

**Child Protection**

# A Guide for Parents.

**February 2026**



# If you're worried about a child,

it can be hard to know what to do. Whilst this is very rare, Busy Bees has information and advice on different types of child abuse, how to spot the signs and what you can do to help keep children safe. We also have a designated safeguarding lead in all of our Busy Bees Centres and a Company Safeguarding Lead who can support and advise you.





# Types of Abuse

## Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts or harms a child or young person.

### Physical abuse can include:

- Hitting with hands or objects
- Slapping, punching, kicking, shaking, throwing
- Poisoning
- Burning or scalding
- Biting or scratching
- Breaking bones
- Drowning

It's important to remember that physical abuse is any way of intentionally causing physical harm to a child or young person. It also includes making up the symptoms of an illness or causing a child to become unwell.

Bumps and bruises don't always mean a child is being physically abused. All children have accidents, trips and falls and there isn't just one sign or symptom to look out for. But it's important to be aware of the signs. It's not common for children to intentionally be physically abused, but it is important to be aware of the indicators.

If a child regularly has injuries, there seems to be a pattern to the injuries or the explanation doesn't match the injuries, then this should be reported.

## Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is any type of abuse that involves the continual emotional mistreatment of a child. It's sometimes called psychological abuse. Emotional abuse can involve deliberately trying to scare, humiliate, isolate or ignore a child.

Emotional abuse is often a part of other kinds of abuse, which means it can be difficult to spot the signs or tell the difference, though it can also happen on its own.

### Types of emotional abuse are:

- making a child perform degrading acts
- not recognising a child's own individuality or trying to control their lives
- pushing a child too hard or not recognising their limitations
- exposing a child to upsetting events or situations, like domestic abuse or drug taking
- not allowing them to have friends
- persistently ignoring them
- being absent
- manipulating a child
- never saying anything kind, expressing positive feelings or congratulating a child on successes
- never showing any emotions in interactions with a child, also known as emotional neglect.

There might not be any obvious physical signs of emotional abuse or neglect and a child might not tell anyone what's happening until they reach a 'crisis point'. That's why it's important to look out for signs in how a child is acting. (see spotting the signs)

## Neglect

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs and the most common form of child abuse. A child might be left hungry or dirty, or without proper clothing, shelter, supervision or health care. This can put children and young people in danger and it can also have long term effects on their physical and mental wellbeing.

Neglect can be a lot of different things, which can make it hard to spot. But broadly speaking, there are 4 types of neglect.

- **Physical neglect** A child's basic needs, such as food, clothing or shelter, are not met or they aren't properly supervised or kept safe.
- **Educational neglect** A parent doesn't ensure their child is given an education.
- **Emotional neglect** A child doesn't get the nurture and stimulation they need. This could be through ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them.
- **Medical neglect** A child isn't given proper health care. This includes dental care and refusing or ignoring medical recommendations.

## Sexual abuse

When a child or young person is sexually abused, they're forced or tricked into sexual activities, although this is not a common situation and incidents like this are very rare. They might not understand that what's happening is abuse or that it's wrong. And they might be afraid to tell someone. Sexual abuse can happen anywhere - and it can happen in person or online.

It's never a child's fault they were sexually abused - it's important to make sure children know this.

There are 2 types of sexual abuse - contact and non-contact abuse. Non-contact abuse and sexual abuse can happen in person or online.

**Contact abuse** is where an abuser makes physical contact with a child. This includes:

- sexual touching of any part of a child's body, whether they're clothed or not
- using a body part or object to rape or penetrate a child
- forcing a child to take part in sexual activities
- making a child undress or touch someone else.

Contact abuse can include touching, kissing and oral sex - sexual abuse isn't just penetrative.

**Non-contact abuse** is where a child is abused without being touched by the abuser. This can be in person or online and includes:

- exposing or flashing
- showing pornography
- exposing a child to sexual acts
- making them masturbate
- forcing a child to make, view or share child abuse images or videos
- making, viewing or distributing child abuse images or videos
- forcing a child to take part in sexual activities or conversations online or through a smartphone.

These are the four main categories of abuse, there are other forms of abuse such as:

- bullying and cyber bullying
- child sexual exploitation
- child trafficking
- criminal exploitation and gangs
- domestic violence
- female genital mutilation (FGM)
- grooming
- none-recent abuse
- online abuse

## Child-on-child abuse

Child-on-child abuse can happen in nurseries, schools, colleges or online, and is most likely to include:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault, and sexual assault; including online
- Sexual harassment such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as 'sexting' or youth produced sexual imagery)
- Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group)

**If you are concerned about any type of abuse, further information can be found on the NSPCC website, speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead within one of our Busy Bees Centres, or make contact with the Busy Bees Company Safeguarding Lead.**





# Spotting the signs

The signs of child abuse can be hard to spot. Busy Bees can help you to recognise the signs of abuse and support you if you have concerns about a child.

The signs of child abuse aren't always obvious, and a child might not feel able to tell anyone what's happening to them. Sometimes, children don't even realise that what's happening to them is abuse.

There are different types of child abuse and the signs that a child is being abused may depend on the type. For example, the signs that a child is being neglected may be different from the signs that a child is being abused sexually.

