



## **GUIDANCE ON THE PURPOSE, THRESHOLD AND CATEGORIES**

The decision about whether or not the threshold is met for a child or young person to be made subject of a Child Protection Plan must be made based on the evidence shared from all agencies in the Conference, that demonstrate a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

Significant harm occurs when a single traumatic event or more often, a lot of small events or issues interrupt, change or damage a child or young person's physical and/or emotional psychological development.

When deciding whether or not the threshold for significant harm is met, consider the following:

- The seriousness and degree of harm;
- How often and how long has it been going on;
- Is it deliberate and planned or as a result of uncontrolled behaviour;
- How much has the child or young person been forced, and/or threatened or influenced;
- The likely impact on the child or young person now or in the future.

If the decision is made that the threshold has been met for a child or young person to be made a subject of a Child Protection Plan, then consideration must be given to which category of abuse is the most relevant.

## **CATEGORIES OF ABUSE**

Abuse is a form of treating a child or young person in a way that harms them and this could be deliberate or not. Somebody might abuse a child by causing them harm, or by not doing something to stop the child being harmed.

**Physical Abuse** – may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. This could also include a child being physically hurt due to either trying to protect someone being physically hurt or getting hurt when someone is being physically aggressive in their presence.

**Emotional Abuse** – affects the child's emotional development and may involve the child believing that they are worthless or unloved, not good enough, or valued only because they meet the needs of others. It may include not giving the child or young person the chances to say what they think, deliberately keeping them quiet or 'making fun' of them. It may include expecting children to do things they aren't able to do or

being overprotective and limiting children exploring and learning. It may involve seeing or hearing someone else being hurt, may involve serious bullying, including 'cyber' bullying i.e. through internet and via social networking sites, such as Facebook, which makes children feel frightened, suicidal or in danger.

Some emotional abuse is involved in all types of abuse though it may occur alone.

**Sexual Abuse** – involves forcing or tempting a child or young person to take part in sexual activities whether or not the child or young person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve body contact, including inserting things, for example, rape or oral sex or doing things such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, touching outside the clothing. It may also include involving children in looking at, or making sexual pictures, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexual ways that are not appropriate or preparing a child or young person for such abuse.

**Neglect** – on-going failure to meet a child or young person's physical or psychological needs, which is likely to seriously affect the child's health or development. Neglect may occur in pregnancy if a mother misuses drugs or alcohol. Once a child is born, neglect may include a parent or carer not giving enough food, clothing or shelter; not protecting the child from harm or danger; not making sure there is proper supervision; not making sure there is proper medical care or treatment or not being responsive to a child or young person's emotional needs.