Child abuse linked to Faith and Belief

Certain kinds of child abuse are linked to faith or belief. This includes: belief in concepts of witchcraft and spirit possession, demons or the devil acting through children or leading them astray (traditionally seen in some Christian beliefs), the evil eye or djinns (traditionally known in some Islamic faith contexts) and dakini (in the Hindu context). Faith abuse includes all forms of child abuse including murder.

The University of Brighton ITE Partnership is committed to ensuring trainees are aware of the issue of child abuse linked to faith and belief and are able to act upon their safeguarding duties as members of school and setting communities.

These beliefs are not confined to one faith, nationality or ethnic community. Examples have been recorded worldwide among Europeans, Africans, Asians and elsewhere as well as in Christian, Muslim, Hindu and pagan faiths among others.

Not all those who believe in witchcraft or spirit possession harm children. Data on numbers of known cases suggests that only a small minority of people with such beliefs go on to abuse children.

Perpetrators may perversely believe that they are doing the right thing. For example, they may believe that the child is the victim of a supernatural force and the abuse is therefore justified by perpetrators as a means of saving the child.

Explore the following links to find out more.

- Every Child Journal - article on tackling child abuse linked to faith and belief.
- Hull City Council - information sheet on child abuse linked to faith or belief.
- Africans Unite against Child Abuse - slides from a training seminar entitled 'Child Abuse linked to a Belief in Witchcraft and Juju.'

A copy of the government national action plan can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-action-plan-to-tackle-child-abuse-linked-to-faith-or-belief

If you are concerned that a child you work with might be a victim or exposed to the dangers of abuse linked to faith or belief you must follow the safeguarding procedures at your training school.