

## West Lothian Council Adult Protection Committee 7-Minute Briefing:

### 1. Where to find the guidance?

**Criminal exploitation: practitioner guidance - gov.scot ([www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot))**

### 2. What is Criminal Exploitation?

Criminal exploitation of children or vulnerable adults is when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive the child or vulnerable adult into criminal activity, for the financial or other advantage of the exploiter.

### 3. Use of technology

Physical contact between victim and perpetrator may not be necessary, the use of increasingly sophisticated technologies offers an alternative means for exploitation to take place, creating physical distance, and at times reducing the need for physical contact.

### 7. Not all criminal exploitation is linked to serious organised crime

Perpetrators can be individuals who exploit children or adults within their families or communities. The identification of these victims, and the response, should be the same and any concerns about an adult at risk should be reported under Adult Support and Protection legislation and procedures to the Local Authority without delay.

## **7-Minute Briefing: Practitioners Guidance on Criminal Exploitation**

### 4. Imbalance of power

Criminal exploitation usually involves an imbalance of power due to age, gender, cognitive ability, physical strength, status or access to money. The relationship between the exploiter and the exploited can often appear consensual, providing a challenge to professionals seeking to identify the issue. Even in these circumstances, safeguarding responses should be triggered. Victims of exploitation may not see themselves as exploited or admit to their exploitation.

### 6. Vulnerability in Childhood and as an adult

Many over 18 will have been recruited into organised crime activity through exploitation prior to them turning 18, and the vulnerabilities that led them into initial involvement may still be prevalent. The vulnerability of older young people and young adults should therefore be noted. Many over 18 will have been recruited into organised crime activity through exploitation prior to them turning 18, and the vulnerabilities that led them into initial involvement may still be prevalent. The vulnerability of older young people and young adults should therefore be noted.

### 5. Organised Crime

The Scottish Multi-Agency Strategic Threat Assessment (2022) indicates that there are currently 97 active, also referred to as “mapped”, serious organised crime groups operating in Scotland. Organised crime groups can create a base in their chosen area, usually by taking over the homes of vulnerable adults. This is often referred to as “cuckooing”.