Health and Social Care – Abuse

1 of 11 – Welcome

Welcome to this session for Health and Social Care Level 3.

In this session we will be exploring:

* Being aware of abusive behaviour as a professional working in the health and social care sector

2 of 11 – What is abuse?

Abuse is a large and complex subject and it can affect people in many different ways. However, abuse refers to the negative and deliberate behaviour towards someone that has the ability to cause harm or damage to them.

The awareness of abuse is an important aspect of equality and diversity, as these types of behaviours cause damage and are against our human rights. No-one should be abused in any environment and legislation has been put into place to support this.

3 of 11 – Reflecting on abuse

When working in any health and social care role, you often have the privilege of working very closely with people and their families. During this time it is essential that you listen and take note of what people are saying and doing, so that you can be made aware of abuse.

This can be done by asking yourself the following types of questions during your encounters with them and when reflecting on your communication afterwards:

* Are they positive when you engage with them?
* Do they look well other than the issues that they are under your care for?
* Is anyone else there? If yes did this change their behaviour at all?
* Are they dressed well and in clean clothes?

Other family members may also come forward with information. It is your responsibility to investigate any possible signs of abuse. However, this must be done with the client’s safety in mind.

4 of 11 – Types of abuse

Signs of abuse can often be really difficult to detect at times. As a professional working in the health and social care sector, it is important that you understand the different types of abuse. This will make it easier for you to pick up on the signs, so that you can deal with it quickly. You will now learn about the following types of abuse:

* Verbal abuse
* Psychological abuse
* Physical abuse
* Sexual abuse
* Hate crime

Verbal abuse 1 of 5 – Verbal abuse: what is it?

Often overlooked because it can be subtle, verbal abuse is when someone directs language or words at an individual in order to criticise them. Even though this can be considered as ‘just words’, these words have the ability to control someone. This can be seen in the following methods of verbal abuse:

* **Withholding** – the withholding of information looks at the lack of communication in relationships. Being ignored or providing very little in the way of engaging thoughts and feelings is abusive, as this does not allow for a healthy and normal relationship
* **Name calling** –name calling is a difficult one because it can be very subtle, for example, saying things such as ‘you are such a victim’ can be just as hurtful and damaging as using explicit name-calling such as ‘you are a bitch’

Verbal abuse 2 of 5 – Verbal abuse: what is it? Part 2

* **Verbal abuse disguised as jokes –** saying something hurtful to someone and then saying it is just a joke is abusive. Jokes that are used to cause upset are a form of abuse
* **Discounting –** discounting is the method of denying a sense of reality by indirectly telling someone that their thoughts and feelings are wrong. This can be done by using terms such as ‘you are too sensitive’ or ‘you have no sense of humour’
* **Countering –** countering is the tendency to be argumentative during very ordinary situations, whilst continually trying to dismiss someone's thoughts and feelings. For example, someone may be positive about a film that they just saw, however the abuser will try to convince them that their feelings are wrong

Verbal abuse 3 of 5 – Verbal abuse: what is it? Part 3

* **Blocking and diverting** – this is when an abuser withholds information because they do not want to discuss it and in doing so, decides what are ‘good’ conversations to have. For example, they may tell the victim that they are ‘complaining too much’
* **Accusing or blaming** – this is when the abuser accuses the victim of things which are not under their control. For example, they may accuse the victim of failing to get a job because they are overweight
* **Judging and criticising** – this is like accusing and blaming, however this additionally involves a negative judgement of the victim. For example using ‘you’ statements such as ‘you are never satisfied’ or ‘you always find something to moan about’
* **Threatening** – threatening someone is a very common type of verbal abuse, however it can be subtle. For example, saying ‘if you don’t follow my advice, people will find out that you are not good at your job’

Verbal abuse 4 of 5 – Verbal abuse: what is it? Part 4

* **Abusive anger** – yelling at someone is abuse
* **Denial** – denial is a form of abuse when it is used to deny bad behaviour. Abusers will justify, rationalise and make excuses for their behaviour

There are many types of verbal abuse and these can be used together or alone. Verbal abuse is a way of controlling someone by means of changing their behaviour, making them feel bad and masking reality through the use of words.

It is important to note that verbal abuse is really difficult to detect, so it is important that professionals in the health and social care sector are aware of these issues when working with their clients.

Verbal abuse 5 of 5 – Verbal abuse – summary

You have now completed this section on verbal abuse.

We have looked at:

* What verbal abuse is
* The different types of verbal abuse and how they are used
* Why verbal abuse is used

We will now look at psychological abuse.

Psychological abuse 1 of 4 – Psychological abuse

Psychological abuse can also be known as emotional or mental abuse. It is difficult for a victim to understand if they are being abused in this way because it can be subtle, however it is any behaviour that is used to control or coerce someone (persuade through means of force of threat).

