



Rewarding Learning

# eGUIDE//

## Health and Social Care (Double Award) Unit AS 4: Safeguarding Children

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## Promoting positive development in early years settings

### *Physical, intellectual, emotional and social developmental norms for children aged between 1 and 8 years.*

Developmental norms are also sometimes referred to as developmental milestones. They are the average age at which a child is expected to be able to do certain activities such as walking or talking, for example most children are able to walk by 12 months but some may walk as early as nine months whilst others may not walk until they 15 or 16 months. Developmental norms are a way of measuring a child's development. Physical developmental norms refer to the development of gross motor skills (such as crawling, walking, jumping and climbing) and fine motor skills (such as holding a crayon or spoon). They also refer to expected growth as measured by height and weight.

#### **Activity**

Find growth charts for children up to age 8 to help you identify height and weight norms for the age you choose to investigate for this unit.

Intellectual developmental norms include learning, reasoning, thinking and problem solving including memory and recall, for example learning to talk, recognising colours, reading and writing.

Emotional developmental norms are about a child's ability to cope with and express their emotions, for example jealousy, and include bonding, attachment and the development of independence, trust and self-confidence.

Social developmental norms refer to the child's ability to interact with others, for example to share, co-operate in games and develop friendships.



### *Developmental norms for a 1 year old*

#### **Social**

- plays games such as “pat-a-cake”
- puts arm/leg out to help with dressing

#### **Physical**

- may stand alone
- walks holding furniture
- may walk without assistance



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#### **Emotional**

- shows affection
- is nervous/shy with strangers
- cries when parents leave the room

#### **Intellectual**

- follows simple instructions eg - close the door
- says “mama” and “dada”

The above illustration provides brief examples of some of the developmental norms.

Further information is available on the following websites;

[www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/milestones-1yr.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/milestones-1yr.html)

[http://earlyyears.matters.co.uk/index.php/top\\_tip/your-developing-babys-first-year/](http://earlyyears.matters.co.uk/index.php/top_tip/your-developing-babys-first-year/)

[www.goodtoknow.co.uk/family/galleries/8059/child-development-stages-age-1](http://www.goodtoknow.co.uk/family/galleries/8059/child-development-stages-age-1)



### *Developmental norms for a 2 year old*

#### **Social**

- plays beside other children
- enjoys company of other children
- puts on their shoes
- enjoys pretend play

#### **Physical**

- climbs on furniture
- runs on whole foot
- can walk downstairs
- throws a small ball



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#### **Emotional**

- demonstrates increasing independence
- displays negative behaviour
- demands mother's attention

#### **Intellectual**

- makes short sentences
- starts talking about self
- asks names of objects and people
- build a tower of 5-6 bricks

Further information is available on the following websites;

[www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/Pages/Developmental-Milestones-2-Year-Olds.aspx](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/Pages/Developmental-Milestones-2-Year-Olds.aspx)

[www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/milestones-2yr.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/milestones-2yr.html)

[www.whattoexpect.com/toddler-development/developmental-milestones.aspx](http://www.whattoexpect.com/toddler-development/developmental-milestones.aspx)

[www.talkingpoint.org.uk/ages-and-stages/18-24-months](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/ages-and-stages/18-24-months)



### *Developmental norms for a 3 year old*

#### **Social**

- may be dry throughout the night
- has difficulty sharing toys
- eats with a fork and spoon

#### **Physical**

- rides tricycle
- walks upstairs, alternating their feet



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#### **Emotional**

- less prone to temper tantrums
- independence increases
- less anxious when separated from parents

#### **Intellectual**

- counts to 10 by rote
- names colours
- carries on a simple conversation

Further information is available on the following websites;

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002014.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/milestones-3yr.html>

and

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/childdevelopmenttracker/three/> .



