



Africans Unite Against Child Abuse

Promoting the Rights and Welfare of African Children

WHAT IS PHYSICAL ABUSE?

Safeguarding African Children in the UK Series **6**



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1 About AFRUCA



Africans Unite against Child Abuse (AFRUCA) was established in May 2001 as a platform for advocating for the rights and welfare of African children following the deaths of children like Victoria Climbié, Jude Akapa and Damilola Taylor in the UK. It became a registered Charity in July 2002 and a Company Limited by Guarantee in October 2002 with a Board of Directors appointed to run the organisation.

AFRUCA is embedded in and has developed out of African communities in the UK as a response to their realisation of the problems African children and parents face and the gaps that exist within the child protection system for African children in the UK.

The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of The Child and the UK Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 provide the foundation for all our work at AFRUCA. We aim to promote the best interests of the child in all our activities. Our stance is that culture and religion should never be a reason to abuse children.

Our work includes:

- **Awareness raising and sensitisation:** within African communities and among young Africans about children's rights as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international conventions and UK legislation promoting the rights and welfare of children.
- **Information, education, and advisory services:** to raise the profile of African children in the UK, increase awareness of their needs, improve policies and practices, and develop the leadership potential of young Africans. Activities include research and publishing reports, media work, conferences, seminars, workshops and training programmes for policymakers, service providers, parents, faith and community leaders, young people, community meetings, advice and consultancy services.
- **Advocacy and policy development:** working closely with policy makers to shape the development of policy and regulatory action to promote the welfare of children.
- **Community and international development:** in partnership with others to put in place programmes and projects to help relieve some of the suffering and hardship that African children experience.
- **Family Support:** Working to support families in crisis, at the point of breakdown through effective early intervention services.

For more information about our work at AFRUCA, please visit our website at www.afruca.org

2 Africans in the UK



There has been a significant growth in the number of people from different parts of Africa coming to live in the UK. Africans are coming to the UK for a variety of reasons. Some are here to escape the conflict and war situations in their own countries. Others are here to study. Some are here to escape the harsh economic conditions in their countries and wish to settle down and make the UK their permanent home. Many others are here as victims of human trafficking, brought to the UK to be abused and exploited. Under the government's dispersal programme, many Africans are living across the UK, outside the major conurbations like London and Manchester in isolation, away from friends and family.

With this rapid increase in population has come, for many, associated problems such as social exclusion and poverty. There are high levels of unemployment and underemployment as new arrivals face difficulties in accessing good quality, well paid, jobs despite Africans having one of the highest levels of educational achievement amongst ethnic groups. African communities also find themselves without decent housing. With low levels of home ownership, a high proportion of Africans live on the poorest and most neglected estates in the UK's largest cities, including London, Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester. Many Africans have difficulty accessing social and health care, some cannot due to their immigration status, but also, sometimes, because they are unaware of the local support services available to them.

The economic, social and spatial isolation felt by many migrants families, combined with the day-to-day problems of leading a life in a new country puts huge amounts of pressure on many. This stress can lead to problems such as substance abuse and domestic violence, and in turn puts more children at risk of becoming victims of abuse.





Despite the difficulties and challenges facing them, Africans are one of the most hardworking and diligent groups in Britain today. It is common to see many people combining two or three jobs to make ends meet. Africans are also one of the largest ethnic groups in higher education, and many higher learning institutions have a high proportion of African students.

This desire for educational achievement is a tradition that is instilled in Africans from an early age. Regardless of socio-economic class, all Africans are raised with a desire for excellence and a reverence for education. Unfortunately, in recent times, the idea of education as the key to a good quality adult life has been defeated by conflict, massive corruption and mismanagement in many African countries which has led to huge levels of graduate unemployment, poverty, destitution and the urge to migrate to better climes to discover a "better life".

Immigration does not happen in a vacuum. People tend to take their practices, beliefs, customs and cultures with them when they migrate.

Increasingly Local Authorities across the country are reporting cases of African families coming to the attention Children's Services mainly due to different child rearing practices which conflict with the laws of the land. Approaches to child rearing, physical discipline and cultural, religious or medicinal practices such as female circumcision and witchcraft branding are seen as putting children at risk of abuse and significant harm. As a result, many African children are being removed from their families and lost to the care system, leading to more African families being broken up and fragmented. Certainly, our research shows that children of African origin are also becoming over represented in the child protection system especially under the categories of "Physical Abuse" and "Neglect".

