



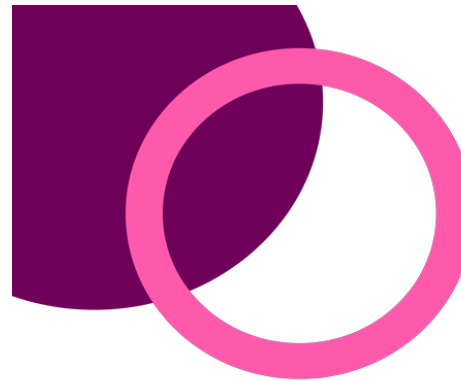
# **An introduction to adultification**

**What is it, who does it affect, what  
can I do?**

# This video covers



1. What adultification bias is
2. How it affects young people affected by homelessness
3. Tips for professionals can do to address adultification bias



**Understanding young people's development: a guide for homelessness services**

[www.homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/understanding-young-peoples-development/](http://www.homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/understanding-young-peoples-development/)

# What is adultification



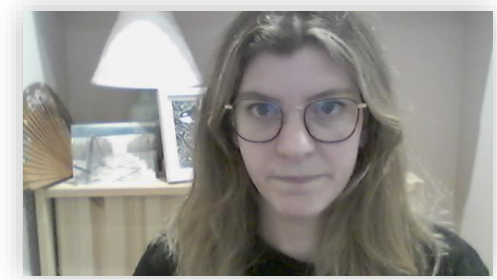
Adultification occurs when children and young people assume or are forced into adult-like roles prematurely.

## Adultification bias:

- Reduces perceived vulnerability of a child or young person.
- Affects the response that a young person receive at a systems level, and at an individual/service level.
- Can lead to a child/young person's rights diminished or not upheld
- Impact on development and wellbeing



# Who is affected by adultification?



Inequality and discrimination at a structural level set the pre-conditions for adultification to occur.

This affects the likelihood that adultification will occur, and the way in which a child will be adultified.

When adultification occurs outside of the home it is founded within discrimination and bias.

# What does this look like in real life?

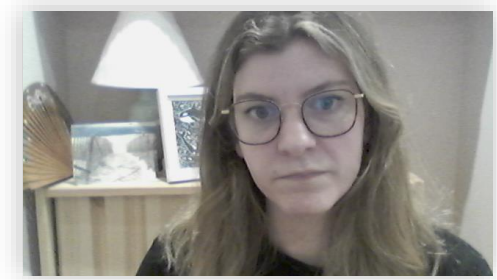


- » Inappropriate assessments, for example 16-17-year-olds who are homeless
- » Vulnerabilities not seen, e.g. educational needs, mental health, wellbeing
- » Responses inappropriate: punitive/criminal justice approach, lack of safeguarding
- » Inappropriate housing options offered: young people placed in adult settings
- » Expectations around independence and independent living

**“I think what most people learn when they’re in their 20s, I learnt in my teens. I struggle now in a different way. With friends, you’re not as flexible and you’re not as free. I sometimes want to be. I want to give myself that.”**

**Young & Homeless 2020 participant**

# Addressing bias:



## How does it help?

- ✓ Helps us scrutinise the story we, as practitioners, have been told about a young person.
- ✓ Framework to support conversations with a young person to consider their own story and what they have been told about themselves by the adults around them.
- ✓ Helps us challenge practice and advocate for a young person's rights
- ✓ Helps us reflect on our own bias and assumptions about vulnerability

## Questions to ask

- » What do you know about the young person's history with services? How has the young person been described by other services? How do they describe themselves? Were vulnerabilities identified or ignored?
- » How does this interact with their experiences of homelessness, and their current support package? Have certain support needs been overlooked?
- » How do young people experiencing homelessness continue to be adultified in homelessness/housing services?

# Further questions:



## Intersecting identities:

**Young people's experiences of adultification will relate to their experiences of structural discrimination.**

- » How has the young person's intersecting identities affected the way they have experienced adultification?
- » How has this affected their support offer, or the organisations/institutions they've had contact with?

## Red flags

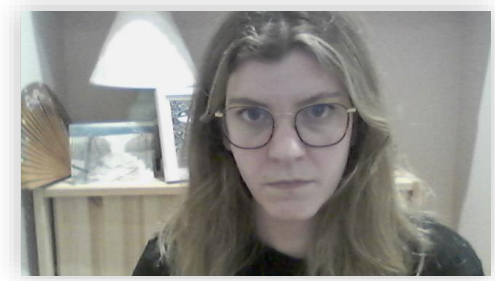
- » History of children/young people as "mature" or "resilient" or "streetwise"
- » Children's behaviour has been described as: "risk taking" or "a lifestyle choice"

# Takeaways

**Be curious.** Ask young people about their stories. Ask professionals how they have reached their decision about what support should be offered to a young person (or absence of support).

**Advocate and challenge:** has this led to the young person's needs not being met? This may be education, health, safeguarding, housing. Advocate for young people's entitlements to be upheld.

**Self-reflect:** What assumptions may you be bringing to your interactions with young people?

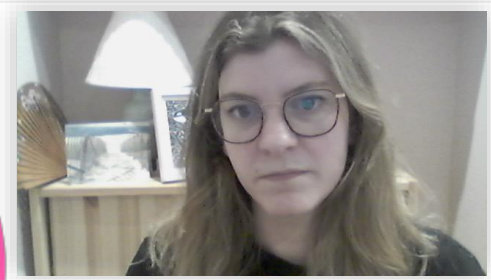




# Thanks for listening!

Read more about adultification and youth development:

[www.homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/understanding-young-peoples-development/](http://www.homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/understanding-young-peoples-development/)



## Understanding young people's development: a guide for homelessness services

### Contents

Introduction	2
Understanding the developing brain	3
Adultification	5
Development, adultification and trauma informed approaches: putting the pieces together	8
Further information and resources	17