

Psychiatrist for Children – Safeguarding Policy

At Psychiatrist for Children, we take the safety and wellbeing of our patients very serious¹ and have a duty to report child abuse and protect and safeguard children.

1. Definitions of child abuse

1.1 **Physical abuse** - Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or failing to protect a child from that harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately inducing illness in a child.

1.2 **Emotional abuse** - Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

- It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
- It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.
- It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.
- It may involve serious bullying causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

1.3 **Sexual Abuse** - Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact including both penetrative and non-penetrative acts such as kissing, touching or fondling the child's genitals or breasts, vaginal or anal intercourse or oral sex.

- They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

1.4 **Neglect** - Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

- Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing; shelter, exclusion from home or abandonment; failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate caretakers; or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

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- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

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1.5 **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)** is a form of sexual abuse. A young person is forced or persuaded to take part in a sexual act (including sharing images) in exchange for something – this could include affection, gifts, drugs or alcohol, accommodation, friendship or money. The young person may be forced or threatened, or they may believe that they are in a consensual relationship with the other person.

2. **Our duty**

- As mental health professionals, we have a duty to safeguard our patients and this may involve speaking to third parties such as social services, your GP surgery or the police. This will ensure that you and your child are receiving the support and care that you need. We will always endeavour to speak and liaise with you as needed and if appropriate.
- We also have an overarching lawful need to share information if there is any type of serious crime or where there is a formal court order issued. Where we are required to share information we will ensure that only the essential information is shared with third parties as is required.