AFRUCA has produced the "**Safeguarding African Children in the UK**" series of publications to highlight different safeguarding issues and to assist members of the African community in the UK to know more about different forms of child abuse and how to identify the signs so children can be safe and be better protected. The "**What is Physical Abuse?**" booklet is the sixth in the series.

3 What is Physical Abuse?



The UK government has identified four main categories of child abuse. These are:

- **Physical**
- **Sexual**
- **Emotional**
- **Neglect**

Although there are other categories, most forms of child abuse will fall under one or more of these.

Physical Abuse is any intentional physical contact resulting in injury, pain or discomfort. It is a form of child abuse which can cause both long and short-term harm to a child and is the most visible and commonly reported form of child abuse in the UK. It is a form of maltreatment in which a non-accidental physical injury (ranging from minor bruising to severe fractures and death) is inflicted upon a child by a parent, caregiver, or other person who has responsibility for that child. Such an injury is considered abuse, irrespective of whether or not the caregiver intended to hurt the child.

You can read more about Child Abuse and the different categories in our publication: **"What is Child Abuse?"**

Physical Abuse and African Families

The issue of physical punishment or "discipline" is very common among African families both in Africa itself and the Diaspora. Many African parents grew up in environments where the notion of discipline and "good home training" were paramount in the upbringing of children. This is not only a cultural practice, many parents believe it is a directive of their religion to use physical punishment to enforce parental authority and to prohibit sinful behavior. Africans generally have strong religious values. Religion is their way of life. The most dominant religions among Africans are Christianity and Islam. However, our experience at AFRUCA is that many parents and their faith leaders are unaware of UK laws that protect children from abuse. In addition, in many instances, culture and religion are intertwined making children prone to abuse and harm.





A lot of people strongly believe that children who are brought up with good “discipline” grow up to be respectful, courteous and know how to behave appropriately in society. However, discipline in this sense translates into physical chastisement and using violence to correct behaviour. In particular, many Africans believe that the UK culture of “reasonable chastisement” means children are being brought up with no respect for authority and society.

Many parents who use our services are fearful that a lack of discipline will lead their children into all forms of sinful behaviour like becoming disrespectful, uncontrollable, joining gangs and becoming involved in crime and criminality. Physical chastisement is therefore seen by many parents as a preventive technique.

Significant Harm

The government uses the term “significant harm” to decide at what point to intervene in a family to safeguard a child believed to be at risk of abuse. In the UK, when a local authority has reasons to believe a child is suffering or is likely to suffer “significant harm”, it has the legal duty to make enquiries to assess what is happening to that child. Although this activity can be regarded by parents as interfering in their family, it is usually seen by the law to be done in the “best interests of the child”. For this reason, many African children have been referred into the Child Protection system in various local authorities nationwide due to allegations of Physical Abuse as a result of physical punishment. Certainly, our research shows that children of African origin are becoming over represented in the child protection system especially under the categories of “Physical Abuse” and “Neglect”.

Many people have also been prosecuted by the authorities for physically abusing African children in different ways linked to beliefs and cultural practices. In the past one year to May 2012, for example, a Ghanaian mother was jailed for force feeding her baby, causing serious injury which led to her death. Eric Bikubi and Magale Bamu were both jailed for life for the torture and murder of Kristy Bamu because they believed he was possessed by evil spirits. In April 2012, after a Sunday Times investigation, two people were arrested on suspicion of offering Female Genital Mutilation in the UK. Some African communities view household chores and physical labour as the child’s obligation to the family – to balance the support and care given by its parents. However, excessive child labour in the home can become abusive and exploitative – especially in relation to children in private fostering situations or children used as domestic servants. In May 2011, a Nigerian pastor was jailed in London for trafficking girls and exploiting and abusing them as domestic slaves as a result.

In this booklet, we aim to help parents and others gain a better understanding of what it means for children in our community to suffer “significant harm” as a result of physical abuse, and what can be done to better protect children and prevent physical abuse to children.

