



# CHILD EXPLOITATION

## **Parents and Carers Support Pack**

Recognising the support and commitment that parents, carers and families have for their children.



# Parents and Carers Support Pack

Child exploitation can happen to any child. This pack is designed to help parents and carers to reduce the risk of exploitation from happening to their child and help understand what is happening if it does. The support pack considers when a child may be at risk of or experiencing exploitation or abusive relationships with peers or older adults.

It provides tips and helpful information and guidance for parents and carers to prevent exploitation from happening and protect your child if it does.



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Within this support pack the term **child** refers to any person **under the age of 18** years



# What is exploitation and abuse?

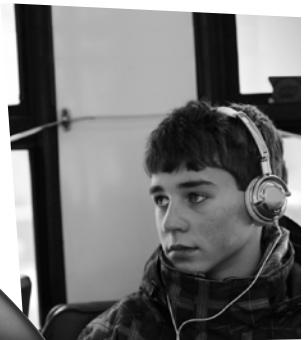
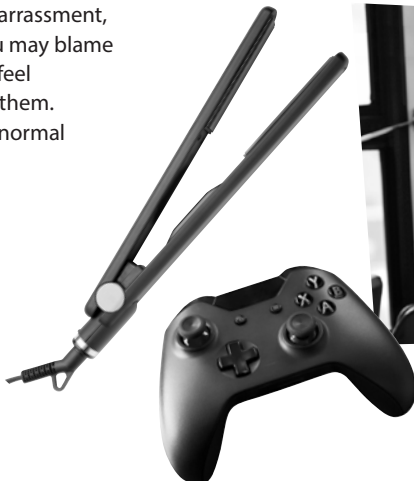
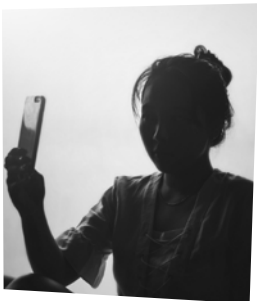
Exploitation is to treat someone unfairly or use a situation to gain an unfair advantage over someone else. It can also be to benefit from their work or activity.

Exploitation of children can take many forms, for example, using a child to get money for someone else, or using a child to distribute drugs to other people. It can mean getting a child to do something sexual, even when they may feel that they are willingly taking part. Exploitation is a form of abuse. Abuse can be emotional, sexual, financial and physical.

Finding out that your child is being, has been or is vulnerable to exploitation is extremely upsetting. You might find yourself in shock or in denial. You may have feelings of anger, guilt, upset, confusion, fear, embarrassment, helplessness and depression. You may blame yourself as a parent or carer and feel you didn't do enough to protect them. These feelings and reactions are normal and understandable.

It is important to remember that you and your child are not to blame for the exploitation your child may have experienced and that they have been targeted by an adult or peer who is using your child's vulnerabilities against them.

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach used to understand, and respond to, young people being harmed by someone outside their family. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and on-line can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of abuse from those not part of their family can undermine relationships with parents and carers.



## Child criminal exploitation and county lines

Children as young as 12 or even younger can be put in danger by criminals or even their peers who they may consider to be friends. Criminal networks or gangs use their power and position to groom, recruit and exploit young people to move money and drugs from one area to another. Young people will often be made to travel outside their local area, often to coastal or market towns, where

they use dedicated phone lines or 'deal lines' to sell drugs. In return the young people will often be given things that they want or need, such as money, gifts – like designer clothes and trainers, status, perceived friendship, or protection. Soon these gifts turn into threats of what will happen if they don't complete their tasks.

## Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child Sexual Exploitation is when a boy or a girl is taken advantage of by someone else. An abuser manipulates, coerces or forces a child or young person into performing sexual acts. This sometimes involves getting something in return like love, affection, money, drugs or alcohol, phones or gifts. It is not always possible to recognise that exploitation is going on, as sometimes young people may feel that the sexual relationship is equal, even if it is not. Abusers can be older males, but are often a similar age or can be female. They use the grooming process to gain the trust of the child or young person.

Abusers often plan out the steps they will take to abuse. They will know which areas and which children to target. They are skilled in approaching children or young people in person or may use a younger man or woman, or child, to make the initial contacts. Some use the internet or mobile phones to engage the child or young person.

They may use threats or violence, introduce them to alcohol or drugs or make the child feel special through attention or gifts. They may pretend to be their boyfriend or girlfriend.

They will also aim to alienate them from their friends and family. This is sometimes referred to as the grooming process. Their actions are intended to make the child feel dependent on them.

Because of the grooming process children or young people don't usually know that they are being drawn into sexual exploitation or realise that the situation they are in is abusive. They often trust their abuser and don't understand that they're being abused. They may depend on their abuser or be too scared to tell anyone what's happening.



## Legal age for consenting to sex

If your child is under 13 years of age the law states that they cannot consent to sex. If your child has reached 16 or 17 (and is legally able to consent to sex) this does not mean that they are no longer at risk of sexual exploitation. In almost all cases involving grooming the child's ability is challenged by the imbalance of power between the child and the abuser, the control exercised and the manipulation or use of force.

## On-line abuse

The reality is that many children are sharing images of themselves.

Sexting, or the sending of a sexually explicit image, can be a feature of sexual exploitation or harmful sexual behaviour.

Once a child shares an image of themselves, they might be blackmailed by the perpetrator and could feel ashamed, cornered and worried about what would happen if their images were shared.

