

1 minute guide: Child abuse linked to faiths and beliefs including witchcraft.

What is Child Abuse linked to Faiths and Beliefs?

Abuse linked to faith or belief is where concerns for a child's welfare have been identified, and could be caused by, a belief in witchcraft, spirit or demonic possession, ritual or satanic abuse features; or when practices linked to faith or belief are harmful to a child.

Any abuse that takes place against those who are branded (or labelled) either as a witch or as having been possessed by an evil spirit is unacceptable. Significant harm (including murder) can occur because of concerted efforts to 'excise' or 'deliver' evil from a child (or vulnerable adult). An example of this is when Victoria Climbié was beaten (by family and a religious minister), starved, neglected and eventually died at the hands of those adults who were supposed to be caring for her.

Signs & Indicators - The signs of abuse linked to faith or belief are like other forms of child abuse. However, children abused for the purpose of removal of demons or possessions often display 'particular and significant' signs of abuse either physically, in their presentation or their behaviours:

- physical injuries, such as bruises or burns (including historical injuries/scaring)
- a child reporting that they are or have been accused of being 'evil', and/or that they are having the 'devil beaten out of them'
- the child or family may use words such as 'kindoki', 'djinn', 'juju' or 'voodoo' - all of which refer to spiritual beliefs.
- a child becoming noticeably confused, withdrawn, disorientated or isolated and appearing alone amongst other children.
- a child's personal care deteriorating (eg rapid loss of weight, being hungry, turning up to school without food or lunch money, being unkempt with dirty clothes).
- it may be evident that the child's parent or carer does not have a close bond with the child
- a child's attendance at school or college becomes irregular or there is a deterioration in a child's performance.
- a child is taken out of a school altogether without another school place having been arranged
- Wearing unusual jewellery/items or in possession of strange ornaments/scripts.

What are the Impacts? - A child might be abused physically, emotionally sexually or through neglect, the child might suffer all types of abuse and could lead to death.

Action to be Taken - Where there are concerns about abuse linked to witchcraft and spirit possession, for the welfare and safety of the child or young person the settings policy should be followed and a referral to the Children's Services should be made.

Good Practice Guidance - teaching children to show respect for religions and cultures in the local community and wider world; using British values to inform your curriculum; support children to recognise and understand different faiths by teaching about them - reading books, visiting religious buildings,



marking special occasions through the year and learning about faith in the local community and wider world.

Useful Links: [Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

[Child abuse linked to faith or belief: national action plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Child abuse linked to faith or belief | Metropolitan Police](#)

