



One minute guide

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

No. 11, June 2017

What is Child Sexual Exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of sexual abuse, where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person into sexual activity for something the victim needs or wants, such as attention, affection, money, alcohol/drugs or somewhere to stay, and for the advantage of the perpetrator(s) and/or facilitator(s).

CSE does not always involve physical contact; it may take place through the use of technology, or consist of a combination of both.

CSE can occur in seemingly consensual relationships and the child/young person may think or describe their abuser as their friend, boyfriend or girlfriend. It is also important to be aware that although a child may maintain contact with someone about who there may be concerns, it does not mean that the relationship is not exploitative. Maintained contact could be due to fear, control and / or coercion.

Perpetrators can be male or female, children or adults. Those who abuse will control and manipulate, they may do this through the use of enticement and/or violence.

Child sexual exploitation can range from opportunistic to organised abuse, and be a one-off occurrence or involve abuse over a prolonged period of time. Generally there will be a form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the abuse. This may be based on one or more factors such as age, gender, sexual orientation, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

Any child or young person from any background, including 16 and 17 year olds (who can legally consent to sexual activity), can be a victim of CSE. Even where there is some form of exchange (money, gifts etc.) **child sexual exploitation is never the victim's fault.**

What do we all need to do?

We all have an important role to play in protecting children and young people from sexual exploitation. We can do this by the following:

Identification— Children and young people rarely self-report CSE, so it is important that we are aware of vulnerability and risk factors and indicators (see next page);

Acting— Contact the Children and Families Duty and Advice Team ([guide](#)) to discuss concerns regarding a child being at risk of, or experiencing CSE. If a child is believed to be at risk of immediate harm, ring the Police on 999;

Vulnerability and Risk Management—Where it is recognised that a child is at risk, has been targeted or is being sexually exploited, services should work together to manage the child's vulnerability and risk. This is usually coordinated by Children's Social Work Service; and

Disruption - Practitioners, businesses and communities should work in partnership to disrupt perpetrator activity. Effective sharing of information and intelligence is vital to help the police and services working with children and adults to disrupt exploitation and secure prosecutions.

Vulnerability and risk factors and indicators to consider

Some groups of children are particularly vulnerable to CSE, these include; children with learning difficulties or disabilities, children looked after, ([guide](#)), care leavers ([guide](#)), migrant children, unaccompanied asylum seeking children, homeless children, children who run away from home and care ([guide](#)), and/or are missing from education ([guide](#)).

Certain experiences can contribute to children being more susceptible to child sexual exploitation such as: having a prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse; experience of domestic violence/ parental substance misuse, or mental health problems; a lack of a safe/stable home environment; being economically disadvantaged; a recent bereavement or loss; social isolation or social difficulties; and/or exposure to adult sex work in their family or network.

When considering a child's vulnerability and risk, indicators to consider include:

- Missing from home, care or school, running away, leaving home/care without explanation and/or persistently returning late; and/or unexplained absences from school, college or work;

- Secrecy about whereabouts, friendships, significant relationships and/or new possessions;

- Concerning use of the internet or social media and/or excessive receipt of messages phone calls;

- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional wellbeing;

- Evidence of/suspicions of physical or sexual assault;

- Evidence of new possessions, extra money or access to alcohol, substances or access to other non-tangible items such as taxi fares access to events, eating out without plausible explanation;

- Gang-association or social isolation;

- New offending or anti-social behaviour /increased misuse of substances;

- Significant relationships with controlling individuals or groups; and

- Concerning sexualised behaviour.

CSE rarely occurs in isolation of other vulnerability and risk factors. It is also often linked to other types of criminal activity such as: child trafficking; domestic abuse and violence; interpersonal violence and abuse in intimate relationships; drug-related offences; gang-related activity; and modern day slavery.

Absence of any of the potential indicators of CSE does not mean that a child is not experiencing abuse and exploitation. Assessing if a child is at risk of/or is experiencing CSE, relies on a full and holistic assessment of all concerns.

Key contacts and more information

Duty and Advice Tel: 0113 3760336 (practitioners) or 0113 2224403 (public) or out of hours for practitioners, Children's Emergency Duty Team Tel: 0113 3760469.

Integrated Safeguarding Unit Tel: 0113 2478652.

You can read national guidance: [Child Sexual Exploitation—definition and guide for practitioners](#) or for more information, see [Leeds Safeguarding Children's Board](#)