

What is Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)?

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is Child Sexual Abuse.

CSE has two distinctive characteristics - **exploitation and exchange**.

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse in which a person(s), of any age takes advantage of a power imbalance to force or entice a child into engaging in sexual activity in return for something received by the child and/or those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. As with other forms of child sexual abuse, the presence of perceived consent does not undermine the abusive nature of the act.

Note: This is not necessarily considered to be an all-inclusive or exhaustive list of possibilities.

What does CSE involve?

CSE is a **complex issue** and can affect any child or young person; male or female; anytime; anywhere - regardless of their social; economic or ethnic background.

CSE should not be seen in isolation, but in the wider context of vulnerability and risk.

CSE is often hidden and can involve features of **violence, coercion and intimidation**. Involvement in exploitative relationships are characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice, resulting from their social; situational; psychological; physical; economic and / or emotional vulnerability.

CSE can also occur through the use of **technology** and without the child's immediate recognition, e.g. being persuaded to post sexual images of themselves on the internet / mobile phones without any immediate payment or gain.

CSE perpetrators have **power** over their victims by virtue of their age; gender; intellect; physical strength; and / or economic or other resource. The gain for those perpetrating or facilitating CSE can include financial benefit; sexual gratification; status or control.

Victims of CSE **rarely disclose** their abuse. This may be due to fear or even them not recognising they are a victim of CSE, or they may consider themselves to be in a loving adult relationship with the abuser. The **sophisticated grooming** and priming processes conducted by the perpetrators and the **exchange element** can also act as additional inhibitors and / or barriers to disclosure.

In some CSE cases, the sexual abuse may take place between the victim and the perpetrator; in other CSE cases the victim may be passed between two or more perpetrators and in some CSE cases this may be organised by criminal gangs or organised groups.

Remember, CSE is abuse and a child protection concern. No child or young person can consent to their own abuse. SEE BEYOND.

What circumstances may make a child or young person vulnerable to CSE?

There are aspects in every child or young person's historical or current circumstances which may make them more vulnerable to being targeted and / or groomed for CSE.

The following is a list of CSE vulnerability factors (situational / environmental), albeit these are not necessarily considered to be an all-inclusive or exhaustive list of possibilities:

- *A history of abuse (including familial sexual abuse and emotional abuse)*
- *A history of neglect*
- *Being looked after, or formerly looked after*
- *Disrupted family life, including family breakdown, separation; divorce; historic / ongoing domestic violence and / or problematic parenting*
- *Living in a chaotic / dysfunctional households*
- *Disengagement from education and isolation from other support mechanisms*
- *Going missing from home or care environments - regularly / frequently*
- *Problematic parental alcohol and / or drug use*
- *Parental mental ill-health and / or parental learning disabilities*
- *Homelessness; living in hostel, bed and breakfast or homeless accommodation (especially longer term)*
- *Poor health and wellbeing, social exclusion; social isolation*
- *Low self-esteem; low self-confidence; poor self-image; eating disorders*
- *Recent bereavement or loss*
- *Being in a state of poverty; financial hardship; unemployment*
- *Having a disability - particularly autistic spectrum disorder or a learning disability*
- *Experiencing bullying in and / or out of school*
- *Involvement in crime / offending*
- *Online vulnerability and lack of recognition of risk in the online world*
- *Uncertainty of sexual orientation / or unable to disclose to family and friends*
- *Risk of forced marriage / honour based violence / female genital mutilation*
- *Links with other young people who are sexually exploited*

What are the signs and risk indicators of CSE?

There are a number of signs, symptoms and indicators (behavioural) which may alert you that a child or young person is at risk of CSE.

