



# SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

## Exploitation

This edition of our Safeguarding Newsletter will focus on child sexual exploitation (CSE). We need everyone to recognise the need for greater awareness around the indicators of CSE and to know how to report this.

Exploitation can happen at any time, and here is some information to help

## What is CSE?

Each year in England thousands of children and young people are raped or sexually abused. This includes children who have been abducted and trafficked, or beaten, threatened or bribed into having sex. Media coverage of police investigations into the crimes of Jimmy Savile and other prominent figures have brought child sexual abuse and exploitation to public attention.

But while police work to tackle the problem, child sexual exploitation continues to happen every day. It's important to understand what child sexual exploitation is and to be aware of warning signs that may indicate a child you know is being exploited. Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of sexual, emotional and physical abuse of children. Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of sexual, emotional and physical abuse of children. It can be difficult to recognise the warning signs of child sexual exploitation, as they are similar to the challenges that all parents of adolescent or near-adolescent children face.

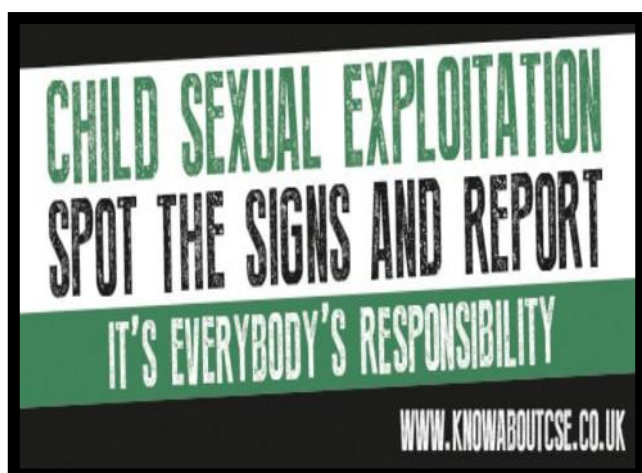
As a rough guide, child sexual exploitation can be defined in the following terms:

- A person under 18 is sexually exploited when they are coerced into sexual activities by one or more person(s) who have deliberately targeted their youth and inexperience in order to exercise power over them.
- Child sexual exploitation is often conducted with actual violence or the threat of violence. This may be threats towards the child, or her or his family and may prevent the child from disclosing the abuse, or exiting the cycle of exploitation. Indeed, the child may be so confused by the process, that they do not perceive any abuse at all.

# Signs of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Signs that a child or young person is being groomed or sexually exploited include:

- Unhealthy or inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Persistently going missing for periods of time or returning home late regularly
- Frequently staying out late or overnight with no explanation as to where they have been
- Being secretive about who they are talking to and where they are going
- Using more than one phone
- Spending more time online or on their devices
- Excessive receipt of texts or phone calls, letters, or emails
- Having an older girlfriend or boyfriend, or having relationships with controlling older individuals or groups
- Unexplained absences from school, college, training, or work
- Suddenly acquiring expensive gifts such as mobile phones, jewellery – even drugs – and not being able to explain how they came by them
- Having mood swings and changes in temperament
- Having hotel cards or keys to unknown places
- Noticeable changes in behaviour – becoming secretive, defensive or aggressive when asked about their personal life.
- Wearing inappropriate clothing that is too adult or revealing for their age
- Significant changes in emotional well-being
- Sudden changes in lifestyle
- Increasingly disruptive or violent behaviour
- Getting into trouble with the police
- Bruises, marks on the body, bleeding their genital or anal area, sexually-transmitted diseases, pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse or self-harm.



## What are the reasons for a child or young person not disclosing CSE?

The reasons why a child or young person may not disclose CSE are complex and numerous. In many cases they do not recognise that they are a victim of CSE.

The following is a list of reasons why children and young people do not always disclose CSE, albeit these are not necessarily considered to be an all-inclusive or exhaustive list of possibilities:

- Fear that perceived benefits of exploitation may outweigh the risks e.g. loss of or supply of alcohol; drugs; the relationship and associated love and attention
- Fear of retribution on self or family or that situation could get worse
- Fear of violence within exploitative relationship;
- Shame
- Fear of not being believed
- Fear of labelling e.g. being a prostitute or being gay
- Fear of separation from family and / or threat of being placed in secure accommodation
- Loss of control; fear of Police involvement and court proceedings
- Don't recognise they are being exploited

## Who is sexually exploiting children?

People of all backgrounds, ages and ethnicities are involved in exploiting children. Although most are male, women can also be involved in CSE. For instance, women might be involved through befriending victims. Criminals will be hard to identify because the victims are often only known by nicknames rather than their real names. Some children and young people are exploited by criminal gangs specifically set up to sexually exploit children. Children may not know that they are being exploited and initially at least will think that their abusers are friends. Some children are 'groomed' by 'boyfriends' who later force the child or young person into having sex with their friends or associates.

### **CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION - KNOW THE SIGNS!**



Going missing from home



Not engaging with usual friends



Sharp changes in mood or character



Being frightened of some people



Unexplained access to money



Always on their phones



Displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour



Drug or alcohol misuse

# What should you do if you are concerned that a child or young person is at risk of CSE?

## ASK

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What have I seen?
2. What have I heard?
3. What do I feel is unusual or different?
4. What has actually happened?
5. What is my concern?
6. What is this telling me?
7. What should I do now?

