

7. ADVICE/SUPPORT/DUSCUSSION/ESCALATION

Speak with your organisation's safeguarding team in the first instance/ICB Designate Safeguarding Team Tel: [07730 318300](tel:07730318300) (Mon to Fri 9am to 4.30pm)
Email: nhsbsolicb.safeguarding@nhs.net

6. RESOURCES & KEY THOUGHTS

- Use **Exploitation screening** tools [Birmingham](#) (child), [Solihull](#) (All age). Children at risk of exploitation will be discussed at Multi-Agency Adult Child Exploitation Meetings (MAACE) (Solihull) and Disruption Planning Meetings (DPMs) (Birmingham).
- FIB form to be used to share information /intelligence with the police, this information can be used to assist with **disruption**
- **Every Contact Counts**, be **professionally curious**, remember **'reachable moments'** and the **'voice of the child /adult'** to empower victims and understand their **lived experience**
- It is important to ensure there is no **'adultification bias'**; whereby children who are victims of exploitation can be perceived as having more adult understanding of the consequences of their actions/being able to protect themselves.
- Explore **'intersectionality' /'identity' of victims, within your safeguarding practice**; exploitation is not gendered/race- related violence. Consider victims **'intersecting identities'** and lived experiences relating to class, race/ethnicity, gender, age, familial factors, social/health inequalities, diversity/oppression and how they impact victims and may make them vulnerable to abuse
- remember the importance of **partner agency** working e.g. with schools and Social Workers
- Have a **trauma informed response** when working with victims of exploitation.

5. VULNERABILITY FACTORS in Adults and Children

The following are factors which increase risk of being exploited:

- Neurodiversity i.e. those who have ADHD, ASD
- Poor mental health
- Children in Care
- Homelessness
- Poverty/unemployment
- Domestic abuse in the home/familial abuse/problems at home
- Previous abuse
- Dysfunctional family
- Learning disabilities/Learning difficulties
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Children with low self-esteem, being bullied at school, having no friends
- Children not attending school/have been excluded
- Socially isolated/vulnerable, new to country adults/children/no recourse to public funds.

4. SIGNS OF EXPLOITATION

Missing episodes • carrying weapons • unexplained injuries • excessive receipt of calls or texts • self-harm or changes in emotional wellbeing • general health complaints, such as abdominal pain, urinary infections, headaches, injuries • experimenting with/addiction or use of drugs and alcohol • unexplained acquisition of money, phones or clothing • appearing nervous, scared, evasive or secretive • evidence of criminal behaviour /change in general behaviour • Sexual health and behaviour concerns • Absent from school/not attending school • Emotional Health needs • mental health needs • Gang affiliation and involvement in crime • Use of technology and sexual bullying • Distrust of professionals • Significant decline in school performance • Leaving home/care without explanation • Relationships with older controlling individuals/ gang association • aggressive • Parental concerns

1. WHAT IS EXPLOITATION?

Exploitation affects **children and adults** from any social, ethnic and economic background, has serious long-term effects on every aspect of their lives and may be life threatening. Victims who are exploited face huge risks to their physical, psychological and emotional health. This is an issue of **abuse**, not a lifestyle choice and the individuals who are exploited are always victims. Exploitation occurs when a child or adult is groomed or coerced into an exploitative situation through the use of exploitative relationships. These relationships are characterised by an imbalance of power that enables the perpetrator to coerce, control, manipulate and deceive the victim. The use of controlling behaviours keep the victim in a dependent position. Children/adults often do not realise they are victims and the activity can appear consensual; however, it is important to remember that this is not a 'choice'.



Birmingham and Solihull

2. TYPES OF EXPLOITATION

Criminal exploitation is where criminals target vulnerable individuals, to carry out forced criminality/activity, this can include county lines, cuckooing/home invasion (adults), drug dealing/hiding weapons for other gang members. Victims may be forced to ingest/internally conceal drugs ("plugging").

Child sexual exploitation, is where children may be given things, such as gifts, drugs, money, status and affection in exchange for performing sexual activities, sometimes they are not given anything in return. They are often tricked into believing that they are in a loving and consensual relationship. This is called **grooming** – they may trust their abuser and not understand that they are being abused.

Other types of exploitation include **Human trafficking, Modern Day slavery and forced labour**. Contextual safeguarding seeks to identify and respond to harm and abuse posed to young people outside their home, either from adults or other young people. Children and adults who are exploited may also be used to 'find' and coerce others to join groups.

3. HOW ARE PEOPLE EXPLOITED?

Gangs/organised crime groups/networks/wide range of offenders 'recruit' and exploit children and vulnerable adults. This can be done **online** as well as **in person**. Children are seen as an easily controlled, 'cheap' resource that often fall into some form of **debt bondage** resulting in violence and assaults. Victims are often used to operate phone lines (County Lines) in connection with, and delivery of illegal drugs.