4 Forms of Physical Abuse



In the African community, Physical Abuse occurs in many different ways. Most forms of physical abuse are linked to cultural and religious beliefs and practices. Others are as a result of extreme wickedness or parents' negligence. All can have devastating consequences on children.

a. Physical Chastisement

UK legislation does say that parents can use "reasonable chastisement" to control their children's behaviour. However in doing so, they must not use any implements or leave a mark on the child's body (**Section 58 of the Children Act 2004**). As an organization, AFRUCA believes "reasonable chastisement" can cause harm to children which might not be detectable not only because of the skin pigmentation of many African children but also because research has shown that regular beatings or even smacking can lead to long term emotional harm. The term "reasonable" is also subjective. This is because what is considered "reasonable" by one parent might be seen as "excessive" by another. In the course of our work, we have come across children being abused in different ways in order to enforce discipline. These include:

- Forcing children to inhale the fumes of burning chilli peppers
- Using the knuckles to hit the child on the head
- Beating, hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, pinching or pushing
- Burning with cigarettes, hot water, oil or hot iron
- Pulling the earlobes till they hurt
- Making a child perform excessive physical labour
- Rubbing hot pepper in eyes/genitals
- Cutting off children's hair with sharp objects like broken bottles
- Withholding food
- Tying up a child with rope or electrical wire
- Physical tasks such as carrying heavy objects/keeping arms raised for an extended period of time
- Forcing a child to take a cold bath or shower in cold weather

b. Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS)

SBS is the term used to describe an injury incurred by a baby, toddler or small child as a result of being shaken violently. Since babies are very fragile, being shaken as few as three times and can cause brain damage, blindness, paralysis and speech and learning disorders. One in four victims of SBS dies as direct result.

SBS most commonly occurs when a caregiver is feeling stressed or frustrated, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and can be triggered by a trivial incident such as the baby crying.



c. Force-feeding a Child

Force feeding babies and children can occur in a number of ways. In many African cultures, when parents feel that babies are not eating enough, or are not getting enough nutrition, the babies can be force fed. This occurs when a baby is held down and baby's mouth is forced opened while liquid food is poured in. At times, the baby's nostrils are held so that when the baby gasps for breath, the food goes down the oesophagus.

This form of feeding has been known to cause serious harm, injury, even death to children. Harm can occur when the food goes down the wind-pipe, instead of the oesophagus. This can lead to a build of liquid in the child's lungs leading to serious injury, even death.

Case Study One

A Ghanaian nurse Gloria Dwomoh was jailed for three years for force-feeding her baby causing her serious injury and death. The baby developed pneumonia after food got into her lungs. Gloria Dwomoh claimed this was a perfect way of feeding babies as she had seen it done many times in her country, Ghana.

Source: www.dailymail.co.uk

Force feeding can also occur when children are forced to eat food they do not wish to eat, with serious consequences for disobedience or non-compliance including various forms of corporal punishments.

d. Forcing Children to Fast

Another common form of physical abuse in our community is the practice of forcing children to fast, or denying children food as a form of punishment. While fasting is a core element of Islam and many African Pentecostal churches, it is wrong to force children to fast, especially if they are a young age. Being denied food and drink especially on a regular basis is also seen as a form of child neglect.

e. Child Trafficking and Physical Abuse

Children trafficked into the UK for various forms of exploitation also experience a multitude of abuse, especially physical abuse and exploitation. Many victims we have worked with at AFRUCA are made to work excessive long hours, carrying out tasks that are too harsh for someone their age. Many are beaten frequently and very harshly for failing to complete tasks given to them, or for disobedience. Others are made to undertake very painful corporal punishments and stress positions including carrying a heavy object, bending down and raising a leg up, as well as kneeling down on a hard surface for an extended period of time.

You can read more about Child Trafficking in our publication: **"What is Child Trafficking?"**

5 Physical Abuse linked to Culture and Religion



As mentioned above, many of the practices within the African community which constitute physical abuse are linked to religious and cultural practices. Most of these practices are done for the benefit of the child, although in our view, they do lead to abuse and harm. Some of the practices are viewed as an important rite of passage or are linked to mythology. They include:

f. Facial Scarification and Tribal Marks

This is the practice of cutting scars on parts of the face. Although this is a practice that is dying-out, it involves using sharp objects to cut the child thereby inflicting pain. The rationale for tribal or facial marks is to identify a person's family lineage or ethnic group and for spiritual protection. It is not unusual to have members of the same tribal groups with similar marks on their faces. Once the cuts are made, they cannot be removed, making them permanent. Many people see tribal marks as a form of facial disfigurement. Children with facial marks are bullied and taunted as a result.

g. Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Female Genital Cutting or Female Circumcision involves the removal of a girl's external genitals. FGM can occur when the girl is still a baby, during childhood, adolescence, just before marriage and during pregnancy. Girls from practising communities may be at risk in the UK, although it is illegal to support or arrange for FM to be performed on a girl in this country. It is also illegal to take a girl outside the UK to have the procedure performed. However, despite the FGM Act of 2003, no one has so far been convicted of performing the procedure on children. FGM leads to a number of health complications as well as to emotional harm.

