

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) can occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual or criminal activity. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources. In some cases, the abuse will be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or will be to the financial benefit or other advantage (such as increased status) of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The abuse can:

- be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, children or adults, any ethnicity or background
- be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, on or offline
- happen without the child's immediate knowledge e.g. shared videos or images of them on social media
- range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse
- involve force, enticement-based methods of compliance, physical contact, non-contact activities, youth-produced imagery, watching sexual activities, sexually inappropriate behaviour, threats etc

Victims can be exploited even when activity appears consensual and exploitation, as well as being physical, can be facilitated and/or take place online.

Your duty to protect & support does not depend on the child or young person's willingness to be safeguarded.

Vulnerabilities:

ALL children and young people can be vulnerable to criminal &/or sexual exploitation, but are at greater risk if they:

- have a prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse
- live in an unsafe home environment e.g. domestic violence, parental substance misuse, mental health issues, criminal activity
- have experienced recent bereavement or loss
- experience social isolation or social difficulties
- cannot explore their sexuality & identity safely
- are economically vulnerable
- are homeless or in insecure accommodation
- connect with other exploited young people
- have family members or other connections involved in adult sex work
- have a physical or learning disability
- are in care, particularly residential
- are excluded from mainstream education
- have gang connections
- are a foreign exchange student
- are a Class A drug user
- use social media unsafely

Warning signs:

- acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc. without plausible explanation
- gang association or relationships with controlling or significantly older people
- isolation from peers & social networks
- exclusion, unexplained absences, missing from school, college, home or work
- found out-of-area, in areas known for sex work, in a 'trap house' or 'cuckooing' or hotel room where there is drug activity
- excessive texts, phone calls, multiple handsets
- return home indicates drugs or alcohol use
- inappropriate sexual behaviour or infections
- evident/suspicious/unexplained injuries
- perpetrator of violence, carrying weapons
- concerning use of internet/other social media
- increasing secretiveness, self-harm, significant changes in emotional well-being
- involved in taking, moving & selling drugs, concealing drugs internally ('plugging') financial connection to drug dealing
- parental, wider family, friend concerns
- Decline in academic attendance, results & performance

A key factor in CSE & CCE is the presence of an exchange in return for something:

- **Tangible** - money, drugs, alcohol
- **Intangible** - status, protection, perceived love or affection
- **Prevention** of something negative e.g. a threat to harm the child's family

As there is an unequal power relationship, the receipt of something by the child still makes them a victim.

Exploitation can affect any child under the age of 18 years old, however the experience of girls who are exploited can be different to boys.

In the case of CSE, 16- & 17-year olds can legally consent to sex but only if it isn't coercive or abusive.

Sexual exploitation can include contact (penetrative & non-penetrative) & non-contact acts (e.g. online).

Trafficking can be within a very small area, a city, the UK or abroad.

A child or young person who is recruited, transported, transferred, harboured, or received for exploitation is a trafficking victim, whether or not they have been forced or deceived.

Modern Slavery is trafficking with slavery, servitude & forced or compulsory labour.

County Lines describes gangs & organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs over any distance e.g. inside the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line".

They are likely to exploit children & vulnerable adults to move, sell & store drugs & money using coercion, intimidation, physical & sexual violence & weapons.

Children can be targeted, recruited, threatened & financially coerced anywhere, e.g. educational institution, care homes & social media.

Protective factors for a child or young person can include:

- Enjoying & participating in learning, good home/school links
- Engaging in education, employment, training, planning future career
- Good physical & mental health & development
- Age-appropriate sexual activity, no drug/alcohol misuse
- Positive boundaries, guidance, services, activities & peers
- Parental warmth, support, physical care & good safety network

Useful Web-links:

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education, DfE 2022](#)
- [Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines](#) HO, Feb 2020
- [NSPCC: Child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation & gangs, child trafficking](#)
- [Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners - GOV.UK](#) DfE 2017
- [Sheffield Safeguarding & Child Protection Procedures \(Section 3, Children in Specific Circumstances\)](#)
- [Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked](#) DfE & Home Office
- [The National Referral Mechanism](#) identifying & supporting victims of human trafficking or modern slavery
- [Sheffield Child Exploitation Screening Tool](#) to help professionals to recognise the signs, indicators and protective factors in relation to child exploitation
- [Child Sexual Exploitation, November 16,](#) SCSP Learning Brief
- [Contextual Safeguarding, December 19](#) SCSP Team Talk
- [Modern slavery,](#) HO July 22

What to do:

- Tell your Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy (DSL/D) immediately if you are concerned about any individual, group or community issue involving or suspecting child exploitation, trafficking, etc.
- The DSL/D will use the CSE/CCE screening tool to consider a child or young person's level of risk and contact either the child's social worker or the **Sheffield Safeguarding Hub (tel. 0114 2734855)** as appropriate
- If you are concerned about a group or community, you or your DSL/D can ring 101
- If someone is in immediate danger ring 999
- If you are concerned about the behaviour of a person who works (paid or unpaid) with children, the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** should be informed via the [Sheffield Safeguarding Hub](#), where new LADO referrals are processed.

Where appropriate, the child or young person's wishes and feelings, and those of their parents and carers should be sought and taken into consideration when deciding how to proceed.

However, practitioners should be aware that this may not always be in the child or young person's best interest and may put them at further risk of harm.

Some children or young people may have been trafficked and need support to access services.

[The National Referral Mechanism](#) (NRM) is the framework for identifying victims of human trafficking or modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support.

The Amber Service:

[The Amber Service](#) is the service for children who are being exploited i.e. are being used for someone else's advantage, gratification or profit which results in harm of the child.

The service brings together the statutory CSE and CCE social work teams as part of a multi-agency response. The team also includes police, health, specialist exploitation workers and social workers, working with young people, their families and professionals to educate and support around individuals who are identified at high risk of, or involved in, sexual exploitation, at risk of criminal exploitation, organised crime, grooming, violence and exploitation.

Practitioners cannot refer directly to this service; you must make referrals through the child's current social worker or by ringing the Sheffield Safeguarding Hub, tel.: **0114 2734855**.

All education settings should ensure that:

- A DSL/D is trained and regularly updated as the **Child Exploitation (CE) Lead** for staff & students
- all staff are made aware of and understand CSE/CCE indicators and referral pathways
- students are taught (age-appropriately) about:
 - CSE/CCE and how to protect themselves and each other
 - Healthy (including sexual) relationships, peer pressure, bullying, online-safety, gang activity etc. and how these topics can relate to CSE/CCE
- students know who to go to for help and support, and who to report CSE/CCE concerns to inside and outside the education setting
- relevant staff work in partnership with other agencies & ensure that information is shared promptly & fully
- procedures are in place to gather, record and share CSE/CCE information with the Amber Service, including data on pupils who run away or go missing
- they consider effective ways of raising awareness of CSE/CCE with parents and carers