



MODULE 3 – SECTION B

RECOGNISING THE SIGNS OF ABUSE



Children may not tell anyone about abuse. It is important to look out for possible signs and changes in behaviour, emotions or physical health.

No single sign proves abuse, but several signs – or a child telling you – should always be taken seriously.

TYPES OF ABUSE – WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

PHYSICAL ABUSE



Hitting, shaking, pushing, burns, or any physical injury that is not explained or seems unusual.

Possible signs:

- Unexplained bruises, cuts or burns
- Frequent injuries
- Fear of going home
- Wearing long sleeves in hot weather

EMOTIONAL ABUSE



Constant criticism, humiliation, threats, scapegoating or making a child feel worthless.

Possible signs:

- Low self-esteem
- Lack of confidence
- Extreme fear of making mistakes
- Withdrawal from others

SEXUAL ABUSE



Any sexual activity with a child or forcing a child to take part in sexual activities.

Possible signs:

- Inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviour
- Pain, itching or injury in genital area
- Nightmares or bed-wetting
- Sudden change in behaviour

NEGLECT



Failing to meet a child's basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, education, medical care or supervision).

Possible signs:

- Poor hygiene
- Hunger or tiredness
- Inadequate clothing
- Untreated medical needs
- Left alone frequently

ONLINE ABUSE



Being harmed through the internet, social media, or by sharing images or messages without consent.

Possible signs:

- Secretive behaviour online
- Anxiety when receiving messages
- Changes in mood after using devices

SIGNS OF ABUSE CAN LOOK DIFFERENT AT DIFFERENT AGES

AGES 3 – 5 YEARS



- Separation fears
- Clinging to adults
- Tantrums or irritability
- Sleep disturbance
- Regressive behaviours (thumb sucking, bed wetting)
- Withdrawal

AGES 6 – 11 YEARS



- Regressive or externalising behaviours
- Denial, avoidance or withdrawal
- Difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety, fear or depression
- Physical complaints (headaches, stomach aches)
- Self-blame or guilt

ADOLESCENTS (12 – 17 YEARS)



- Depression or mood swings
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Self-harm or risk-taking
- School refusal or decline in grades
- Withdrawal from friends or activities
- Substance use



Remember: These signs may also be caused by other issues. However, if you are concerned, do not ignore it – speak to someone you trust.



WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?



Observe and listen – be alert to changes in behaviour or appearance.



Ask if you are concerned – speak to the child in a calm, supportive and private way.



Record your concerns – write down what you saw, heard or were told. Be factual.



Report your concerns – tell the appropriate person immediately.



Support the child – reassure them they are not to blame and that they did the right thing by telling you.

KEY MESSAGE

If you are concerned, say something. It could save a child.



IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

- ✓ Trust your instincts.
- ✓ It is not your job to investigate.
- ✓ Keep the child safe.
- ✓ Report every concern – no matter how small.
- ✓ Your actions can make a real difference.



Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Together we can create safe environments for all children.



BE AWARE. BE RESPONSIBLE. BE THE REASON A CHILD IS SAFE.



RECOGNISE

RESPOND

REPORT

PROTECT

