

# THINK SHEET

## CHILD EXPLOITATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Children and young people with a disability are often over protected and not informed about sex and relationships because they are not perceived to have a sexual identity or sexual desires, this means that often these young people get little or no sexual education.

It was recognised that it is important to not treat all young people the same just because they share an impairment label. The spectrum of learning disabilities and autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) for example, means that young people can have different needs and experience the world in very different ways.

If a child has not been identified as having a learning disability their behaviour could increase the chances of exclusion from education which could then increase vulnerability to CSE.

It can be difficult to unpick the difference between what's trauma related, what's development related and what's learning disability.

Impairment-related factors, including capacity to consent to sexual activity, difficulties associated with being able to recognise exploitation or risk, impulsive behaviours and needs associated with a different understanding of social cues, interaction and communication.

Young people with learning disabilities are often social isolated and may use social media heavily to gain friendships and meet people without being informed of the risks of online abuse.

Sometimes professionals miss behaviour triggers of CSE by linking this to the child's disability rather than any potential CSE

Young people with learning disabilities are not always present for sex and relationships education classes, as this time is often used for catching up on other lessons.

When a child turns 18 they may not meet the thresholds for Adult Social Care and therefore the support they received as a child may evaporate leaving them with little or no guidance.

Often work is completed once a young person has been abused, rather than education being given as a matter of course.

A young person with a disability is 3 times more likely to be abused.

Due to the perceptions of professionals and adults a child with learning disabilities may not have been given any preparation or any transition work to allow them to manage sexual and personal relationships when they are living independently, this could increase the chances of the young person being exploited by others.

Often young people, children or young adults with learning disabilities are not empowered to make decisions about their own lives meaning that they could be at increased risk of perpetrators exploiting this lack of power for their own gain.

There is a lack of training received by professionals concerning CSE and learning disabilities.

Young people may not be able to assess whether a situation is harmful due to their developmental age, however a professional may just be looking at their chronological age and assume the child is able to make an informed decision about consent or understanding how others can consent.