluctance by family, friends or the person controlling funds to pay for food, clothing or other things.
- Disappearance of possessions, documents and bank statements.
- Unexplained withdrawals from the person's bank account.

### **Negative discrimination, including racism**

Children and vulnerable adults may experience harassment or negative discrimination because of their race or ethnic origin, socio-economic status, culture, age, disability, gender, sexuality or religious beliefs. Although not in itself a category of abuse for the purposes of the RIBI guidance it is categorised as emotional abuse.

### **Institutional racism**

All organisations working with children and vulnerable adults including those operating where black and ethnic communities are numerically small, should address institutional racism, defined in the MacPherson Inquiry report on Stephen Lawrence as: 'The collective failure by an organisation to provide appropriate and professional service to people on account of their race, culture and/or religion'.

### **Bullying**

It is important to recognise that in some cases of abuse, it may not always be an adult abusing a child or vulnerable adult. It can occur that the abuser may be a young person, for example in the case of bullying. Refer to NSPCC website [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)