### *Developmental norms for a 4 year old*

#### **Social**

- starts to play games with others
- takes turns, shares and co-operates with others
- dresses and undresses

#### **Physical**

- catches and throws a ball
- walks up and down stairs without support
- hops, stands on one foot



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#### **Emotional**

- independence increases
- feels jealousy
- expresses themselves verbally

#### **Intellectual**

- listens to longer stories
- describes events that have already happened eg “we went to the park”
- uses colour and number related words eg ‘blue van’

Visit the following websites for further details;

<http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/ages-and-stages/3-4-years>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/Pages/Developmental-Milestones-3-to-4-Years-Old.aspx>

<http://earlyyearsmatters.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/4to5Yrs.pdf>





### *Developmental norms for a 5 year old*

#### **Social**

- plays with boys and girls
- uses the toilet by themselves
- enjoys make believe play and dressing up

#### **Physical**

- swings and climbs
- colours within lines
- walks on a balance beam
- walks on tiptoes



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#### **Emotional**

- seeks praise
- independence increase
- can be mean to others
- may be afraid of the dark, monsters etc.

#### **Intellectual**

- understands more complex language
- uses future tense
- says own name and address

The following websites provide further details;

<http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/developmental-milestones-age-5/>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/preschool/Pages/Developmental-Milestones-4-to-5-Year-Olds.aspx>

<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthtopics/content.asp?hwid=ue5316> and

<http://www.goodtoknow.co.uk/family/galleries/8089/child-development-stages-age-5/6>.





### *Developmental norms for a 6 year old*

#### **Social**

- unstable friendships
- plays with friends of same gender
- co-operative play

#### **Physical**

- moves in time with music
- skips, hops and jumps
- throws and catches a small ball



#### **Emotional**

- independence continues to increase
- aware of feelings of others
- hurt by criticism

#### **Intellectual**

- develops reasoning skills
- learns to write
- counts to 10 and understands concept of 10
- moves towards abstract thinking

Visit the following websites for further details;

<http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/developmental-milestones-your-6-year-old-child/>

<http://www.webmd.com/children/tc/milestones-for-6-year-olds-topic-overview>

[http://www.babycenter.com/0\\_physical-development-milestones-gross-motor-skills-ages-5-to\\_3659044.bc](http://www.babycenter.com/0_physical-development-milestones-gross-motor-skills-ages-5-to_3659044.bc)



### *Developmental norms for a 7 year old*

#### **Social**

- takes part in games with rules
- plays in groups with the same gender
- forms close relationships

#### **Physical**

- catches a ball with one hand
- walks along a narrow wall/ beam
- rides a two wheel bike confidently



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#### **Emotional**

- starts to feel guilty
- very independent
- has better control of emotions

#### **Intellectual**

- performs simple calculations in his/her head
- begins to understand and tell time
- uses computer and keyboard for simple word processing

The following website provides further details;

<http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/developmental-milestones-your-7-year-old-child/>



### *Developmental norms for an 8 year old*

#### **Social**

- may have best friend
- develops close friendship with same sex
- enjoys group play and team sports

#### **Physical**

- moves in time with music
- skips, hops and jumps
- throws and catches a small ball



#### **Emotional**

- shows sensitivity
- emotions change quickly
- needs to be accepted by peers
- confident
- very confident

#### **Intellectual**

- wants to know reasons for things
- develops logical thinking
- may be interested in reading

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Visit the following website for further details;

<http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/developmental-milestones-your-8-year-old-child/>

#### **Activity**

Prepare a table outlining the physical, intellectual, emotional and social developmental norms for children aged 1 to 8 years.



## The influence of theories in early years settings

### **How theories influence practice in the chosen setting, for example by promoting language development, managing behaviour, developing learning or setting policies**

The work of various psychologists has increased awareness of how children develop and has impacted on how children are cared for in early years settings. For example, the work of Bowlby has influenced settling in procedures, which many early years settings have in place and it also underlies the principle of the key worker. The work of Vygotsky and Piaget has influenced the strategies used by staff to promote learning and language development.