Someone that is being psychologically abused can be identified through how that person feels, whilst receiving that behaviour. If an individual explains, or you notice any of the following, it is likely that they are being abused:

* They feel small or scared
* Are unable to talk – this could be about home life or about what they like doing
* Unable to express themselves – this could be that they cannot wear the clothes that they want to or do the things they like doing
* They have had to change their actions – this could be as a result of the abuser’s behaviour towards something

Psychological abuse 2 of 4 – Examples of psychological abuse

Psychological abuse can be seen in the following types of behaviour:

* **Intimidation and threats** – usually used to make people scared in order to gain control by shouting, or being aggressive through actions or throwing or smashing things. This makes the victim feel small so that they do not defend themselves
* **Being made to feel guilty** – this can be done by giving the victim the silent treatment, sulking or telling them that you will kill yourself. This makes the victim feel ashamed of their own actions without any reason
* **Telling someone what they can and can’t do** – this does not always mean someone physically telling someone else what to do, it can also mean making someone believe that they can and can’t do something through using particular behaviour
* **Jealousy and overprotection** – This can be seen when a person cannot stand the thought of a victim having past lovers or having relationships or even conversations with other people. This may even extend to surveillance through checking phones, demanding details on where the victim has been, who they have talked to or what they are wearing
* **Lack of empathy** – An abuser will find it difficult to have empathy for their victim, even if they are visibly upset as they may feel that this will validate the victims feelings
* **Financial abuse** – This can happen through removing all financial responsibility from the victim so that they have to ask for money and by controlling what the victim can and can not buy
* **Gas lighting** – This is a way of manipulating situations so that they victim always feels like they are to blame, even if the abuser does something wrong
* **Grand gestures** – Manipulation through buying expensive goods to silence the victims emotions. This also comes in the form of a honeymoon period of good behaviour from the abuser, after a period of abuse
* **Turning you against friends and family** – This makes the victim become more and more isolated, by convincing them that their friends and family are no good so that the victim will not want to see them anymore

Psychological abuse 3 of 4 – Why psychological abuse is used

Making a victim feel like they cannot make their own decisions properly will damage confidence and self-worth. This becomes a more desperate situation when the abuser is successful in removing a victim’s circle of friends and family.

Psychological abuse is a form of control by masking abusive behaviour, through making the victim feel responsible for something that an abuser has done or by making the victim feel unable to make decisions, or everyday things.

Those working in health and social care need to be aware of this abuse type, learn to communicate well and reflect on their experiences with the people they care for.

Psychological abuse 4 of 4 – Psychological abuse – summary

Well done. You have now completed this section on psychological abuse.

We have looked at:

* What psychological abuse is
* What the indicators of psychological abuse are
* What types of psychological abusive behaviours there are
* What psychological abuse does to a victim
* How people working in the health and social care sector can be more aware of psychological abuse

We will now look at physical abuse.

Physical abuse 1 of 4 – Physical abuse: what is it?

Physical abuse seems to be a more obvious type of abuse, especially compared to verbal or psychological abuse because of its ability to inflict visible pain. However, victims may become good at covering the effects of physical abuse and it can also be quite subtle if it is used only to threaten.

Indicators of physical abuse can include the following:

* Injuries with no explanation or an account that is inconsistently explained
* Injuries that do not reflect an individual’s lifestyle
* Frequent injuries
* Unexplained falls
* Bruising, cuts, hives (raised areas of skin), burns, marks on the body or loss of hair
* Subdued (sad or low mood) or behaviour that changes when someone is present
* Signs of malnutrition (condition which comes from a poor diet or not eating)
* Not seeking medical treatment after injuries
* Regular changing of GP

Physical abuse 2 of 4 – Examples of physical abuse

There are many types of physical abuse and these include:

* Hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, hair-pulling, biting, pushing, etc.
* Rough handling
* Scalding and burning
* Physical punishments
* Inappropriate use of restraint or restricting movement, for example tying someone up
* Purposely making someone uncomfortable, for example opening a window to make someone cold which falls into the abuse category of ‘neglect’
* Isolation or confining someone, for example locking someone in a room
* Inappropriate use of medication, for example sedating someone
* Forcible feeding or removing food

**Who is likely to be affected by physical abuse?**

It is often those with care and support needs (older people or people with disabilities) that are more likely to be abused. This is because they are an easy target and less likely to understand that it is abuse. Abusers may also try to prevent access or isolate the person they abuse.

Physical abuse 3 of 4 – Physical abuse and neglect

Physical abuse uses pain or someone's fear of pain in order to control them. It can be obvious if there are injuries or marks left behind, however it is important to remember this type of abuse can also be used subtly where marks are covered or hidden.

Physical abuse can also fall into the neglect category, which denies the provision of a person’s basic needs. The victim will often be isolated from their friends and family, which makes it all the more important for professionals in the health and social care sector to be aware of these types of behaviour.

Physical abuse 4 of 4 – Physical abuse – summary

Well done. You have now completed this section on physical abuse.