## ACT

1. Protecting children and young people and keeping them safe is everyone's job!
2. Keep your focus on the child or young person - their safety is paramount!
3. Doing nothing is not an option!
4. Do not assume someone else will do something!
5. Do not delay unnecessarily - act quickly!
6. Look, Listen and Record your Concern!
7. Look Further and See Beyond!
8. If you are a practitioner - Follow your agency child protection procedures
9. If you are a practitioner - Tell your Line Manager or Child Protection Officer immediately!
10. If you are a member of the public:
  - Contact the Child Protection Duty Team (24 hours) on 0300 111 8007
  - In an Emergency - Dial 999
  - Police (Non Emergency) - Dial 101
  - ChildLine - Dial 0800 1111
  - Crimestoppers - Dial 0808 555 111



# **Child Criminal Exploitation**

Child criminal exploitation is when someone uses a child (under 18 years old) to commit crimes for them.

It includes things like forcing a child to work on a cannabis farm, or targeting, grooming, coercing and exploiting a child to sell drugs in county lines operations. Child criminal exploitation can involve bribery, intimidation, violence and/or threats. The child does not need to have met whoever is exploiting them - children can be exploited via the internet or using mobile phones. They can also be targeted via social media platforms and gaming forums. A child may have been exploited even if it looks as if they have been a willing participant. Many young people do not see themselves as victims. Children can be exploited by individuals or groups, men or women, and adults or young people. People who exploit children use the fact that they have power over children, because of an age difference or some other factor like gender, intelligence, strength, status or wealth.

## **Who is likely to be exploited**

Any child can be a victim of child criminal exploitation, not just those who are known to social care or local authorities. But risk factors include:

- neglect or abuse
- not having a safe and stable home
- poverty
- social isolation or other social difficulties
- connections with people involved in gangs or crime
- disability
- mental health issues
- alcohol or drug problems
- being in care
- being excluded from mainstream education

## **Signs of exploitation**

Signs to look out for include:

- displaying aggressive/violent behaviours
- often going missing from home or school and being found away from their normal area
- unexplained money, clothes, designer wear, jewellery, gadgets or mobile phones
- having multiple mobile phones
- getting lots of phone calls or texts
- use and/or possession of drugs and/or alcohol
- possession of hotel key cards/keys
- committing theft/shoplifting
- relationships with older people
- unexplained injuries
- carrying weapons
- abandoning friends and their social circle
- school performance getting worse
- self-harm
- changes in well-being

- significant emotional changes (like becoming angry or sad), or becoming fearful, withdrawn or isolated
- using different language/terminology
- new peer groups and/or relationships with unknown associates

Any sudden change in a young person's lifestyle could be because of criminal exploitation and you should talk to them about it

### **Risks of exploitation**

Risks include:

- emotional and physical harm
- sexual violence
- sexual exploitation
- criminalisation resulting in custodial sentences, criminal records
- risk to siblings
- forced to live in cuckooed properties (see link to the county lines page which makes reference to cuckooing)
- being excluded from education
- serious violence/death

### **Advice for children**

If you are worried about a friend or concerned about your own welfare. It can be really worrying if you know someone who is in a gang or you think you may be being exploited. You don't have to cope with things on your own.

**You could:** [contact Childline](#) on [0800 1111](#) or online / [ask an adult for help](#), like a parent or teacher you trust / [call 999](#) if you think they are in immediate danger and need urgent help / consider speaking with your designated safe-guarding lead if in

education talk to your GP or nurse, social worker, mentor, local police officer.

### **How to leave a gang**

Try to spend less time with the other gang members / try to avoid places where you know the gang will be / [contact Childline](#) on [0800 1111](#) or online / [ask an adult for help](#), like a parent, teacher or youth worker you trust / [call 999](#) if you are in immediate danger and need urgent help focus on things that you enjoy like sport, music, art, reading or hobbies.

### **Advice for parents and carers**

Child criminal exploitation is a form of child abuse.

[Advice about child abuse for parents, guardians and professionals](#)

### **Report possible child criminal exploitation**

If you suspect someone of criminally exploiting children, or think someone you know has been or is at risk of becoming a victim find out [how to report possible child abuse](#).

If someone is in immediate danger and needs urgent help please [call 999](#) now. If you have a hearing or speech impairment, use our text phone service 18000 or text us on 999 if you've pre-registered with the emergency SMS service.

# Resources & Support

## Childline - relationship support for young people

Being in a relationship can be really exciting. Getting to know someone, hanging out and feeling happy just thinking about them. But it can also be confusing. Here is some advice for young people:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/friends-relationships-sex/sex-relationships/relationships/>

## Brook

Brook is an organisation that helps children and young people develop to be individuals and be themselves. They have many resources that parents and children can use about relationships and the wider context. <https://www.brook.org.uk/>

Useful places to go for information for your child:

Samaritans: 116 123  
Childline: 0800 1111  
Young Minds: 0808 802 5544

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>  
<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>  
<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>  
<https://youngminds.org.uk/>  
<https://www.kooth.com/>

