

### Emotional abuse

Out of the 4 categories of abuse and which are; neglect, emotional, physical and sexual abuse....emotional abuse is the second most common initial category of abuse for children who are likely to be supported by children services, statutory interventions and engagement.

#### Definition of emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development.

Although the effects of emotional abuse might take a long time to be recognisable, practitioners will be in a position to observe it, for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child.

Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.

Emotional abuse may involve serious bullying, including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones or by a child's peers.

*'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused – advice for practitioners' HM Government (2015)*

Emotional abuse is often difficult to recognise. The indicators of emotional abuse are often also associated with other forms of abuse.

Emotional abuse can often occur as a result of 'children experiencing traumatic events either in the home (such as witnessing domestic violence or experiencing maltreatment) at school (being a victim of bullying) or the community (witnessing or being a victim of street crime)'.

*Realising the potential of early intervention – Early Intervention Foundation (2018)*

**What might emotional abuse look like for children in the early years?**

- Developmental delay
- Unusual or poor attachment between a child and parent/carer e.g. anxious, indiscriminate or no attachment
- Poor speech and language or significant language delay
- Aggressive behaviour towards others including bullying their peers
- Singled out or scapegoated within the family
- Low self-esteem and lack of confidence
- Withdrawn or seen as a “loner” – difficulty relating to others including adults

Babies and pre-school children who are being emotionally abused or neglected might:

- be overly-affectionate to strangers or people they don't know well
- seem unconfident, wary or anxious
- not have a close relationship or bond with their parent
- be aggressive or cruel towards other children or animals.

*(Source NSPCC)*