

Indicators of Child Abuse – Guidance August 2026

Safeguarding: Everyone's Responsibility

- Whatever your role at BDSIP everyone has a responsibility to keep children and young people safe.
- Your eyes and ears could make a difference and add a vital piece to the puzzle.
- You should always act in the best interests of the child or young person.
- Always report any concerns about children or young people and about staff **immediately** to the DSL, however small you think it may be.
- If you aren't sure about something, ask.

Things to look out for when working with children and young people

*Please note that this list is not exhaustive. If you have **any** concerns about a child or young person but are not sure whether it constitutes a safeguarding concern, you are expected to contact BDSIP's DSL or DDSL to talk it through.*

- Changes in behaviour, including becoming withdrawn, angry, aggressive or challenging
- Being evasive, withdrawn or secretive
- Going missing from home, school or care
- Poor school attendance or persistent absence
- Using unusually sexualised language or displaying sexualised behaviour
- Engaging in conversations that are inappropriate for the child or young person's age, developmental stage or circumstances
- Self-harming behaviours or indicators of mental health concerns
- Displaying fear of particular people, places or situations
- Appearing unclean or wearing dirty, torn or malodorous clothing
- Being inappropriately dressed for the weather or circumstances
- Showing signs of hunger or stealing food
- Having an insubstantial or inadequate packed lunch
- Bruising or other unexplained injuries, including burns
- Suddenly having unexplained access to money or possessions
- Flinching when touched or appearing easily startled
- Producing drawings, written work or play scenarios that contain concerning themes
- Engaging in whispered conversations about things that 'must not be told'
- Showing unexplained anxiety about going home or being with a particular child or adult
- Not wanting to attend school or being reluctant to separate from a parent or carer
- Frequent fighting or conflict with peers
- Signs of online or digital exploitation, including excessive secrecy around screen use or contact with unknown adults online
- Indicators of county lines activity or criminal exploitation, including new friendship groups, going missing, possession of drug-related paraphernalia, or experiences of peer-on-peer abuse