

One Minute Guide

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

What is Child Sexual Exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of sexual abuse, in which a young person is manipulated or forced into taking part in a sexual act. This could be as part of a seemingly consensual relationship, or in return for attention, affection, money, drugs, alcohol or somewhere to stay. The young person may think that their abuser is their friend, or even their boyfriend or girlfriend. But they will put them into dangerous situations, forcing the young person to do things they don't want to do. The abuser may physically or verbally threaten the young person, or be violent towards them. They will control and manipulate them, and try to isolate them from friends and family. The risk of CSE is linked to children and young people who are missing or absent.

What do we all need to do?

Child sexual exploitation affects thousands of children and young people across the UK every year. As professionals working with young people in an education, health or social care setting, we all have an important role to play in protecting children from exploitation - helping to cut them free from this horrific form of child abuse. We can do this by the following:

Identification— we should all become aware of the risk indicators and factors to consider whether a child is at risk of sexual exploitation.

Acting— if someone identifies that a child may be at risk of CSE, they should contact the Duty and Advice Team to discuss this. If a child is at immediate risk of harm, ring the Police on 999.

Vulnerability and Risk Management— where it has been recognised that a child is at risk, has been targeted or is being exploited, services should work together to manage vulnerability and risk. This is usually coordinated by Children's Social Work Service and involves multi-agency partnership working.

Disruption -services should work in partnership to disrupt perpetrator activity. This includes sharing information between the police and services working with children & adults and the wider community.

Who does it affect?

This type of abuse could happen to any young person from any background. It happens to boys and young men as well as girls and young women. Some children are particularly vulnerable such as disabled children, children looked after, care leavers, migrant children and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Risk indicators and factors to consider identifying CSE

Education — Truancy, regular non-school attendance, excluded, behaviour problems.

Missing / run away — Comes in late, stays out overnight without permission, persistently reported as missing from home or care, missing for short periods of time on a regular basis.

Sexualised risk taking — Inappropriate dress/ change in physical appearance, meeting unknown adults / getting into unknown cars, internet used to meet adults, older partner (+5 years).

Rewards — Unaccounted for money, expensive items such as new mobile phone, jewellery.

Contact with risky adults / environments — Associating with other known sexually exploited children and / or unknown adults, extensive use of mobile phone, accessing unknown premises (homes) or known risky areas, evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites.

Coercion / control — Reported limited/reduced contact with friends/family, disclosure of physical /sexual assault (later withdrawn), physical injuries, child's whereabouts unknown/estranged from family.

Sexual health — Reported STI(s), miscarriage(s), termination(s).

Substance use — Level of drug and alcohol use/different, increased/concerning/ chronic.

Mental Health — Low self-esteem, self-harm, eating disorder, attempted suicide, violent behaviour, angry outbursts, offending.