



Fact sheet: When is a child at risk of significant harm?

A child is at risk of significant harm if they are suffering, or are at risk of suffering, from neglect, abuse or psychological harm.

Some signs a child might be at risk of significant harm include:

Signs relating to basic physical or psychological needs not being met

- low weight
- untreated physical problems
- poor standards of hygiene
- scavenging or stealing food
- child is not attending school.

Signs relating to physical abuse

- bruising, bite marks, scratches
- burns and scalds
- the child's explanation of injury is not consistent with the injury itself
- the child is exposed to domestic violence
- there is a family history of violence
- parents or caregivers use excessive discipline.

Signs relating to sexual abuse

- the child is pregnant
- injuries to the genital area
- the child has a sexually transmitted infection
- the child is describing sexual acts
- the child has sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate for their age
- the child has accumulated money and gifts without explanation.

Signs relating to psychological harm

- constant feelings of worthlessness
- lack of trust
- extreme attention seeking behaviour
- persistent running away from home
- anorexia or over-eating
- anxiety or depression
- the child is taking engaging in risk-taking behaviours including self-harm and attempted suicide
- the child is exposed to domestic violence.