You can read more about Female Genital Mutilation in our publication: **"What is FGM?"**

h. Male Circumcision

There is a lot of debate whether male circumcision is abusive towards children although it is not illegal in the UK. This is a procedure in which the foreskin of the penis is removed. It is usually done for both religious and cultural reasons. Among many African communities in the UK, male circumcision is widely practised. Those against it claim it is harmful to children – especially because it is performed at an age when they are too young to make an informed decision. Opponents also argue that potential post-operative complications, such as excessive bleeding and infections, overshadow any possible benefits. However, in recent years, proponents have highlighted the role male circumcision can play in helping to reduce the rate of HIV infection among men.



i. **The Branding of Children as Witches or as Possessed by Evil Spirits**

The branding of children as witches is indeed a growing problem in the UK and agencies nation-wide are increasingly coming across cases involving children of African origin experiencing extreme forms of abuse following accusations of witchcraft. To be called a witch in the African context presupposes that the person is an evil person, responsible for wicked acts and causing untold suffering and distress on other people, even killing people. Once a child has been diagnosed or identified as a witch, a catalogue of abusive actions follows in response to what people believe is a way of countering evil. In the past, the following groups of children have been accused of witchcraft or of being possessed by the devil. This list is not exhaustive:

- Children with disability including autism, epilepsy, downs syndrome, dyslexia etc.
- Children living away from home in private fostering situations as well as in domestic servitude situations.
- Children living with a step parent, with one of the natural parents absent or dead.
- Children whose parents have been diagnosed as witches.
- Children who are “naughty” or have challenging behaviour.

In the UK, the branding of children as witches has been known to lead to very abusive acts on children. At least two children are known to have been tortured and killed as a result of witchcraft branding.

You can read more about the branding of children as witches in our publication: **“What is Witchcraft Abuse?”**



6 Signs of Physical Abuse



Physical abuse is one of the most apparent forms of child abuse, often leaving obvious physical marks and bruises. However, due to the skin pigmentation of many African children, abuse may not be visible or noticeable. There are other warning signs that a child is being physically abused:

In the Child

Physical Signs:

- Injuries that cannot be explained or are explained inconsistently or unconvincingly, that are on parts of the body where accidents are unlikely (e.g. thighs, back, underarms, abdomen), or that have not been treated. Injuries at different stages of healing indicate they did not all occur as the result of one accident.
- Bruising which leaves hand or finger marks or peculiar patterns (from an object).
- Burns (especially cigarette burns), scalds and bite marks.
- Hair loss.
- Wearing long-sleeved clothing out of season (in order to cover body).

Emotional/Behavioural Signs:

- Withdrawn/sad behaviour and low self-esteem/overly compliant/passive.
- Anti-social behaviour and excessive aggression.
- Nightmares and trouble sleeping (sleep walking, hallucinations).
- Show fear/mistrust in adults.
- Regular absence from school.
- Use of drugs/alcohol.
- Lack of concentration or difficulty learning.
- Eating disorders.
- Fantasies, art work or threats relating to violence.
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home.
- Chronic runaway.
- Shows a lot of fear if told will be reported to parents for misbehaving.

In the Parent/Caregiver

- Little concern for the child's well-being.
- Denies the existence of – or blames the child for – the child's problems in school or at home.
- Uses, and may ask other caregivers to use, harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves.
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome.
- Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve.
- A history of (physical) abuse as a child.
- Anger management issues or excessive need for control.



The Parent and Child:

- Rarely touch or look at each other.
- Consider their relationship entirely negative.
- State that they do not like each other.
- Ignore each other.
- Child very submissive to the parent (wants to please every time).