### ***Cognitive development or constructivism (Piaget)***

The work of Jean Piaget (1896-1980) had a major influence on practice in early years settings in particular primary schools. Piaget's study of cognitive development focused on a series of tests and observational studies of children. He showed that children think differently from adults and that they are born with a basic mental state, which is part genetically inherited and part evolved. There are three components to his theory of cognitive development; schemas (the building blocks of knowledge), adaption processes (equilibrium, assimilation and accommodation) and four stages of development (sensorimotor 0-2 years, preoperational 2-7 years, concrete operational 7-11 years and formal operational 11+.) The first three stages are relevant to children aged between 1 and 8 years.

There are several videos on You Tube providing more detail on Piaget's theory such as: 'Piaget's Theories of Cognitive Development' available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HcwSlnNPaLY>, and

'Jean Piaget Cognitive Stages of Development' available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-50Fvj3a0ks>

The website below also provides more detail:

<http://www.simplypsychology.org/piaget.html>,

### **Activity**

Prepare a summary of how Piaget's cognitive development theory may be used in early years settings to promote learning.



## ***Social constructivism (Vygotsky)***

Vygotsky (1896-1934) was a Russian psychologist. He believed that infants are born with basic abilities and that learning is influenced by several factors such as the acquisition of language, opportunities to express ideas, social interaction with others and the environment and active play. Two important concepts introduced by Vygotsky are 'scaffolding' and the zone of 'proximal development'. The zone of proximal development refers to the next level of a child's independent learning ability, for example, to solve a problem or complete an activity independently and the learning that is guided by a teacher, parent or older child (referred as the knowledgeable other) should reflect an understanding of this. Scaffolding refers to reducing the amount of intervention by the knowledgeable other as the child develops competence. His theory has significant implications for early years settings such as active play and group work.

Further detail is available on the following websites;

<http://www.simplypsychology.org/vygotsky.html>

<http://teachinglearningresources.pbworks.com/w/page/19919544/Constructivism>.

The following You Tube clips 'Vygotsky in the classroom' available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9CnZoFUIT0> and

Charlie demonstrates Vygotsky' on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibEP4xBdJco> also clarify the theory.

### **Activity**

Prepare a presentation for early years staff on how they can use Vygotsky's theory to promote learning in their setting.



## ***Operant conditioning (Skinner)***

Skinner was an American psychologist and his theory of operant conditioning is used widely to manage behaviour in early years settings. Operant conditioning is a way of changing behaviour by using reinforcers after the desired behaviour. He identified three types of response or operant that can follow a behaviour. Punishers are responses from the environment that decrease the likelihood of a behaviour being repeated, reinforcers are responses from the environment that increase the likelihood of a behaviour being repeated and neutral operants neither increase nor decrease the likelihood of a behaviour being repeated. For the purpose of this unit the responses from the environment are generally the responses from the staff in the early years setting. Behaviours that are reinforced should continue and those punished should decrease.

Further detail is available on the following websites:

<http://www.learning-theories.com/operant-conditioning-skinner.html>

<http://www.kidsdevelopment.co.uk/bfskinnersbehaviouraltheory.html>

<http://www.simplypsychology.org/operant-conditioning.html>

<http://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/nursery-world/news/1089918/show-the-way>.

The You Tube video clips below show examples of operant conditioning;

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I\\_ctJqjlrHA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_ctJqjlrHA)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AK32448CgKE>.

### **Activity**

- (I) Consider how Skinner's theory of operant conditioning is used within your school or college to manage behaviour.
- (II) Prepare an information sheet for staff in an early years setting explaining how they could implement Skinner's theory to manage behaviour.





## ***Social learning theory (Bandura)***

Albert Bandura was born in Canada in 1925 and is famous for his Bobo doll experiments.

These can be viewed at <http://www.learning-theories.com/social-learning-theory-bandura.html>.

