

Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Exploitation Screening Tool Guidance

The screening tool alongside this guidance document, should be used to help inform professional judgement where you suspect there is a possible risk of exploitation. The screening tool should help you to focus on the concerns that are specific to exploitation to determine the risk. The screening tool can be used as a reflective practice tool as well as with the adult.

Consent

When completing the tool with the adult, the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) must always be adhered to.

Wherever possible, you should gain consent from the individual to complete the screening tool and then to make related referrals. If they do not consent, but there are safeguarding concerns, this should be discussed with your manager. If the person does not have capacity to consent to you completing the referral, a best interest decision should be made. Support from family and friends, and advocacy support should be considered. If the person has an active Lasting Power of Attorney for Health and Welfare, their Attorney must be consulted. This should be confirmed with the Office of Public Guardian.

Definition of Exploitation

The Home Office 2018, defines exploitation as:

An individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child, young person or adult and exploits them:

- a) Through violence or the threat of violence, and/or*
- b) For financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or*
- c) In exchange for something the victim needs or wants*
- d) Can also occur through use of technology*

Swindon Safeguarding Partnership recognises that exploitation is deliberate maltreatment and manipulation irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, background or ability and sexuality and comes in many forms including:

Modern Slavery
Human Trafficking
Sexual Exploitation
Criminal Exploitation

Whilst completing the screening tool, it is important to remember:

- To keep an open mind about the category of exploitation the adult may be subject to; it is possible for them to be subject to more than one type of exploitation.
- The individual may have been exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Often, people being exploited do not recognise themselves as victims, or that they are being groomed.
- Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology, online social networks etc.

Anyone can be exploited; however, consideration should be given to factors that may heighten someone's vulnerability:

- Adults who have been in care
- Having a physical or learning difficulty or disability
- Having a prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse.
- Lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past (domestic abuse or substance misuse, mental health issues, homelessness or insecure accommodation status, for example).
- Recent bereavement or loss.
- Social isolation or social difficulties.

People who do not have any of these vulnerabilities can still be exploited.

Concerns have been raised that cultural stereotyping among professionals is creating barriers to people from ethnic minority communities being recognised or having the opportunity to disclose abuse (inquiry into CSA June 2020)

Signs & Indicators

The screening tool includes some examples of signs and indicators of exploitation that you may notice; these are not exhaustive, you may see different indicators, you may not see any indicators, but other information available to you may indicate possible exploitation. The free text sections on the form have therefore been designed for you to be able to include anything you feel may indicate exploitation. You should include as much detail as you have; for example if someone has 2 phones, one being a Smart phone & the other one not, this is an important detail, although it may seem very small.

It's important that any details about context that may be linked to the exploitation concerns for the individual are included in the screening tool; this may be names of shops, fast food outlets, parks, gaming sites, social media or types of transportation used linked to their exploitation.

Capturing the Voice of the Adult

The language we use when speaking to adults matters. It's important to engage the individual (in a dialogue around your concerns and where appropriate their family/carers). The thoughts and opinions of the individual should be sought throughout the tool, so it is preferable that they are actively engaged in the process. You, as the professional completing the tool, may be well known to them or conversely, you may not have met prior to this. In either case, it is important that a rapport is built with the intention of making them feel as

comfortable as possible, to therefore engender a situation whereby they feel able to provide full and honest responses to questions asked of them.

It is important that open and carefully considered questions are asked. This should be in accordance with their receptive and expressive ability to communicate.

It is recommended that you use probing questions to elicit an account of what is happening and in what context. This will provide clarity around 'what', 'where' and 'when' something happened and 'who' was involved or present. Further questions can then be considered for clarification and elaboration on the initial account.

You should avoid:

- Asking leading or suggestive questions
- Use of emotive words within the question
- Changing the words used by the adult
- Pre-cursing a question with an opinion
- Asking forced choice questions
- Yes and No options and limited option posing

The information shared by the adult needs to be recorded and documented correctly. The boxes are intended to capture information, observations, concerns or strengths noted by the professional completing the tool. There should be a clear distinction between facts and things that are known for certain, from opinions, 'gut feelings' about things and circumstances relayed that equate to 'hearsay'. Sometimes what the person does not want to share/ states they will not say is as important as what they do share, so this should also be noted.

If you have cause to record any disclosures or further information provided by the adult, it is important that you also consider recording: the circumstances of the disclosure and what prompted it, the exact words used by you and the exact words used by the adult. This is in order to prevent misinterpretation.

Grooming, Coercion & Control

Grooming includes small, but often quick, gestures that help someone befriend and learn lots of personal information about an individual. They are then able to use this information to deepen their 'relationship' with an individual by using the information to portray that they are the only one/s that knows what the individual needs or how they really feel, isolating them from their own family and existing networks. This method of forming an intense 'relationship' is a predatory tactic that is meant to build a deep emotional connection with an individual; however kind gestures can abruptly turn into intimidation and threats and can be used to coerce and control an individual. Abusers know exactly what they are doing, and practitioners should be aware that it is not unusual for them to coerce and control what an individual may say to professionals they meet. Because the abusers hold such a perceived real threat to the individual's lives but intersperse this with small kindnesses, it is not unusual for a trauma bond to be created. This can happen very quickly and can mean that an individual is isolated from any other perspective than that of the abusers and they have a very real perception that they cannot escape. They may talk very positively about their abuser/s and support their reasoning & behaviours. The trauma bond will also mean they may have very negative feelings towards those offering a way out and may display behaviours that will demonstrate detachment or aggression towards those offering assistance. Practitioners should realise this is not personal, but is a response to the trauma the individual is experiencing & take a trauma informed approach.

Lived Experience

What has happened in a person's life informs how that person grows, develops and responds to things in their lives. The amount of time a child/adult is exposed to experiences like abuse, poverty, neglect, housing instability, food insecurity, parents' separation, incarceration, poor mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence, without appropriate support, can increase the likelihood of adversity not only during childhood but within their lifelong health & development into adulthood. It is therefore important to explore the person's full lived experience to factor into the analysis of what is working well, or what we are worried about.

Scaling question
<p>Professional judgement of risk based on responses to overall concerns and on information captured within the screening tool.</p> <p>On a scale of 0-10 where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 equates to there being no current risk of harm or exploitation and professional intervention is not required. • 0 equates to there being a significant risk of harm, necessitating immediate professional intervention.

Category of Risk	Indicators of Risk	Description
Universal Risk 9-10	No risk indicators but may have one or more vulnerabilities present.	An individual who may be 'in need' but who is not currently at risk of being groomed for exploitation.
Low Mild Risk 6-8	Multiple vulnerabilities. One or two risk indicators may also be present.	A vulnerable individual who may be at risk of being groomed for exploitation.
Medium Moderate Risk 3-5	Multiple vulnerabilities and risk indicators present.	Indication that the individual is at risk of or may already be being exploited.
High Significant Risk 0-2	Multiple vulnerabilities and risk indicators. One or more significant risk indicators also likely.	Indication that an individual is at significant risk of or is already being exploited. Exploitation is likely to be habitual, often self-denied and coercion/control is implicit.



Where immediate risk of exploitation and safeguarding concerns have been identified, contact adult safeguarding:

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20011/adult_social_care_and_support/1120/report_a_safeguarding_concern_about_an_adult_at_risk_of_or_experiencing_harm

National Referral Mechanism

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support. If you think you have encountered an individual who has been a victim of modern slavery in England and Wales, you should ensure that an NRM referral is completed, guidance on this can be found [here](#).