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## Child Abuse Terms and Definitions December 2022

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**Child Abuse:** The deliberate act of ill-treatment that can harm or is likely to cause harm to a child's safety, wellbeing, dignity and development. Abuse includes all forms of physical, sexual, psychological or emotional ill treatment.

**Physical Abuse:** involves the use of violent physical force so as to cause actual or likely physical injury or suffering (eg hitting, shaking, burning, female genital mutilation, torture).

**Emotional or Psychological Abuse:** includes humiliating and degrading treatment, or witnessing of humiliating and degrading treatment behaviours, such as bad name-calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement and isolation.

**Sexual Abuse:** Includes all forms of sexual violence or witnessing of any form of sexual violence, including incest, early/forced marriage, rape, involvement in pornography and sexual slavery. Child sexual abuse may also include indecent touching or exposure, using sexually explicit language towards a child and showing children pornographic material.

**Neglect:** Deliberately, or through carelessness or negligence, failing to provide for, or secure for a child, their rights to physical safety and development.

**Exploitation:** Refers to the use of children for someone else's advantage, gratification or profit often resulting in unjust, cruel and harmful treatment of the child. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development.

**Violence:** "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against a child, by an individual or group, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity" (WHO, World Report on Violence and Health 2002). Violence can be committed by individuals or by the State as well as groups and organisations through their members and policies. It results not only in fear of/or actual injury but also in fundamental interference with personal freedom.

**Harm:** The result of the exploitation, violence, abuse and neglect of children and can take many forms, including impacts of children's physical, emotional and behavioural development, their general health, their family and social relationships, their self esteem, their educational attainment and aspirations.

**Grooming:** Describes the 'preparation' phase of child sexual assault and exploitation, undertaken by the perpetrator to gain the trust of the child or young person, and to establish secrecy and silence. It is not always only the child or young person who is groomed. Parents and carers or other significant adults (including organisations) may also be groomed by someone intending to harm a child.