

MATE CRIME

1 BACKGROUND

There is no statutory definition of mate crime in UK law. The term is generally understood to refer to the befriending of people, who are perceived by perpetrators to be vulnerable, for the purposes of taking advantage of, exploiting and/or abusing them. This can strongly be associated, but not exclusively associated, with people with a learning disability, learning difficulties or mental health conditions. Additionally this could be targeted to those with low self-esteem and/or feeling isolated

Mate crime involves additional and complex issues to understand which sometimes resonate with cases of domestic abuse. The perpetrator is likely to be perceived as a close friend, a carer or a family member and will use this relationship for exploitation.

A person experiencing mate crime can sometimes be unaware of any hidden motives. People with a learning disability, learning difficulties or mental health conditions may have less control and ability to develop and maintain friendships and this can lead to an acceptance of unequal relationships. The relationship is likely to be of some duration and, if unchecked, may lead to a pattern of repeat and worsening abuse.

2 WHY IT MATTERS

- Targets our most vulnerable members of our community
- Exploited local children may be 'working' from the address.
- The exploited person may have children who are being exposed to this practice
- This practice may affect a number of different individuals, so support agencies need to be vigilant and aware of this

3 INFORMATION

How can you spot Mate Crime?

- Changes in routine, behaviour, appearance, finances or household (e.g. new people visiting or staying over, lots of new 'friends', lots more noise or rubbish than there normally is).
- Unexplained injuries.
- Being involved in sexual acts which they have not agreed to.
- Losing weight.
- Not taking care of themselves and looking dirty or scruffy.
- Bills not being paid.
- A 'friend' who does not respect, bullies or undermines the person.
- Suddenly short of money, losing possessions or changing their will.
- The person 'doing what they are told to' by a 'friend'.
- Showing signs of mental ill health.
- Not being with usual networks of friends/family or missing weekly activities.
- Goods or packages arriving at a person's house (and then being collected by someone else soon after).
- The house is a mess after lots of parties.

4 WHAT TO DO

IF THERE IS IMMEDIATE RISK – DIAL 999

Can I do more enquiries – neighbour/ Next of kin to gather further information

- Consider 101 in the event that other links are not in place.

- Utilise your existing links, processes and contacts with police to flag up any concerns. E.g MARF / VA1
- Crimestoppers is an option for anonymously sharing intelligence – not preferable to direct contact.

Share experience and good practice with colleagues to raise awareness

5 LEARNING/TRAINING

- Take personal responsibility to seek/understand awareness training

If there are training gaps, then to flag these with managers
Consider on-line learning and training packages