



## **Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

Knowing the signs of [child criminal exploitation \(CCE\)](#) can help give a voice to children. A child is unlikely to know they are being groomed or exploited and might not speak out. Any child can be groomed into exploitation, though some children may be more at risk. Children who are more vulnerable, for example children in care and children with disabilities, may be more heavily targeted by groomers who want the child to become dependent on them.

Any sudden changes in a young person's lifestyle should be discussed with them. It is important to remember that warning signs will be presented differently for each child or young person being exploited. Teens might also behave in a way that could be seen as 'normal teenage behaviour', masking the exploitation.

Signs that a child or young person is being groomed or exploited into criminal activity or county lines include:

- Persistently going missing from school or home and/or being found out-of-area
- Unexplained acquisition of money, clothes, jewellery, or mobile phones
- Excessive receipt of texts or phone calls
- Spending more time online or on their devices
- Using more than one phone
- Suddenly acquiring expensive gifts such as mobile phones, jewellery – even drugs – and not being able to explain how they came by them
- Having hotel cards or keys to unknown places
- Being secretive about who they are talking to and where they are going
- Relationships with controlling older individuals or groups
- Leaving home/care without explanation
- Unexplained absences from school, college, training, or work
- Returning home unusually late or staying out all night
- Coming home looking dishevelled
- Suspicion of physical assault or unexplained injuries
- Carrying weapons
- Starting or increasing drug use, or being found to have large amounts of drugs on them
- Starting or increasing alcohol use
- Loss of interest in school and significant decline in performance
- Using sexual, gang, drug-related or violent language you wouldn't expect them to know
- Meeting with unfamiliar people or associating with a gang
- Becoming isolated from peers or social networks
- Self-harm
- Significant changes in emotional well-being
- Sudden changes in lifestyle
- Increasingly disruptive or violent behaviour
- Getting into trouble with the police

Before explaining [child sexual exploitation \(CSE\)](#), it is helpful to understand what is meant by the age of consent (the age at which it is legal to have sex). This is 16 for everyone in the UK. Under the age of 16, any sort of sexual touching is illegal.

It is illegal to take, show or distribute indecent photographs of children, or to pay or arrange for sexual services from children. It is also against the law if someone in a position of trust (such as a teacher) has sex with a person under 18 that they have responsibility for.

Child sexual exploitation is when people use the power they have over young people to sexually abuse them. Their power may result from a difference in age, gender, intellect, strength, money or other resources. People often think of child sexual exploitation in terms of serious organised crime, but it also covers abuse in relationships and may involve informal exchanges of sex for something a child wants or needs, such as accommodation, gifts, cigarettes or attention. Some children are "groomed" through "boyfriends" who then force the child or young person into having sex with friends or associates.

Sexual abuse covers penetrative sexual acts, sexual touching, masturbation and the misuse of sexual images – such as on the internet or by mobile phone. Part of the challenge of tackling child sexual exploitation is that the children and young people involved may not understand that non-consensual sex (sex they haven't agreed to) or forced sex – including oral sex – is rape.

Signs of child sexual exploitation include the child or young person:

- 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 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")
- they may also show signs of unexplained physical harm, such as bruising and cigarette burns

*What to do? Report all concerns immediately to the safeguarding team. Inform your DSL/DDSL and log on CPOMS.*

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hate**

~~**Fear**~~  
~~**Hate**~~  
~~**Prejudice**~~

**Respect**  
**Tolerance**  
**Kindness**

**Children can be vulnerable to negative,  
extremist views.**

**The Educate Against Hate website contains  
information, practical advice and free  
classroom resources to support you in your role.**

**Visit [educateagainsthate.com](https://educateagainsthate.com)  
to learn how you can protect  
your pupils.**



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