



# Safer Seven

On: Adulthood



## 1. Defining Adulthood

Adulthood refers to the societal perception and treatment of children, particularly minority or marginalised children, as if they were adults. This perception results in expectations, behaviours, and treatment typically reserved for adults being imposed on children, disregarding their developmental stage and individual needs.

## 2. What Adulthood can look like:

- Expectations of emotional maturity beyond a child's developmental stage.
- Harsher discipline or punishment compared to peers.
- Disproportionate suspicion or scrutiny from authority figures
- Assumptions of guilt or culpability in situations where children are victims.

## 3. Impact

- Being treated as adults can lead to stress, anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy or powerlessness.
- Unrealistic expectations may hinder healthy emotional, cognitive, and social development.
- Adulthood may exacerbate risks of exploitation, violence, and involvement in the criminal justice system.

## 4. Root Causes

Biases and stereotypes perpetuate the perception of children from minority groups as inherently older, more threatening, or less innocent than their white counterparts.

Legacy of slavery, colonialism, and systemic racism contributes to the dehumanisation and hyper-surveillance of minority groups. Negative portrayals in media reinforce stereotypes and shape public perceptions of children from marginalised communities.

## 5. Addressing Adulthood

When considering adulthood, as with all forms of discrimination, it is important to consider **intersectionality**.

Each child's circumstances are unique and an individual may possess a number of different characteristics that increase or decrease their likelihood of being subject to adulthood (or of experiencing other forms of discrimination along with adulthood). The interplay of characteristics, such as age, ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation all have an impact.

## 6. What can you do

- Ensure you are using appropriate language when talking to, discussing or recording about a child.
- Have conscious consideration of culture and ethnicity in the provision of services or the understanding of experiences
- Think Family – ensure there are effective joint working practices when your organisation is working with members of the same family
- Be professionally curious in your practice.

## 7. Further information:

See our guidance on [appropriate use of language](#) for more information

For Further information on Adulthood within Safeguarding Click [HERE](#)

Visit our Learning Zone to see our selection of briefings and more [HERE](#)