

## Your role:

As a parent/carer or family member, talking with your child about the reality of new friendships or relationships is really important. Children and young people need support to understand the signs of healthy relationships and the signs of unhealthy ones.

We offer the following guidance to you to help you safeguard your children from any potential risks.

- Know where your child is going when they are out, who they are with and when they will be home
- Ensure you explore and monitor occasions where your child does not return home on time
- Be aware of new friends who may be older or perceived to be more influential or dominant than your child
- Ensure that your child's online presence isn't open to the public and that they are communicating safely
- Monitor changes in behaviour, or any physical signs of harm
- Be aware of any new material possessions your child may bring home

## If you are concerned:

If you believe a child is in any immediate danger of harm you must call 999. You can also call the Police by dialling 101 to report crime and other concerns that do not require an emergency response.

Parents Against Child Exploitation (PACE) works alongside parents and carers of children who are – or are at risk of being – sexually exploited by perpetrators external to the family. See more at: [www.paceuk.info](http://www.paceuk.info)

**Or to speak to a friendly support worker from Catch22 please contact your local service:**



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# Child sexual exploitation



**Guidance for parents,  
carers and families:  
understanding what it is,  
how it occurs and how to  
spot the signs**

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## What is Child Sexual Exploitation?

Every day, the sexual exploitation of children and young people is being identified throughout the UK.



Children who are sexually exploited are the victims of sexual abuse and should be safeguarded from further harm. As parents, carers and family members you have a really important role to play in protecting your child from this harm.

Sexual exploitation of children and young people involves situations, contexts and relationships where young people receive 'something' such as food, alcohol, affection, a place to stay, gifts, or money as a result of them being manipulated to take part in a sexual act.

Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet without immediate payment or gain.

## How does it occur?

In many cases the child may not consider that they are being exploited or abused, but rather see the abuser's behaviour as part of a seemingly consensual relationship with someone they think is their boyfriend or girlfriend.

The perceived love, affection or material benefits that the child gains may cause them to accept abusive expectations, demands or unwanted sexual acts being performed upon them or demanded from them against their will.

Abusers may be materially, physically or socially more powerful than the child. They can be violent, verbally threatening and lead children into dangerous and isolating situations without the child being aware as to what is happening to them.

Children who experience child sexual exploitation tell us that they trusted their abuser, being manipulated into believing that the relationship with them was better than with their own friends and family. As a result, the time that they spent with their abuser was often in isolation where the abuse would take place.

## Knowing the signs\*



**Child sexual exploitation can happen to any child, living in any location and from any background.**

Whilst there is no one definition of what a child experiencing sexual exploitation will do or show, there are a number of things you can look out for:

- The child is reluctant to share where they are going or who they are with.
- Child is going missing from school or home on regular occasions or for long periods of time and their whereabouts is unknown.
- The child is returning home late in the evening or the next day.
- Relationships are with older peers, boyfriends or girlfriends who may be involved in exploitation.
- They display inappropriate sexual behaviour or language.
- They have new or unexplained belongings such as phones, jewellery, clothes.
- They are using drugs and or alcohol.
- They have a sexually transmitted infection.

*\*These signs in isolation don't prove CSE but a number of them could suggest CSE as a cause.*