Some common signs that there may be something concerning happening in a child's life include:

- unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
- becoming withdrawn
- seeming anxious
- becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
- lacks social skills and has few friends, if any
- poor bond or relationship with a parent
- knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age

- acting out sexual behaviour in their play
- running away or going missing
- always choosing to wear clothes which cover their body.
- Extreme tiredness
- Visible signs of neglect, dirty, hungry etc

These signs don't necessarily mean that a child is being abused, there could be other things happening in their life which are affecting their behaviour - but sharing your concerns will help you to assess the situation.

You may also notice some concerning behaviour from adults who you know have children in their care, which makes you concerned for the child/ children's safety and wellbeing.



# Effects of child abuse

If we work together to stop abuse happening and provide support to children who have been abused, we can turn things around for a child at any stage of their development - so they can go on to lead happy and fulfilling lives.

Child abuse can take many forms. It can be emotional, physical, sexual or neglect and it can happen to any child, in any family, in any place or online.

Abuse often happens over a period of time, rather than as a one-off event, and can have a devastating effect on a child's development and society as a whole.

Some of the effects child abuse can have included:

- negative effects on a child's health, relationships and education
- adults who were abused as children may find it harder to cope with life's stresses, get a good job, or be a good parent
- mental health problems, drug or alcohol issues, criminal behaviour - or showing signs of harmful behaviour themselves

But it doesn't have to be this way. We can all play our part in preventing abuse. And we can all help a child who's experienced abuse to get their life back on track.





# Keeping your child safe

- If your child is attending a nursery or club, sports club or other activity, ask about vetting and their safeguarding procedures.
- It's a good idea to keep talking to your child about nursery or school, or time spent at a friend's house, even if nothing seems wrong. Ask them about their day - but try not to badger them. It's important that if anything happens, they feel like they can talk to you about it.
- As children grow up and start going to school, it's also important to talk to them about their safety and what to look out for. It is a tricky conversation to have - but the NSPCC have got lots of resources to help.
- If using a babysitter to support you with childcare, ask for references.

If your child is younger you can use the NSPCC PANTS guide <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule/>. Talk PANTS helps children understand that their body belongs to them, and they should tell someone they trust if anything makes them feel upset or worried.

## How to report abuse

Whether you want to report child abuse and neglect or are worried about a child and not sure what to do, NSPCC have advice for you. Don't wait until you're certain: if you have any concerns or suspicions these need to be reported.

**If you feel a child is in immediate danger, call the police straight away on 999.**

There are a number of ways you can report a concern, any of these options will enable someone to protect a child from potential further harm or neglect:

- Speak to the Manager at the nursery or Headteacher at the school
- Look on your local authority website under safeguarding for details of how to report a concern
- Contact the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000 or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) or access their website and complete the online form.

## What happens if I share my concerns?

There are lots of reasons why you might want to remain anonymous when telling someone your concerns. You don't have to tell people who you are, where you live or share your contact details. If you do choose to share any of your details, you can state you do not want to share them with other agencies - like the police or social services.

When there's a serious concern about a child, and if you've shared information about the child's identity, the person you have shared your concerns with will take the next steps. This is called "making a referral". They will make a report and share information with social services. They might also contact local police if the child is in immediate danger.

If they don't need to make a referral, they'll give you advice on what you can do or information on local services.

# Online Safety and the Safe Use of Children's Photos

In today's digital world, children are exposed to technology from a very young age. While the internet and social media can offer many benefits, they also carry risks. We work in partnership with parents and carers to help keep children safe, both online and offline.

## How Parents Can Help Keep Children Safe Online:

- Always supervise children when they are using phones, tablets, TVs, or computers.
- Use parental controls and privacy settings on all devices and apps.
- Choose age-appropriate apps, games, and videos, and check content regularly.
- Avoid allowing children to use social media platforms, which are not designed for young children.
- Be mindful that children can accidentally access unsuitable content through adverts, auto-play videos, or shared devices.

## The Risks of Taking, Storing, and Sharing Photos

Photographs and videos of children are precious, but once shared online, control over them can be lost.

### Potential Risks Include:

- Images being copied, saved, or shared without consent.
- Photos being used inappropriately or altered.

- Personal information (such as names, locations, school uniforms, or routines) being revealed.
- Images remaining online permanently, even after deletion.

### Safer Use of Photos and Videos

We encourage parents to think carefully before taking or sharing any images of their child.

### Good Practice for Parents

- When posting on social media, please take care when sharing photos of children, particularly images that clearly show their faces.
- Never share images that show:
  - Children partially dressed (e.g. during toileting, bath time, or swimming).
  - School or setting logos, names, or locations.
  - Ensure privacy settings are set to "friends only" but remember this does not guarantee safety.
  - Do not forward or repost images of other children without the explicit consent of their parents.
  - Store photos securely on password-protected devices and cloud services.

## Working Together to Safeguard Children

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

### We ask parents to:

- Respect the setting's policies on photography and mobile phone use.
- Speak to staff if they have concerns about online safety or the use of images.
- Model positive and responsible online behaviour for their children.
- If you are ever unsure about whether something is safe to share, it is always best not to post and to ask for advice.





**Visit busybees**  
**childcare.co.uk**

