

1 Background

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (e.g. rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts (e.g. kissing, masturbation, rubbing and touching outside of clothing).

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Sexual abuse can also include activities such as the person looking at, or involved in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging the person to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming the person in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can children.

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In relation to adults, sexual abuse is the direct or indirect involvement in sexual activity without valid consent. Consent to a particular activity may not be given because:

- The adult has capacity and does not want to give consent
- The adult lacks capacity and is therefore unable to give consent
- The adult feels coerced into activity because the other person is in a position of trust, power or authority

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What to do

Where workers or volunteers have concerns that an adult at risk is being sexually abused the Police must be contacted immediately, consideration should also be given to a referral to the [Sexual Assessment Referral Centre \(SARC\)](#). [Safeguarding Procedures](#) in relation to adults at risk must also be instigated to begin the process of sharing information and safeguarding the alleged victim. Where the relationship is considered consensual and not abusive, health and social care workers should ensure that the adult receives appropriate advice regarding sexual health and contraception.



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- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothes
- Love bites
- Pain or itching
- Bruising or bleeding in genital area
- Sexually transmitted/ urinary tract/ vaginal infections
- Bruising to thighs and upper arms
- Severe upset or agitation when being bathed/ dressed/ undressed/ medically examined
- Pregnancy in person not able to consent

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Information

Research by the BBC in 2015 revealed that in the previous two years, 4,748 cases of sexual abuse had been reported in relation to people with disabilities: 63% were against those with learning disabilities, and 37% against those with physical disabilities.

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Look for:

- Change in behaviour for no apparent or obvious reason
- Sudden onset of confusion, wetting or soiling
- Withdrawal, choosing to spend the majority of time alone
- Overt sexual behaviour or language by the adult at risk
- Self-inflicted injury
- Disturbed sleep pattern, poor concentration