His experiments showed that children observe people around them and behave in a similar way. The individuals that are observed are referred to as models and these may be parents, sports stars, celebrities, teachers, early years workers, peers, other children or TV characters. The behaviour imitated can be positive or negative. Children do not imitate all role models equally. A child is more likely to imitate a model's behaviour when they are praised or reinforced for that behaviour. A child may be more likely to tidy their bedroom when they hear a parent say "well done" to an older sibling for tidying their bedroom. A child may be less likely to imitate a model's behaviour if they see the model punished for their behaviour. For example a child in school may be less likely to get involved in a fight if they see others punished by the teacher for fighting.

Further information is available on the following websites;

<http://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html>

<http://www.learning-theories.com/social-learning-theory-bandura.html>

[http://psychology.about.com/od/profilesofmajorthinkers/p/bio\\_bandura.ht](http://psychology.about.com/od/profilesofmajorthinkers/p/bio_bandura.ht)

<http://psychology.about.com/od/developmentalpsychology/a/sociallearning.htm>.

### **Activity**

Bandura's social learning theory has implications for all early years settings. Prepare a short presentation for staff in early years settings on how Bandura's theory should influence their practice.



## *Psychosocial (Erikson)*

Erik Erikson (1902-1994) believed that that an individual can grow and develop throughout their entire life. He developed eight distinct psychosocial stages of development covering the entire lifespan and he believed that an individual who successfully passes through each will acquire certain virtues and have a healthy personality. Erikson also believed that individuals face a crisis in each psychosocial stage. For the purpose of this unit, which focuses on a child aged 1-8 years, only the first four stages are relevant;

- Stage 1: Trust v Mistrust (0-1.5 years)
- Stage 2: Autonomy v Shame and doubt (1.5-3 years)
- Stage 3: Initiative v Guilt (3-5 years)
- Stage 4: Industry v Inferiority (5-12 years).

Watch the You Tube video, 'Erikson's Psychosocial Development Ages and Stages Project' available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grSxCdtLL38> and when watching try and substitute parents by early years workers.

Further information is available on the websites below;

<http://www.simplypsychology.org/Erik-Erikson.html>

<http://psychology.about.com/od/psychosocialtheories/a/psychosocial.htm>

<http://www.kidsdevelopment.co.uk/eriksonspychosocialdevelopmenttheory.html>.

### **Activity**

Discuss the implications of Erikson's theory for staff in a day nursery and a primary school.



## ***Attachment theories (Bowlby)***

John Bowlby (1907-1990), a psychoanalyst, was the first to propose an attachment theory that argued that the relationship between a child and one primary caregiver is needed to give the child a sense of stability and security; this is known as monotropy. The primary caregiver is usually the mother according to Bowlby who argued that separation from the mother is damaging. In the 1930s Bowlby worked as a psychiatrist with emotionally disturbed children in London and during this time he did some research which he believed demonstrated that the most disturbed teenagers had been separated from their mothers early in life. Other researchers have gone on to develop attachment theories that differ from Bowlby's. For example, Schaffer and Emerson (1964) went on to conclude, after studying 60 babies, that a baby could form several attachments in sequential order, for example, aged 7-9 months a baby will have a specific attachment to one person and by the age 18 months will form multiple attachments as independence increases.

Visit the following website <http://www.simplypsychology.org/bowlby.html> for further details.

Further information is also available on the websites below;

<http://www.psychologistworld.com/developmental/attachment-theory.php>

and

<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/extra/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=53500&p=0>.

### **Activity**

Prepare a short talk for staff in a day nursery on attachment theories and the implications of such theories for their day-to-day work with the children.



## Understanding abuse



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### *The types of abuse*

Child abuse is a term used to describe the harm caused to a person under eighteen years of age by another person. According to the NSPCC (2016), this can include physical, sexual, emotional, and online abuse, neglect, grooming, child trafficking, child sexual exploitation, bullying, cyber bullying, domestic abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM) and harmful sexual behaviour. The abuser may be an adult, for example a parent, neighbour, stranger, or as recently highlighted in the media well known celebrities, or another child or young person.

