

What is Child Abuse?

The formal definition of Child Abuse is:

‘Children may be in need of protection where their basic needs are not being met, in a manner appropriate to their age and stage of development, and they will be at risk through avoidable acts of commission or *omission on the part of their parent(s), sibling(s) or other relative(s), or a carer (i.e. the person(s) while not a parent who has actual custody of the child).’

This is a broad definition which includes placing children at risk through something a person has done to them or something a person is failing to do for them. It encourages us to be open minded and think about a wide range of behaviours and actions which may be harmful to children. For those working in the field of Child Protection the definition gets broken down further into categories of abuse, namely:

- ♦ [Physical injury](#) (hit, kicked, punched)
- ♦ [Physical neglect](#) (not being properly fed or clothed, poor hygiene)
- ♦ [Sexual abuse](#) (inappropriate sexual behaviour or language, indecent assault, sexual intercourse)
- ♦ [Emotional abuse](#) (constantly criticised, ignored, humiliated, exposed to family violence)
- ♦ Non-organic Failure to Thrive (failure to develop normally for which there is no medical explanation)

More detailed descriptions of these categories are to be found in the publication [‘Protecting Children - A Shared Responsibility’](#).