

# Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants

## Guidance on Recognising Abuse, Issues and Concerns

### Policy approval:

This safeguarding policy adopted on:	January 2025
Date of next review:	January 2026

Child and vulnerable person abuse is a serious problem and many children and vulnerable people are injured, damaged and neglected. Some children and vulnerable people are abused by strangers, but far more are abused by adults they know or someone within their own family. Children and vulnerable people of all ages and from all social groupings are affected. All Islington Centre Personnel have a responsibility to help protect children and vulnerable people and to help stop abuse. This applies whether you are a trustee, member of staff, volunteer, intern, trainer, consultant, session lead or other freelancers and to anyone else who is employed or engaged directly or indirectly by Islington Centre. You should be aware of some of the signs of abuse, and know what action to take if you are concerned. Don't assume that someone else will take action.

Abuse can have long term effects – physical or emotional. Children and vulnerable people who have been abused may grow up feeling they are worthless and find difficulty in forming happy relationships, or even become abusers themselves.

### The main forms of abuse are:

#### Physical:

Physical abuse is hurt or injury deliberately inflicted on a child or vulnerable person – hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning (sometimes with cigarettes), biting, giving poisonous or harmful substances (e.g. drugs, alcohol).

Look out for: unexplained bruises, burns, fractures, marks on body, regular marks or many different marks, concealing of marks e.g. unwillingness to roll up sleeves.

#### Sexual:

##### Sexual Abuse:

Sexual abuse is an adult using a child or vulnerable person to meet their own sexual needs. Inducing the child or vulnerable person (through bribes, threats, physical force) to be actively engaged in sexual activity. Such activities range from showing pornographic magazines, videos, or internet activity, exhibitionism, or fondling through to masturbation, oral sex or intercourse.

Look out for: Injury, pain or itching in the genital area, discomfort when walking or sitting down (children aged one to five years old), Changes in a child's or vulnerable adult's behaviour, weight loss, sexually explicit behaviour (for example playing games and showing sexual awareness which is inappropriate), continual masturbation, aggressive and inappropriate sex play, an inappropriately dressed child.

## **Sexual Harassment:**

Sexual harassment can be a one-off incident or an ongoing pattern of behaviour. It can happen in person. It can also happen online, for example in meetings, email, social media or messaging tools. It is when someone's dignity is violated and/or when an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment has been created for someone

Look out for anyone: making sexual remarks about someone's body, clothing or appearance; asking questions about someone's sex life; telling sexually offensive jokes; making sexual comments or jokes about someone's sexual orientation or gender reassignment; displaying or sharing pornographic or sexual images, or other sexual content; touching someone against their will; displaying evidence of sexual assault or rape.

## **Psychological:**

Psychological abuse is when a person scares another person and includes emotional abuse (see below), threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Emotional abuse is caused by failing to show love or affection to a child or vulnerable person. Severe and persistent rejection, criticising, bullying, harassment, taunting, ridiculing, belittling, frightening, threatening.

Look out for: a child or vulnerable person who becomes nervous, withdrawn, lacking in confidence and self-esteem, or aggressive.

## **Neglect and Acts of Omission**

Neglect is a persistent or severe failure to meet child's or vulnerable person's basic physical needs so health and development are adversely affected. Exposing child or vulnerable adult to cold, not providing adequate food, not ensuring basic cleanliness and hygiene, leaving unattended, failing to seek medical attention.

Look out for: a child or vulnerable "failing to thrive", having health problems, being listless and uninterested in surroundings.

## **Discriminatory:**

is when someone treats a person differently because of who they are or because of their gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, age and disability.

## **Self Neglect:**

this covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding

## **Domestic Violence:**

As defined by the Home office in 2013:

- Incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse... by someone who is or has been an intimate partner or family member regardless of gender or sexuality.
- Includes: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called 'honour' based violence; Female Genital Mutilation; forced marriage.
- Age range extended down to 16.

### **Financial and Material:**

is the use of a person's property, assets, income, funds or any resources without their informed consent or authorisation.

### **Organisational (also known as Institutional):**

is the mistreatment, abuse or neglect of an adult by a regime or individual within services, which including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

### **Modern Slavery:**

encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

### **A note on Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants**

As stated in the Safeguarding Policy, being an asylum seeker, refugee or migrant does not in itself make an adult vulnerable. However, many clients are experiencing difficulties that make them vulnerable where they may be for example subject to their host's house rules or may be experiencing mental illness including depression or post-traumatic stress disorder among other issues. It is vital that we report any concerns in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

Additionally to the main forms of abuse stated above, as a Centre concerned with the welfare of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants it is important to understand the key areas of concern within this client group.

### **What should I be looking out for in a client?**

#### **Visible Concerns:**

Unusually aggressive or violent behaviour  
 Unwillingness to speak or interact with anyone  
 Uncontrollable emotional expression  
 Erratic behaviour  
 Some concerns

If you experience any of these then please tell the first member of staff available and also the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Chief Executive

**Non-visible concerns:**

Homelessness – can lead to desperate behaviour

Destitution – can lead to desperate behaviour

Loneliness

Intention for self harm

Intention to harm others

Intention to carry out any criminal activity

**What should I do if one of these arises?**

Abuse, issues or concerns may be identified through conversation with a client. Often but not always this can be through a trusting relationship. It is important to:

- Remain supportive
- Remain calm and collected
- Listen carefully and sympathetically but do not probe into areas of concern that make you or the client feel uncomfortable.
- Don't make assumptions or draw conclusions
- Suggest that together you speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Chief Executive
- Report the issue to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Chief Executive

If you feel unsafe at any point you can close the conversation and request help from a member of staff who is supervising the session or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

If you recognise any of these or have any further feedback to help us identify areas of concern, please contact the Chief Executive and Designated Safeguarding Lead in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

**Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants**

[islingtoncentre@gmail.com](mailto:islingtoncentre@gmail.com)

[www.islingtoncentre.co.uk](http://www.islingtoncentre.co.uk)

020 7354 9946

16-18 Cross Street

London N1 2BG

*Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants is a registered charity in England and Wales - Number: 1135205  
Registered as a company limited by guarantee in England & Wales - Number: 07076199.*