### *Physical abuse*



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Physical abuse is deliberately hurting a child, for example by hitting, punching, burning or biting and causing injuries such as cuts, bruises and broken bones.



Further detail on physical abuse is available on the following website:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/physical-abuse/>.

Watch Alfie's story on

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/physical-abuse/what-is-physical-abuse/>.

## ***Sexual abuse***

Sexual abuse occurs when a child or young person is forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities.

## ***Emotional abuse***



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Emotional abuse is sometimes called psychological abuse and examples include humiliating, ignoring, or telling a children they are 'no good'.

The websites below provide more detail;

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/emotional-abuse>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/Explore/AbuseSafety/Pages/Emotional.aspx>



## **Neglect**

Neglect is the most common form of abuse and it means not providing for a child's psychological or physical needs. Examples include not maintaining a safe environment, failure to take a child to the GP when they are ill and not providing adequate food or housing for a child.

Further detail is available at;

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/neglect/>.

## **Online abuse**



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Online abuse is on the increase and refers to abuse on the web. The abuser may be someone the child knows or a stranger.

Further detail is available at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/online-abuse/>.

## **Grooming**

Recent media reports have highlighted an increase in this type of abuse especially in large UK cities, Rotherham being a recent example. This type of abuse involves a person (someone the child knows or a stranger) building a relationship with them either in the real world or on line for the purpose of sexual abuse or exploitation.

Further information can be accessed at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/grooming/>.





### ***Child trafficking***



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This involves the illegal movement of children, usually from one country to another who are then forced to work or sexually exploited. Statistics show this is becoming an issue in the UK.

Read the media articles at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-26234092>,

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-trafficking/>.

### ***Child sexual exploitation (CSE)***

This form of sexual abuse involves children getting, for example, money, gifts, drugs, or food in return for taking part in sexual activities.

Further information is available at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-exploitation/>.



## *Bullying and cyber bullying*



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Many children have experienced bullying especially at school and most schools have anti-bullying policies. Bullying is repeated behaviour intended to hurt a child either emotionally or physically and takes various forms, for example name calling, teasing and physical assaults.

Further information is available at

<http://www.bullying.co.uk/general-advice/what-is-bullying/>.

Cyber bullying is on the increase and this is bullying on line and includes the use of mobile phones, games and social networking.

<https://www.childline.org.uk/Explore/Bullying/Pages/Bullying.aspx>



### ***Domestic abuse***



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Domestic abuse is threatening behaviour or violence between adults who have been or are in a relationship together. Children who witness domestic abuse can become very distressed and frightened and they become victims of child abuse.

### ***Female genital mutilation (FGM)***

This is illegal in the UK. It is also known as female circumcision and involves the cutting of the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is carried out for cultural or religious reasons.

#### **Activity**

Prepare a presentation describing the various types of child abuse.



## ***Possible indicators of abuse in children***

Most types of abuse can be described as physical, sexual, and emotional or neglect, for example bullying can be both emotional and physical. Whilst there are possible general indicators that a child is being abused there are specific indicators of each type. Staff in early years settings should always be vigilant and examples of potential indicators of abuse are illustrated below.



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### ***Examples of possible indicators of physical abuse***



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**UNEXPLAINED BRUISES AND MARKS**

**BURNS**

**FRACTURES**

**SCALDS**

**INJURIES NOT RECEIVING MEDICAL ATTENTION**

**UNWILLINGNESS TO CHANGE FOR PE**



*Examples of possible indicators of sexual abuse*

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**SELF-HARM**

**REPEATED URINARY INFECTIONS**

**ENGAGES IN SEXUAL PLAY INAPPROPRIATE FOR AGE**

**SHOWS SEXUAL ACTIVITIES THROUGH PLAY, DRAWINGS AND WORDS**

**INAPPROPRIATE SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE**

*Examples of possible indicators of emotional abuse*

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**POOR CONCENTRATION**

**AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR**

**HYPERACTIVITY**

**REDUCED CONCENTRATION SPAN**

**WITHDRAWN**

**DELAY IN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

**LOW SELF-ESTEEM**

**SELF STIMULATION  
e.g. rocking movements.**





### *Examples of possible indicators of neglect*



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**POOR ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL**

