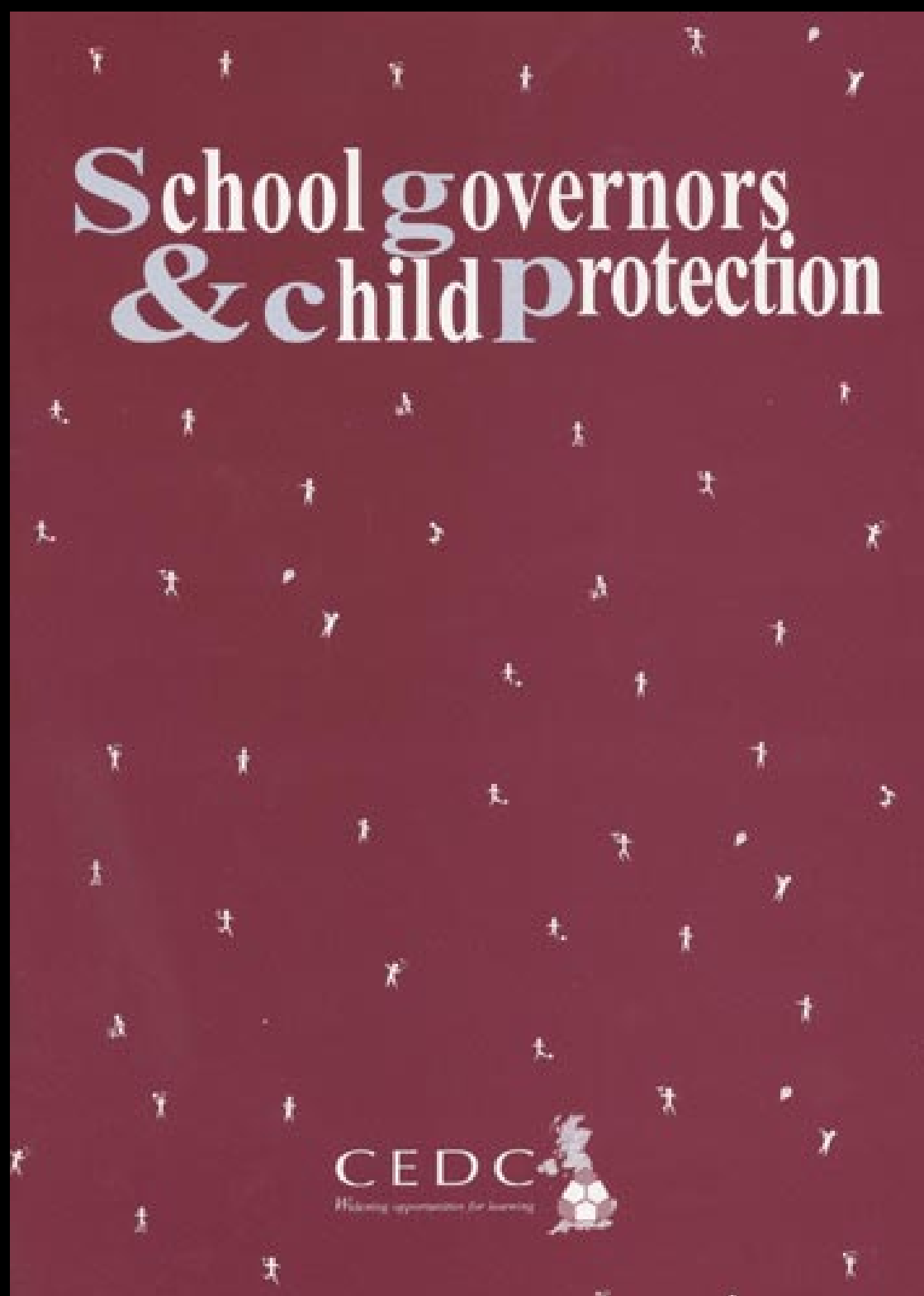


School governors & child protection
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Group materials 1

Case studies

What constitutes abuse?

A Craig, aged 7, is in Mrs Jones' class in Year 2 of the infant school. He is disruptive and difficult to manage. One afternoon, after being particularly trying all morning, Craig soiled his pants. Feeling angry, Mrs Jones called him a 'dirty, stinking boy' in front of the whole class and made him stay in the corridor for the rest of the day as 'we don't want your smell in here'.

