

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE



What is child sexual exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation is 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.

(HM Government, Working Together to Safeguard Children, London, Stationery Office, 2023)

Child sexual exploitation can manifest itself in different ways:

- It can involve an older perpetrator exercising financial, emotional or physical control over a young person.
- It can involve peers manipulating or forcing victims into sexual activity, sometimes within gangs and in gang-affected neighbourhoods, but not always.
- Exploitation can also involve opportunistic or organised networks of perpetrators who may profit financially from trafficking young victims between different locations to engage in sexual activity with multiple men *(Barnardo's, 2011).*

Examples of child sexual exploitation



- Deceiving children into producing indecent images of themselves, engaging in sexual chat online or sexual activity over a webcam.
- An adult, usually at least five years older, befriending and grooming a young person by focusing on their vulnerabilities. The victim will initially feel they are in a positive and rewarding relationship with the perpetrator.
- Young people are passed by perpetrators through networks, between towns and cities, where they may be forced or coerced into sexual activity with multiple people.
- Young people are used to recruit other young people to take part in so-called 'sex parties' where this can occur.
- Young people in gangs or groups may be sexual exploited as part of gang initiation or as punishment. Young people may also be encouraged to recruit peers into the gang, exposing them to similar treatment and making it difficult to identify perpetrators who control the gang.

Perpetrators may be:

- An adult or another young person
- Male or female
- Any ethnicity
- Visible in everyday life
- Articulate, plausible and 'savvy'



It is important to note that:

- not all perpetrators will involve money or gifts when they exploit young people.
- young people may not understand that sex they haven't agreed to or forced sex – including oral sex – is wrong and illegal.

In addition to the indicators for sexual abuse, in cases of child sexual exploitation some indicators may include young people:



- going missing for periods of time or regularly returning home late
- skipping school or being disruptive in class
- appearing with unexplained gifts or possessions that can't be accounted for
- experiencing health problems that may indicate a sexually transmitted infection
- having mood swings and changes in temperament
- using and misusing drugs and/or alcohol
- displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour, such as over-familiarity with strangers, dressing in a sexualised manner or sending sexualised images by mobile phone (sexting)
- showing signs of unexplained physical harm, such as bruising and cigarette burns

Your Parish Safeguarding Officer is: