

## What should you do if you are concerned?

### Seek help

If you are concerned that your child is dealing with something bigger than the usual problems of growing up, then contact a key professional in your child's life; a teacher, school nurse, social worker or youth worker should be able to help you access the support you need.



### YOUR CONCERNS WILL BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY

#### Talk to your child

One of the first difficulties many parents and carers encounter on discovering that their child is being sexually exploited is how they broach the subject with their child. You should raise the subject directly, but gently – and avoid conflict at all costs. You should speak to your child in a language that they understand, it may be helpful to talk about choices and keeping safe rather than in terms of abuse or exploitation.



Talking to your child about the reality of their new relationship or network is not easy. The most important thing is for your child to feel that they can always come and talk to you, no matter what they have to say; and that you will always be there for them.

If your child is affected, then it is important to remember;

- It is not your fault. If a child is sexually exploited, it doesn't mean that their parents or carers have neglected them, as all children are vulnerable because of their age.

- You are not alone – many parents and carers have gone through what you are going through and understand what you may be feeling.

*Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation (PACE) offer support for parents affected by this issue:*

<http://www.paceuk.info/support-for-parents/>  
0113 240 3040

Further information for parents and carers can be found at:

<http://www.paceuk.info/>

[http://www.nspcc.org.uk/help-and-advice/for-parents-and-carers/guides-for-parents/sexual-abuse/sexual-abuse-2-pdf\\_wdf92436.pdf](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/help-and-advice/for-parents-and-carers/guides-for-parents/sexual-abuse/sexual-abuse-2-pdf_wdf92436.pdf)

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/Parentsold/>

<http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/>



[www.liverpoolscb.org.uk](http://www.liverpoolscb.org.uk)

0151 233 2747

@LiverpoolLSCB



## SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

What is it?

Where can I get help and support?

INFORMATION

FOR PARENTS AND

CARERS IN LIVERPOOL



### What is child sexual exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation is a very distressing, form of sexual, emotional and physical abuse of children and young people.

A person under 18 is sexually exploited when they are encouraged into sexual activities by one or more person(s) who have deliberately targeted their youth and inexperience in order to gain power over them.

It can be extremely difficult to recognise because many of the warning signs are symptomatic of challenges that all parents of adolescent or near-adolescent children face.

### What should I be aware of?

It can be useful to think of child sexual exploitation as lots of small events rather than an isolated incident. It involves *relationships* based on one person being in control.

### How can it start?

The process often involves the child receiving gifts (such as a mobile phone, clothes, drugs or alcohol) prior to or as a result of being involved in sexual activities. Although every case is different, this is sometimes called “grooming”.

### Technology

Child sexual exploitation may occur through the use of technology without the child's permission or without the child recognising that they are being exploited; for example through being persuaded to post sexual images over the internet or through mobile phone images.

Child sexual exploitation can involve violence or the threat of violence. This may be directed towards the child, or their friends and family and may prevent the child from telling someone what is going on. The child may be so confused by the process that they do not think they are being abused at all.

Child sexual exploitation is a scary form of harm because it occurs only after a child has been persuaded that their activities are a ‘normal’ part of adult life, or an ‘exciting’ opportunity which confirms their maturity and independence. This could mean a greater effort on the part of the child to conceal their actions from you.

The people involved in this type of abuse aim to drive a wedge between you and your child, closing down the normal channels of communication and emotional bond between you.

It is important to recognise that **all** children and young people may be at risk of child sexual exploitation. This includes children and young people in strong and loving family units.

### What can I do as a parent or carer?

As a parent or carer you can look out for the tell tale signs, as well as talk to your child or the child in your care about healthy and risky relationships; many of these signs are typical of all teenagers, so need to be treated with caution.



Here is a list of things to look out for:

- Your child may become especially secretive and stop engaging with their usual friends.
- They may be associating with, or develop a sexual relationship with older males or females
- They may go missing from home – and be defensive about their location and activities, often returning home late or staying out all night
- They may be missing school
- They may receive odd calls and messages on their mobiles or social media pages from unknown, possibly much older associates from outside their normal social network
- They may be in possession of new, expensive items which they couldn't normally afford, such as mobile phones, iPods or jewellery
- They may exhibit a sudden change in dressing patterns or musical taste
- They may look tired and/or unwell, and sleep at unusual hours
- They may have marks or scars on their body which they try to conceal
- They may adopt new ‘street language’ or respond to a new street name