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# Exploitation Reflective Questions for Practitioners.

**These questions are not designed to be a checklist.** They are designed to facilitate reflective questions for practitioners to explore/consider when making an analysis for a young person. You are unlikely to know the answer to all of these questions, but you should consider what information you have an what further information you need. These questions could also be used as part of: screening, consultation, assessment, or individual/group reflective supervision for a young person you are worried about.

All information gathered should be contextualised and provided in a clear narrative as to why there are worries about exploitation - responses to questions should **not be ‘yes/no’**, details should **always** be provided. Any victim blaming language should be challenged.

Please note that criminal and sexual exploitation do not happen mutually. A young person may be experiencing **both** criminal and sexual exploitation at the same time, ensure you are curious about this.

Check your bias. Are you assuming one ‘type’ of exploitation due to the gender/ethnicity/sexuality/ability of the young person?

**Remember all children are different and can demonstrate their response to harm in different ways, just because the below may not be present, this does not mean they are not being exploited. Listen to the people who know the young person best, if they are worried, there is likely to be a reason why.**

## Young Person:

Is someone who knows the young person well worried about their safety? Has there been a change in behaviour which is not understood?

What is the young person’s identity, and how does this impact on their self-esteem and need to be accepted/loved (e.g. do they have any characteristics where they may face oppression/discrimination: race/sexuality/ability/religion/asylum seeking/gender/poverty and are there multiple factors which interlink and may cause further disadvantage)? What is their place in the family – do they have siblings to the same parents? Are they of different heritage to others in the home?

What is their self-esteem and sense of self like? – young people who are exploited tend to have a very low self-esteem and a desire for belonging/acceptance/perceived sense of protection.

Are they in education? Have they been excluded, or are they on a reduced timetable/special provision?

Do we know what the young person is saying about the worries? Are they worried? Has someone spoken to them?

Do they have any additional needs which could be taken advantage of?

Are they regularly missing from school or home and do carers know where they are if they are not reported missing?

Do they have things which people do not know where they have come from/how they have got them (money/clothing/electronics)?

Has anyone reported multiple phones/burner phones?

Are they distressed/reacting disproportionally to boundaries (being told they cannot go out, removing their phone (beyond normal adolescent behaviour) – could this be linked to an implication something will happen to them if they are not in a certain place/responding to messages?

If they cannot go out are they taking risks to do so – the implications for a young person could be worse if they do not go out (climbing out of windows etc)?

Have they been out of the area to a place they are not connected to?

Has anyone reported drug sales via social media?

Do they feel safe in the community, and are they carrying/have they carried weapons due to this?

Do they strongly identify with one peer group/area? Why?

Have they been hurt or hurt anyone else?

Have they been arrested for criminal offences (stealing cars/drugs/burglary/assaults/robbery)?

If they have been arrested, are they worried about what may happen to them (if items have been seized/if they speak)?

Have they spoken about a ‘relationship’ which has a clear power imbalance (due to age/finance/group of people/status/ability-disability)?

Has the young person been picked up by older peers in the community/from school?

If they have seen sexual health services, are there any worries regarding infections/pregnancies/consent?

Do they suffer from mental health difficulties/self-harm?

Do they use substances (is this normal peer behaviour, or is it to manage mental health difficulties/trauma)?

Do they talk about going to ‘party houses’ where they get free drugs and alcohol?

How do they pay for substances if they do use them? Do they have a debt?

Has anyone reported finding a large number of drugs in their room/on them?

Could they be targeted due to appearance? Are the less likely to be stopped buy the police due to their appearance e/g being small/female/white/wealthy? Or, does their appearance mean they could be targeted because of their stature, to threaten others e.g. physically big/do they look older?

Are they displaying trauma response behaviours (are they labelled as ‘aggressive’, ‘beyond parental control’, a ‘criminal’)? **Make sure you contextualise any negative language in response to their experiences when writing a referral.**

## Past experiences:

Is there a history of trauma for the young person?

Have they lost a parent/sibling/close family member (via incarceration/death/separation/illness/genocide)?

Have they witnessed domestic abuse/neglect/sexual/physical abuse? Young people who have suffered sexual abuse, may be more vulnerable to further exploitation due to their experiences of relationship/sex and grooming.

What is the modelling of relationships in their family – are they positive, or negative?

Have they had a lot of instability (multiple moves/school/carers)?

Have they moved countries due to it being unsafe (have they experienced political trauma)?

Have they experienced oppression (racism/sexism/homophobia/transphobia)?

## Home:

Have threats been made indirectly/directly to the young person or their family/carers?

Are the family/carers saying they feel unsafe in the area?

Do they have their own bedroom/space within the home?

Is there parental/carer substance use/domestic abuse/mental health needs?

Do they have siblings they care for/feel responsible for?

Are they living in poverty? Have debts?

Is there neglect in the home?

Have they experienced emotional neglect (affluent carers who not emotionally/physically present)?

Are parents/carers saying they cannot protect their child/ren?

Are you worried about parental capacity?

## Context:

What is the community like that they live in (is there high level of criminality/deprivation)?

Has the wider family been exploited?

Is criminality/sexual exploitation present in the young person’s life/is this normalised?

Is the harm taking place in a particular location/area? E.g. A number of incidents/assaults taking place in one location. Do you need to consider a ‘context’ response?

Have they been a victim of a crime in their community?

Is harmful sexual behaviour appropriately responded to by adults/schools? Does the context allow for peer on peer harm to take place? E.g. the norm for images to be shared in school?

## Peers/Adults:

Are they connected to other adults or young people professionals are worried about?

Is there clear evidence of exploitation by a person/a group – what do we know about them?

Have they been humiliated by peers (sexually/physically/emotionally)?

Do we know the dynamic between the young person and the people we are worried about (e.g. is the young person made to do things/be violent, do they lead/follow)?

Have any of their peers been harmed/killed/sexually or criminally exploited?

## Strengths:

What are the strengths of the young person and carers/family? What are they good at, what do they like doing?

Do we know what the ambitions of the young person are?

Are there any people who are protective and supportive for the young person (adults and peers)?

Are there areas of safety for the young person (relatives/friends/community centres etc)?

Who would the young person say their most trusted professional is?

Have they ever intervened/supported a friend when something was going to happen to them?

## What next?

What do we know, what do we think and what do we need to find out? Do we need to take any actions to gather further information?

Do the professionals involved have a good understanding of exploitation and adolescent knowledge, or do they need guidance from specialist workers?

Can we work with the professional who has the best relationship to introduce any new workers/to gather information?

Can other agencies support the young person if they do not meet ‘threshold’ for specialist support?

Do we need specialist support/consultation/a referral to be made?

What age is the young person and is this going to impact on the service they receive? Are we not offering them a service because they are 17? Will there be service gaps due to a transitional age? Do we need to think about support once they turn 18?