**DIRTY CLOTHES**

**UNTREATED HEAD LICE**

**UNCOMBED HAIR**

**MALNOURISHED**

**FREQUENT HUNGER AND TIREDNESS**

**POOR CLOTHING**

**UNPLEASANT BODY ODOUR**

More detail is available on the following websites;

[http://www.safenetwork.org.uk/training\\_and\\_awareness/pages/assessing\\_injuries\\_and\\_concerns.aspx](http://www.safenetwork.org.uk/training_and_awareness/pages/assessing_injuries_and_concerns.aspx)

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/studentambassadors/assets/documents/NSPCCDefinitionsandsignsofchildabuse.pdf>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/>

#### **Activity**

Prepare a poster for the noticeboard in the staff room of an early years setting outlining the potential indicators of abuse.





## Implementing safeguarding policies in early years

### *Staff responsibilities as described in a child protection and whistle blowing policy*

Policies have been included in AS 1: Promoting Quality and it may be useful to refer to the CCEA Fact File A2 5 produced for the unit, available at [www.ccea.org.uk/hsc](http://www.ccea.org.uk/hsc)

The importance of safeguarding children in early years settings has been highlighted in the case of Vanessa George, a nursery worker who sexually abused infants she was caring for in Little Ted's Nursery.

Details of the case can be accessed on <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/nov/04/vanessa-george-serious-case-review>.

All children have the right to be protected and policies set out to ensure that they are. All early years settings must have a **child protection policy**. The purpose of this policy is to help ensure that appropriate action is taken by the staff when they suspect a child is being abused or is at risk from, for example, another young person, an adult visitor, carer, parent or guardian. The policy places a responsibility on all staff within the setting and states the procedures they should follow if they suspect a child may be at risk. Managers, principals and designated teachers have additional responsibilities and these are outlined in the policy.

A **whistleblowing policy** also helps safeguard children in early years settings. Whistleblowing occurs when a person raises concerns about wrong doing in his or her workplace. The worker raising the concern is known as a whistle-blower and he/she would follow the procedures outlined in the whistleblowing policy to raise their concerns. An example of whistleblowing in an early years setting is a nursery worker reporting a colleague she suspects of abusing a child she is caring for. This policy also outlines the procedures to be followed when reporting wrong-doing and outlines the responsibilities of different staff members.

### **Activity**

Access the whistleblowing policy of a Nursery School on and outline the responsibilities of

- (a) A staff member who has concerns about the behaviour of a colleague
- (b) The manager to whom the concern has been raised.



## Factors that could put children at risk of abuse

### *Factors increasing the risk of child abuse*

A number of factors can increase the risk of child abuse. These include child, community and environmental, parent or care-giver and family factors.

#### **Child factors**



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Two factors that increase the risk of a child being abused are disability and age. A research report published in November 2014 'Missed opportunities: indicators of neglect- what is ignored, why, and what can be done?' (Brandon et al 2014) found that disabled children are more likely to experience neglect. Children with behavioural or communication problems (especially pre-school boys) are 5 to 7 times more likely to experience abuse than their non-disabled peers. This may be because children with disabilities may spend considerable time away from home either short term on respite breaks or long term in residential settings. Another contributing factor may be that children with disabilities may also experience communication barriers making it difficult to tell about or report the abuse. In addition many disabled children depend on support for personal care, which may increase the risk of abuse and neglect.

The report also indicates children born with complex health needs, low birth weight or born before full term have a higher risk of being neglected. Young children, especially babies, are more vulnerable to abuse as they are very dependent on parents or care givers. In addition a parent who has little support and is not coping, perhaps the baby is unsettled and not sleeping or feeding well, may be more likely be under stress and abuse the child.



