

Appendix E

Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation

Children with a Disability

The abuse of children may take many forms. Children and young people with disabilities (physical, sensory and/or learning difficulties) are especially vulnerable and need special care and protection.

Racial, Cultural and Religious issues

Crucial to any assessment is knowledge and sensitivity to racial, cultural and religious patterns. While different practices must be taken into account, all children have a right to protection. Differences in child rearing do not justify child abuse; no racial group advocates the abuse of children. Equally, these issues apply within the safeguarding context of vulnerable adults.

Statutory Definitions

The central government document, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children', HM Government, DfE Publications, 2015, defines child abuse in terms of:

- physical abuse; emotional abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- neglect.

Full definitions of these categories are set out below in Appendix

Spiritual Abuse

The enquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié found that she had been severely traumatised by 'deliverance prayer' sessions at her church which led her to believe that she was possessed by demons and was evil. Sensitivity and discretion is required in prayer for children. Welfare of the child is paramount. The guiding principle should always be the example of Christ himself; in his dealings with children he was always gentle and never frightening.

Sexual Exploitation

Recent court cases have highlighted the serious problem in some cities of vulnerable adolescents being targeted by criminal gangs for sexual exploitation. Guidelines on recognising the plight of such children are on the safeguarding section of the Cathedral intranet.

Abuse by Children and Young People

Abuse by children and young people is more common than is generally realised, accounting for almost one third of all sexual abuse against children. While it is not unusual for children and young people to be curious about the opposite sex and for them to experiment sexually, where a child is in a position of power or responsibility over another and breaches that trust through some sexual activity, then this is abuse. Where one child forces him or herself on another child of any age, this is abuse. Such situations should be taken as seriously as if an adult were involved and should be investigated in the same way by the child protection agencies. The damaging effect on

the child victim may be significant and the perpetrator might also be a victim and in need of help.

Downloading of Child Pornography/Exchange of Sexual Images of Children

The number of convictions of people who download child pornography from the internet has increased in recent years. This is classified as a sexual offence. Such offences are sometimes erroneously referred to as non-contact sexual offences; it must be remembered that children will have been abused in the making of such images. The texting of sexual messages and photographs (sometimes referred to as 'sexting') can be particularly problematic and abusive amongst children and young people.

e-Safety and Abuse

With the constant increase in the use of electronic (e) communication technology there has been a corresponding rise in the use of e-technology to target, groom and abuse children. Adults or older children may target chat rooms, social networking sites, messaging services, mobile phones and the internet generally.

Children are particularly vulnerable to abuse by adults who pretend to be children of comparable ages on social networking sites and who try to obtain images of children and/or engineer meetings. Guidelines in the context of e-communication in a church setting have been produced by Canterbury Diocese and are available on the safeguarding section of the Cathedral intranet.

Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

The following behavioural signs may or may not be indications that abuse has taken place, but the possibility should be considered:

Physical signs of abuse:

- injuries not consistent with the explanation;
- injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.;
- injuries which have not received medical attention;
- neglect – undernourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care, etc.;
- bruises, burns, bites, fractures, etc., which do not have an accidental explanation;
- female circumcision (which is illegal in the United Kingdom).

Signs of Emotional of abuse:

- changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging;
- depression/ extreme anxiety;
- nervousness, 'frozen watchfulness';
- obsessions or phobias;
- sudden underachievement or extreme lack of concentration;
- over-readiness to relate to strangers;

- excessive attention-seeking behaviour;
- persistent tiredness;
- very low self-esteem;
- unduly aggressive behaviour.

Signs of possible sexual abuse:

- any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse;
- child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour;
- sexual activity through words, play or drawing;
- child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults;
- severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares,
- sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations;
- sexualised play with other children;
- recurrent urinary tract infections;
- self-harm or mutilation.