

Basic Awareness - Types of Abuse

(2025)

Neglect: “Failure to provide for basic physical, emotional or social needs; failure to administer medication; isolating a person; failing to respect their privacy or independence; failing to respect their religious, cultural or social needs.”

Domestic Abuse: “Any incident or pattern of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or who have been, intimate partners or family members. It also includes ‘honour-based violence’, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. Domestic abuse can be psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional, and often includes some or all of these elements simultaneously.”

Physical Abuse: “Hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, hair-pulling, biting or pushing; rough handling, scalding or burning; administering physical punishments or inappropriate or unlawful use of restraint; deliberately making someone uncomfortable, involuntary isolation or confinement, misuse of medication, force-feeding or withholding food.”

Sexual Abuse: “Rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault. Inappropriate touch on any part of the body is sexual abuse, as is any sexual activity which the person lacks the capacity to consent to. Sexual abuse can also include inappropriate looking, sexual teasing, innuendo or sexual harassment, sexual photography, forced use of pornography, and indecent exposure.”

Financial or Material Abuse: “Theft of money or possessions; fraud; preventing someone accessing their own money; pressure of duress in connection with loans, wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions; denying necessary assistance or misuse of personal allowance, or other types of exploitation.”

Modern Slavery: “Human trafficking, forced labour, domestic servitude, sexual exploitation such as prostitution, debt bondage.”

Psychological or Emotional Abuse: “Enforced social isolation, removing mobility or communication aids, intentionally leaving someone unattended when they need assistance, preventing someone from meeting their religious or cultural needs, failure to respect privacy, or preventing the expression of choice and opinion. It may also include intimidation, coercion, harassment, use of threats, humiliation, bullying, or verbal abuse.”

Self-Neglect: “Lack of self-care that threatens personal health or safety; inability to avoid self-harm; failure to seek help or access services; inability or unwillingness to manage one’s personal affairs.”

Discriminatory Abuse: “Unequal treatment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation. Verbal abuse, harassment, denial of rights or substandard service relating to a protected characteristic.”

Organisation or Institutional Abuse: “Discouraging visits or involvement of friends or family; authoritative or absent leadership/management; abusive or disrespectful staff; inadequate staffing levels; failure to provide adequate physical needs, supervision and care, safety, or individual expression; not offering choice or independence.”

Coercive Control: Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 created an offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship, which occurs when a person repeatedly or continuously engages in behaviour towards another person to whom they are personally connected

that is controlling or coercive, and that has a serious effect on their victim. Victims who experience coercive and controlling behaviour that stops short of serious physical violence, but amounts to extreme psychological and emotional abuse, can bring their alleged or known perpetrators to justice. The offence closes a gap in the law around patterns of controlling or coercive behaviour that occurs during a relationship between intimate partners, former partners who still live together, or family members.

Spiritual abuse is not a category of abuse recognised in statutory guidance but is of concern both within and outside faith communities, including the Church (Protecting All God's Children 2010, Church House 4th edition).

“Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional and psychological abuse. It is characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. Spiritual abuse can have a deeply damaging impact on those who experience it. This abuse may include: manipulation and exploitation, enforced accountability, censorship of decision making, requirements for secrecy and silence, coercion to conform, control through the use of sacred texts or teaching, requirement of obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that the abuser has a ‘divine’ position, isolation as a means of punishment, and superiority and elitism.” (Oakley, 2018).