

# WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

## *Child abuse is any behaviour or action by a person that harms a child.*

It can take many forms, such as physical, sexual and emotional abuse as well as neglect and exploitation. Child abuse can harm children in lots of ways. This could be physically, sexually, emotionally or through neglect or exploitation. Child abuse can happen in person or via the internet or social media.

You may think it is only abuse if you are physically hurt, but you can also be abused if you are made to feel unloved and worthless, if you live with or experience violence or if your basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter are ignored or not provided.

The person who causes you harm may be someone you know – a parent, family relation, a group leader, or someone who looks after for you.

Child abuse is harmful and may have serious and long-lasting effects. It is against the law for people to abuse children. It is never your fault. You are not to blame.

It does not matter if the behaviour happened today or in the past – it is still not allowed.

## *Types of Abuse*

- **Physical abuse** is when you are hurt by things such as punching, kicking, biting or shaking. These actions are not caused by accident. There may be cuts and bruises but sometimes there are no physical marks.
- **Sexual abuse** is when an adult or another child forces, tricks or convinces you into some sort of sexual activity – this may happen in person or online. This may include a person touching your private areas, asking you to show or photograph your private areas, or being made to watch or look at photos or videos of another person's private parts. It might include being forced to have sex. They may spend time getting to know you and getting you to trust them so that they can do these things to you – or they may threaten or bribe you to do what they want. They are getting you ready so you won't tell and they won't get caught when they abuse you. This is called 'grooming'.
- **Emotional abuse** is when a child is treated in ways that make them feel scared, worthless or alone, and it can be just as harmful as other types of abuse. It is often a repeated and ongoing behaviour by an adult. This can include ignoring you, constantly shouting at you, criticising or teasing you, and making you feel that you are different from your peers or siblings.
- **Exploitation** is where an adult uses a child for their own profit or sexual needs, forces them into work or some other purpose that meets their needs, including child pornography. An adult may do these things for their own needs, for money or to create pornography.
- **Neglect** is when a parent or caregiver does not provide a child with their basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, supervision, hygiene or medical attention.
- Living with **family violence** can harm you physically but it can also harm you emotionally, even if the violence is not towards you.



### *Information for children and young people*

It can be hard to speak up and tell someone if you think you or someone you know has been abused.

It is important you tell someone so they can stop it happening and make you safe.

If you or someone you know has been abused – or you feel uncomfortable about how an adult behaves with you – talk to someone you trust. This may be a parent, someone who looks after you or one of our people at The Salvation Army.

We will act on what you tell us, and we may have to report what you say. We will let you know what we have to do and support you in any processes that involve you.

Do not be afraid to keep asking for help. If you still feel unsafe or feel that your concern has not been dealt with, speak up again to the same person or a different person.

**The Salvation Army cares about you, and we want you to be safe whenever you are attending any program, event or service with us.**

**Whether you come to us to learn, play or pray – your safety and wellbeing is central to all we do.**

