

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation - Information for Professionals

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is present across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. It affects boys and young men as well as girls and young women. Sexual exploitation takes many forms, from a seemingly 'consensual' relationship, where sexual acts are given for affection, accommodation, alcohol, drugs, money or gifts, through to the prostitution or trafficking of children and young people across counties, town or streets for the purposes of sexual activity.

What marks out exploitation, is an imbalance of power in a relationship, coercion, intimidation, bullying or grooming for sexual activity. Technology can be used to groom or record the abuse and share this with others.

A child or young person may believe their abuser is a boyfriend or girlfriend but their abuser will manipulate them, expose them to dangerous situations and force them to do things which they would otherwise not willingly do. The abuser will try to isolate the child or young person from their friends and family, effectively taking control of their life.

You can help by identifying a child or young person who may be at risk.

If you are concerned that a child or young person may be at risk of being exploited, please make a referral to the Multi Agency Referral Unit (MARU) tel: 0300 123 1116). If you have information that is not specific to a child, please share this information with the representative from your organisation who attends the Missing and Child Sexual Exploitation Forum, where this information can be shared.

The South West Peninsula Child Sexual Exploitation Standard Operating Protocol and Strategy provides more information regarding children or young people who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation including the risk indicators.

You are encouraged to:

Be alert to changes in behaviour or any physical signs and be prepared to investigate these further;

- Think how you can support children or young people to share information if they are worried about their own or another person's behaviour;
- Think how you can support children and young people and their parents about the importance of healthy relationships and how they can access support;

- Recognise the importance of intervening early. It may be possible to protect a child or young person as risks emerge and prevent opportunities for sexual offending;
- Be familiar with the South West Child Protection Procedures and understand your role in them.

You can help in sharing information about offenders and locations of concern

You may have information about offenders, their vehicles or locations linked to sexual exploitation. The information you have may be incomplete, third hand or anonymous, however, this should not discourage you in sharing this information as it may provide a missing link or corroborate other information. Three operational Forums across the county have been developed for this information to be shared and collated. In assisting in the gathering of information we encourage you to:

Be alert to opportunities you will have to pass on information;

- Be confident in passing on information – it could help protect children and young people.

Who is involved?

It is common for victims not to recognise that they are being abused and they rarely make complaints.

The needs of teenagers who can legally consent to sexual activities are often overlooked by professionals for this very reason.

There are common indicators which can help professionals to recognise those children and young people who may be at risk.

Offenders are predominantly male, can come from any ethnic background and could be in their early 20's or considerably older, however, women and other young people children are involved in the grooming of children and young people.

Who might be targeted?

Any child may be targeted; however, some groups are particularly vulnerable. These include children and young people:

- Who run away or go missing from home;
- In residential and foster care;
- Who are disengaged from education;
- Who may be using drugs or alcohol.

Where might children be targeted?

Offenders will often use social media, such as the internet and mobile phones, to make contact and target children and young people. Offenders are also known to target areas where children and young people gather without much adult supervision, such as shopping centres, takeaways, pubs and off licences, sports facilities, bus and train stations, local parks and playgrounds.

In particular, there is a link between children and young people who go missing and being vulnerable to sexual exploitation. An additional vulnerability factor can be the use of drugs and alcohol.

How are victims targeted?

Children and young people are 'groomed' by someone befriending them. This can be in person or through social media. Often they are made to feel special and are initially given lots of attention.

Children and young people are groomed to be secretive about who they are in contact with on-line, the places they are going and the people they are meeting, activities are very often concealed from parents and carers. Often these children and young people are faced with limited choice because of the controlling behaviour of their abuser.

What are the possible signs of sexual exploitation?

Anyone who is in regular contact with children and young people is in a good position to notice early changes in behaviour and physical signs which may indicate involvement in sexual exploitation. Children and young people's demeanour could change, which may mean that professionals involved with them may miss the telltale signs that they are being groomed for sexual exploitation.

Risk indicators can include:

- Going missing for periods of time or regularly returning home late;
- Appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions;
- Acquisition of a new phone, not provided by parents or carers;
- Having older boyfriends or girlfriends;
- Isolated from peers and social networks;
- Suffering from sexually transmitted infections;
- Mood swings, challenging behaviour or changes in emotional wellbeing;
- Drug and/or alcohol misuse;
- Displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour;
- Involvement in theft, shoplifting or anti social behaviour;
- Concerns about their on-line activities.

LOCAL SOURCES OF SUPPORT (CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION):

Cornwall:

Multi Agency Referral Unit (MARU) 0300 123 1116
Out of Hours Service - 01208 251300

Isles of Scilly:

Children's Social Care - 01720 424354
Out of Hours service - 01720 422699

Devon and Cornwall Police: Emergency 999/Non emergency 101

NATIONAL SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

NSPCC helpline: 0808 800 5000 or Text: 88858
Childline: 0800 1111
Missing People Helpline: Call freephone or text: 116 000