

There are steps you can take to help safeguard the children that you work with against adultification bias.

* Build Awareness
* Acknowledge Bias
* Foster a Culture of Professional Challenge
* Watch Your Language

**See also** [**NSPCC information on Adultification**](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/children-from-black-asian-minoritised-ethnic-communities/)

**How to tackle Adultification**

In March 2022, a Local Safeguarding Practice Review concluded that Child Q had been exposed to a traumatic event and had suffered harm. The report found that adultification was a factor in her treatment. It concluded that she *‘received a largely criminal justice and disciplinary response from the adults around her, rather than a child protection response’ and that ‘the disproportionate decision to strip search Child Q is unlikely to have been disconnected from her ethnicity and her background as a child growing up on an estate in Hackney.’*

**Example**

A male and female officer subsequently arrived at the school, followed by another two officers (one of whom was also female). After discussions between the police and teachers, Child Q was escorted to the medical room where she was strip searched. No Appropriate Adult was in attendance, teachers remained outside the room and Child Q’s mother was not contacted in advance. No drugs were found during either the strip search or a search of the room in which Child Q had been waiting beforehand. Child Q was later allowed to return home where she disclosed the events to her mother.

**Example**

On questioning Child Q, she denied using or having any drugs in her possession and a search of her bag, blazer, scarf and shoes revealed nothing of significance. Remaining concerned, teachers sought advice from the Safer Schools Police

Officer. Due to the restrictions arising from Covid-19, this officer was not on site. He recommended that the school call 101 and ask for a female officer to attend.

In 2020, Child Q, a Black female child of secondary school age, was strip searched by female police officers from the Metropolitan Police Service. The search, which involved the exposure of Child Q’s intimate body parts, took place on school premises, without an Appropriate Adult present and with the knowledge that Child Q was menstruating.

On the day of the search, teachers believed that Child Q smelt strongly of cannabis and they suspected that she might be carrying drugs.

**Example**

When this happens outside the home, it is always grounded in bias and discrimination. Certain aspects of that child’s personal characteristics, socio-economic situation or lived experiences are met with discriminatory responses. This means that, rather than being seen as children experiencing abuse, they are viewed as either responsible in some way, or as more resilient and able to withstand maltreatment.

Adultification is defined as:

*‘..When notions of innocence and vulnerability are not afforded to certain children.’* (Davis and Marsh, 2020)

Adultification is a type of bias which skews the perception of certain children, leading to others – including professionals – viewing them as more ‘grown up’ or, ‘adult’. This can then lead to lapses in appropriate safeguarding.

**Information**

**Adultification – What is it?**

**Adultification**

**Example**