



Understanding the Types of Child Abuse

Policy Statement

At Clare House Nursery, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. We recognise that abuse can occur in any family, community or setting, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, culture, disability, religion or socio-economic background. All staff, students, volunteers and visitors have a duty to remain vigilant, maintain professional curiosity and act immediately if they have any concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing.

Staff receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role and understand that abuse may present in many different ways. A child may experience one form of abuse or multiple forms simultaneously. Concerns will always be taken seriously and managed in accordance with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The Four Main Categories of Abuse

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the deliberate causing of physical harm to a child. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical injury. Physical abuse may also occur when a parent or carer fabricates or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Possible indicators may include:

- Unexplained injuries or bruises.
- Injuries inconsistent with the explanation given.
- Frequent injuries.
- Fear of physical contact.
- Flinching or appearing frightened of adults.
- Wearing clothing to conceal injuries.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child which causes severe and persistent adverse effects on their emotional development. It may involve making a child feel worthless, unloved, inadequate, frightened or exploited.

Emotional abuse may include:

- Persistent criticism or humiliation.
- Exposure to domestic abuse.
- Serious bullying or cyberbullying.
- Inappropriate expectations.
- Preventing normal social interaction.
- Constant rejection or isolation.

Possible indicators include:

- Low self-esteem.
- Delayed emotional development.
- Extreme behaviour.
- Anxiety or withdrawal.
- Excessive attention-seeking.
- Lack of confidence.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child understands what is happening. The abuse may involve physical contact or non-contact activities.

Examples include:

- Sexual touching.
- Penetration.
- Indecent exposure.
- Grooming.
- Encouraging a child to watch sexual acts.
- Taking, making or sharing indecent images.
- Online sexual abuse or exploitation.

Possible indicators include:

- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge.
- Sexualised behaviour.
- Fear of a particular person.
- Sudden changes in behaviour.
- Unexplained soreness or bleeding.
- Withdrawal or anxiety.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Neglect may involve failing to provide:

- Adequate food.
- Appropriate clothing.
- Safe shelter.
- Medical treatment.
- Supervision.
- Emotional warmth.
- Education.

Possible indicators include:

- Poor hygiene.
- Constant hunger.
- Inappropriate clothing.
- Frequent absence.
- Untreated medical conditions.
- Tiredness or poor growth.

Other Forms of Abuse and Safeguarding Concerns

Staff must also recognise that children may experience other forms of abuse, exploitation or harm including:

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).
- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), including County Lines.
- Domestic Abuse.
- Peer-on-peer abuse.
- Harmful sexual behaviour.
- Online abuse and exploitation.
- Bullying and cyberbullying.
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
- Forced marriage.
- Honour-based abuse.
- Radicalisation and extremism (Prevent Duty).
- Modern slavery and trafficking.
- Fabricated or induced illness.
- Abuse linked to faith or belief.
- Missing children.
- Contextual safeguarding concerns.
- Mental health concerns where these may indicate abuse or neglect

Recognising Abuse

Children rarely disclose abuse directly. Staff should remain professionally curious and be alert to:

- Changes in behaviour.
- Injuries without explanation.
- Developmental regression.
- Changes in attendance.
- Changes in mood or emotional wellbeing.
- Signs of fear or anxiety.
- Poor hygiene or persistent unmet needs.
- Comments or disclosures made by the child.

No single indicator confirms abuse. Staff should always consider the child's lived experience, record factual observations and seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Responding to Concerns

If a member of staff suspects abuse or receives a disclosure they must:

- Remain calm and listen carefully.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by speaking.
- Never promise confidentiality.
- Avoid asking leading questions.
- Record the child's own words as accurately as possible.
- Report concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Follow the nursery's Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures.

Where a child is at immediate risk of harm, staff will contact Children's Social Care and/or the Police without delay in accordance with statutory safeguarding procedures.

Professional Curiosity

At Clare House Nursery, we encourage a culture of professional curiosity. Staff are expected to respectfully question, observe and seek further information whenever something does not seem right. We recognise that early identification and timely intervention can significantly improve outcomes for children and families.

Safeguarding Responsibility

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Every adult working within Clare House Nursery has a legal and moral duty to protect children from harm, act upon concerns without delay and work in partnership with families and other agencies to ensure every child has the opportunity to grow up safe, healthy and able to achieve their full potential.

