**9. Categories of Abuse:**

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 (ROI) defines four categories of abuse: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. These 4 types of abuse are consistent with those in the UK (with minor wording changes to definitions). But in Northern Ireland there has been an additional category of abuse known as Exploitation. A child/young person may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

When working with children/young people it is important to be aware of the four categories of abuse these are as follows:

**Neglect:**

Child neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse, both in Ireland and internationally. Ongoing chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and well-being of the child and may have serious long-term negative consequences.

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child’s health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety.

**Emotional Abuse:**

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child’s basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver.

**Physical Abuse:**

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child’s health and/ or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

Physical abuse can include the following: 10

• Physical punishment.

• Beating Slapping, hitting or kicking.

• Pushing Shaking or throwing.

• Pinching Biting, choking or hair-pulling.

• Use of excessive force in handling.

• Deliberate poisoning.

• Suffocation.

• Fabricated/induced illness.

• Female genital mutilation.

**Sexual Abuse**:

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography.

**Exploitation:** (an NI only category of abuse)

Exploitation is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

NB: If you require further information on any of the categories of abuse listed above please consult Children First Guidance directly via the following link:

[Children First Guidance and Legislation Tusla - Child and Family Agency](https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-guidance-and-legislation/) or for Northern Ireland visit [Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland)