

Further Information:

[Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Safeguarding Children in Whom Illness is Fabricated or Induced](#)

[RCPCH FII: A Practical Guide for Paediatricians](#)

[Safeguarding Children in whom Illness is Fabricated or Induced \(DHSC, 2008\)](#)

[Supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children HM Government, 2008\)](#)

Context

The medical histories of this group of children may be extensive by the time suspected abuse is identified.

International research findings suggest that up to 10% of these children die and about 50% experience long-term consequent morbidity. One study found that 6% of these children died as a direct result of abuse. A further 12% required intensive care and an additional 35% suffered major physical illness, again as a result of abuse.

Information Gathering

Information gathered from the child's records and tabulated in the form of a chronology is key to confirming whether the situation is abusive.

The documentation of facts and evidence in this format often reveals a startling picture. Getting the facts agreed and seeing the overall pattern is crucial. Multi-agency consultation will be an important part of the process. If there is suspicion that staff, carers/volunteers are responsible, refer to the

[RLSCP procedures online](#)

What is it?

Fabricated or induced illness (FII) is a rare form of child abuse. It happens when a parent or carer, usually the child's biological mother, exaggerates or deliberately causes symptoms of illness in the child. There are three main ways (not exclusive) and include:

- ◆ Fabrication of signs and symptoms (may include fabrication of past medical history);
- ◆ Falsification of hospital charts and records, and specimens of bodily fluids (may include falsification of letters and documents);
- ◆ Induction of illness by a variety of means

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/fabricated-or-induced-illness/>

Signs

- ◆ History of Unexplained illnesses or deaths or multiple surgery in parents or siblings of the family.
- ◆ An inexplicably poor response to prescribed medication and other treatment.
- ◆ Relationship problems between the child's parents are common
- ◆ More indicators are covered in:

[NICE Guidance: Child Maltreatment](#)

Types of FII Abuse

- ◆ lying about child's symptoms
- ◆ deliberately contaminating or manipulating clinical tests to fake evidence of illness.
 - ◆ poisoning child with unsuitable and non-prescribed medicine
 - ◆ infecting child's wounds or injecting the child with dirt
 - ◆ inducing unconsciousness by suffocating child
 - ◆ not treating or mistreating genuine conditions so they get worse
 - ◆ withholding food, resulting in the child failing to develop physically and mentally

Why does it happen?

It's not fully understood why some parents or carers fabricate or induce illness in their child, however it is likely the parent or carer will have a history of previous traumatic experiences.

They may:

- ◆ Have been victims of abuse during their own childhood;
- ◆ Have a history of [self-harm](#) or drug or [alcohol misuse](#);
- ◆ Have experienced the death of another child, or a difficult pregnancy;
- ◆ Have a personality disorder (in particular, a [borderline personality disorder](#))