



Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent
Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board

Abuse must stop

Adult Sexual Abuse & Exploitation

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Document			
Date Created	November 2025	Address	SSASPB Team Staffordshire Place 1
Version	1		
Status			

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance about the different ways in which adult sexual abuse and exploitation can occur and the steps that can be taken to mitigate or prevent further abuse.

Adult sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where an individual or group take advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive the adult for their own benefit. It is important to note that the adult may be exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual due to the effects of grooming and coercion.

Types of sexual abuse and exploitation

The following are examples of different types of sexual abuse or exploitation. Fact Sheets have been produced for some of the types with more detailed information. Those that have factsheets are indicated.

- rape
- sexual assault
- being tricked or manipulated into having sex or performing a sexual act
- being trafficked into, out of, or around the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation (this could include sex work)
- being forced to take part in or watch pornography
- being victim to image based sexual abuse (when someone takes, shares, or threatens to share sexually explicit images or videos of a person without their knowledge and consent and with the aim of causing distress or harm.) May also be referred to as revenge porn, sextortion or intimate image abuse.
- Grooming – Fact Sheet
- Forced marriage – Fact Sheet
- Predatory marriage – Fact sheet
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) – Fact sheet

It is also important to note that the Sexual Offences Act (SOA) 2003 introduces specific offences relating to workers within the care sector:

The SOA makes it illegal for a care worker to:

- 1) Have any sexual activity with someone who has a mental disorder.
- 2) Cause or incite anyone with a mental disorder to have sexual activity
- 3) Have any sexual activity in the presence of someone with a mental disorder
- 4) Cause a person with a mental disorder to watch a sexual act.

A "relationship of care" exists where one person has a mental disorder and another person provides care. This applies to people working in both a paid and unpaid basis.

The offences in this Act apply whether or not the adult with care and support needs appears to consent, and whether or not have the capacity to consent.

Mental capacity:

All adults have a legal right to make decision regarding their own life, except where there is clear evidence that they lack capacity to make a specific decision.

However, it must be emphasised that Section 2.11 of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 Code of Practice states that there may be cause for concern if somebody:

- Repeatedly makes unwise decisions that put them at significant risk of harm or exploitation.
- Makes a particular unwise decision that is obviously irrational or out of character.

These factors do not necessarily mean that the person lacks capacity, but there may need to be further assessment of the situation.

Refer to the fact sheet on mental capacity and sexual relations for further information

Who Presents a Risk?

Anybody could be a perpetrator of sexual exploitation, rape or sexual assault. Commonly, perpetrators include:

- partners - boyfriends or girlfriends or husbands or wives
- family members
- gang members (organised traffickers or drug gangs)
- drug and alcohol abusers
- persons in position of trust, including landlords
- Other adults with care and support needs - (The Frank and Elsie Safeguarding Adult Review published in 2023 focussed on the response to risk presented by sexual behaviours in nursing/care home settings – the report and associated resources is available [here](#)).

Potential indicators of sexual abuse

- Bruising, particularly to the thighs, buttocks and upper arms and marks on the neck
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- Bleeding, pain or itching in the genital area
- Unusual difficulty in walking or sitting
- Foreign bodies in genital or rectal openings infections,
- Unexplained genital discharge, or sexually transmitted infections
- Pregnancy in a woman who is unable to consent to sexual intercourse
- The uncharacteristic use of explicit sexual language or
- Significant changes in sexual behaviour or attitude
- Incontinence not related to any medical diagnosis
- Self-harming
- Poor concentration, withdrawal, sleep disturbance
- Excessive fear/apprehension of, or withdrawal from, relationships
- Fear of receiving help with personal care
- Reluctance to be alone with a particular person.

