Every child has the right to feel safe and have a happy childhood
Young people involved in developing this guide

This guide has been written by young people who have experienced abuse or neglect of a child or young person. Our voices are important.

Your views matter in developing this guide.

Child abuse

Child abuse is anything that someone does to cause harm to a child or young person. It can include:

- Physical abuse – such as beating, punching, kicking or using weapons
- Sexual abuse – forcing you to have sex; touching you or making you watch pornographic videos or pictures
- Emotional abuse – making you feel scared, worthless or unloved
- Neglect
- Neglect is the ongoing failure to care properly for a child or young person.

What is child abuse and neglect?

Two groups of young people worked with AVA again to design this guide, including agreeing which messages from the NICE guideline were most important to highlight. They hope it will help others in similar situations understand the NICE guideline and get the help and support they need.

This quick guide will help you understand what support you should expect. It is really important that you get the help and support you need, and that you feel heard.

Abuse of neglect of a child or young person is very serious.

About this quick guide

Your views matter in developing this guide.

15 young people from around the country were supported by AVA to help develop the NICE guideline on child abuse and neglect. They wanted to write a quick guide to help other young people find out what support is available to them.

You don’t have to live in silence. Feel trapped or be alone any more.

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How you may feel...
Not everyone is affected in the same way but abuse can change your feelings and behaviour in the following ways:

- Being afraid
- Crying a lot
- Feeling very angry
- Not feeling like talking
- Wanting to keep control
- Feeling suicidal

Other signs could include:
- Eating disorders or using drugs or alcohol
- Being dirty or not having enough clothes or food
- Hurting yourself
- Nightmares
- Being very affectionate with strangers
- Running away

What difference can the right support make?
A young person’s story

“Things were hard at home for a long time. I remember being scared all the time, and then I just kind of started to feel numb to everything. I skipped school, hung around with mates who were a bit older than me, anything to avoid being at home. We had different social workers coming round over the years. I didn’t want to talk to them. What could they do? Would they even believe me? But there was this one woman who didn’t give up. She actually talked to me and didn’t treat me like a useless kid. She didn’t push me, we went step by step on my terms. She showed that she really cared, and she gave me different options – for the first time I actually felt like there could be some hope, that life didn’t have to always be like this.

She found help for my mum and little brother too. They go to a group to help them talk about what happened when my dad lived with us. And she spoke to my teachers so they understood why I was acting like I was. I do really want to learn, I just didn’t think I was worth bothering about. But now I know I am.

Abuse can make you feel helpless and as though you are totally under the control of another person. It’s really important that any help or support doesn’t take even more control away from you, but empowers you and helps you to make choices as well as helping other people to understand what you have been through.”

Remember that what happened was not your fault.
The guideline helps people who work with young people understand how best to support you if you have been abused or neglected. This could be talking about what has happened or taking action to help you feel safe.

What does the guideline say?

People working with children and young people should...

- Involve you in decisions about your life – your opinion should be taken into account
- Find the right way to communicate – it’s ok to ask if you don’t understand them, and check how you respond if they disagree with what they say
- Explain about confidentiality – when they may have to share information, what they will share and who with
- Ask permission if they need to touch you (for example, to examine you) and explain what they are going to do
- Write down, in your words, what you have talked about and get you to sign it – if you disagree with what they say, this should be written down too
- Share any reports and plans with you
- Share any information about your life your opinion should be taken into account
- Involve you in decisions about your life – your opinion should be taken into account
- Work with other organisations to make sure you don’t need to keep repeating your story
- Tell you how to contact them, including out of hours, and check how you want them to contact you
- Work with other organisations to make sure you don’t need to keep repeating your story
- Give you a choice of different therapies and support
- Help your parents or carers

What do I do now?

If you are finding it difficult to get support you could get in touch with organisations like the National Youth Advocacy Service or Help at Hand.

What else could help me?

There are lots of organisations who specialise in helping children and young people affected by abuse and neglect. Here are some that you can speak to confidentially:

- Childline
  0800 1 1 1 1
- Rape Crisis
  0808 802 9999
- The Hideout
  07708 762500
- SupportLine
  01708 765200
- Stop It Now!
  0808 1000 900
- Healthwatch
  03000 68 3000
- Help at Hand
  0800 528 0731
- National Youth Advocacy Service
  0808 808 1001
- Healthwatch
  0800 528 0731

Who else could help me?

They can make sure your views, feelings and wishes are heard and taken seriously, and help you get the services you need and want.

If you are finding it difficult to get support you could get in touch with organisations like the National Youth Advocacy Service.

Who else could help me?