

Child abuse and neglect

Information for the public

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Abuse and neglect: keeping children and young people safe

Child abuse means anything that harms a child or young person. It can be physical, emotional or sexual, or can be a lack of love or care (neglect). It can take other forms too – for example it is abuse when a child sees violence or bullying in their family home. It is thought that over half a million children are abused in the UK each year. It is important that professionals who work with children and young people, such as social workers, youth workers, school and nursery teachers and police officers, know how to spot abuse and neglect and what to do.

We want this guideline to make a difference to children, young people and their families by making sure:

- children and young people who want to talk about abuse or neglect always feel listened to
- everyone working with children and young people knows what signs might mean abuse or neglect – and they know how to act when they see them
- when a child is at risk the whole family is given early help to keep their child safe.

We have produced a [quick guide](#) for young people that explains what NICE has said.

Working with families

Professionals working with families should give clear information, explain all the options for therapy and support and listen carefully to people's views and concerns.

They should also:

- make sure families understand why they have become involved
- explain what information has been shared, and who it has been shared with
- explain in detail any therapies or support they think could help
- explain about local services, such as advocacy, where an independent person helps you put your views across.

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your professional.

In the news

[Responding to child abuse and neglect - a view from NICE](#)

Children who have experienced abuse or neglect could be offered therapy; and their parents sent on programmes to support their families better, new guidance from NICE says.

[Children should be seen and heard](#)

Jo Sharpen, Policy Manager, Against Violence and Abuse (AVA) discusses how she worked with NICE to ensure voices of vulnerable children were taken on board for the new abuse and neglect guideline.

"Children suffering from abuse and neglect often feel isolated and too afraid to speak out.

At 'Against Violence and Abuse' (AVA) we work hard to provide an environment children and young people feel safe in. We encourage them to share their experiences and work with us so we can better support them, and others like them."

Where can I find out more?

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

All forms of abuse and neglect

- [NSPCC](#), helpline for adults concerned about a child: 0808 800 5000
- [Childline](#), 0800 111

Emotional abuse

- [Support Line](#), 01708 765200

Sexual abuse or sexual exploitation

- [Rape Crisis England & Wales](#), 0808 802 9999
- [The Survivors Trust](#), 0808 801 0818
- [Mosac](#), 0800 980 1958

Sexual offending behaviours

- [Lucy Faithfull Foundation](#), 0808 1000 900

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

NICE has written separate advice to help doctors, nurses and other health professionals spot [child maltreatment](#) (which covers both abuse and neglect).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by child abuse and neglect and staff who support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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