



CHILD ABUSE LINKED TO BELIEF IN 'POSSESSION' OR 'WITCHCRAFT' April 2008

1. Belief in 'possession' or 'witchcraft' is widespread and not confined to particular countries, cultures, religions or immigrant communities.
2. The children or young people involved can suffer damage to their physical and mental health, capacity to learn, ability to form relationships and self esteem.
3. Children and young people may be perceived as being different or difficult, and this attributed to them being 'possessed' or involved in 'witchcraft'. Attempts to 'exorcise' the child or young person may be made and these may involve severe beatings, burning, starvation, cutting or stabbing and/or isolation. This usually occurs within the child or young person's household.
4. Agencies should look for possible indicators and apply basic safeguarding principles including information sharing across agencies, in order to be able to identify children and young people at risk of this type of abuse.