Further detail is available in a report published by the NSPCC 'We have the right to be safe' Protecting disabled children from abuse' available at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/right-safe-disabled-children-abuse-report.pdf> (Chapter 3 in particular) and on the following websites;  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-19333317>,  
[http://www.hampshiresafeguardingchildrenboard.org.uk/practitioners-issues\\_disabled.html](http://www.hampshiresafeguardingchildrenboard.org.uk/practitioners-issues_disabled.html).

## Activity

- (i) Access the website below and read the case studies of children with disabilities who experienced abuse.
- (ii) Produce a summary of how having a disability may increase a child's risk of being abused.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/190544/00374-2009DOM-EN.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190544/00374-2009DOM-EN.pdf).



## *Community and environmental factors*



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A range of community and environmental factors increase the risk of a child being abused including poverty, unemployment, social isolation and culture.

Children who live in low-income families or in poverty may be more likely to experience abuse. One explanation may be that parents/caregivers become stressed, irritable or depressed due to the problems of living in poverty. As a result they may not supervise their children adequately resulting in neglect, or harsh discipline methods may be used resulting in physical or emotional abuse. Children living in poverty may also experience neglect as there may not be enough money to provide adequate heating or food and the home may be poorly maintained. Evidence (American Academy of Paediatrics, 2010) also suggests that when parents/caregivers are unemployed children may be more at risk from abuse. When unemployed adults become bored, angry, depressed, worried and stressed (for a wide range of reasons) it may result in aggressive behaviour and children in the household may become victims of abuse.

Further detail on the links between poverty, unemployment and child abuse is available on the websites below;

<https://sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/10/101003081452.htm>

<http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2015/06/30/child-protection-must-dealing-symptoms-increased-poverty/>

[http://www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/search?q=subject\\_](http://www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/search?q=subject_)

[terms%3A%22child+neglect%22&page=1&full\\_text=Free&subject\\_terms=poverty](http://www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/search?q=subject_terms%3A%22child+neglect%22&page=1&full_text=Free&subject_terms=poverty)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/4123676.stm>

Social isolation and a lack of informal support increases the risk of a child being abused especially neglected. This means that if the parent/care-giver is facing problems, for example feeling ill or not coping, there is no-one there to offer support or advice and as a result the child may be neglected. In addition if abuse is happening then it may not be noticed or reported due to the social isolation of the family. There are cultural differences in child rearing practices and what is deemed to be



acceptable in one culture could be viewed as abuse in another. For example physical punishment such as beating a child with a belt or female genital mutilation are unacceptable in our culture but not in others. Children may also be bullied or abused because of their culture.

Further detail can be found on the following websites;

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/190544/00374-2009DOM-EN.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190544/00374-2009DOM-EN.pdf).

[http://www.safenetwork.org.uk/training\\_and\\_awareness/Pages/black-and-minority-ethnic-bme-communities.aspx](http://www.safenetwork.org.uk/training_and_awareness/Pages/black-and-minority-ethnic-bme-communities.aspx)

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/judge-says-cultural-context-should-be-considered-when-investigating-allegations-of-parental-child-10308692.html>

## Activity

Produce a short presentation for staff in a nursery on how community and environmental factors may increase the risk of child abuse.



## Parent or care giver factors

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The circumstances of parents or care-givers may increase the risk of a child being abused.

