

## Child sexual exploitation - information for parents and carers

### What is sexual exploitation?

Sexual exploitation is a horrific form of sexual abuse that affects thousands of children and young people every year in the UK. It can happen to any young person from any background and affects boys and young men as well as girls and young women.

Many victims of child sexual exploitation have been groomed by an abusing adult, who will befriend them and make them feel special by buying gifts or giving them lots of attention. Victims are targeted both in person and online.

Some young people – in particular those having difficulties at home, those truanting or excluded from school, those who regularly go missing from home or care, or those in care – may be more vulnerable to exploitation.

### What are the signs?

Children and young people who are victims of this form of sexual abuse often do not recognise they are being exploited. However, there are a number of signs that could indicate a child is being groomed for sexual exploitation and, as a parent or carer, you have an important role in recognising them and protecting children.

These signs include:

- going missing for periods of time or regularly returning home late
- regularly missing school or not taking part in education
- appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- associating with other young people involved in exploitation
- having older boyfriends
- being preoccupied with their mobile phone, which could indicate the child is being controlled
- suffering from sexually transmitted infections
- mood swings or changes in emotional wellbeing
- drug and alcohol misuse
- displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour



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

Discussing the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships with children and young people is really important in helping highlight potential risks to them.

There are also practical steps you can take, such as:

- stay alert to changes in behaviour or any physical signs of abuse, e.g. bruising
- be aware of new, unexplained gifts or possessions, e.g. mobile phones, and carefully monitor any instances of staying out late or not returning home
- exercise caution around older friends your child may have, or relationships with other young people where there appears to be a power imbalance
- make sure you understand the risks associated with your child being online and put measures in place to minimise them

## Contact details

- You can contact Children's Social Work Services **0121 788 4333** in office hours or by email [childrensservices@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:childrensservices@solihull.gov.uk)
- The Out of Hours the Emergency Duty Team (social work) can be contacted on **0121 605 6060** or you can also contact the Police by telephoning: **0345 113 5000**

If you are concerned that a child is at immediate risk you should call **999**

You should always contact us if you are worried a child or young person is at risk of abuse or neglect



[www.solihull.gov.uk/staysafe](http://www.solihull.gov.uk/staysafe)