

Child Sexual Exploitation

Overview description

Child sexual exploitation is defined as;

“a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology”.
DfE (2017) p5.

Child sexual exploitation:

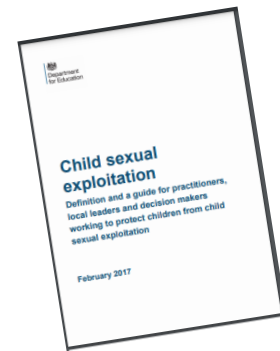
- can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years, including 16- and 17-year olds who can legally consent to have sex;
- can still be abuse even if the sexual activity appears consensual;
- can include both contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity;
- can take place in person or via technology, or a combination of both;
- can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence;
- may occur without the child or young person's immediate knowledge (through others copying videos or images they have created and posting on social media, for example);
- can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults. The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse; and
- is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the abuse. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

One of the key factors found in most cases of child sexual exploitation is the presence of some form of exchange (sexual activity in return for something); for the victim and/or perpetrator or facilitator. The exchange can include both tangible (such as money, drugs or alcohol) and intangible rewards (such as status, protection or perceived receipt of love or affection). It is critical to remember the unequal power dynamic within which this exchange occurs and to remember that the receipt of something by a child/young person does not make them any less of a victim. It is also important to note that the prevention of something negative can also fulfil the requirement for exchange, for example a child who engages in sexual activity to stop someone carrying out a threat to harm his/her family.

Key Message: Child sexual exploitation is never the victim's fault, even if there is some form of exchange: all children and young people under the age of 18 have a right to be safe and should be protected from harm.

In February 2017 the DfE published a key document entitled:

Child sexual exploitation: Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation



Greater Manchester Safeguarding also has detailed guidance

Much of the information/guidance in this chapter has been drawn from the non-statutory advisory DfE document and MSP Guidance.

They can be found here:

- <https://greatermanchesterscp.trixonline.co.uk/chapter/safeguarding-children-and-young-people-abused-through-sexual-exploitation>
- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/591903/CSE_Guidance_Core_Document_13.02.2017.pdf

Types of exploitation

Child sexual exploitation takes many different forms. And it is often occurring alongside other forms of abuse or in connection with other crimes. The DfE provides some helpful illustrative examples.

The image displays six blue rounded rectangular boxes, each containing a specific example of child sexual exploitation. The boxes are arranged in a grid-like fashion. The first box (top left) describes a 44-year-old female posing as a 17-year-old female online to persuade a 12-year-old male to send her a sexual image. The second box (top right) describes three 15-year-old females being taken to a house party and given 'free' alcohol and drugs, then made to have sex with six adult males. The third box (middle left) describes a 14-year-old male giving a 17-year-old male oral sex because the older male has threatened to tell his parents he is gay. The fourth box (middle center) describes a 21-year-old male persuading his 17-year-old 'girlfriend' to have sex with his friends to pay off a drug debt. The fifth box (bottom center) describes a mother letting other adults abuse her 8-year-old child in return for money. The sixth box (bottom right) describes a 14-year-old female having sex with a 16-year-old gang member and his two friends in return for the protection of the gang.

Child sexual exploitation may occur without the child being aware of events, or understanding that these constitute abuse.

Children can also be perpetrators. They can be both experiencing child sexual exploitation and perpetrating it at the same time. Examples might include a child who is forced to take part in the exploitation of another child under duress, or a child who is forced to introduce other children to their abuser under threats to their family's safety. Responses need to acknowledge the child's own victimisation.

Who is vulnerable to being exploited?

Any child/young person, in any community can be vulnerable. However, the following vulnerabilities are examples of the types of things children can experience that might make them more susceptible to child sexual exploitation:

- Having a prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse;
- Lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past (domestic violence or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example);
- Recent bereavement or loss;
- Social isolation or social difficulties;
- Absence of a safe environment to explore sexuality;
- Economic vulnerability;
- Homelessness or insecure accommodation status;
- Connections with other children and young people who are being sexually exploited;
- Family members or other connections involved in adult sex work;
- Having a physical or learning disability;
- Being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories); and
- Sexual identity.

Not all children and young people with these vulnerabilities will experience child sexual exploitation. Child sexual exploitation can also occur without any of these vulnerabilities being present.

Potential Indicators for grooming and sexual exploitation

Children rarely self-report child sexual exploitation so it is important we are aware of potential indicators of risk, including:

- Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc without plausible explanation;
- Gang-association and/or isolation from peers/social networks;
- Exclusion or unexplained absences from school, college or work;
- Leaving home/care without explanation and persistently going missing or returning late;
- Excessive receipt of texts/phone calls;
- Returning home under the influence of drugs/alcohol;
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age/sexually transmitted infections;
- Evidence of/suspicions of physical or sexual assault;
- Relationships with controlling or significantly older individuals or groups;
- Multiple callers (unknown adults or peers);
- Frequenting areas known for sex work;
- Concerning use of internet or other social media;
- Increasing secretiveness around behaviours; and
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being.

What to do if a child/young person reveals abuse?