Potential indicators of sexual exploitation

- Unexplained money, gifts or lifestyle changes.
- Missing episodes/changes in routine.
- Behavioural changes – sudden changes in behaviours or personality (for example the person becomes increasingly withdrawn, aggressive or chaotic). The person may also be intimidated or fearful around certain people or situations.
- Sexual health concerns – repeated sexually transmitted infections, pregnancies or miscarriages, inappropriate or sexually risky behaviour.
- Physical signs – injuries from physical or sexual assault, evidence of physical restraint.

Sexual exploitation typically involves **coercion, manipulation, threats and an imbalance of power**. It may not always involve physical contact.

What to do if you are concerned that an adult has been sexually abused or exploited?

Adult social care is not an emergency services - always call 999 if there is an emergency or immediate threat of abuse taking place.

If a criminal offence has occurred, or may occur, contact the Police force where the crime has occurred/may occur via 101 or online reporting mechanisms.

Secure any physical evidence such as clothing, bed linen.

Refer any safeguarding concerns to the Local Authority for the area where the abuse took place by phoning the relevant contact centre;

If the abuse occurred in Stoke-on-Trent – Tel: **0800 561 0015**
(available during standard office hours)

To report concerns overnight, over a weekend or on a bank holiday, please contact the Emergency Duty Service on Tel: **01782 238770**

If the abuse occurred in Staffordshire – Tel: **0345 604 2719** **(available during standard office hours)**

To report concerns overnight, over a weekend or on a bank holiday, please contact the Emergency Duty Service on Tel: **0345 604 2886**

Key agencies and possible interventions

Staffordshire Police

If an adult is in immediate danger call 999 immediately or contact 101 for police non-emergencies.

Staffordshire Police have a team that includes specially trained officers to deal with complaints of sexual assault and rape.

The **Sexual Assault and Rape Centre** (SARC) covers Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and provides specialist support and medical assessment for victims of sexual abuse.

Tel: 0800 970 0372 or website <https://grangepark.org.uk/>

NHS Services

You can [find your local GP](#) by entering your post code on the NHS website.

If you are worried about sexually transmitted infections (STI's) or pregnancy, [find sexual health services via the NHS website](#)

Independent Sexual Violence Advisors – specially trained advisors who give practical and emotional support to adults, children and their families.

ISVA services are available via: Survive Sexual Assault & Abuse Service (see below).

24/7 Rape and Sexual Support line – Provides free, specialist and confidential support for victims of sexual violence or abuse. Delivered by Rape Crisis England and Wales.

Tel: 0808 500 2222

New Era – Domestic abuse service operating across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

Confidential helpline for victims – 0300 303 3778 (available 24 hours/7 days a week)

Confidential helpline for perpetrators – 0300 373 5772 (standard office hours)

<https://www.new-era.uk/>

Survive – Staffordshire Women’s Aid – Offers a free, non-judgmental and confidential service for adults, children over the age of 4, and close family members/significant others who have been affected by sexual assault or abuse at any point during their lives.

Tel: 0300 330 5959

<https://staffordshirewomensaid.org/>

If someone has posted sexual images or videos of the adult online, the alleged source of risk can be reported to the website or social media platform alongside a request for the content to be removed.

The website [Report Harmful Content](#) lists the most commonly used social media sites and how to contact them.

If further advice or support is needed on how to get online material removed is needed, please contact the [Revenge Porn Helpline](#) on 0345 6000 459 or visit [Stop Non-Consensual Intimate Image Abuse](#)

National Services

Beyond the Streets – A UK charity working to end sexual exploitation

Helpline: 0800 133 7870

<https://beyondthestreets.org.uk>

The Survivors Trust – A national membership organisation supporting specialist rape and sexual abuse services in the voluntary sector.

Helpline: 0808 801 0818 or text: 07860 022956

<https://thesurvivorstrust.org>

Safeline – A specialist sexual abuse support charity for adults and children affected by sexual abuse

Helpline: 01926 402498

National Male Survivor Helpline: 0808 800 5005

<https://safeline.org.uk>

The National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC)

Helpline: 0808 801 0331

<https://napac.org.uk>