



## Sexual Abuse

This leaflet explains what Sexual Abuse is and what you can do about it if you are worried that you or someone you know is experiencing it.

We have also published other leaflets about adult safeguarding.

**Abuse** is when someone does or says something which harms someone or makes them upset and scared.

Abuse is always unacceptable. Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. No-one has the right to abuse other people.

Abuse can happen once or can be something that happens over weeks, months or years. It can be accidental or deliberate. Just because there is no injury

that someone can see it does not mean there is no abuse.

### Who could carry out Sexual Abuse?

Most people will not abuse BUT anyone could abuse. It might be someone the person being abused knows or a stranger. It can be anyone who uses their 'power' over someone else. Anyone can carry out abuse or neglect, including:

- A partner, spouse, child or relative
- A friend or neighbour
- A parent or guardian
- A health or social care worker
- Staff in a residential or nursing home or hospital
- A volunteer worker
- Someone else the person experiencing abuse lives with
- A stranger

It is likely that the person responsible for abuse is known to the person experiencing abuse, and is in a position of trust and/or power.

Sexual abuse is often associated with Domestic Abuse, but can take place in any situation

### Possible signs and symptoms of Sexual Abuse include:

- Rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment
- Inappropriate looking or touching
- Sexual teasing or innuendo
- Sexual photography
- Subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts
- Indecent exposure and sexual assault
- Sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting
- Offensive or suggestive sexual language or action

It includes penetration of any sort, incest and situations where the person causing harm touches the abused person's body (for example, breasts, buttocks, genital area), exposes his or her genitals (possibly encouraging the abused person to touch them) or coerces the abused person into participating in or looking at pornographic videos or photographs. Denial of a sexual life to consenting adults is also considered abusive practice.

**Any** sexual relationship that develops between adults where one is in a position

of trust, power or authority in relation to the other (for example, day centre worker/social worker/residential worker/health worker) may also constitute sexual abuse.

### **Possible indicators of Sexual Abuse include:**

- Urinary tract infections, vaginal infections or sexually transmitted diseases that are not otherwise explained
- A person appears unusually subdued, withdrawn or has poor concentration
- A person exhibits significant changes in sexual behaviour or outlook
- A person experiences pain, itching or bleeding in the genital/anal area that are not otherwise explained
- A person's underclothing is torn, stained or bloody
- A biological woman who lacks the mental capacity to consent to sexual intercourse becomes pregnant

### **Sexual exploitation**

The sexual exploitation of adults with care and support needs involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where adults with care and support needs

(or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (for example, food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of performing sexual activities, and/or others performing sexual activities on them.

Sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the person's immediate recognition. This can include being persuaded to post sexual images or videos on the internet or a mobile phone with no immediate payment or gain, or being sent such an image by the person alleged to be causing harm.

In all cases those exploiting the adult have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength, and/or economic or other resources.

### **Who to contact if you are worried about abuse or neglect:**

Somerset County Council's Adult Social Care service has the lead for adult safeguarding for all adults with care and support needs in Somerset, and works closely with other organisations including the police and NHS. If a crime has been committed you should always contact the police.

#### **Adult Social Care:**

- **Telephone: 0300 123 22 24** (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.30pm, Saturday and Sunday closed.)
- **Email: [adults@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:adults@somerset.gov.uk)**

The phone number for Adults and Mental Health out of hours is **0300 123 23 27**

#### **Police:**

101 or in an emergency 999

#### **Further information:**

Please use the following link to view other leaflets on our website: [bit.ly/SSABLeaflets](https://bit.ly/SSABLeaflets)

