



Cognitive Impairments and Adult Exploitation



Research from the University of Nottingham and the University of Birmingham



An easy read guide

What is Cognitive Impairment?



A cognitive impairment is when you think or understand things in a different way to other people.



You might have a cognitive impairment if you have:
a learning disability, autism, a memory problem like dementia, a brain injury or a problem with drugs or alcohol.



People who have a cognitive impairment might find everyday life more difficult than other people. They might need support from others.

What is exploitation?



Exploitation is when a person makes you do things you don't want to.



They might take things from you. For example, your money or things that belong to you.

They might come into your home when you have not invited them.

Why did we do this research?



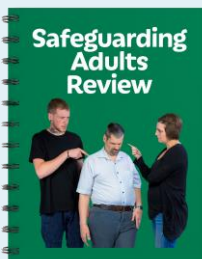
Why?

We wanted to find out how people with cognitive impairments and people with mental health problems are at risk from exploitation.



We want to help stop exploitation and keep people safer in the future.

What did we do?



We looked at all the information and reports in England about exploitation.

We read 58 Safe-Guarding Adults Reviews (SARS).



We spoke to services that help adults who have been exploited. For example: the police, housing support, dementia support, healthcare, social services and charities.



95 people from these services filled in a survey.

24 people from these services had an interview.



We asked some questions:

1. How often are people with cognitive impairments exploited?
2. What problems do you see?
3. What do you do about it?



We interviewed 23 adults with a cognitive impairment who have been exploited.
We spoke to 3 more people in a group.



They shared their lived experiences with us.



We ran 2 workshops.

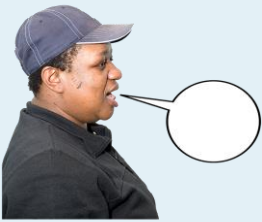


We want to thank everyone who helped us with this work.

What did we find out?



People with cognitive impairments are more at risk of exploitation than other people.



The different types of exploitation people told us about are:



- **Financial exploitation** by family and friends.

This is when is when someone steals your money or things that belong to you.



- **Sexual exploitation**

This is when someone touches your body in ways that you do not like or want them to.



- **Criminal exploitation**

This is when someone forces you to do something that is against the law.

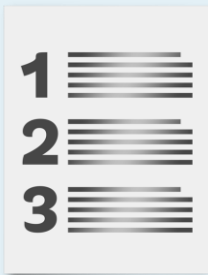


- **Forced labour**

This is when you are held against your will and forced to work.



A lot of people with cognitive impairments experience **everyday exploitation**. This is things like internet or phone scams.



People with cognitive impairments often experience more than one type of exploitation.



The most common types of exploitation people working in services told us about were:

1. Financial exploitation
2. Mate Crime



Mate crime is a type of hate crime. It is when somebody pretends to be your friend so they can exploit you.



You have more risk of being exploited if you have a relationship with someone who is controlling you.

What did we learn?



The law on exploitation is confusing.



There is no law about some types of exploitation. For example, **cuckooing**.

Cuckooing is when someone uses your home to do something illegal like selling drugs.



Sometimes exploitation is hidden or isn't recorded.



Abuse

It can be hard to tell the difference between exploitation and abuse.



Sometimes the police and social workers don't do anything about exploitation because they do not have the right information or training.



The Mental Capacity Act is law. It makes sure people have the support they need to make decisions. It protects people who need others to make decisions for them.



Mental capacity assessments do not check to see if a person is being controlled or forced to do things by somebody else.



Some people do not get the help they need when they are being exploited.



When someone is being exploited they may feel confused, scared or upset. This can make it difficult to make decisions or to ask for help.



Being exploited can cause problems. For example:

- mental health problems
- Money problems
- having to move away from family and friends



A lot of people who exploit others do not get punished.

How can we help to stop exploitation?



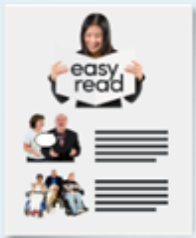
Services need better information and training about exploitation.



People with cognitive impairments need good support from family, friends, support services and advocacy groups.



People with cognitive impairments need support to build their confidence skills.



People with cognitive impairments need accessible information about exploitation to help them talk about and report their experiences.



We need more information about why people with cognitive impairments are more at risk from exploitation.

What do we want to happen next?



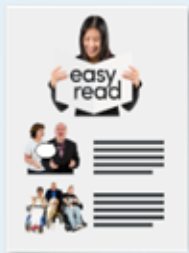
We want the Government to get more information about exploitation and people who have physical or mental disabilities.



We want the government to train services so they can give people better help in exploitation.



We want the government to give more money to advocacy charities and voluntary groups who support people with cognitive impairments.



We want the government and advocacy organisations to work together to make accessible information about exploitation.



We want the government to make new laws about exploitation to help keep people safer.



We want to make it easier for people with cognitive impairments to report exploitation.



This problem may not only be in England. We think governments in other countries should think about it too.

For more information



If you have any questions or feedback please email: alison.gardner@nottingham.ac.uk



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