

# Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. When a child or young person is exploited they're given things, like gifts, drugs, money, status and affection, in exchange for performing sexual activities. Children and young people are often tricked into believing they're in a loving and consensual relationship. This is called grooming. They may trust their abuser and not understand that they're being abused.

Sometimes abusers use violence and intimidation to frighten or force a child or young person, making them feel as if they've no choice. They may lend them large sums of money they know can't be repaid or use financial abuse to control them.

Anybody can be a perpetrator of CSE, no matter their age, gender or race. The relationship could be framed as friendship, someone to look up to or romantic. Children and young people who are exploited may also be used to 'find' or coerce others to join groups.

## Types of child sexual exploitation

CSE can happen in person or online. An abuser will gain a child's trust or control them through violence or blackmail before moving onto sexually abusing them. This can happen in a short period of time.

When a child is sexually exploited online they might be persuaded or forced to:

- send or post sexually explicit images of themselves
- film or stream sexual activities
- have sexual conversations.
- Once an abuser has images, video or copies of conversations, they might use threats and blackmail to force a young person to take part in other sexual activity. They may also share the images and videos with others or circulate them online.
- Gangs use sexual exploitation:
  - to exert power and control
  - for initiation
  - to use sexual violence as a weapon

Children or young people might be invited to parties or gatherings with others their own age or adults and given drugs and alcohol. They may be assaulted and sexually abused by one person or multiple perpetrators. The sexual assaults and abuse can be violent, humiliating and degrading.

Sexual exploitation can be difficult to spot and sometimes mistaken for "normal" teenage behaviour. Knowing the signs can help protect children and help them when they've no one else to turn to.

- Unhealthy or inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Being frightened of some people, places or situations
- Bring secretive
- Sharp changes in mood or character
- Having money or things they can't or won't explain
- Physical signs of abuse, like bruises or bleeding in their genital or anal area.
- Alcohol or drug misuse.
- Sexually transmitted infections.
- Pregnancy