

INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT (Somerset Child Protection Handbook)

	Physical injury (p.33)	Sexual Abuse (p.43)	Neglect (p.38)	Emotional Abuse (p.40)
Visible Signs	Bruises, bites, fractures, burns, scalds, scars, unusual size, shape or location. Frequent presentation of minor signs. Poisoning	Bruises, bites in oral, anal or genital area. Often no physical signs. Sexualised play, aches & pains. Returns to soiling or wetting. Self harm, promiscuity, anorexia, running away, poor sleep.	Frozen watchfulness. Voracious appetite. Development delay. Non-organic failure to thrive poor skin, dry hair. Dirty - unwashed, smelling	Gross attention seeking Self-harm, self neglect. Development delay
Audible Accounts	Child (or another child) talks about abusive incident (about self or other). Accounts may later change	Child (or another child) talks about abusive incidents (about self or other). Accounts may later change.	Unresponsive to concern from others.	Unresponsive to, or evasive about, concern from others.
Child's demeanour & attitude	Explanation missing or incompatible with signs. Frightened or evasive in giving account.	Explanation missing or incompatible with signs. Frightened or evasive in giving account. Withdrawing from sexuality.	Indiscriminate relationships with adults. Isolated very low self-esteem. Always tired.	Lack of trust in adult. Self-deprecating. Feeling guilty, unworthy. Very low self-esteem.
Recent sudden changes in behaviour (either becoming more withdrawn or more restlessly outgoing)				
Child's context & environment	Fabricated or Induced Illness. Carer's delay seeking help. Domestic violence.	Secretive sexual family lifestyle. Offender presenting a Risk to Children (formerly called Schedule 1 offender) in house.	Inadequate adult supervision.	Carers under - or - over-protective. Domestic violence. High criticism, low warmth.

Carer's Attitude Strong rejection or scapegoating of the child. Unrealistic expectations. Too much or too little concern and control.

Carer's Characteristics Very young, unsettled, isolated. Mental ill health, dependency on alcohol or drugs. Financial, work, & housing stresses.

Child's Characteristics Unwanted pregnancy, separated at birth, pre-term, low birth weight, developmentally delayed, early management problems, excessive difficult behaviour.

Notes: 1) The above signs are a brief summary only. Divisions between categories are overstated for the sake of simplicity.

2) Many of the signs may indicate other concerns not connected with child protection.

3) Interpreting signs of abuse & neglect is like joining up pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. You may have "pieces" of varying clarity, & others may contribute theirs.

4) Environmental signs need treating with particular caution, because they easily fit our stereotypes. Most children who come from socially "loaded" (& often marginalized) backgrounds have not been abused. By the same token, abused children may come from very "ordinary" backgrounds.