



Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status.

Consent cannot be given, even where a child may believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them.

“The sexual exploitation of children and young people **under 18** involves situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive ‘something’ (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities.

Child sexual exploitation can occur through use of technology without the child’s immediate recognition, for example the persuasion to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones with no immediate payment or gain. In all cases those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources.”

The National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children & Young People, 2008

Both girls and boys can be exploited.

Online Sexual Exploitation includes:

- Online befriending, grooming and abuse
- Asking children to share indecent images of themselves
- Leverage for further demands,
- Offline meetings to sexually abuse a child
- Contact from perpetrators in other countries

The speed of grooming online can be **very** quick - leaving little ‘thinking time’ for the victim.

The restrained influencing of a child over several months has largely been replaced by rapid escalation to threats, intimidation and coercion.

Governors, Management Committees and the senior management of all education settings need to make clear their commitment to deal effectively with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

All education settings should ensure that:

- They identify to staff & pupils a fully trained **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Lead** who is updated regularly
- The CSE Lead and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (if they are different people) work closely together
- All staff are made aware of and understand CSE indicators and referral pathways
- Students are taught about:
 - CSE and how to protect themselves and each other
 - Healthy (including sexual) relationships, peer pressure, bullying, e-safety, gang activity etc. and how these topics can relate to CSE
- All students know who to go to for help and support, and who to report CSE concerns to, both inside and outside the education setting
- Relevant staff work in partnership with other agencies
- Procedures are in place to continually gather, record and share CSE information with the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service as soon as practicable, including ongoing data on students who run away or go missing
- They consider effective ways of raising awareness of CSE with parents and carers



What to look out for:

Vulnerabilities:

ALL children and young people, including those from supportive families can be vulnerable to sexual exploitation. However, some children and young people are known to be at greater risk if they:

- Have a chaotic home/family life
- Have a history of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of 'honour'-based violence, physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect)
- Have experienced loss or bereavement
- Are associated with gangs through relatives or peers, or are living in a gang neighbourhood
- Have friendships with children or young people who are being sexually exploited
- Have learning difficulties
- Live in residential care, or hostel or bed & breakfast accommodation
- Have low self-esteem or self-confidence
- Are Young Carers (i.e. have caring responsibilities for parents or family members with mental or physical health problems, or who are misusing substances)

Warning signs:

Children and young people who are being sexually exploited may be:

- Going missing from, or returning late to home or care
- Absent from or not taking part in education
- Receiving unexplained gifts or new possessions
- Having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- Increasing their use of social media, dating sites, image sharing apps etc.
- Involved in risky online relationships or meeting people befriended online
- Sharing inappropriate or indecent online images
- Becoming isolated or estranged from family and friends
- Involved in offending behaviour
- Misusing drugs or alcohol
- Experiencing sexual or other cyber-bullying
- Changing their physical appearance
- Contracting sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations
- In poor mental health, self-harming, have mood swings or changes in emotional wellbeing or having thoughts of, or attempting suicide

Risk assessment and consent:

"In assessing whether a child or young person is a victim of sexual exploitation, or at risk of becoming a victim, careful consideration should be given to the issue of consent. It is important to bear in mind that:

- A child under the age of 13 is not legally capable of consenting to sex (it is statutory rape) or any other type of sexual touching;
- Sexual activity with a child under 16 is also an offence;
- It is an offence for a person to have a sexual relationship with a 16 or 17 year old if they hold a position of trust or authority in relation to them;
- Where sexual activity with a 16 or 17 year old does not result in an offence being committed, it may still result in harm, or the likelihood of harm being suffered;
- Non-consensual sex is rape whatever the age of the victim; and
- If the victim is incapacitated through drink or drugs, or the victim or his or her family has been subject to violence or the threat of it, they cannot be considered to have given true consent and therefore offences may have been committed.

Child sexual exploitation is therefore potentially a child protection issue for all children under the age of 18 years and not just those in a specific age group."

Taken from: 'What to do if you suspect a child is being sexually exploited' DforE 2012



What to do next:

Any member of staff who suspects or receives information that a child or young person **may be** involved in sexual exploitation (including suspicion that they are being groomed online), should refer their concerns to their Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy, who will refer the matter to Children's Social Care.

Children's Social Care will initiate a child protection enquiry and contact the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service to consider convening a Sexual Exploitation Meeting based on the indicators of risks.

If there are concerns about the involvement of a person who:

- works with children, and/or
- is in a 'Position of Trust'

...the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** should be informed, via the Sheffield Safeguarding Children Advisory Service, details below.

Where appropriate, the child or young person's wishes and feelings, as well as those of their parents and carers should be sought and taken into consideration when deciding how to proceed.

However, practitioners should be aware that this may not always be in the child or young person's best interest and may put them at further risk of harm.

Some children or young people may have been trafficked and need support to access services.

Practitioners should refer to the 'Designated Competent Authorities' based within the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre (details below) and [UK Visas and Immigration](#).

Useful websites:

- [Sheffield Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures](#)
- SSCB factsheet about [Sexual Exploitation](#)
- [Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation 'PACSE'](#) is a national charity working with parents & carers whose children are sexually exploited
- [NSPCC](#): definitions, statistics, facts and resources about Child Sexual Exploitation
- [Thinkuknow](#): advice for staff, parents, children and young people about online abuse
- [Barnardo's](#): advice for parents, professionals and young people on the signs of sexual exploitation and how to keep safe

Advice and Support:

Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service:

Tel. 0114 2018645

Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm

Safeguarding Children Advisory Service:

Tel 0114 2053535

Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm

UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC):

Tel. 0844 7782406

Fax: 0870 4965534

Email: UKHTC@nca.x.gsi.gov.uk

Publications and research:

- [What to do if you suspect a child is being sexually exploited, DfE June 2012](#)
- [Qualitative study of children, young people and 'sexting', NSPCC 2012](#)