

Appendix 7: Circumstances which give rise to Concern in Relation to Child Abuse

Children living in certain circumstances may be particularly vulnerable to harm. Children living in the following situations may be at increased risk of harm. However, it is important to note that the presence of any of these circumstances does not mean that the child is being abused:

a. Parent/Guardian/Carer Factors

- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Addiction, including gambling
- Mental health issues
- Conflictual relationships
- Domestic violence
- Adolescent parents
- Parental disability issues, including learning or intellectual disability

b. Child Factors

- Age
- Gender
- Sexuality
- Previous abuse
- Disability
- Communication difficulties
- Trafficked/Exploited
- Young carer
- Mental health issues, including self-harm and suicide

c. Community Factors

- Cultural, ethnic, religious or faith-based norms in the family or community which may not meet the standards of child welfare or protection required in this
- Jurisdiction Culture-specific practices, including:
 - Female genital mutilation
 - Forced marriage
 - Honour-based violence
 - Radicalisation

d. Environmental Factors

- Housing Issues
- Poverty/Begging
- Bullying
- Communication difficulties
- Children who are out of home and not living with their parents, whether temporarily or permanently
- Internet and social media-related concerns

e. Poor Motivation or Willingness of Parents / Guardians to engage

- Non-attendance at appointments
- Lack of insight or understanding of how the child is being affected
- Lack of understanding about what needs to happen to bring about change
- Avoidance of contact and reluctance to work with services
- Inability or unwillingness to comply with agreed plans

These factors should be considered routinely as part of the process of being alert to the possibility that a child may be at risk.

1. Bullying

Bullying is defined as repeated aggression – verbal, psychological or physical and can be conducted by an individual or group against one or more persons. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyberbullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion. It can often be based on perceived differences e.g. gender identity, sexual preference, race, ethnicity religion, parent's occupation etc. ICTs mean that bullying can be perpetrated through mobile phones or other personal devices using internet and social media enablers such as Facebook, Snapchat etc.

Some children are particularly vulnerable to bullying. These include:

- SEN children
- Minority ethnic groups
- Traveller children
- LGBT children
- Minority religious faiths
- Academic high achievers
- Children with underdeveloped social skills and social cue recognition

The management of bullying among children in a school environment is an ongoing task and requires constant vigilance among school staff as well as constantly revised and understood policies.

All of the above factors and bullying need to be taken into account as part of the process of being vigilant for the presence of child abuse and suffering among the children in every school.