7 Why are Children Abused?

Parental Practices

Many parents grew up in environments where the notion of discipline and “good home training” were paramount in the upbringing of children. For this reason, many African parents believe it is not possible to discipline children without beating them or using other forms of corporal punishment. A lot of children are therefore being abused in the name of “discipline”.

Fear of the Future

Many parents who attend AFRUCA programmes express their fear that a lack of discipline will lead their children into becoming disrespectful, uncontrollable and that they will end up joining gangs and become involved in crime and criminality. We have therefore been working with parents to promote alternative ways of disciplining children without the need for physical abuse.

Cultural Practices

Many of the practices within the African community which constitute physical abuse are part of cultural or religious traditions, with the practitioners unaware of the harm they are causing. Female circumcision is an example of a custom viewed as an important rite of passage on the path to womanhood, and is linked to mythology, religion and the belief it will stop promiscuity and make females more marriageable.

Stress of living in a new country

By moving to a new country, African parents put themselves under a lot of stress which makes raising children more difficult. Problems of unemployment, poverty, migration, status, racism, housing and healthcare all lead to increased stress. As well as this, the potential loss of community support from family and friends, and language and cultural differences with their children (who have been raised in a different culture and may have different values to their parents, for example about deference to elders) makes raising children more difficult. These increased stresses and difficulties make it more likely that a parent will physically abuse their child.



Vulnerable Children

Many children become victims of physical abuse because they are vulnerable. The abuser knows they can harm the child because there is no one who can protect him or her. Some children such as those with disabilities or behavioural problems or those not living with their real parents like children in private fostering or domestic servitude situations are more vulnerable than others.

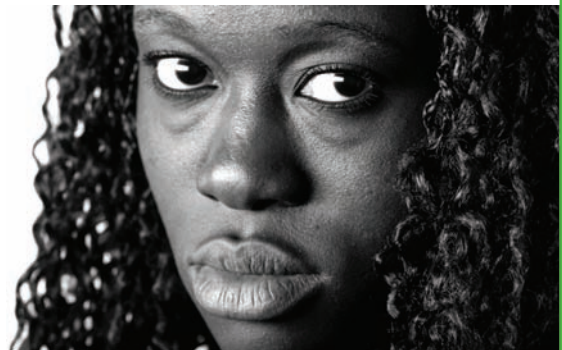
"I don't care" Attitude

Many acts of physical abuse go unnoticed or unreported in the African community because those who know about it and witness the abuse do not do anything about it. Others might think that the parent has the right to abuse because it is their child. Whether because they don't feel they have the right immigration status, or due to personal problems, many people do not want to get involved with the authorities. As a result, when they see physical abuse going on, many do not report it, and the child continues to suffer.

8 Why do Children Hide Physical Abuse?

Many, if not most child abuse cases, still go unreported. There are many reasons children do not come forward as victims of child abuse:

- A child may believe that what they are going through is normal.
- They may be scared that the abuser may hurt them or someone they care about if they come forward, or that they will be split up from their family.
- They may think that it is their fault that they are abused, the child may be too ashamed of their abuse, or fear they may not be believed or mocked.
- A child may be scared something bad will happen to their parents
- The child may not be able to, or know how to come forward, for example due to a disability or being too young.
- Since they are abused by adults, the child may fear or mistrust other adult authority figures such as teachers or police.
- They may not understand the situation they are in, or comprehend why those closest to them are hurting them.



9 What are the Effects of Physical Abuse?



The consequences of physical abuse are extremely varied in severity, duration and in how they affect the child. The effects on a child may be purely physical, but also emotional, behavioural and intellectual, and they can be both short and long term. The impacts of physical abuse will depend on factors such as the child's age, duration and severity of abuse, and the amount of care they receive.

Physical Consequences

- The most apparent consequence of physical abuse is the direct impact of the act. This could be a short-term impact, such as a bruise or a cut, or it could be long-term, such as blindness (from SBS), brain damage from a head trauma, paralysis, chronic pain, stunted growth or other disabilities. In extreme cases, physical abuse, particularly head injuries, can lead to death.
- As well as direct impacts, recent research suggests that abused children are more likely to suffer problems such as heart disease, cancer, allergies, arthritis, STDs, chronic lung disease and liver disease. This is possibly due to associated depression weakening the immune system as well as high-risk behaviour such as drinking, smoking, sexual risk-taking, drug abuse and overeating.

