

What kind of situations are we talking about?

Here are some examples:

1 Inappropriate Relationship

This usually involves an individual who exercises inappropriate power or control over a young person. There may be a significant age gap. The victim may believe they are in a loving relationship initially, but then feel trapped and used.

2 Boyfriend

A young man befriends and grooms the victim into a sexual relationship by presenting himself as an 'ideal boyfriend'. He then forces or coerces the victim into having sex with friends or associates, for social status, financial or other gain.

3 Organised exploitation and trafficking

Victims are trafficked through criminal networks- sometimes within the same town but often between towns and cities – where they may be forced or coerced into sex with multiple men and used to recruit other victims.

Sexual abuse, including exploitation, can happen to any young person – boys as well as girls.

**source, adapted from Community Care*



Internet Safety Top Tips

- Talk to your child about their internet use. Ask them what sites they use. If they use social networks, discuss privacy settings and how they use the site.
- When buying a computer, mobile phone or gaming device ask about safety features and software to help manage your child's internet use, such as 'filters' which restrict access to inappropriate material
- Talk about the need to be careful of online 'friends' who they do not know in the real world
- Teach your child from an early age not to give out personal information about themselves or their family or friends
- Let them know they can tell you if they become uncomfortable with anything that happens on the internet
- Show them the Click CEOP report button on the CEOP website so they can report anything that makes them uncomfortable
- Talk to them about 'sexting' and the dangers of sending/receiving sexual images of themselves/others
- Ensure they know not to meet in person someone they have only met online because that person may not be who they say they are
- Set a good example with your own internet use

More information can be found at www.parentsprotect.co.uk

For confidential advice, information and support call the Stop it Now! Freephone Helpline on 0808 1000 900 or email help@stopitnow.org.uk

You can request Parents Protect! resources or more information on the Stop it Now! campaign by calling 01372 847160 or emailing: office@stopitnow.org.uk



The Lucy Faithfull Foundation is a child protection charity. For information about the services available to professionals and members of the public, visit www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk, call 01372 847160 or email wolvercote@lucyfaithfull.org.uk

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Parents Protect!

Together we can prevent child sexual abuse

Helping you protect children and young people from sexual abuse and exploitation

Parents and carers can do a lot to protect their child.

But what are we talking about?

‘Child sexual exploitation’ is a form of child sexual abuse.

The term ‘sexual exploitation’ is often used to refer to the sexual abuse of children during adolescence. This is the time when they are rapidly changing and developing, both sexually and emotionally. They may be dreaming of having boyfriends or girlfriends and, while they want to act like adults, they lack the knowledge and experience to recognise when an abusive adult or young person is taking advantage of them. All this makes young people particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

What can we do?

As adults there is much we can do to protect our children from sexual abuse, including exploitation. This leaflet will help protective adults recognise some of the risks and vulnerabilities children face as they grow up as well as decide what they can do to help protect them.



Signs and indicators that a young person may be at risk:

- Skipping school, coming home late or staying out overnight with no explanation
- Change in appearance, or overt sexualised dress
- Disengaging from family, friends and other support networks
- Becoming secretive
- Changing peer groups
- Unexplained money or gifts, including mobile phones

Signs and indicators that something is wrong:

- Regularly going missing
- Offending behaviour
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Being seen in different cars, perhaps with different older people
- Displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- Having a much older boyfriend / girlfriend
- An increase in physical ailments and/or an increase in contact with healthcare
- Suffering from sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy and/or terminations
- Self-harming

There may be many reasons for changes in a young person’s behaviour, but if we notice a combination of worrying signs it may be time to seek help or advice.

How to prevent it - what can we do?

Know the signs – and be alert

‘Warning sign’ is another way of saying ‘opportunity to prevent and protect’. Acting on signs early can prevent abuse from happening or escalating. Look out for changes in behaviour and think about the guidance below.

Ensure lines of communication are open

Children and young people need to know they can talk to us about anything that is bothering them – even if they think we will be upset or cross. Abusers often rely on the victim feeling shame or guilt to keep them silent.

Be in the habit of talking to your child about their experiences, their friends and what they get up to. As children grow up conversations should include topics such as what are healthy/unhealthy relationships.

Get to know what they know

At the onset of puberty children can find it difficult to talk to adults, particularly their parents, about sex and relationships. Parents can find it equally hard to talk to their child. Know what sex and relationship education your child is getting at school so that you can reinforce positive messages and fill any gaps.

Useful resources for young people include: www.brook.org.uk and www.bishuk.com.

You could look these up together so your child knows where to go if they want to.

Know their friends

Knowing our children’s friends enables us to monitor who is likely to be a positive

influence on them and we can encourage them to take care of each other. Strong friendships also mean your child’s friends are more likely to tell someone if your child is getting into trouble. Secrecy around friends could indicate unsuitability.

Take an active interest in their online life

Take as much interest in your child’s online life as their offline one because abusers can use the internet to groom their victims. Talk about the sites they use, talk about the importance of not giving out personal information and not meeting anyone in person they have only met online. Talk about the dangers of posting sexual images online, and of ‘sexting’ (the sending or receiving of sexual images via text message). See back page for more advice in relation to the internet.

Listen to children and young people

Listen to children and young people and look out for things they may be showing, rather than telling. Off-hand comments and difficult behaviour could be an indicator that something is wrong.

Take time

Children are more vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation if their emotional needs are not being met and they feel they have no one they can talk to. Regular conversations give children the opportunity to talk about concerns they have sooner rather than later. You can use story lines on popular soap operas or news items to talk about sexual abuse and

give your child the message they can talk to you about anything.

If you think your child is associating with potentially abusive people

Collecting as much identifying information as possible such as car registration numbers and descriptions of people can assist the police to intervene if necessary. Keep a diary of events such as times your child has gone missing or unexplained phone calls they have received.

If a child or young person is in immediate danger, call 999 or contact your local police.

If you are concerned that a child is at risk of sexual exploitation, discuss your concerns with family, friends, the school or others in your child’s life.

The Stop it Now! Helpline provides confidential advice on 0808 1000 900. Call at any time to discuss any concerns you have.

You can also contact local Children’s Services teams directly.

Taking early action can prevent a child from being abused.

Useful resources

www.parentsprotect.co.uk

www.paceuk.info

www.brook.org.uk

www.thinkyouknow.co.uk

www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/parents-carers

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