

Safeguarding

What is Child Sexual Exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation is when children and young people receive something (such as food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, or money) as a result of performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of the internet or on mobile phones. In all cases, those exploiting the child or young person have power over them because of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or resources. For victims, the pain of their ordeal and fear that they will not be believed means they are too often scared to come forward.

What are the signs?

Often, the victims of sexual exploitation are not aware that they are being exploited. Sometimes, a victim may think they won't be believed - especially if the abuser is the partner of their mum or dad, a relative or close family friend - and so they may be reluctant to ask for help. However, there are a number of tell-tale signs that a child or young person may be being groomed. These include:

- going missing for periods of time or regularly coming home late
- regularly missing school or not taking part in education
- appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- associating with other young people involved in exploitation
- having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- suffering from sexually transmitted infections
- mood swings or changes in emotional wellbeing
- drug and alcohol misuse
- displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- changes in eating pattern

Risks faced by children?

- Children at risk of sexual exploitation are some of the most vulnerable in our society. Many have experienced abandonment or have suffered from physical and mental abuse. They need help but don't know where to look.
- Perpetrators of these crimes are becoming increasingly sophisticated, using the internet to protect their identity and trafficking children around the country to avoid detection.

Who can offer additional support?

0808 800 5000, the NSPCC 24 Hour Child Protection Helpline, is a useful helpline