

Section 1: What is Abuse?

“Child abuse occurs when the behaviour of someone in a position of greater power than a child causes the child harm”.

There are different types of abuse and a person under 18 may suffer more than one type of abuse.

- 1. Physical abuse** – deliberate physical injury of a person under 18 which could include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning or suffocating, confining to a room or cot or incorrectly giving drugs to control behaviour. Symptoms may include unexplained, recurrent injuries or burns with or without improbably excuses or refusal to explain how they occurred. It could also manifest in self-destructive behaviour or fear of physical contact, shrinking back if touched.
- 2. Neglect** – this is the persistent failure to meet a child’s physical and or psychological needs including adequate foods, shelter, clothing, failing to protect the under 18 year old from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or supervision. Symptoms may include constant hunger, constant tiredness, inadequate clothing and/or poor personal hygiene.
- 3. Emotional abuse** – This occurs when a person under 18 is verbally ill-treated or made to feel unloved. The person may be made to feel unloved, worthless, inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing under 18s frequently to feel frightened or in danger. It can include the exploitation or corruption of under 18s. Symptoms may include delays in physical, mental and emotional development, continual belittling of oneself, overreacting to mistakes, extreme fear of new situations, inappropriate response to pain or neurotic behaviour.
- 4. Sexual abuse** – involves forcing or enticing a person under 18 to take part in sexual activities whether or not the person is aware of what is happening. These activities may involve physical contact including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may also include noncontact activities such as involving a person under 18 in looking at or the production of pornographic material, watching sexual activities or encouraging under 18s to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Symptoms may include sexual knowledge, behaviour or use of language inappropriate for the person’s age, regression to younger behaviour patterns, selfmutilation, suicide attempts, running away, overdoses, anorexia, sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating.

For the purposes of these procedures, abuse includes any inappropriate or sexualised physical contact; or other actions deemed to be an abuse of trust or power, which impact the person under 18's welfare.

Disclosures of Child Abuse

A disclosure is an act or statement that makes abuse known. A disclosure is an allegation until proven.

A camp leader or volunteer may be informed of an allegation of abuse. This allegation of abuse may concern a member of staff or volunteer during an SU activity or a disclosure of alleged abuse which has occurred or is occurring outside of an SU activity.

Responding to a disclosure of abuse

- Be calm and sensitive to the specific situation. (There are no guidelines to fit every circumstance.)
- Children will often ask an adult to promise confidentiality before disclosing abuse. To them, this usually means they want you to promise not to tell anyone else. You must NEVER promise this, or to keep secrets.
- Seek medical assistance immediately for any physical injury. The welfare of the child is your priority.
- Any questioning to assess a child's physical condition needs to be carried out by the camp leader in the company of an adult witness and should be carried out with the utmost care and sensitivity.
- The adult involved must be removed immediately from contact with the child and others attending the event. Arrangements should be made for a vetted individual to sit with the adult involved both ensuring that the individual does not have contact with any young people and to offer support. If it is a serious incident, arrangements should be made for the adult involved to leave the event location immediately.
- Once the welfare and safety of the child has been secured, and the individual at the centre of the allegation has been removed, the camp leader, as a matter of urgency, must contact the Designated Liaison Person or the National Leader.
- Any concerns about a child should be dealt with promptly and without over-reaction. Scripture Union is aware of potential difficulties and implications of any revealed situations and these procedures are designed to offer a measured response and provide appropriate support.
- Make arrangements for the child to be cared for by a SU Staff member or a suitable camp volunteer.
- The National Leader or the Designated Liaison Person may either travel to the camp or mission location or arrange for another suitable person to do so. The function of this visit will not be to speak

to the person under 18 but to discuss the matter more fully and offer on-site support to the team leader, and if possible, talk with the person identified in the allegation.

- If it is agreed that the camp leader should investigate the matter more fully by talking with the person under 18 concerned, it is vitally important that he/she does so with at least one witness and

Remember:

- Do not ask leading questions or put words into the mouth of the person.
- Under no circumstances collude in keeping the matter “a secret” between you and the person under 18, explain that you have a responsibility to protect them and others.
- Reassure the person under 18 that the information will be treated as confidential.
- It is important from the outset that you are open and honest.
- Information should not be communicated to any external persons, other than the National Leader and the DLP.

It is the responsibility of the National Leader or the Designated Liaison Person to contact the parents of the young person. Should external agencies be involved, the National Leader or the Designated Liaison Person, in consultation with camp leader, will agree as to how this is to be handled.