B The father of Rajinder (aged 13) is very strict. He wants her to do well at school and puts a lot of pressure on her academically. She is not allowed out and seems to spend her time working in her room or helping in the family's shop. She seems depressed and withdrawn.

C James is 6. For the last couple of years his father has been persuading him to fondle his penis. Last night he persuaded James to masturbate him.

D Claire is nearly 2. She is the only child of a single teenage mother who frequently leaves her alone in the evening while she goes to the pub. Claire has several times woken up crying, with no one there to comfort her.

E Janet is nearly 16. She has had a steady boyfriend for two years. Yesterday Janet's father returned home unexpectedly early and found Janet in bed with her boyfriend. He threw the boyfriend out and gave Janet a 'good hiding'. She has several large, fresh bruises and cuts.

F Stuart is 14 and attends a minor public school. He says he is a pacifist, but he has been told it is compulsory to join the school Combined Cadet Force and he is forbidden to wear his CND badge. Despite his pleadings, his parents refuse to take him away or intervene, even though he is being publicly humiliated and held up to ridicule because of his beliefs.

G Jonathan is 3 months old and suffers badly with colic. This evening his father, Tony, was looking after him while his mother went to the cinema with her sister. Tony became so frustrated by Jonathan's constant crying that he shook him violently and threw him down into his cot.

H Marion is a single parent with two teenage sons, Paul and Steven. Paul has left school but has no prospect of a job and Steven often stays off school to be with his brother. Marion finds it hard to keep going and has reached the point of ignoring them, leaving them to watch TV or listen to music in their room. This morning, when Steven went out to hire a video, Paul took an overdose. He is unlikely to survive.

I Harry is 3. He lives with his mum and her boyfriend in a damp, privately rented, two roomed flat. Last night his mum's boyfriend left. As his mum lay sobbing on the bed, Harry pulled over a boiling kettle and scalded himself badly.

J Wendy lives with her dad and stepmother and their three children. She has become the family drudge and scapegoat, gets called 'dumbo' and is only given whatever food is left over when everyone else has eaten. Sometimes this means she only gets the scraps from their plates. When the family go out at the weekend, she has to stay at home and do the cleaning.



Group materials 2

Why child abuse happens

<p>Children as 'belongings'</p> <p>Child abuse will remain a major problem as long as children are viewed as the 'private property' of those who care for them. As a society, we need to begin to see all children as 'our children' and to take responsibility for their care and protection.</p>	<p>Pornography</p> <p>Exposure to pornography in written materials or on video has contributed to the rise in child abuse, particularly sexual abuse. As a society, we need a more responsible attitude to censorship to protect the young from inappropriately stimulating material.</p>	<p>Consumer society</p> <p>A consumer society which encourages little girls to buy make-up and offers role models like Madonna stimulates the sexual abuse of children. We need to look carefully at the messages offered to children.</p>
<p>Lack of preparation for parenthood</p> <p>Child abuse is a symptom of decline in moral and family values. Parenting should be taught in schools to prepare young people adequately for their future role.</p>	<p>Cycle of abuse</p> <p>Many people who become abusers do so as a result of their own childhood abuse. Society is not investing in preventative or therapeutic work with children and families, but only attempting to deal with the end results.</p>	<p>Absent fathers</p> <p>Most child abuse is carried out by men. If men were more involved with young children and babies, this would enable them to form better relationships with them, and to empathise with them more. Mothers often get the blame for neglecting children, but until fathers truly accept responsibility for their offspring and become involved with them, children will suffer and be at risk.</p>
<p>Over-reaction</p> <p>The present climate of panic over 'child abuse' is akin to a witch hunt in which many innocent people are bound to be wrongly accused, persecuted and punished. We need to stop knee-jerk reactions and consider who the real abusers of children are and how children can be kept safe. Media-led investigations and the break-up of families hurt children most in the end.</p>	<p>Deprivation</p> <p>Government policies which condemn children who grow up in poverty and deprivation can take some of the blame for child abuse. It is too easy to point the finger at individuals and ignore the fundamental disorder of a society which fails its young.</p>	<p>Power</p> <p>Fundamentally, all forms of child abuse come down to the misuse of adult power over children. The more 'disempowered' adults feel, the more they are likely to abuse those weaker than themselves. Giving all adults opportunities to feel powerful and have higher self-esteem will finally offer more protection to children in our society.</p>