

## Potential Indicators of Abuse

**Physical abuse** including hitting, slapping, and pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions **may** be indicated by:

- Any injury not fully explained by the history given;
- Injuries inconsistent with the lifestyle of the adult at risk;
- Bruises and / or welts on face, lips, mouth, torso, arms, back, buttocks, thighs;
- Clusters of injuries forming regular patterns;
- Burns;
- Friction burns, rope or electric appliance burns;
- Multiple fractures;
- Lacerations or abrasions to mouth, lips, gums, eyes, external genitalia;
- Marks on body, including slap marks, finger marks;
- Injuries at different stages of healing;
- Medication misuse.

**Sexual abuse** including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult at risk has not consented or is incapable of giving informed consent or was pressured into consenting. This may involve contact or non- contact abuse (e.g. touch, masturbation, being photographed, teasing, and inappropriate touching) and **may** be indicated by:

- Significant change in sexual behaviour or attitude;
- Pregnancy;
- Wetting or soiling;
- Poor concentration;
- Adult at risk appearing withdrawn, depressed, stressed;
- Unusual difficulty in walking or sitting;
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing;
- Bruises, bleeding, pain or itching in genital area;
- Sexually transmitted diseases, urinary tract or vaginal infection, love bites;
- Bruising to thighs or upper arms.

**Psychological abuse** including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks **may** be indicated by:

- Change in appetite;
- Low self-esteem, deference, passivity and resignation;
- Unexplained fear, defensiveness, ambivalence;
- Emotional withdrawal;
- Sleep disturbance.

### ***Indicators of Financial/Abuse***

- unexplained sudden inability to pay bills or maintain lifestyle
- unusual or inappropriate bank account activity
- power of attorney or enduring power of attorney obtained when person is unable to comprehend and give consent
- withholding money
- recent change of deeds or title of property
- unusual interest shown by family or other in the person's assets
- person managing financial affairs is evasive or uncooperative

***Neglect and acts of omission*** including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, and the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating **may** be indicated by:

- Physical condition of person is poor e.g. bed sores, unwashed, pressure ulcers (see below for more information on pressure ulcers);
- Clothing in poor condition e.g. unclean, wet, ragged;
- Inadequate physical environment;
- Inadequate diet;
- Untreated injuries or medical problems;
- Inconsistent or reluctant contact with health or social care agencies;
- Failure to engage in social interaction;
- Malnutrition when not living alone;
- Inadequate heating;
- Failure to give prescribed medication;
- Poor personal hygiene;
- Failure to provide access to key services such as health care, dentistry, prostheses.

### ***Self- Neglect***

- Self-neglect covers a wide range of behaviours - neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings including hoarding. It should be noted that whilst self-neglect may not prompt a section 42 enquiry, it should still be referred and assessed on a case by case basis.

***Modern Slavery*** encompasses slavery, human trafficking; forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment. People who have been trafficked may:

- Show signs of consistent abuse or have untreated health issues.
- Have no identification documents in their personal possession, and little or no finances of their own.
- Be unwilling to talk without a more 'senior', controlling person around who may act as their translator.
- Sleep in a cramped, unhygienic room in a building that they are unable to freely leave.
- Be unable to leave their place of work to find different employment, and fear that bad things may happen if they do.
- Be charged for accommodation or transport by their employers as a condition of their employment, at an unrealistic and inflated cost which is deducted from wages
- Be forced to work to pay off debts that realistically they will never be able to.

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They may be forced to work in certain types of industries or activities, such as:

- Factories, farms or fast food restaurants.
- Domestic service, such as a cleaner or nanny.
- Street crime, such as pickpocketing or robbery.
- Services of a sexual nature, such as escort work, prostitution or pornography.

**Domestic Abuse and Violence** including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse and honour based violence.

- Indicators for **Physical, Sexual, Psychological** abuses

**Discriminatory abuse** including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, culture and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment **may** be indicated by:

- Lack of respect shown to an individual;
- Signs of a sub-standard service offered to an individual;
- Repeated exclusion from rights afforded to citizens such as health, education, employment, criminal justice and civic status.
- unequal treatment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation (known as 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010)
- verbal abuse, derogatory remarks or inappropriate use of language related to a protected characteristic
- denying access to communication aids, not allowing access to an interpreter, signer or lip-reader
- harassment or deliberate exclusion on the grounds of a protected characteristic

**Organisational abuse** Neglect and poor professional practice in care settings also need to be taken into account. It may take the form of isolated incidents of poor practice at one end of the spectrum, through to pervasive ill treatment or gross misconduct at the other.

It can occur when the routines, systems, communications and norms of an institution compel individuals to sacrifice their preferred lifestyle and cultural diversity to the needs of that institution. Repeated instances of poor care may be an indication of more serious problems. Organisational abuse **may** be indicated by:

- Inappropriate or poor care;
- Misuse of medication;
- Restraint;
- Sensory deprivation e.g. denial of use of spectacles, hearing aid etc;
- Lack of respect shown to personal dignity;
- Lack of flexibility and choice: e.g. mealtimes and bedtimes, choice of food;
- Lack of personal clothing or possessions;
- Lack of privacy;
- Lack of adequate procedures e.g. for medication, financial management;
- Controlling relationships between staff and service users;
- Poor professional practice.

Neglect can also lead to pressure ulcers. If you suspect a pressure ulcer is as a result of neglect please follow these procedures in conjunction with your own internal procedures for pressure ulcers.

### **Self-harm**

Self-harm does not usually come under the scope of these procedures unless this is as a result of neglect. However, this does not mitigate your duty of care in such cases and should be addressed by your organisations' own internal procedures. For more information on self-harm visit [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk).

It could be an indicator, however, of other types of abuse.