

Adultification aware

Information brochure

This brochure has been designed and developed for professionals working with children, adopters and/or carers who wish to learn more about adultification.



Developed in partnership with:



Adultification

Definition

Adultification is seeing children as adults. Adultification is most commonly associated with Black girls. It happens when a child is given less nurturing, less protection, less support and less comfort by professionals.

I may appear to be:

Adult

Okay

Mature

Strong

To have a higher pain threshold that my peers or adults

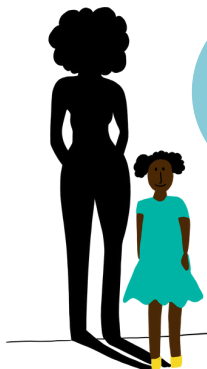
You may see me as:

Caring

Able

Resilient

Precocious in taking adult decisions



#adultificationaware

What is adultification?

Adultification is a form of racial bias that denies children the right to be seen, valued and protected as children.

It leaves children vulnerable—unseen, unheard, unsupported, at risk of harm, and without access to the protection they need. Adultification manifests differently depending on race, gender, and context. Different expectations and assumptions are made about some children, resulting in unfair treatment and reduced protection.

Some children are forced into being more adult because of their context;

- Assuming that caring for siblings or other children is a cultural norm, rather than recognising it as a potential safeguarding concern.
- Failing to adequately explore cultural identity and trauma once basic needs are met.
- Failing to investigate the underlying causes of a child's distress or behaviour; misinterpreting emotional withdrawal or self-preservation as defiance, or a trauma response as aggression.
- Assuming a child will cope with repeated placement moves because they are perceived as resilient.
- Placing a child in harsher or less nurturing care settings due to perceived 'behavioural difficulties'.
- Expectations to cross unsafe areas without appropriate transport arrangements in place to ensure safety .
- A lack of concern or appropriate safeguarding responses when a child does not return home.
- Expectations to travel long distances alone to school or appointments, based on their journey into the UK as an unaccompanied child.
- Asking a child to make difficult decisions because they are perceived as older than their age or deemed 'streetwise'.
- Failing to recognise the child as a victim in their own right, particularly when they are subject to exploitation or excessive use of police force (as highlighted in the case of Child Q).

Download the [adultification aware](#) poster and start raising awareness today!

What I need from you

Please... even if I'm resistant, what I need you to do is...



See me as a child. Protect me as a child.

Speak to me in a way appropriate that is appropriate to my age and understanding.

Recognise that what you see on the surface may not reflect what I'm feeling inside.



Be brave to challenge decisions that don't feel right.

Read about Child Q—and ask yourself what you would have done.

Learn about adultification and how it shows up.



Be curious. Take time to understand me and my story.

Listen to me. Hear me. See me.



Speak up if I am being treated unfairly or differently.

Examine your own bias—and talk to your supervisor or team about it.



It's okay to feel uncomfortable. That's where learning starts.

Reflect on your language, assumptions, and stereotypes.

Don't reduce me to a label or behaviour.



References

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Epstein, R., Blake, J., & González, T. (2017). *Girlhood interrupted: the erasure of Black girls' childhood*.

Ikomi, S. 2024. *The Adulthood of Black Girls in State Care: Perspectives*.

About the campaign

Following a research presentation about the adulthood of Black girls for Oxfordshire Youth Justice Management Partnership Board's Away Day in June 2024, the staff at Oxfordshire County Council explored steps that could potentially be taken to address this issue.

Since that session, Oxfordshire County Council have collaborated with Sylvia Ikomi to produce and distribute awareness materials for organisations and individuals about the adulthood of Black girls.

Get involved

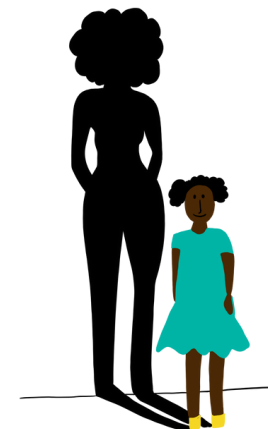
We encourage you to read, download, and share the resources to help our campaign to raise awareness about adulthood.

Why does this campaign matter?

The adulthood of Black girls in state/local authority care is an under-explored research area and has severe consequences for Black girls.

Adulthood can be a contributory factor in young Black girls entering state/local authority care.

It can also result in social workers, teachers, foster parents and staff in children's homes not giving these young girls the pastoral care they need, and lead to their placement in lower-quality foster care homes.



Artist

The logo you see throughout the campaign was created by Samantha James, to exemplify adulthood of Black girls.