Teenage parents may be overwhelmed by the responsibility of parenthood and lack the knowledge to care for their child properly and as a result may be, for example, neglecting their child without realising it. In addition teenage parents may lack support and research indicates that teenage mothers are more susceptible to mental health problems than older mothers. Often teenage parents are unable to complete their education and income may be a problem as many depend on benefits or have low paid jobs. These factors may also contribute to increased risk of child abuse. Details are available at;

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/146370-the-problems-faced-by-teen-parents/>

Research shows a direct link between domestic violence and child abuse. Children who experience domestic violence in the home are fifteen times more likely to be abused according to UNICEF (see the link below). The abuse may include physical abuse where the child may be hit, punched, or beaten by the perpetrator or emotional abuse where the child hears verbal abuse between the adults or sees a parent frightened, humiliated injured and perhaps taken away in an ambulance. See the following links for more information:

[https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/our\\_work/domestic\\_violence.htm](https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_work/domestic_violence.htm)

<http://www.unicef.org/media/files/BehindClosedDoors.pdf>

Children whose parents or care-givers have mental illnesses are more likely to experience emotional abuse; examples including rejection, hostile behaviour and aggression. Statistics for non-accidental deaths for children indicate a link with parents who have a mental illness, such as depression or a personality disorder. A mother with depression may neglect her children by being unable to carry out everyday tasks such as cooking, washing or cleaning or interacting with them.



Research indicates that 50% of children whose parents have a learning disability are at risk of abuse and up to 25% may be taken into care. There may be various reasons for this including stereotyping, a lack of support, an unwillingness to ask for help or a lack of understanding of caring for children.

For further detail visit the website below;

<http://www.bestbeginnings.org.uk/parents-with-learning-disabilities>

Substance misuse, for example of drugs and alcohol, puts children at greater risk of abuse. Examples include inadequate supervision of children such as leaving them home alone or failing to meet their needs for adequate nutrition, personal care or warmth. Emotional abuse may also occur if parents fail to form a bond with their child, resulting in insecurity. Sexual and physical abuse of children is closely linked to alcohol misuse by parents.

Parents or care-givers who themselves were abused as children are more likely to become adults who abuse children, as indicated in the article available at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/parentalsubabuse.pdf>.

The reasons for this are unclear but it may be because they see abuse as being 'normal', as it was part of their life when growing up or perhaps they perceive abuse as a way of controlling others and getting what they want.

Visit the website below for further information:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/134182.stm>

Babies are very dependent when they are born and depend on their parents or care-givers to care for them and meet their emotional and physical needs. When parents or caregivers meet these needs the baby attaches or forms a bond with them. This attachment is critical for the development of the baby and a lack of attachment can result in the baby being abused, for example by not receiving attention or being fed or changed. This lack of attachment may happen if the parent or care-giver is ill, abusing substances or has mental health problems.

Access the website below for further details:

<http://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/attachment-disorder.html>





## Family factors



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Family factors such as dysfunctional family relationships and stressful life events can also put a child at greater risk of abuse. Most children grow up in a family where they are loved, cared for and valued. Children reared in this supportive environment will have their emotional and physical needs met. In contrast, some children grow up in families where this is not the case and these children may experience abuse. A number of factors can contribute to dysfunctional family relationships, for example the parent or care-giver has an addiction or uses physical force as control or punishment.

Further information is available at:

<http://www.brown.edu/campus-life/support/counseling-and-psychological-services/dysfunctional-family-relationships>

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2003/05/17127/21832> and

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/134182.stm>.

Stressful life events such as divorce, death of a loved one, moving house, job loss and serious illness can also increase the risk of a child being abused, in many cases unintentionally. For example if a family member is seriously ill a child may be neglected if the parent or care-giver is spending a lot of time in hospital and there is little family support to help with tasks such as cleaning, cooking, washing or preparing children for school. In some acrimonious divorce cases, children are used by parents to score points or 'get at each other'. Children may be encouraged to blame or criticise the other parent and they may be involved in arguments about where they live and contact arrangements. This can result in emotional abuse. All these events cause stress and can lead to depression in adults and the risk of child abuse is increased when the parent or care-giver is unable to cope.

Visit <http://www.lawdonut.co.uk/law/personal-law/divorce-separation-cohabitation/divorce-and-children> for further details.



## Activity

Prepare a presentation to be given as part of the induction programme for staff in an early years setting on 'The Factors That Could Put Children at Risk Of Abuse'.