

Update: Amended October 2017

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

No doubt you have heard a great deal about this in the media and think that it doesn't concern your child. High profile cases have led to parents thinking about this issue in a certain way.

By knowing the signs and symptoms of child sexual exploitation, talking to your child and getting help and support if you are concerned, you can help to protect your child. Not only now, but potentially for the rest of their lives.

What is child sexual exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of child abuse. It happens when a young person is encouraged, or forced, to take part in sexual activity in exchange for something.

How does it happen?

Someone, either known or unknown to the family, encourages a close relationship with the young person. This could be as a friend or as their boyfriend or girlfriend. It can happen to any child or young person. It might seem like a normal friendship or relationship to begin with.

There is no specific profile of who commits this crime. Child sexual exploitation can happen between young people too.

It can happen online or offline, and without the young person being aware.

At first, the young person feels good about the relationship with the person offering them presents, money, alcohol, or simply emotional attention.

CSE is hard to spot even for the young person concerned. Grooming takes place over time. The young person may not see themselves as a victim, if they do they may be prevented from speaking out, as they think it's their fault.

Online, it's easy for an adult to pretend to be someone of a different age or gender. They'll try to gain the victim's trust by using websites, games and social media.

They may suggest meeting or try to talk the young person into sending naked photographs, taking part in sexual activities via a webcam or smartphone, or having sexual conversations by text. Sometimes they'll encourage the victim by offering a gift or compliments in return. You can help by keeping up to date on social media/webs/apps and knowing what your child is using, as well as talking to your child about safe internet use.

What can you do to keep your children safe?

1. Know the tell- tale signs:

Look out for:

- unexplained gifts
 - changes in mood
 - going missing
 - staying out late
 - being secretive about where they are going
 - lack of interest in activities and hobbies
2. Keep up to date with the technology your child uses. Discuss the risks online (see the E safety link on the website).
 3. Consider talking about the subject as a whole in an age appropriate way as part of understanding relationships.

Using information from Safer Scotland and Barnardos- see their websites for further information.