

WHAT CAN I DO AS A PARENT OR A CARER

As a parent or carer, it is important to discuss with children the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships to help them understand the potential risks.

Children and young people may find it difficult to recognise that they are being exploited. The person abusing them could come from any gender, race or culture.

There are a number of practical steps you can take to protect children such as:

Staying alert to changes in behaviour or any physical signs of abuse such as bruising

Being aware of new, unexplained gifts or possessions and carefully monitoring any instances of staying out late or not returning home

Being cautious of older friends your child may have, or relationships with other young people where they appear to have control over your child

Making sure you understand the risks associated with your child being online and putting measures in place to minimise these risks.

Act now to help keep children and young people safe from harm:

If it's an emergency: **Ring 999**

If you have concerns regarding children in Rotherham: **01709 823987**
or Childline on **0800 1111**

If you would like to share information which might help protect a child you can contact Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111** anonymously, or the Police on **101**

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

WARNING SIGNS



PARENTS

As a parent or carer, you have an important role in protecting children from exploitation.

Child sexual exploitation affects thousands of children and young people across the UK every year. As a parent or carer, you have an important role to play in protecting your children from exploitation.

WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse, in which a young person is manipulated or forced into taking part in a sexual act. This could be as part of a seemingly consensual relationship, or in return for attention, affection, money, drugs, alcohol or somewhere to stay.

The young person may think that their abuser is their friend, or even a boyfriend or girlfriend. But they will put them into dangerous situations, forcing the young person to do things they don't want to do. The abuser may physically or verbally threaten the young person or be violent towards them. They will control and manipulate them, and try to isolate them from friends and family.

WHO DOES IT AFFECT

This type of abuse could happen to any young person from any background. It happens to boys and young men as well as girls and young women. The victims of abuse are not at fault.

Abusers are very clever in the way they manipulate and take advantage of the young people they abuse.



HOW DOES IT HAPPEN

Many young people have been 'groomed' by an abusing adult who befriends the young person and makes them feel special by buying them gifts or giving them lots of attention. Young people may be targeted online or in person. Sexual exploitation can also occur between young people of a similar age.

In most cases, the abuser will have power of some kind over the young person. It may be that the abuser is older or more emotionally mature, physically stronger, or that they are in a position where they are able to control or threaten the young person.

There are some situations that can make young people more vulnerable to exploitation; by becoming distant from the people who would usually look after them. Young people who are having difficulties at home, regularly go missing or have been in care may be particularly vulnerable.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS

Children and young people who are the victims of sexual exploitation often do not recognise that they are being exploited.

However, there are a number of tell-tale signs that a child may be being groomed for sexual exploitation.

Are they staying out overnight?

Have they been missing from home?

Have they started to truant from school?

Have they been coming home with money, clothes, jewellery and mobile phones they can't explain properly?

Have they begun a relationship with someone that you are concerned about?

Have you had concerns that they could be using drugs and/or alcohol?

Has there been a change in their mood or behaviour?

Are they losing contact with family and friends of their own age, and associating with an older age group?

Do they lack self confidence?

Are they secretive about where they have been and with whom?

Are they chatting online to people you have never met?