The following is a list of CSE signs and symptoms, albeit these are not necessarily considered to be an all-inclusive or exhaustive list of possibilities:

- *Staying out late or regular episodes of being missing overnight or longer without permission*
- *Reduced contact with family and friends and / or other support networks*
- *Multiple callers to home (unknown adults / older young people)*
- *Evidence of / suspicion of physical or sexual assault; disclosure of assault followed by withdrawal of an allegation*
- *Unplanned pregnancy; repeat sexually transmitted infections (STIs); terminations; high number of sexual partners*
- *Peers involved in sexual exploitation*
- *Exclusion, truancy or unexplained absences from school or college*
- *Relationships with controlling adults*
- *Entering / leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults or taxicabs*
- *Frequenting areas known for known on / off street sexual exploitation (prostitution)*
- *Children under 13 years asking for sexual health advice*
- *Concerning use of the internet / mobile phone*
- *Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phone etc without plausible explanation*
- *Receiving lots of texts / phone calls prior to leaving*
- *Agitated / stressed prior to leaving home / care*
- *Returning distraught / dishevelled or under the influence of substances*
- *Requesting emergency hormonal contraception (the morning after pill) upon return from an unexplained absence*
- *Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age and development*
- *Physical signs of bruising or bite marks*
- *New peer groups*
- *Significantly older ‘boyfriend’ or ‘girlfriend’*
- *Increasing secretiveness around behaviours*
- *Change in personal hygiene (greater attention or less attention)*
- *Overtly sexualised dressing*
- *Self harm and other expressions of despair*

- Evidence or suspicion of substance misuse / alcohol and drug use
- Gang member or association
- Risks associated with the Internet:
 - Grooming children or young people on-line for sexual abuse offline
 - Children viewing abusive images of children / pornographic images
 - Selling children or young people on-line for abuse offline
 - Making abusive images of children or young people
 - Viewing abusive images of children or young people
 - Access to contact sites; chat lines via the internet or mobile phones
 - Sexting

What are the reasons for a child or young person not disclosing CSE?

The reasons why a child or young person may not disclose CSE are complex and numerous. In many cases they do not recognise that they are a victim of CSE.

The following is a list of reasons why children and young people do not always disclose CSE, albeit these are not necessarily considered to be an all-inclusive or exhaustive list of possibilities:

- Fear that perceived benefits of exploitation may outweigh the risks e.g. loss of or supply of alcohol; drugs; the relationship and associated love and attention
- Fear of retribution on self or family or that situation could get worse
- Fear of violence within exploitative relationship;
- Shame
- Fear of not being believed
- Fear of labelling e.g. being a prostitute or being gay
- Fear of separation from family and / or threat of being placed in secure accommodation
- Loss of control; fear of Police involvement and court proceedings
- Don't recognise they are being exploited

What else do we know about CSE?

The following additional points are known about CSE, albeit these are not necessarily considered to be an all-inclusive or exhaustive list of additional points:

- The key factor that distinguishes CSE from other forms of child sexual abuse is the **concept of exchange** - the victim is enticed; coerced; manipulated; forced or deceived into engaging in the sexual abuse in return for something
- Practitioners can **misinterpret** CSE as consensual and can fail to recognise the element of exploitation
- CSE is typified by a **power imbalance** in favour of the perpetrator
- Children and young people **in care** (particularly those in residential care) have a **disproportionate risk** of CSE
- The majority of CSE victims are **living at home**
- Most CSE concerns are reported by practitioners; friends or family; or by proactive investigations rather than by self-disclosure by the victim
- **No single agency can, or should, address the challenge of preventing and responding to CSE in isolation - a multi-agency approach is much more effective**

What should you do if you are concerned that a child or young person is at risk of CSE?

ASK

Ask yourself the following questions

- 1. What have I seen?**
- 2. What have I heard?**
- 3. What do I feel is unusual or different?**
- 4. What has actually happened?**
- 5. What is my concern?**
- 6. What is this telling me?**
- 7. What should I do now?**

ACT

- 1. Protecting children and young people and keeping them safe is everyone's job!**
- 2. Keep your focus on the child or young person - their safety is paramount!**
- 3. Doing nothing is not an option!**
- 4. Do not assume someone else will do something!**
- 5. Do not delay unnecessarily - act quickly!**
- 6. Look, Listen and Record your Concern!**
- 7. Look Further and See Beyond!**
- 8. If you are a practitioner - Follow your agency child protection procedures**
- 9. If you are a practitioner - Tell your Line Manager or Child Protection Officer immediately!**
- 10. If you are a member of the public:**
 - Contact the Child Protection Duty Team (24 hours) on 01738 476768**
 - In an Emergency - Dial 999**
 - Police (Non Emergency) - Dial 101**
 - ChildLine - Dial 0800 1111**
 - Crimestoppers - Dial 0808 555 111**