We have looked at:

* What physical abuse is
* What the indicators of physical abuse are
* What types of physical abuse can be used
* How the elderly and disabled are more likely to be physically abused
* Why physical abuse is used and how it is connected to neglect

We will now look at sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse 1 of 4 – Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is any unwanted sexual contact, including both adults and children. This can be indicated by witnessing the following in a victim:

* Bruising to the thighs, buttocks, upper arms and neck
* Torn, stained or bloody underwear
* Bleeding, pain or itching in genital area
* Difficulty with walking or sitting
* Infections or sexually transmitted diseases
* Pregnancy when a female is unable to give consent, for example, an underage young woman who does not have the capacity to consent
* Use of explicit sexual language or changes in sexual behaviour
* Self-harming
* Poor concentration, withdrawal, sleep disturbance
* Fear of receiving help that includes personal care
* Reluctance to be alone with a particular person

Sexual abuse 2 of 4 – Examples of sexual abuse

Sexual abuse can happen inside and outside of relationships, and can include the following:

* Rape (unwanted penetration), attempted rape or sexual assault (unwanted sexual contact)
* Inappropriate touching of any part of the body
* Non-consensual masturbation of either or both persons
* Any sexual activity where a person lacks the capacity to consent
* Inappropriate looking, sexual teasing or innuendo (hinting/suggesting) or sexual harassment
* Sexual photography or forced use of pornography or witnessing of sexual acts
* Indecent exposure (showing of sexual organs in public)

Sexual abuse 3 of 4 – Sexual abuse: what is it?

Sexual abuse is unwanted sexual activity with someone that is using force through threatening behaviour, or targeting a victim that is unable to give consent.

It is important to understand that sexual abuse happens in relationships and outside of them, however the abusers and their victims will often already know each other.

Professionals working in the health and social care sector have a duty to report instances where they think sexual abuse has taken place, so it is important for them to understand the signs.

Sexual abuse 4 of 4 – Sexual abuse – summary

Well done. You have now completed this section on sexual abuse.

We have looked at:

* What sexual abuse is
* What the indicators of sexual abuse are
* What types of sexual abuse there are
* How sexual abuse happens inside and outside of relationships

We will now look at hate crime.

Hate crime 1 of 3 – Hate crime: what is it?

Hate crimes can use verbal, physical or sexual abuse in order to attack and abuse an individual or group of people. Anyone can be a victim of a hate crime, however the abuse may be based on prejudice against a number of characteristics such as:

* Gender
* Race or colour of skin
* Religion
* Sexual orientation
* Disability

An abuser could be the victim’s friend or carer, using the friendship to gain money or other goods.

Hate crime 2 of 3 – Example of hate crime

Hate crime can include many forms and these include:

* Hoax calls, abusive phone or text messages
* Hate mail
* Online abuse, for example on Facebook or Twitter
* Displaying discriminatory literature or posters
* Graffiti
* Damaging property, for example, a house or vehicle
* Arson
* Malicious complaints, for example over parking, smells or noise

Hate crimes are considered serious incidents in the UK and can carry tough sentences for the abusers.

Hate crime 3 of 3 – Hate crime – summary

Well done. You have now completed this section on hate crime.

We have looked at:

* What hate crime is
* Who abusers could be
* What forms hate crime comes in

You have now learnt about different types of abuse in the health and social care sector. There will now be some quiz questions to test the knowledge you have gained in this session.

5 of 11 – Question 1

Using the following choice of words; **listen**, **closely**, **abuse** and **aware**, fill in the blanks in the paragraph below about abuse and working in health and social care services:

When working in any health and social care role, you often have the privilege of working **blank** with people and their families. It is important that you **blank** and be **blank** of what these people are saying and doing, so that you can be made aware of **blank**.

The correct paragraph should read as follows:

When working in any health and social care role, you often have the privilege of working **closely** with people and their families. It is important that you **listen** and be **aware** of what these people are saying and doing, so that you can be made aware of **abuse**.

6 of 11 – Question 2

Match the following types of verbal abuse; **countering**, **judging and criticising**, **discounting** and **withholding**, with their descriptions below:

1. Ignoring or providing very little in the way of engagement with thoughts and feelings
2. Blaming and placing a negative judgment on someone
3. Denying a sense of reality by indirectly telling someone that their thoughts and feelings are wrong
4. Argumentative, whilst continually tying to dismiss someone's thoughts and feelings

The correct answers are:

**Countering** means being argumentative, whilst continually tying to dismiss someone's thoughts and feelings.

**Judging and criticising** means blaming and placing a negative judgment on someone.

**Discounting** means denying a sense of reality by indirectly telling someone that their thoughts and feelings are wrong

**Withholding** means ignoring or providing very little in the way of engagement with thoughts and feelings.

7 of 11 – Question 3

What is psychological abuse also known as?

1. Sexual abuse
2. Verbal abuse
3. Emotional abuse

The correct answer is C, emotional abuse.

8 of 11 – Question 4

What usually falls under the same category as physical abuse?

1. Verbal abuse
2. Neglect
3. Emotional abuse

The correct answer is B, neglect.

9 of 11 – Question 5

What should professionals within the health and social care sector do if they suspect sexual abuse?

1. Report it
2. Write it down
3. Ignore it as it might be wrong

The correct answer is A, report it.

10 of 11 – End

Well done. You have completed this session for Health and Social Care Level 3.

In this session, you have looked at:

* Being aware of abusive behaviour as a professional working in the health and social care sector

If you have any questions about any of these topics, speak to your tutor for more help.