

## Sexual Abuse

A sexual act carried out without the informed consent of the other individual is abuse. Such behaviour includes contact and non-contact abuse. The issue of informed consent is a fraught one and would need to be carefully investigated. No one should enter into a sexual relationship with someone for whom they have pastoral responsibility or have a position of trust. Non-contact abuse may include sexual remarks and suggestions, introduction to indecent material or indecent exposure. Contact abuse may include rape, indecent assault, being forced to touch another person, sexual intercourse or being pressurised into consenting to sexual acts. It is also important to remember that it is not just adult men who sexually abuse children – there are increasing numbers of allegations of sexual abuse of children against women and sexual abuse can also be perpetrated by other children or young people

Abusive Action	Signs & Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rape</li> <li>• Sexual assault</li> <li>• Kissing</li> <li>• Fondling/caressing</li> <li>• Involving children or vulnerable adults in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities,</li> <li>• Encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways</li> <li>• Sending sexualised texts and emails.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bruises around the breasts or genital areas;</li> <li>• unexplained venereal disease or genital infections;</li> <li>• unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding;</li> <li>• vaginal discharge or infection;</li> <li>• torn, stained or bloody underclothing;</li> <li>• the child or vulnerable adult telling you they have been sexually assaulted or raped;</li> <li>• pain or itching in the genital area;</li> <li>• sexually transmitted disease;</li> <li>• stomach pains or discomfort when walking or sitting down;</li> <li>• pregnancy.</li> </ul> <p>Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn;</li> <li>• fear of being left with a specific person or group of people;</li> <li>• having nightmares;</li> <li>• running away from home;</li> <li>• sexual knowledge which is beyond their age, or developmental level;</li> <li>• sexual drawings or language;</li> <li>• bedwetting;</li> <li>• eating problems such as overeating or anorexia;</li> <li>• self-harm, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts;</li> <li>• saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about;</li> <li>• substance abuse;</li> <li>• suddenly having unexplained sources of money;</li> <li>• not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence);</li> <li>• acting in a sexually explicit way, specifically children towards adults.</li> </ul>

**NOTE:** The following lists under each category of abuse contain examples of possible indicators. The presence of one or more of these signs or symptoms does not necessarily confirm abuse. Remember if you are ever uncertain you can contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team for advice, guidance and support.