



Physical Abuse

This leaflet explains what Physical Abuse is and what you can do about it if you are worried that you or someone you know is experiencing it.

We have also published other leaflets about adult safeguarding.

Abuse is when someone does or says something which harms someone or makes them upset and scared.

Abuse is always unacceptable. Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. No-one has the right to abuse other people.

Abuse can happen once or can be something that happens over weeks, months or years. It can be accidental or deliberate. Just because there is no injury

that someone can see it does not mean there is no abuse.

Who could carry out Physical Abuse?

Most people will not abuse BUT anyone could abuse. It might be someone the person being abused knows or a stranger. It can be anyone who uses their 'power' over someone else. Anyone can carry out abuse or neglect, including:

- A partner, spouse, child or relative
- A friend or neighbour
- A parent or guardian
- A health or social care worker
- Staff in a residential or nursing home or hospital
- A volunteer worker
- Someone else the person experiencing abuse lives with
- A stranger

It is likely that the person responsible for abuse is known to the person who is being abused, and is in a position of trust and/or power.

Physical abuse is often associated with Domestic Abuse, but can take place in any situation

Possible signs and symptoms of Physical Abuse include:

- Hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, hair-pulling, biting, punching
- Rough / inappropriate handling and other forms of assault that may not leave visible signs of injury, but may cause pain or discomfort
- Biting, deliberate burns, scalding
- Physical punishments / beating
- Inappropriate or unlawful use of restraint
- Making someone purposefully uncomfortable (for example, opening a window and removing blankets)
- Stabbing, strangulation, poisoning and wounding (breaking the skin) and other forms of assault that cause serious injuries or death
- Involuntary isolation or confinement
- Withholding, inappropriately altering or administering medication or other treatments
- Forcible feeding or withholding food
- Restricting movement (for example, tying someone to a chair)

Possible indicators of abuse include:

- Unexplained or inappropriately explained injuries
- A person exhibiting untypical self-harm
- Unexplained cuts or scratches to mouth, lips, gums, eyes or external genitalia
- Unexplained bruising to the face, torso, arms, back, buttocks, thighs, in various stages of healing
- Collections of bruises that form regular patterns which correspond to the shape of an object or which appear on several areas of the body
- Unexplained burns on unlikely areas of the body (for example, soles of the feet, palms of the hands, back), immersion burns (from scalding in hot water/liquid), rope burns, burns from an electrical appliance
- Unexplained or inappropriately explained fractures at various stages of healing to any part of the body
- Medical problems that go unattended
- Sudden and unexplained urinary and/or faecal incontinence. Evidence of over/under-medication
- The person flinches at physical contact

- The person appears frightened or subdued in the presence of particular people
- The person asks not to be hurt
- The person may repeat what someone causing harm has said (for example, 'Shut up or I'll hit you')
- The person is reluctant to undress or uncover parts of the body
- The person wears clothes that cover all parts of their body or specific parts of their body
- A person who has been assessed as not having the mental capacity to make certain decisions being deprived of their liberty without an authorisation under the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards or order from the Court of Protection being in place. For example, this might include not being allowed to go out of a care home when they ask to or being allowed to be discharged at the request of an unpaid carer/family member

Who to contact if you are worried that about abuse or neglect:

Somerset County Council's Adult Social Care service has the lead for adult safeguarding for all adults with care and support needs in Somerset, and works closely with other organisations including the police and NHS. If a crime has been committed you should always contact the police.

Adult Social Care:

- **Telephone: 0300 123 22 24** (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.30pm, Saturday and Sunday closed.)
- **Email: adults@somerset.gov.uk**

The phone number for Adults and Mental Health out of hours is **0300 123 23 27**

Police:

101 or in an emergency 999

Further information:

Please use the following link to view other leaflets on our website: bit.ly/SSABLeaflets

