**Indicators of Abuse**

Signs of abuse can often be difficult to detect. This briefing aims to help adults who come into contact with people with care and support needs identify abuse and recognise possible indicators. Many types of abuse are also criminal offences and should be treated as such.

There are typically ten types of abuse although the radicalistion of a vulnerable adult is also considered abuse.

* Physical abuse
* Domestic violence or abuse
* Sexual abuse
* Psychological or emotional abuse
* Financial or material abuse
* Modern slavery
* Discriminatory abuse
* Organisational or institutional abuse
* Neglect or acts of omission
* Self neglect
* Prevent concern

Evidence of any one indicator from the following lists should not be taken on its own as proof that abuse is occurring. However, it should alert practitioners to make further assessments and to consider other associated factors. Neither are the lists of possible indicators and examples of behaviour exhaustive and people may be subject to a number of abuse types at the same time.

Under the SS&WB Act in Wales; Abuse means physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse; Neglect means a failure to meet a person’s basic physical, emotional, social or psychological needs, which is likely to result in an impairment of the person’s well-being

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| **Physical Abuse** | |
| **Types of abuse** | **Possible Indicators** |
| * Assault, hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, hair-pulling, biting, pushing * Rough handling * Scalding and burning * Physical punishments * Inappropriate or unlawful use of restraint * Making someone purposefully uncomfortable (e.g. opening a window and removing blankets) * Involuntary isolation or confinement * Misuse of medication (e.g. over-sedation) * Forcible feeding/withholding food * Unauthorised restraint, restricting movement (e.g. tying someone to a chair) | * No explanation for injuries or inconsistency with the account of what happened * Injuries are inconsistent with the person’s lifestyle * Bruising, cuts, welts, burns and/or marks on the body or loss of hair in clumps * Frequent injuries * Unexplained falls * Subdued or changed behaviour in the presence of a particular person * Signs of malnutrition * Failure to seek medical treatment or frequent changes of GP |
| **Domestic Abuse**  Domestic Abuse is the preferred term and encompasses psychological, physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse of a partner. It also includes any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. Included also is so called ‘honour’ - based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. | |
| **Types of abuse**   * acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation * harming, punishing, or frightening the person * isolating the person from sources of support * exploitation of resources or money * preventing the person from escaping abuse * regulating everyday behaviour. | **Possible Indicators**   * Low self-esteem * Feeling that the abuse is their fault when it is not * Physical evidence of violence such as bruising, cuts, broken bones * Verbal abuse and humiliation in front of others * Fear of outside intervention * Damage to home or property * Isolation – not seeing friends and family * Limited access to money |
| **Sexual abuse** | |
| **Types of abuse**   * Rape, attempted rape or sexual assault * Inappropriate touch anywhere * Non-consensual masturbation of either or both persons * Non-consensual sexual penetration or attempted penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth * Any sexual activity that the person lacks the capacity to consent to * Inappropriate looking, sexual teasing or innuendo or sexual harassment * Sexual photography or forced use of pornography or witnessing of sexual acts * Indecent exposure | **Possible Indicators**   * Bruising, particularly to the thighs, buttocks and upper arms and marks on the neck * Torn, stained or bloody underclothing * Bleeding or pain in the genital area * Unusual difficulty in walking or sitting * Foreign bodies in genital/rectal openings * Unexplained genital discharge, or sexually transmitted diseases * Pregnancy in a woman who is unable to consent to sexual intercourse * Unusual sexualised behaviour. Incontinence not related to any medical diagnosis * Self-harming * Poor concentration, withdrawal, sleep disturbance * Excessive fear/apprehension of, or withdrawal from, relationships * Fear of receiving help with personal care * Reluctance to be alone with a particular person |
| **Psychological or emotional abuse** | |
| **Types of physical abuse** | **Possible Indicators** |
| * Enforced social isolation – preventing someone accessing services, educational and social opportunities and seeing friends * Removing mobility or communication aids or intentionally leaving someone unattended when they need assistance * Preventing someone from meeting their religious and cultural needs * Preventing the expression of choice and opinion * Failure to respect privacy * Preventing stimulation, meaningful occupation or activities * Intimidation, coercion, harassment, use of threats, humiliation, bullying, swearing or verbal abuse * Addressing a person in a patronising or demeaning way * Threats of harm or abandonment * Cyber bullying | * An air of silence when a particular person is present * Withdrawal or change in the psychological state of the person * Insomnia * Low self-esteem * Uncooperative and aggressive behaviour * A change of appetite, weight loss/gain * Signs of distress: tearfulness, anger * Apparent false claims, by someone involved with the person, to attract unnecessary treatment |

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| **Financial or material abuse** | |
| **Types of abuse**   * Theft of money or possessions * Fraud, scamming * Preventing a person from accessing their own money, benefits or assets * Employees taking a loan from a person using the service * Undue pressure, duress, threat or undue influence put on the person in connection with loans, wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions * Arranging less care than is needed to save money to maximise inheritance * Denying assistance to manage/monitor financial affairs * Denying assistance to access benefits * Misuse of personal allowance in a care home * Misuse of benefits or direct payments  in a family home * Someone moving into a person’s home and living rent free without agreement or under duress * False representation, using another person's bank account, cards or documents * Exploitation of a person’s money or assets, e.g. unauthorised use of a car * Misuse of a power of attorney, deputy, appointeeship or other legal authority * Rogue trading – eg. unnecessary or overpriced property repairs and failure to carry out agreed repairs or poor workmanship | **Possible Indicators**   * Missing personal possessions * Unexplained lack of money or inability to maintain lifestyle * Unexplained withdrawal of funds from accounts * Power of attorney or lasting power of attorney (LPA) being obtained after the person has ceased to have mental capacity * Failure to register an LPA after the person has ceased to have mental capacity to manage their finances, so that it appears that they are continuing to do so * The person allocated to manage financial affairs is evasive or uncooperative * The family or others show unusual interest in the assets of the person * Signs of financial hardship in cases where the person’s financial affairs are being managed by a court appointed deputy, attorney or LPA * Recent changes in deeds or title to property * Rent arrears and eviction notices * A lack of clear financial accounts held by a care home or service * Failure to provide receipts for shopping or other financial transactions carried out on behalf of the person * Disparity between the person’s living conditions and their financial resources, e.g. insufficient food in the house * Unnecessary property repairs |

