

The sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 years old is a type of sexual abuse. Children in exploitative situations and relationships receive something such as gifts, money or affection as a result of performing sexual activities or others performing sexual activities on them. Children or young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. Young people often trust their abuser and don't understand that they're being abused. They may depend on their abuser or be too scared to tell anyone what's happening.

Young people over 16 may still be sexually exploited as they may have sex with someone as a result of being coerced, threatened or groomed rather than the young person agreeing of their own free will. It is important to consider the power balance when assessing a young person.

Children and young people might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol. They may also be groomed online. Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs.

Signs, symptoms and effects of child sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation can be very difficult to identify. Warning signs can easily be mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour.

Young people who are being sexually exploited may:

- Go missing from home, care or education.
- Be involved in abusive relationships, intimidated and fearful of certain people or situations
- Hang out with groups of older people, or antisocial groups, or with other vulnerable peers
- Associate with other young people involved in sexual exploitation
- Get involved in gangs, gang fights, gang membership
- Have older boyfriends or girlfriends spend time at places of concern such as hotels or known brothels
- Not know where they are, because they have been moved around the country
- Be involved in petty crime such as shoplifting
- Have unexplained physical injuries
- Have a changed physical appearance, for example, weight loss.
- They may also show signs of sexual abuse or grooming

These are all Risk indicators and factors to consider identifying CSE.

What to do if you are concerned

As professionals we aim to help children and young people so they are less vulnerable to sexual exploitation; however it happens, by supporting them to:

- Understand what child sexual exploitation and grooming are compared to a safe, loving relationship
- Secure and maintain a safer environment and a more stable lifestyle. This means talking about knowing where to go to stay safe or who to talk to when worried understand that sexual exploitation is abuse and it's not their fault.

If you have concerns about a child or young person being sexually exploited, you will need to complete the Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (CERAF) which will look at the signs and risk indicators for front-line practitioners. If any one indicator is present in low, medium or high, it doesn't mean a child is being exploited, but an intervention is required. You can always have a conversation



One Minute Guide Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)



with the MASH if you are unsure about the level of risk or what to do next and you should always make contact with the MASH if you are worried about the safety of the child.

If a young person is identified as at risk of CSE then the assessment should be taken to the Portsmouth MET Operational Group by the most relevant professional. The MET group reviews the information they have to ensure that the response is appropriate to the level of risk and will share intelligence on hotspots of activity, parties, and disruption of activity of perpetrators/subjects.

Criminal Law Framework around CSE

There are no specific offence for 'child sexual exploitation' therefore it tends to be made up of a range of offences from sexual assaults, violence/ drug offences, trafficking and fraud.

Sexual Offences Act 2003

- Sexual offences
- Preparatory offences
- Indecent images
- Trafficking

The age of consent...

- The age of consent to any form of sexual activity is 16 for both men and women.
- There are specific laws in place to protect children under the age of 13 who cannot legally give their consent to any kind of sexual activity.
- A person under the age of 18 cannot consent to sex if it is with a person who has a duty of care or is in a position of authority or trust.
- No-one can give consent to being exploited

Current good practice guidance states that in order to recognise, respond to and prevent CSE, three things must be present:

- Investigation of and prosecution of offenders
- Protection of young people involved or targeted
- Preventative work including raising awareness of professionals, young people, parents and the public.

Provision for Preventative Orders

- Sex Offender Orders
- Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPO)
- Risk of Sexual Harm Orders (ROSHO)

For more information:

Portsmouth MASH - 0845 671 0271

Out of Hours - 0300 555 1373

The Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework can be found on the PSCP website:

<https://www.portsmouthscp.org.uk/professionals/child-sexual-exploitation/>

The Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth & Southampton (HIPS) Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Information Guide can be found here:

https://hipsprocedures.org.uk/assets/clients/7/4/lscb_met_protocol.pdf

[CEOP – Think you know](#)

[Barnardo's](#)

[Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners](#)