

What can you do?

If you are worried about your son or daughter, you must do something - but it may not be easy to find out what is going on from them.

Your child may have been told not to talk about what they are doing, or threatened with violence. Or they may think they have an exciting grown-up life with a boyfriend or girlfriend, which they don't want to end.

Try to find a time to talk to them calmly about how they feel. Your child may open up, and admit they are unhappy about a part of their life. They may even admit they need help.

But if they won't talk to you, please do not let the matter drop. Is there someone else that you both trust that could talk to them – a grandparent, uncle or family friend, or someone from your religion or local community? Tell the trusted person about your concerns and ask them to have a word.

If you think a child is at immediate risk call 999

Contact us...

If you are worried about a child call our call our Children's Services Access and Referral Hub:
0300 300 8585.

There are specialists in the team who can help stop the abuse.

Child sexual exploitation

How to get help if you think your son or daughter is being sexually exploited



Leaflet for parents or carers

Are you worried about your child or teenager?

- Do they stay out overnight?
- Have they been missing from home?
- Do they skip school?
- Have they come home with money, clothes, jewellery or a mobile phone they can't account for?
- Do they have an older boyfriend or girlfriend you are concerned about?
- Are you worried they are using drugs or alcohol?
- Have they lost contact with family and friends of their own age?
- Do they lack self-esteem?
- Are they secretive about where they go and who they see?
- Do they chat to people online they have never met?
- Are you worried about unsafe sexual behaviour?

If this sounds familiar, your child could be at risk of sexual exploitation. Taking risks is part of growing up, but sometimes children get out of their depth.

What is sexual exploitation?

Sexual exploitation can involve swapping sexual favours for drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and other presents. Or it may be having sex for money with several adults. Young people may feel they must have sex because an adult gives them something, or because they feel threatened or frightened.

Some young people may want to have sex because they think the adult is their boyfriend or girlfriend. In reality they are being used for sex, and the 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend' may pass them on to other people too. (Remember – sexual abusers can be women, as well as men.)

How does it happen?

We know from experience that some grown-ups target young people and draw them into abusive sexual relationships. This is how it works:

- Older adults show the young person a lot of interest and affection at the beginning, and make them feel special,
- Sometimes they ask groups of young people to come back to their house or parties with other adults, which makes the child feel grown up,
- They are offered drugs and alcohol, and a place to chill out,
- The young people may get presents like clothes, a mobile phone, or money to buy alcohol and cigarettes
- After the grown-up has gained the young person's trust and affection, things change,
- They will ask for sexual favours for themselves or other people, in return for alcohol, drugs, presents, money - all the things they started giving for free,
- They stop being nice and can become threatening or violent.