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| **Modern Slavery and trafficking**  The United Nations defines trafficking in people as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, or abduction, fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, or of a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purposes of exploitation.  **Further Home Office information on identifying and reporting modern slavery can be found** [**here**](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/383764/Modern_Slavery_Strategy_FINAL_DEC2015.pdf)**.** | |
| **Types of abuse**   * Human trafficking * Forced labour * Domestic servitude * Sexual exploitation, such as escort work, prostitution and pornography * Debt bondage – being forced to work to pay off debts that realistically they never will be able to * Deprivation of Liberty | **Possible Indicators**   * Signs of physical or emotional abuse * Appearing to be malnourished, unkempt or withdrawn * Isolation from the community, seeming under the control or influence of others * Living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation and or living and working at the same address * Lack of personal effects or identification documents * Always wearing the same clothes * Avoidance of eye contact, appearing frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers * Fear of law enforcers |
| **Discriminatory abuse** | |
| **Types of abuse**   * 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](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/new-equality-act-guidance/protected-characteristics-definitions/)) * 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 * Denying basic rights to healthcare, education, employment and criminal justice relating to a protected characteristic * Substandard service provision relating to a protected characteristic | **Possible Indicators**   * The person appears withdrawn and isolated * Expressions of anger, frustration, fear or anxiety * The support on offer does not take account of the person’s individual needs in terms of a protected characteristic * Inappropriate use of Mental Capacity Act 2005 |
| **Organisational or institutional abuse** | |
| **Types of abuse**   * Discouraging visits or the involvement of relatives or friends * Run-down or overcrowded establishment * Authoritarian management or rigid regimes * Lack of leadership and supervision * Insufficient staff or high turnover resulting in poor quality care * Abusive and disrespectful attitudes towards people using the service * Inappropriate use of restraints * Lack of respect for dignity and privacy * Failure to manage abusive behaviours * Not providing adequate food and drink, or assistance with eating * Not offering choice or promoting independence * Misuse of medication * Failure to provide health care * Not taking account of individuals’ cultural, religious or ethnic needs * Failure to respond to abuse appropriately * Interference with personal correspondence or communication * Failure to respond to complaints | **Possible Indicators**   * Lack of flexibility and choice for people using the service * Inadequate staffing levels * People being hungry or dehydrated * Poor standards of care * Lack of personal clothing and possessions and communal use of personal items * Lack of adequate procedures * Poor record-keeping and missing documents * Absence of visitors * Few social, recreational and educational activities * Public discussion of personal matters * Unnecessary exposure during bathing or using the toilet * Absence of individual care plans * Lack of management overview and support |
| **Neglect and Acts of Omission** | |
| **Types of physical abuse**   * Failure to provide or allow access to food, shelter, clothing, heating, stimulation and activity, personal or medical care * Providing care in a way that the person dislikes * Failure to administer medication as prescribed * Refusal of access to visitors * Not taking account of individuals’ cultural, religious or ethnic needs * Not taking account of educational, social and recreational needs * Ignoring or isolating the person * Preventing the person from making their own decisions * Preventing access to glasses, hearing aids, dentures, etc. * Failure to ensure privacy and dignity | **Possible Indicators**   * Poor environment – dirty or unhygienic * Poor physical condition and/or personal hygiene * Pressure sores or ulcers * Malnutrition or unexplained weight loss * Untreated injuries and medical problems * Inconsistent or reluctant contact with medical and social care organisations * Accumulation of untaken medication * Uncharacteristic failure to engage in social interaction * Inappropriate or inadequate clothing |
| **Self-neglect** | |
| **Types of physical abuse**   * Lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health and safety * Neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings * Inability to avoid self-harm * Failure to seek help or access services to meet health and social care needs * Inability or unwillingness to manage one’s personal affairs | **Possible Indicators**   * Very poor personal hygiene * Unkempt appearance * Lack of essential food, clothing or shelter * Malnutrition and/or dehydration * Living in squalid or unsanitary conditions * Neglecting household maintenance * Hoarding * Collecting a large number of animals in inappropriate conditions * Non-compliance with health or care services * Inability or unwillingness to take medication or treat illness or injury |
| **Prevent Concern**  Children and adults can be vulnerable to exposure to or involvement with groups or individuals who advocate intimidation as a means to a political or ideological end. These groups can include those promoting “violence from extreme right-wing or other ethnic or religious organisations” *Prevent Strategy* (2011). Prevent is part of the Government counter terrorism strategy CONTEST and aims to stop people becoming terrorist or supporting terrorism.  Prevent focuses on all forms of terrorism and extreme ideologies and operates in a pre-criminal space, providing support and redirection to vulnerable children and adults at risk of being groomed into terrorist activities before any crimes are committed | |