

Case Study – Signs of Sexual Violence

Sami is 22 years old, they have learning disabilities and live in a supported living service.

Sami has limited verbal communication. They communicate using simple words and sentences and like to use pictures and symbols. They have personal care needs with support required for bathing and using the toilet. Sami likes to be busy, interacting with the other people that live in the service, enjoys listening to music and dancing.

You have recently become worried about Sami as they don't seem to be themselves. They have become very withdrawn, spending more time alone and not wanting to be in communal areas. You have noticed that they have been sleeping more during the day and appear extremely unsettled at night. You have noticed that they are very anxious to know what staff are on shift. Some members of staff have also reported that Sami has been very 'difficult' and has been refusing personal care and forcibly pushing staff away. Today, you have noticed some bruising near Sammi's shoulder when you ask them how it happened they get very unset and shake their head.

What is causing you to have concerns that Sami may have experienced some form of sexual violence?

Sudden changes to Sami's reactions to everyday situations such as refusing personal care and pushing staff away. Changes in their daily routines such as anxiety increased anxiety before going to bed and changes in sleeping patterns. Sami's anxiety around staff members that they have never shown before.

What might be preventing Sami from sharing information about what has happened?

Sami may have difficulty communicating what has happened to them. They may feel ashamed or that they have done something wrong. They may be fearful of getting someone into trouble particularly if it's a member of staff who have told them not to say anything. They may not know who to tell or what might happen to them if they do tell someone.

What might be your next steps?

Try to make Sami feel safe by finding a quiet and safe space to speak with them. Think about how you can best communicate with Sami, do you need to have information with pictures and symbols. More information about responding to disclosure is available here ([link](#))

If the person you are supporting is in immediate danger, at risk of harm or neglect you need to follow your safeguarding policy and initiate a safeguarding referral. If you are unsure, seek urgent advice from a Manager or Safeguarding lead and decide together whether there is an immediate risk and the need to safeguard.