

7 minute briefing: Sexual abuse

- 1. What is sexual abuse?** Sexual abuse includes any sexual act to which an adult has not consented and may not understand. For example being touched or kissed when it is not wanted, being made to touch or kiss someone else, being raped or sexually assaulted, being made to listen to the sexual comments or forced to look at sexual acts or materials. It also includes any sexual activity that the person lacks capacity to consent to.
- 2. Why does it matter?** Sexual abuse is a personal and destructive crime. Its effects can be psychological, emotional, and/or physical. The damage can be long-lasting.
- 3. Information.** Sexual abuse can occur in any relationship. It may be a form of domestic abuse. 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 a day centre worker, social worker, residential care worker, or a health worker is abusive. Multi-agency information and guidance can be found [here](#).
- 4. Definition of sexual abuse.** Sexual abuse can include rape, attempted rape or sexual assault, inappropriate touching, non-consensual masturbation of either or both persons, non-consensual sexual penetration or attempted penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth, any sexual activity that the person lacks the capacity to consent to, inappropriate looking, sexual teasing or innuendo or sexual harassment, sexual photography or forced use of pornography or witnessing of sexual acts of indecent exposure. Where adults with learning disabilities are involved, it is important that we help them to understand healthy and safe relationships.
- 5. What to look for.** Bruising, particularly to the thighs, buttocks and upper arms and marks on the neck. Torn, stained or bloody underclothing. Bleeding, pain or itching in the genital area. Pregnancy or sexually transmitted infection in someone who is unable to consent to sexual intercourse. Unusual difficulty in walking or sitting. Uncharacteristic use of explicit sexual language or significant changes in sexual behaviour or attitude. Reluctance to be alone with a particular person, and self-harming.
- 6. What to watch for.** Incontinence not related to any medical diagnosis. Irregular or disturbed sleep patterns. Unexplained changes in the character or behaviour of the adult. Poor concentration or tendency to withdraw and spend time alone. Fear of receiving help with personal care.
- 7. What to do.**
 - Contact Adult Social Care on 0161 217 6029 or by using the [online portal](#).
 - Out of office hours contact 0161 718 2118 or adultsocialcare@stockport.gov.uk
 - In the event of an emergency contact the Police on 101 or 999.