Any practitioner working with a child who they think may be at risk of child sexual exploitation should follow the guidance set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2018) and share this information with local authority children's social care. You should refer any concerns about a child's welfare to local authority children's social care. If you believe a child is in immediate risk of harm, you should contact the police.

The **Greater Manchester Safeguarding Partnership** (GMSP) has developed a standardised approach to dealing with children and young people abused through sexual exploitation across Greater Manchester – the GMSP procedures found at <https://greatermanchesterscp.trixonline.co.uk/chapter/safeguarding-children-and-young-people-abused-through-sexual-exploitation> and should be used by all practitioners.

The GMSP procedures are supported locally by the **MSB CSE Strategy** published in July 2017.

If you believe a child is at risk of, or is being sexually abused through exploitation, please refer via the Manchester MASH – details on our **concerned** page.





The **Greater Manchester Phoenix CSE Measurement Tool and Guidance** is available from the GM procedures manual at greatermanchesterscb.proceduresonline.com/cse_measurement_tool.pdf and greatermanchesterscb.proceduresonline.com/

If a child talks to you about sexual exploitation it is important to:

- Listen carefully to what they are saying
- Let them know they've done the right thing by telling you
- Tell them it's not their fault
- Say you'll take them seriously
- Don't confront the alleged abuser
- Explain what you'll do next. This may simply be that you need to speak to Mrs XX (safeguarding officer or Head teacher in school) and that they will then need to speak to someone who will be able to keep them safe that day and in the future. Be reassuring but if you don't have all the information say what will happen immediately and be clear that you will keep communicating with them as time goes on.
- Report your concerns.

Helpful Resources/Support



Confidential Helpline: 0808 1000 900    

[Our Impact](#) | [Wales](#) | [Scotland](#) | [Ireland](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Resources](#) | [Media Centre](#)

<https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/>

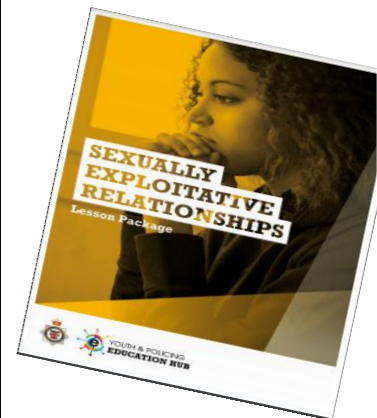
This charity is run by The Lucy Faithfull Foundation, the only UK-wide charity dedicated solely to preventing child sexual abuse. They will support anyone with concerns about child sexual abuse and its prevention including young people themselves, parents and professionals. There is a free helpline for advice and support.

<https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/professionals-looking-for-advice/>

They also recognise that working with children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse can have a significant impact on professionals and they offer advice around self-care. <https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/professionals-looking-for-advice/professionals-self-care/>

The Youth and Policing Hub (Avon and Somerset Police) have put together a resource pack including lesson plans for teaching young people about this issue

<https://healthyschoolscp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CSE-Lesson-Plan-age-13-Youth-and-Policing-Education-Hub.pdf>

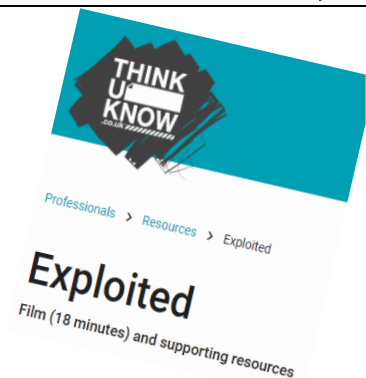


Think U Know website offers free resources for teachers. This includes the film Exploited and a lesson plans and resources to accompany it. Suitable for young people from 14 years.

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/professionals/resources/exploited>

This website is part of CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection command). This is National Crime Agency command specifically in place to address online child exploitation

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/>



Videos

Chelsea's story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAo8Yly8rFk>

This is a dramatisation portraying how exploitation may start. It's helpful for sharing with young people.

University of Bedfordshire has produced a number of short films as part of its CSE research programme. www.beds.ac.uk/ic/films

These 12 films are aimed at anyone who wants to access learning from the latest research on child sexual exploitation (CSE) in a short accessible form. They are helpful for training of staff.

The films share the findings of a range of studies undertaken by researchers in the 'International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking' as well as drawing on wider CSE literature. Most of the films are under two minutes long. Each film is accompanied by a short briefing document that outlines the evidence in more detail, with references and links to the original research, and questions for reflection.

Parents

PACE is a charity specifically supporting parents against child exploitation. <http://paceuk.info/for-parents/advice-centre/>

The Children's Society provides a CSE Toolkit for Parents and Carers – available here: <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/information/professionals/resources/cse-toolkit-supporting-parents-carers>

Relationship Abuse

Specifically exploring exploitation and abuse in the context of teenage relationships. <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/information/professionals/resources/missing-the-mark>

Other helpful websites for information:

- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/child-sexual-exploitation/>
- <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/protecting-children/cse>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/how-to-spot-child-sexual-exploitation/>
- <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/what-we-do/crime-threats/child-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation>

Manchester Safeguarding Partnership – **CSE for CYP** -
<https://greatermanchesterscp.trixonline.co.uk/chapter/safeguarding-children-and-young-people-abused-through-sexual-exploitation>