Intellectual Consequences

- Another indirect impact of physical abuse is on intellectual development. As well as potential suffering impaired brain development, children who suffer physical abuse often find it harder to concentrate in class and may exhibit behavioural problems (aggression, mistrust of adults, etc.) making schooling difficult. As a result, maltreated children tend to achieve lower grades than non-maltreated children.

Emotional and Behavioural Consequences

While there is no single set of behavioural patterns for children who have been physically abused, the impact on a child's psychological development is well documented.

Behavioural issues can range from being passive and withdrawn to active and aggressive. Some examples of problems associated with child abuse are:

- Low self-esteem.
- Depression and anxiety.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Attachment difficulties.
- Eating disorders.
- Poor peer relations/fear of adults.
- Self-injurious behaviour (e.g. suicide attempts).
- Difficulty in expressing and controlling emotions and understanding those of others.



- Difficulty in forming and maintaining healthy relationships and a possibility of being victimised or abused in future relationships.

Criminality and Substance Abuse

- Children who suffer physical abuse are more likely to fall into problems of juvenile delinquency (teen pregnancy, antisocial behaviour, academic underachievement, etc.) violence (especially domestic violence) and adult criminality.
- Physically abused children are also more likely to turn to drug and alcohol abuse, both in their youth and in adulthood.

The Cycle of Abuse

Research suggests about one third of all individuals who were abused as children will subject their children to maltreatment. This cycle of abuse can occur when children who experienced maltreatment learn violent behaviour and learn to consider it as normal and appropriate, therefore (re)enacting it on their own children.

10 Arguments Against Physical Chastisement

While there are many who would argue that physical chastisement or corporal punishment is good for children as it aids discipline, others like AFRUCA do not believe corporal punishment and beating children are effective strategies in child upbringing. Beating children does not work. In addition, there are many other genuine arguments against corporal punishment and physical chastisement.

- **Human Rights** - The UN, AFRUCA and other human rights organisations argue that children have the same rights as adults to protection from physical harm and physical punishment is a breach of their human rights.
- **Ineffectiveness** – Physical punishment does not motivate children to act differently as it does not teach what they should be doing, it does not teach moral lessons about right and wrong, and it does not present a reward for being good.
- **Bad lessons** – Physical punishment teaches a child that violence is an appropriate response to conflict or unwanted behaviour.
- **Emotional problems** – Corporal punishment can lead to emotion problems in children, including low self-esteem, insecurity, substance abuse, aggression and a poor relationship with parents.



- **Physical Abuse** – Finally, parents who physically punish their children (even if within legal limits) are more likely to eventually slip into abusing their child, for example if they are particularly frustrated or angry when punishing their child.
- **Physical Abuse** is not discipline. Discipline should reinforce “positive behaviour” rather than create an atmosphere of harm or fear.
- It is possible for children who grew up with violence to end up being violent towards their own children. A recent survey of over 6,000 children by the NSPCC in May 2012 concluded that children who experience or witness violence in the home are more likely to inflict serious harm on other people, carry weapons, run away from home or be excluded from school.

***“When a child hits a child, we call it aggression.
When a child hits an adult, we call it hostility.
When an adult hits an adult, we call it assault.
When an adult hits a child, we call it discipline.”***

Haim Ginott

11 Alternatives to Physical Punishment

AFRUCA suggests that parents should use alternatives to physical punishment to instil morals and discipline and encourage non-violent behaviour and self-control in children. Here are some ideas.

You can also read more about AFRUCA's Alternatives to Physical Chastisement in our publication: **“Manual on Child Protection for African Parents”**

1. Children imitate behaviour. This is called “modeling”. Be careful about the signals you are sending out to your children. Be a good example of how you want your child to behave.
2. Criticise the behaviour, not your child. The focus should be on what your child has done, not on his or her personality.
3. Never compare your child to another child – even if they are siblings.
4. “Angry discipline” is wrong discipline. Never discipline your child out of anger, frustration or other negative emotions. If you are angry because of something that has happened, take time to calm down before taking any action.
5. If someone else has made you angry, do not take it out on your child.



