Dudley All Age 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.

Consent

The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) must always be adhered to. Wherever possible, you should gain consent from the individual to complete the screening 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.

West Midlands (Metropolitan) Area Definition for Exploitation (all Age)

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.

The victim may have been exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Dudley 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 individual 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:
- Being in care (particularly those in residential 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 parental substance misuse, mental health issues, homelessness or insecure accommodation status, for example).
- Recent bereavement or loss.
- Social isolation or social difficulties.
- Absence of a safe environment to explore sexuality, sexual identity or gender identity.
- Missing episodes
- Chronic health needs.

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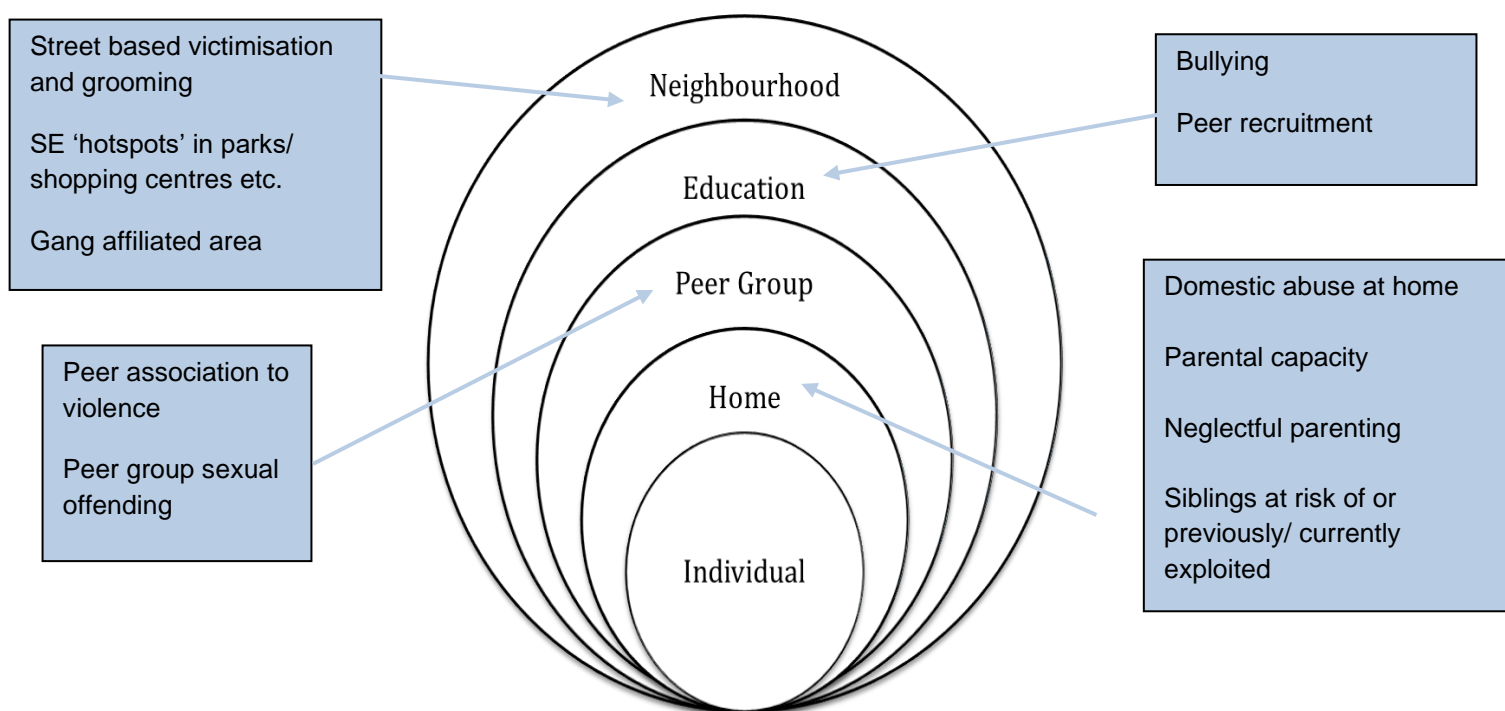
Signs & Indicators

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 'overall summary of current situation' section 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. There is more information about possible signs and indicators included in the West Midlands multi-Agency Safeguarding Procedures for Adults (section 3.4.6)

Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families/carers. It recognises that the different relationships that people form in their neighbourhoods, education provision and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent/carer -child/young person/ adult relationships.

Therefore practitioners need to gain information about the peer groups, neighbourhoods and online activity individuals engage with, as it is possible that this information may generate the need to engage with those who have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, to conduct assessments and interventions within these spaces as a critical part of safeguarding practices.

Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of safeguarding protection systems in recognition that people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts.

Street based victimisation and grooming

SE 'hotspots' in parks/ shopping centres etc.

Gang affiliated area

Bullying

Peer recruitment

Neighbourhood

Education

Peer Group

Home

Individual

Peer association to violence

Peer group sexual offending

Domestic abuse at home

Parental capacity

Neglectful parenting

Siblings at risk of or previously/ currently exploited

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 Child/Young Person/Adult

The language we use when speaking to children/ young people, adults matters; please see the language matters guidance for further assistance.

It's important to engage the individual (child/ young person/ adult) in a dialogue around your concerns and where appropriate their family/carers, there is an online resource to help professionals prepare for conversations: This website provides a range of resources for practitioners working with children and young people which is also relevant of those working with young adults. notjustathought.org.uk

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 (e.g. their social worker or paid carer) 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 use by the child
- Pre-cursing a question with an opinion
- Asking forced choice questions
- Yes and No options and limited option posing

The information shared by the child/young person/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 child/ young person/ 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 is exposed to experiences like abuse, poverty, neglect, housing instability, food insecurity, parents' separation, incarceration, poor mental health, substance abuse and domestic abuse, without appropriate support, can increase the likelihood of adversity not only during childhood but within their lifelong health & development. 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.

Recognising and responding to trauma

An effective response to exploitation and extra-familial harm requires a collective understanding of how trauma impacts on development and behaviour, and how individuals perceive and respond to threats and support. This means recognising the wide-ranging impacts of trauma and attending to non-verbal means of communicating an experience of trauma.

It also means recognising how a professional's and organisation's decisions, language, processes and interventions can compound traumatic experiences and impact on a child or young person's engagement and ability to develop trusting

relationships. Enabling children and young people to exercise voice, choice and control – all of which are undermined by trauma – is important, as is a recognition that 'non-engagement' or 'negative' coping strategies may be a direct or indirect result of trauma.

Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm need to consider trauma on three different levels:

- The direct trauma individuals and potentially their parents / carers, wider family and social networks – have experienced, both from the harms and (potentially) from the professional response to those harms.
- Trauma that can impact individuals and wider communities, stemming from shared experiences such as serious violence.
- The vicarious, or secondary, trauma that can impact those working to support and protect traumatised individuals, often in distressing circumstances.

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 by a first responder or for adults the duty to notify if consent is not given.