



Strategic Partnership Boards
SAFETY SAFEGUARDING WELLBEING



Bitesize video guide: Emotional Harm

Hello, my name is Selasie Bulmuo, and I am a Social Worker in the Children with Disabilities team in Children Social Care.

I am going to talk to you about emotional harm.

Emotional harm is sometimes called psychological harm. It is often seen by practitioners as less serious to a child than physical or sexual harm.

It can happen, because unlike physical harm for example, emotional harm leaves no visible scars and consequently becomes harder to identify.

Emotional harm however is just as serious as other forms of abuse and can have a much more profound effect on a child, both in the immediate and long term.

When emotional harm is experienced, the children are hurting on the inside, so it can be difficult for family members or professionals to notice or it's impact can be minimized.

Emotional harm takes various forms and can come in a variety of context for example

- It could be a child who is repeatedly told that they are not good enough, that they are stupid, fat, or lazy or where the child is being blamed for the problems or caring within the family
- It can be experienced through witnessing domestic violence or
- In situations where the parents or carer is unable or unwilling to understand to the emotional needs of their child
- Emotional harm is also experienced when a child suffers other forms of abuse.

Their experience to emotional harm may lead to failure to thrive in babies or an older child may present poor self esteem as very angry or aggressive. The child may find it hard to form relationships and my even

cause a child to engage in very extreme behaviour such as fire setting or animal cruelty.

Children experiencing emotional harm can experience delayed development and increased risk of developing difficulties later on in life such as alcohol or drug abuse, depression, suicide or problems maintaining a stable life.

Recognizing emotional harm requires practitioners to be child centred where the focus is on the child and their needs are maintained throughout. This doesn't mean listening only to the child's voice, it also involves observing their behaviour and their parents' interaction with them, to understand the effects on the child.

Practitioners also need to be mindful that seemingly identical behaviour by parents or carers can affect individual children differently, so they need to consider the impact of emotional abuse on each child in the family separately and plan their interventions accordingly.

Your 3 messages to take away are:

1. Emotional harm is often not recognized as serious as physical harm, but it is and can have a profound effect on a child's development.
2. It can be difficult to recognize emotional harm, so it is very important not only to listen to what the children are telling you, but
3. Observe their behaviour and interactions with their parents and carers. Some examples include being ignored, not feeling loved or cared about, being expected to provide emotional support to the parents or the parent not being able to put their child's needs before their own.

Thanks for watching and goodbye.