

Safeguarding 7 minute briefing: Fabricated and Induced Illness

Physical abuse

Fabricated or Induced Illness is included in the definition of physical abuse in KCSIE Part one:

Physical abuse: *a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.*

Information gathering

Information gathered from a child's records and tabulated in the form of a chronology is key to confirming whether the situation is abusive. The documentation of facts and evidence in this format often reveals a startling picture. Getting the facts agreed and seeing the overall pattern is crucial. Multi-agency consultation will be an important part of the process.

Why does it happen?

It is likely a parent/carer will have a history of traumatic experiences. They may: *have been victims of abuse themselves; *have a history of self-harm or drug or alcohol misuse; *have experienced the death of another child, or a difficult pregnancy; *have a personality disorder.



What is it?

Fabricated or induced illness (FI) is a rare form of child abuse. It happens when a parent or carer, exaggerates or deliberately causes symptoms of illness in the child. There are three main ways (not exclusive) and include: *Fabrication of signs and symptoms (may include fabrication of past medical history); *Falsification of hospital charts and records, and specimens of bodily fluids (may include falsification of letters and documents); *Induction of illness by a variety of means.

Context

Medical histories of these children may be extensive by the time suspected abuse is identified. International research findings suggest that up to 10% of these children die and about 50% experience long-term consequent morbidity.

Signs of FI

*History of unexplained illnesses or deaths or multiple surgery in parents or siblings of the family. *An inexplicably poor response to prescribed medication and other treatment. *Relationship problems between the child's parents are common.

Types of FI

*Lying about child's symptoms *deliberately contaminating or manipulating clinical tests to fake evidence of illness. *poisoning child with unsuitable and non-prescribed medicine *infecting child's wounds or injecting the child with dirt *inducing unconsciousness by suffocating child *not treating or mistreating genuine conditions so they get worse *withholding food, resulting in the child failing to develop physically and mentally

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