

## Fabricated or Induced Illness

### Definition

[Fabricated or Induced Illness](#) is a condition whereby a child suffers harm through the deliberate action of their main carer and which is attributed by the adult to another cause.

It is a relatively rare but potentially lethal form of abuse

Concerns will be raised for a small number of children when it is considered that the health or development of a child is likely to be significantly impaired or further impaired by the actions of a carer or carers having fabricated or induced illness.

It is important that the focus is on the outcomes or impact on the child's health and development and not initially on attempts to diagnose the parent or carer.

Investigation of Fabricated and Induced Illness and assessment of significant harm to a child falls under statutory framework provided by Working Together 2018 and Safeguarding Children in whom illness is fabricated or induced

### Risks

There are four main ways of the carer fabricating or inducing illness in a child:

- Fabrication of signs and symptoms, including fabrication of past medical history;
- Fabrication of signs and symptoms and falsification of hospital charts, records, letters and documents and specimens of bodily fluids;
- Exaggeration of symptoms/real problems. This may lead to unnecessary investigations, treatment and/or special equipment being provided;
- Induction of illness by a variety of means.

The above four methods are not mutually exclusive.

Harm to the child may be caused through unnecessary or invasive medical treatment, which may be harmful and possibly dangerous, based on symptoms that are falsely described or deliberately manufactured by the carer, and lack independent corroboration.

Concern may be raised at the possibility of a child suffering significant harm as a result of having illness fabricated or induced by their carer.

### Spectrum of "Harm"

Some children may be presented for medical examination by their parent/carers when they are well. This can be due to overanxious parents/carers, or a lack of understanding. Support may be required in order that the parents/carers are able to interpret and respond appropriately to childhood illness.

A key professional task is to distinguish between the overanxious parent or carer who may be responding in an understandable way to a very sick child and those parent/carers who exhibit abnormal behaviour or have an unexpected response to a diagnosis.

For a small number of children, concerns will be raised when it is considered that the health or development of the child is likely to be significantly impaired or further impaired by action of the parents or carers having fabricated or induced illness.

### Indicators

- Reported symptoms and signs found on examination are not explained by any medical condition from which the child may be suffering; or
- Physical examination and results of medical investigations do not explain reported symptoms and signs; or
- There is an inexplicably poor response to prescribed medication and other treatment; or
- New symptoms are reported on resolution of previous ones; or
- Reported symptoms and found signs are not observed in the absence of the carer; or
- Over time the child is repeatedly presented with a range of symptoms to different professionals in a variety of settings; or
- The child's normal, daily life activities, such as attending school, are being curtailed beyond that which might be expected from any known medical disorder from which the child is known to suffer;
- Excessive use of any medical website or alternative opinions.

There may be a number of explanations for these circumstances and each requires careful consideration and review.

Concerns may also be raised by other professionals who are working with the child and/or parents/carers who may notice discrepancies between reported and observed medical conditions, such as the incidence of fits.

Professionals who have identified concerns about a child's health should discuss these with the child's GP or consultant paediatrician responsible for the child's care.

### Children with Chronic illness or Disability

- Children with a known chronic illness may be more at risk of professionals not recognising where illness is fabricated, and professionals should not assume that all reported symptoms in such a child are due to the chronic illness, and may indicate harm;
- Children with a known disability may be more at risk of professionals not recognising where illness is fabricated, and professionals should not assume

that all reported symptoms in such a child are due to the disability and may indicate harm.

### **Protection and Action to be Taken**

Should you become concerned about a cadet in your unit then it is important that you follow your Force and National Safeguarding Policy and Referral Process so that the concerns can be investigated.

### **Allegations against staff or volunteers**

If the parents / carers are working with children in as a cadet leader then the Force and national safeguarding policy and referral process must be followed in respect of dealing with this situation.