6. If a punishment is necessary, then removal of privileges, "time-out" or "natural consequences" all work better than beating, smacking, shouting or using abusive or demeaning language.
7. Develop a strong bond with your child. Involve them as much as possible in your life and try to be actively involved in their lives. Spend a lot of positive time together with your children.
8. Set boundaries from a very young age. Establish simple rules with clear consequences for breaking rules. Very importantly, be consistent by following through if your rules are broken. You lose control if you enforce a rule one day and ignore the rule the next.
9. Reward good behavior with praises, hugs, kisses, approval and love so it will increase.
10. Enjoy, celebrate and encourage your children. Show your children you love and are proud of them.
11. Encourage your child to think for themselves and be their own person. But be firm about behaviour you find acceptable and unacceptable.
12. Calm parents have calm children!
13. No one is too old to apologise. If you have made a genuine mistake, say sorry.
14. For younger children: ignore behaviour you don't want repeated. If it is repeated, deal with it within the boundaries you have set.
15. Spend time at the end of each day to talk to your child. Find out about their day in school, their experiences and discuss any problems they may have.
16. If you make any promises to your children, try and keep them. If you cannot, let them know why it is not possible.
17. If your child makes a disclosure or reports any abuse or bullying, make sure you deal with it as soon as possible.
18. Allow children some control-choices. Let them have some input into decisions in family affairs. They will feel more valued.
19. School-Parents evenings are important. Ensure you attend as regularly as possible. This will show your children that you care about them and their education.
20. Lastly, never ever call your child stupid, idiot or use other derogatory or demeaning language. This is the best way to break down their psyche and destroy their self-confidence.

12 Preventing Physical Abuse



Child Physical Abuse is a huge problem in our community, and everyone needs to play their part in helping to prevent it:

Parents & Caregivers

- Never discipline a child when your anger is out of control - Try and take time out to calm down and regain control.
- Discipline Effectively – Some children can be loud, unruly and destructive and will inevitably irritate their parents, but it is better to discipline through denial of privileges than violence.
- Educate yourself about raising techniques and what you should expect from them.
- Participate in your child's activities and get to know their friends. Be aware of changes in your child's behaviour or attitude and inquire into it.
- Ask questions and listen to your children - If they say they don't want to be with someone this could be a red flag.
- Get help – Learn more about child abuse and how to protect your child from abuse. Organisations like AFRUCA run regular child protection training courses for African parents which you might find useful.
- Culture and religion must never be a reason to abuse your child. In the UK, child abuse is child abuse and parents will face the wrath of the law for causing harm to their children.





Organisations

- Healthcare providers – Prenatal coaching to encourage bonds between parent and child; home health visitation to provide support, education and community links; support programs for parents of children with special needs.
- Social Service Agencies – Parent education services and aid programs; crisis and emergency services; treatment for abused children to prevent the “cycle of violence”.
- Schools – Provide children with the skills to cope with childhood and adolescence; personal safety programs; support for families with children with special needs.
- Faith Organisations – Training religious leaders and members of the congregation in child protection and implementing a good Child Protection Policy will help. Denounce fake pastors who promise fake deliverance sessions which might involve harming children; offer respite care for congregation members who need support to help relieve stress.
- Employer – Flexible work schedules and other “family friendly” policies; maternity/paternity leave policies; employer-supported child care.

Wider Community

- Set up clubs, organisations, social and recreational opportunities, etc. to create strong community support networks for isolated parents.
- Be vigilant to detect the signs of physical abuse and report it.

13 Protecting Children: What to do?

1. Know the different forms of child abuse

- Ensure you know the meaning of “**Child Abuse**”
- Know the difference between physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect.

2. Know the indicators of physical abuse

- Ensure you can tell the different signs of physical abuse.
- If you see a child who has the signs of abuse, ensure you are able to identify them.
- Ensure you can tell if a child you know demonstrates the effects of physical abuse.



3. Know what to do if a child is at risk

- Know who to contact to report cases of child abuse.
- Know how to contact your local authority children's services or the police on 999.
- Know how to contact AFRUCA for help. Our contact details are on the back of this booklet.

4. Engage others to speak out against child abuse

- Ensure you speak with your Pastor or Imam about child abuse so they can help to raise the issue and speak out against it in the community.

14 Reporting Child Abuse

If you suspect someone is abusing a child

Do not:

- Investigate.
- Ask leading questions (questions which suggest an answer - "that man hit you, didn't he?").
- Make promises.
- Notify the parent or caregiver.

Do:

- Provide a safe environment – be comforting, welcoming and a good listener.
- Tell the child it was not his/her fault.
- Be supportive and not judgmental.
- Know your limits.
- Tell the truth and not make promises.
- Report it.





Reporting Child Abuse

- In the first instance contact your local authority children's services department. You can reach them by calling the Local Authority switchboard number which is on your Council Tax bill or in Yellow Pages.
- When you are put through to Children's Services, state that you want to make a Child Abuse "referral". This simply means you want to report a case of child abuse.
- You will be asked to provide further details about the case you are reporting. Please note that you do not have to provide your personal details.
- The local authority is obliged to make an investigation. If you do not see any changes in the case you have reported, please follow up with another phone call.
- You can also call the police on 999 to report a case of child abuse.
- If nothing happens, you can contact AFRUCA and we will pursue the case until action is taken. Our contact details are at the back of this publication.

15 AFRUCA: Our Work to Protect Children

Child Protection Training and Awareness African Parents Project

At AFRUCA, we are very concerned about the number of African children being removed from their families due to allegations of significant harm. We work with parents to overcome the problems they are facing in bringing up their children and give them the knowledge to protect their children from abuse and harm. The Child Protection Training and Support Programme for African Parents Project has been established to work with African parents in London and in the North of England.

We want to help improve the quality of life of African families in these cities. We do this by promoting positive parenting skills, providing knowledge regarding child protection, offering support to parents with children in care and providing information about various issues that affect African communities in the UK.



Our project works with parents in four ways:

Training Courses:

We hold informative workshops to equip parents with a basic knowledge of child protection and related rules and regulations. Cultural practices, religious beliefs and other sources of assistance if needed.

Advice Road Shows:

We run local advice surgeries to enable parents who need one-to-one advice on child protection or parenting to come to us for advice and help. We will also signpost parents to other sources of assistance if needed.

Support:

We work with parents who have children presently in the care system or have a child protection plan to ensure they can get the best outcomes for their children.

Information:

We produce and disseminate publications that deal with different aspects of safeguarding children in the African community and provide useful information about child protection.

SUPPORT OUR WORK: DONATE TO AFRUCA

Your support will enable us to make plans for long term work to address the abuse and exploitation of African children in the UK and in Africa.

DONATIONS ARE MADE SECURELY ONLINE AT

WWW.JUSTGIVING.ORG/AFRUCA

YOU CAN ALSO DONATE BY TEXT

Just text our code AFRU01 + the amount you wish to give, to 70070. It's Quick, Easy and Free on all networks!

For more information about our work, please visit our website at:

www.afruca.org

16 Useful Contacts



AFRUCA

Head Office

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Fax: +44 (0) 844 660 8661
Email: info@afruca.org
Website: www.afruca.org

Barnardos

Website: <http://www.barnardos.org.uk/>

Bullying UK

Website: www.bullying.co.uk

Childline – A help line for parents and children to go to when in need of help and advice

Tel: 0800 1111
Website: <http://www.childline.org.uk/pages/home.aspx>

Department for Education

Tel: 0870 000 2288
Email: info@dfes.gov.uk
Website: <http://www.dfe.gov.uk/>

NSPCC – An instant help line providing a confidential and informative service

Tel: 0808 800 5000
Website: <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

Samaritans – Providing confidential emotional support for those feeling despairing or suicidal

Tel: 08457 90 90 90
Email: jo@samaritans.org
Website: <http://www.samaritans.org/>

Other publications in this series



1. What is Child Abuse?
2. What is Child Trafficking?
3. What is Private Fostering?
4. What is Female Genital Mutilation?
5. What is Witchcraft Abuse?
6. What is Physical Abuse?
7. What is Sexual Abuse?
8. What is Emotional Abuse?

Our safeguarding African Children in the UK series of publications are produced to help raise awareness among the UK African community about different forms of child abuse and what they can do to help address these.

This publication can also be downloaded from our website at: www.afruca.org



Africans Unite Against Child Abuse

Promoting the Rights and Welfare of African Children

Our Safeguarding African Children in the UK Series of publications includes:

- 1 What is Child Abuse?
- 2 What is Child Trafficking?
- 3 What is Private Fostering?
- 4 What is Female Genital Mutilation?
- 5 What is Witchcraft Abuse?
- 6 What is Physical Abuse?
- 7 What is Sexual Abuse?
- 8 What is Emotional Abuse?



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