



Short Guide for Practitioners: Identifying Child Sexual Exploitation

What is Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)?

It is child sexual abuse which may involve physical, emotional abuse and neglect. Sexual exploitation includes situations where children and young people exchange sex for shelter, protection, accommodation, food, gifts, alcohol and drugs. Often there may be violence or threats of violence towards the child and they may be coerced to become involved in pornography or abusive images.

Effects of CSE

Sexual exploitation adversely affects the lives of children and impacts on their health, education, self-esteem and causes them to be socially excluded.

Who Are the Victims?

Sexual exploitation involves both girls and boys under the age of 18. Children involved must be regarded as potential victims of abuse. Victims include children from all communities, cultures, some looked after children and victims of human trafficking. Vulnerability and low self-esteem are the most common factors amongst children who are at risk of being sexually exploited. Strong links have been identified between sexual exploitation, running away from home, human trafficking and substance misuse. Increasingly, young people are being sexually exploited by adults and older young people "met" via the Internet. This "hi-tech" method of grooming children for abuse has contributed to the invisibility of the sexual exploitation of children.

Children may be drawn into sexual exploitation by a young person of a similar age. Girls, in particular, are often coerced into sexual exploitation by an older man who targets an individual. They may see him as their boyfriend, and become physically and emotionally dependent upon him. This may be reinforced by the use of alcohol and drugs. Over time, access to friends and family becomes restricted and the child becomes alienated from agencies which may be able to identify and interrupt the abuse. This is often referred to as the grooming process. Child sexual exploitation can occur even if there is no immediate payment or gain, for example, when a child is persuaded to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones. In all cases those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources (DCSF, 2009). This 'exchange' may also be intangible, in the sense that the young person involved will typically believe that the relationship in which they are involved is a consensual one, and that the abuser(s) are their 'boyfriends'. There are also social and cultural tensions in terms of what is understood to represent a 'consensual' relationship amongst teenagers.

What can you do?

Use this risk assessment framework to help you assess the risk of child sexual exploitation.



- 1 or 2 problems where they live
 - Mostly attend education
 - Rarely or never takes drugs/alcohol
 - Never or very occasionally going missing
 - Close to & get on well with family/caregivers
 - Don't have sex/or age appropriate sexual behaviour
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- Unhappy in home environment
 - Attend alternative school placement
 - Sometimes use drugs/alcohol; becoming a problem
 - Regularly going missing - overnight
 - Lots of arguments with family/caregivers – but they care for me
 - Have sex when under influence of drugs/alcohol
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- No stable base – c/o friend's house, sleeping rough
 - Does not regularly attend school
 - Regularly take drugs alcohol – in risky situations
 - Frequently going missing for longer periods
 - Involved with one or a number of abusive relationships
 - Peers involved in sexual exploitation/associates with risky adults

Adapted from Barnardo's Cymru

What to look out for...

Use the list of indicators on the next page to help identify the likelihood of CSE.

Here are some examples:

- * Staying out late or episodes of being missing overnight or longer
- * Concerning use of the internet/mobile phone, Multiple callers (unknown adults/older young people)
- * Evidence of/suspicion of physical or sexual assault; disclosure of assault followed by withdrawal of a reported incident
- * Children under 13 years asking for sexual health advice, Unplanned pregnancy and/or Sexually Transmitted Infections
- * Peers involved in sexual exploitation, Isolation from peers/social network
- * Exclusion or unexplained absences from school or college, Frequenting areas known for adult prostitution
- * Relationships with controlling adults, Entering/leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults
- * Unexplained amounts of money, expensive clothing or other items, Drugs/alcohol misuse

What to do next?

Follow your usual child protection procedures:

- * Your response to a disclosure.
 - Be calm
 - Tell the young person they have done the right thing by talking to you
 - Do not make any promises to keep a secret
 - Tell them that help is available

- * If you think a young person is a risk of CSE, write down
 - What you have seen
 - What your concerns are and/or
 - What the young person has told you

- * Report your concerns. These people know what to do next
 - Your child protection co-ordinator or line manager
 - The child's named person (Headteacher or Health Visitor)
 - Joint Child Protection Unit 01224 306877
 - Emergency Out of Hours Social Work 01224 693936
 - Police 101

List of Indicators

The following list is not exhaustive but highlights indicators of risk and vulnerabilities associated with sexual exploitation.

