

Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants

Guidance on Recognising Abuse, Issues and Concerns

Child and vulnerable person abuse is a serious problem and many children and vulnerable people are injured, damaged and neglected. Some children and vulnerable people are abused by strangers, but far more are abused by adults they know of someone within their own family. Children and vulnerable people of all ages and from all social groupings are affected. All Islington Centre Personnel have a responsibility to help protect children and vulnerable people and to help stop abuse. This applies whether you are a trustee, member of staff, volunteer, intern, trainer, consultant, session lead or other freelancers and to anyone else who is employed or engaged directly or indirectly by Islington Centre. You should be aware of some of the signs of abuse, and know what action to take if you are concerned. Don't assume that someone else will take action.

Abuse can have long term effects – physical or emotional. Children and vulnerable people who have been abused may grow up feeling they are worthless and find difficulty in forming happy relationships, or even become abusers themselves.

The main forms of abuse: Physical – Sexual – Emotional – Neglect

Physical

Physical abuse is hurt or injury deliberately inflicted on a child or vulnerable person – hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning (sometimes with cigarettes), biting, giving poisonous or harmful substances (e.g. drugs, alcohol).

Look out for: unexplained bruises, burns, fractures, marks on body, regular marks or many different marks, concealing of marks e.g. unwillingness to roll up sleeves.

Sexual

Sexual abuse is an adult using a child or vulnerable person to meet their own sexual needs. Inducing the child or vulnerable person (through bribes, threats, physical force) to be actively engaged in sexual activity. Such activities range from showing pornographic magazines, videos, or internet activity, exhibitionism, or fondling through to masturbation, oral sex or intercourse.

Look out for: Injury, pain or itching in the genital area, discomfort when walking or sitting down (children aged one to five years old), Changes in a child's or vulnerable adult's behaviour, weight loss, sexually explicit behaviour (for example playing games and showing sexual awareness which is inappropriate), continual masturbation, aggressive and inappropriate sex play, an inappropriately dressed child.

Emotional

Emotional abuse is caused by failing to show love or affection to a child or vulnerable person. Severe and persistent rejection, criticising, bullying, harassment, taunting, ridiculing, belittling, frightening, threatening.

Look out for: a child or vulnerable person who becomes nervous, withdrawn, lacking in confidence and self-esteem, or aggressive.

Neglect

Neglect is a persistent or severe failure to meet child's or vulnerable person's basic physical needs so health and development are adversely affected. Exposing child or vulnerable adult to cold, not providing adequate food, not ensuring basic cleanliness and hygiene, leaving unattended, failing to seek medical attention.

Look out for: a child or vulnerable "failing to thrive", having health problems, being listless and uninterested in surroundings.

Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants

As stated in the Safeguarding Policy, being an asylum seeker, refugee or migrant does not in itself make an adult vulnerable. However, many clients are experiencing difficulties that make them vulnerable where they may be for example subject to their host's house rules or may be experiencing mental illness including depression or post-traumatic stress disorder among other issues. It is vital that we report any concerns in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

Additionally to the main forms of abuse stated above, as a Centre concerned with the welfare of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants it is important to understand the key areas of concern within this client group.

What should I be looking out for?

Visible Concerns:

Unusually aggressive or violent behaviour
Unwillingness to speak or interact with anyone
Uncontrollable emotional expression
Erratic behaviour
Some concerns

If you experience any of these then please tell the first member of staff available and also the Lead Safeguarding Officer and Chief Executive

Non-visible concerns:

Homelessness – can lead to desperate behaviour
Destitution – can lead to desperate behaviour
Loneliness
Intention for self harm
Intention to harm others
Intention to carry out any criminal activity

What should I do if one of these arises?

Abuse, issues or concerns may be identified through conversation with a client. Often but not always this can be through a trusting relationship. It is important to:

- Remain supportive
- Remain calm and collected
- Listen carefully and sympathetically but do not probe into areas of concern that make you or the client feel uncomfortable.
- Suggest that together you speak to the Lead Safeguarding Officer or Chief Executive
- If you feel unsafe at any point you can close the conversation and request help from a member of staff who is supervising the session.

If you recognise any of these or have any further feedback to help us identify areas of concern, please contact the Chief Executive and Lead Safeguarding Officer in line with the Safeguarding Policy.