



# DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

## **PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after.

In recreational activities this might occur where the nature and intensity of activities exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body.

## **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment 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 involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Emotional abuse in recreational or social activities might also include situations where parents, staff or volunteers subject children to constant criticism, bullying or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations.

## **SEXUAL ABUSE**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. 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.

Recreational and social situations may involve physical contact (e.g. supporting and guiding children) and could potentially create situations where sexual misuse may go unnoticed. Abuse situations occur if adults misuse their power over children.

## **NEGLECT**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Neglect in recreational or social activities might occur if staff/volunteers fail to ensure that children in their care are safely protected or are exposed to undue risk, cold, sunburn or injury.