

# FABRICATED and INDUCED ILLNESS (FII)

## Background

Fabricated or induced illness (FII) is a relatively rare form of child abuse. It occurs when a parent or carer, usually the child's biological mother, exaggerates or deliberately causes symptoms of illness in the child. In fabricated or induced illness, the parent may present the child as ill when they are healthy, deliberately induce symptoms of illness, manipulate test results, or exaggerate or lie about symptoms. By their nature these types of cases require expert input from a range of disciplines and are challenging for professionals to work with.

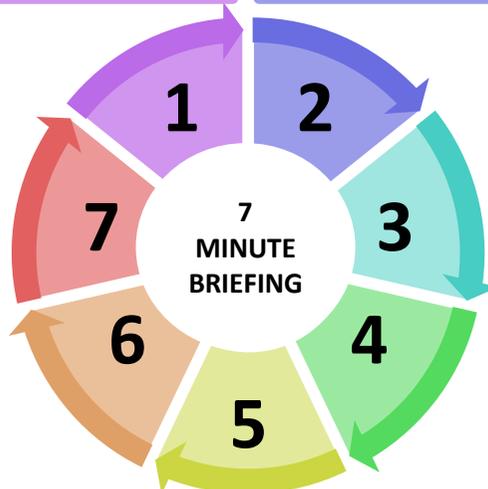
## Why it matters

International research findings suggest that up to 10% of these children die and about 50% experience long-term consequent morbidity. One study found that 8 out of 128 (6%) children died as a direct result of abuse. A further 15 (12%) required intensive care and an additional 45 (35%) suffered major physical illness, again as a result of abuse. It is essential that all professionals who meet children showing signs of illness that may be being induced or fabricated are aware that this form of abuse exists and know what to do if they are worried about a child.

## What to do:

All professionals should:

- Be alert to potential indicators of FII
- Be alert to the risk of harm which abusers may pose to children in whom illness is being fabricated or induced
- Share & help to analyse information so that an informed assessment can be made of children's needs
- Contribute to actions & services are required to safeguard & promote the child's welfare
- Assist in providing relevant evidence in criminal/civil proceedings



## Information

The medical histories of this group of children are likely to have started early and may have become extensive by the time the suspected abuse is identified. They may have been seen at many hospitals in different geographical areas and by several professionals. They may also have been seen in centres for alternative medicine or by private practitioners. Some may suffer from a verified acute or chronic medical condition.

Information gathered from the child's records & tabulated in the form of a chronology is key to confirming whether the situation is abusive. The documentation of facts & evidence in this format often reveals a startling picture. Getting the facts agreed and seeing the overall pattern is crucial.

## Some warning 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

[1 Guidance | Child maltreatment: when to suspect maltreatment in under 18s | Guidance | NICE](#)

There are three main ways of the carer fabricating or inducing illness in a child. These are not mutually exclusive and include:

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

[Overview - Fabricated or induced illness - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)