Health	Present
Physical injuries such as bruising suggestive of either physical or sexual assault	Yes / No / Possibly
A sexually transmitted infection, particularly if it is recurring or there are multiple STIs	Yes / No / Possibly
Pregnancy / abortion / miscarriage	Yes / No / Possibly
Sexually risky behaviour	Yes / No / Possibly
Self-harming	Yes / No / Possibly
Thoughts of or attempted suicide	Yes / No / Possibly
Eating disorder	Yes / No / Possibly
Change in appearance including losing weight, putting on weight	Yes / No / Possibly
Evidence of misuse of drugs/alcohol, including associated health problems	Yes / No / Possibly
Learning disability	Yes / No / Possibly

Behaviour	Present
Sexually offending behaviour	Yes / No / Possibly
Tuancy/disengagement with education, or considerable change in performance at school	Yes / No / Possibly
Volatile behaviour exhibiting extreme array of mood swings or abusive language which is unusual for the child	Yes / No / Possibly
Aggressive or violent, including to pets/animals	Yes / No / Possibly
Becoming angry, hostile if any suspicions or concerns about their activities are expressed	Yes / No / Possibly
Physical aggression towards parents, siblings, pets, teachers or peers	Yes / No / Possibly
Detachment from age-appropriate activities	Yes / No / Possibly
Secretive behaviour	Yes / No / Possibly
Known to be sexually active	Yes / No / Possibly
Low self-image, low self-esteem	Yes / No / Possibly
Young offender or anti-social behaviour	Yes / No / Possibly
Sexualised language	Yes / No / Possibly
Hostility in relationship with parents / carers and other family members	Yes / No / Possibly
Getting involved in petty crime such as shoplifting or stealing	Yes / No / Possibly

Family and Social	Present
A family member or known associate working in the adult sex trade	Yes / No / Possibly
Unsure about their sexual orientation, or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their family	Yes / No / Possibly
History of physical, sexual and / or emotional abuse; neglect	Yes / No / Possibly
Witness to or involved in domestic violence at home	Yes / No / Possibly
Parental difficulties; drug and alcohol misuse, mental health problems, physical or learning difficulty. Being a young carer	Yes / No / Possibly
Pattern of street homelessness or sofa surfing	Yes / No / Possibly
Living in hostel or B & B accommodation	Yes / No / Possibly
Conflict at home around boundaries, including staying out late	Yes / No / Possibly
Recent bereavement or loss	Yes / No / Possibly
Gang association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships	Yes / No / Possibly
Lacking friends their own age	Yes / No / Possibly
Living in a gang neighbourhood	Yes / No / Possibly

Grooming	Present
Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults	Yes / No / Possibly
Inappropriate use of the Internet and forming relationships, particularly with adults, via the Internet. Note adults may pose as peers to entrap the child	Yes / No / Possibly
Mobile phone being answered by unknown adult	Yes / No / Possibly

Grooming	Present
Accounts of social activities with no plausible explanation of the source of necessary funding	Yes / No / Possibly
Having keys to premises other than those they should have	Yes / No / Possibly
Possession of money with no plausible explanation	Yes / No / Possibly
Acquisition of expensive or sexual clothes, mobile phone or other possession without plausible explanation	Yes / No / Possibly
Having new mobile phone, several mobile phones, especially Blackberry or I phone – (because messages cannot be traced)	Yes / No / Possibly
Always have credit on their mobile phones, despite having no access to money or having no credit so phone can only be used for incoming calls	Yes / No / Possibly
Excessive use of mobile phones including receiving calls late at night	Yes / No / Possibly
Reports that the child / young person has been seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation	Yes / No / Possibly
Unexplained relationships with older adults	Yes / No / Possibly
Associating with other young people who are known to be sexually exploited, including in school	Yes / No / Possibly
Sexual relationship with a significantly older person	Yes / No / Possibly
Phone call, texts or letters from unknown adults	Yes / No / Possibly
Recruiting others into sexual exploitation	Yes / No / Possibly
Seen at public toilets known for cottaging or adult venues (pubs and clubs)	Yes / No / Possibly
Adults loitering outside the child/young person's usual place of residence or school	Yes / No / Possibly
Leaving home/care setting in clothing unusual for the individual child (inappropriate for age, borrowing clothing from older young people)	Yes / No / Possibly
Wearing an unusual amount of clothing (due to hiding more sexualised clothing underneath or hiding their body)	Yes / No / Possibly
Persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation	Yes / No / Possibly
Returning after having been missing, looking well cared for in spite of having no known home base	Yes / No / Possibly
Returning after having been missing looking dirty, dishevelled, tired, hungry, thirsty	Yes / No / Possibly
Missing for long periods, with no known home base and/or homeless	Yes / No / Possibly
Possession of excessive numbers of condoms	Yes / No / Possibly
New contacts with people outside of town	Yes / No / Possibly

Looked after children	Present
Living in residential care	Yes / No / Possibly
Frequently missing from placement	Yes / No / Possibly
Multiple Placement breakdown	Yes / No / Possibly
Going missing with other children	Yes / No / Possibly

E-safety	Present
Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through internet or social networking sites	Yes / No / Possibly
Concern that inappropriate images of a young person are being circulated via the internet/phones	Yes / No / Possibly
Exchanging inappropriate images for cash, credits or other items	Yes / No / Possibly
Receiving gifts through the post from someone the young person does not know	Yes / No / Possibly
Concern that a young person is being coerced to provide sexually explicit images	Yes / No / Possibly
Concern that a young person is being bribed by someone because of their inappropriate online activity	Yes / No / Possibly
Concern that a young person is selling sexual services via the Internet	Yes / No / Possibly
Accessing dating agencies via mobile phones (for example - 2 flirt line)	Yes / No / Possibly
Unexplained increased mobile phone / gaming credits	Yes / No / Possibly