If a child does share an image of themselves, it's important to tell them that whatever happens

things will be ok. Retrieving or removing the image might not be possible, but there are ways to report indecent images.

You should always report to the police or inform a professional you trust if you discover that your child has been sharing images on-line and social media.



For more information and advice about talking to your child about on-line sexual harassment please visit: [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/talking-to-your-child-about-online-sexual-harassment-a-guide-for-parents/](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/talking-to-your-child-about-online-sexual-harassment-a-guide-for-parents/)

For information on how to protect your child from on-line child sexual abuse please visit [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

## Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and young people and which may be harmful or abusive to others. HSB includes a range of behaviour, which can be displayed towards younger children, peers, older children or adults. It is harmful to the children and young people who display it, as well as the people it is directed towards. Sometimes a child or young person may not understand that the behaviour they are displaying is harmful to others.

Recently a national report was written by the government that suggests that harmful sexual behaviours happened 'a lot' or 'sometimes' between young people of the same or similar age. This included name-calling, spreading rumours about their sexual activity, unwanted or inappropriate comments of a sexual nature, unwanted touching and sexual assault. This abuse can take place in person and on-line and can happen to anyone although girls may experience more of this than boys.

## Trafficking and modern slavery

Although most people believe Human Trafficking refers to moving people across international borders, Trafficking can also include moving children within the UK for the purposes of exploitation.

## Radicalisation and extremism

Radicalisation is the process by which a person might come to adopt extreme political, social or religious beliefs. Extremism is when a person acts on these radical beliefs in a way which can lead to harming others or supporting terrorism. Such beliefs can often be shared through social media platforms, creating a shared interest group or social network. Organisations and individuals intent on radicalising others can be incredibly powerful and dominating.

Leaders can use their influence to induce you to feel guilt, shame and a sense of duty to a group holding a radical belief. This form of control is often very manipulative and influential. It can make a person feel intimidated or fearful of what others within the group will think of you if you disagree or fail to do as asked.





# How does exploitation happen?

Many young people are groomed by an abusing adult or older young person who befriends the child and makes them feel special by buying them gifts or giving them lots of attention. They may use threats and/or violence, introduce them to alcohol or drugs and create a dependency, or pretend to be their friend, boyfriend or girlfriend. Young people can be targeted on-line or in person.

In most cases the abuser will have power of some kind over the young person. It may be that the abuser is older or more emotionally mature, physically stronger, or that they are in a position where they are able to control the young person.

The young person may trust these adults and therefore not see them as a threat or someone who would abuse them. The adult may have known them since childhood.

The diagram on the next page shows the grooming process for child sexual exploitation. However, the process for criminal exploitation is very similar whereby loyalty and protection are experienced within the friendship and loving relationship stages.





## The grooming process

### Targeting stage:



- Observing the child/young person
- Selection of child/young person
- Befriending – being nice, giving gifts, caring, taking an interest, giving compliments, etc.
- Gaining and developing trust
- Sharing information about young people between other abusive adults

### Friendship forming stage:



- Making young people feel special
- Giving gifts and rewards
- Spending time together
- Listening and remembering
- Keeping secrets
- Being there for them
- 'No-one understands you like I do', being their best friend
- Testing out physical contact – accidental touching
- Offering protection

### Loving relationship stage:



- Being their boyfriend/girlfriend
- Establishing a sexual relationship
- Lowering their inhibitions – eg. showing them pornography
- Engaging them in forbidden activities – eg. going to clubs, drinking, taking drugs
- Being inconsistent – building up hope and then punishing them

### Abusive relationship stage:



- Becomes an 'unloving' sexual relationship
- Withdrawal of love and friendship
- Reinforcing dependency on them – stating young person is 'damaged goods'
- Isolation from family and friends
- Trickery and manipulation – 'you owe me'
- Threatening behaviour
- Physical violence
- Sexual assaults
- Making them have sex with other people
- Giving them drugs
- Playing on the young person's feeling of guilt, shame and fear

Adapted from Banardo's 'Grooming Line'.

## Spotting the signs

### Missing from home

This might be returning home late, staying out over night or missing school. They might be defensive about where they have been, who they have been with and what they have been doing.

### Phone

Receiving excessive or strange messages or phone calls from people you and/or they don't know. Having adults as friends on social networking sites. Being given a 2nd phone or sim to hold for someone. Especially a non-smartphone or "burner".

### Gifts

Coming home with new expensive items that they couldn't normally afford like phone, jewellery, new trainers or computer games. Or talking about people who give them free food or cigarettes.

### Adult friends

Associating with or developing close relationships with people over 18. They may give them lifts or invite them into adult activity like drinking, parties or even offer them the chance of a job.

### Alcohol or drugs

Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs on a regular basis. Particularly alcohol that is normally associated with adult drinking.

### Moods

Changes in mood, maybe acting secretive, withdrawn or aggressive.

### Injuries

Having marks on their bodies which they try to conceal.

### Sudden change

In friendship groups, music taste, clothes, behaviour, school attendance.

### Transport

Getting picked up or dropped off by unknown people, or talking about going to new places.

Finding bus or train tickets from places you have no knowledge of why your child would visit or that they did visit.





# Protecting your child from exploitation

Exploitation can happen to any young person from any background. It happens to boys and young men as well as girls and young women.

There are some situations that can make young people more vulnerable to exploitation. Young people who are having difficulties at home, regularly go missing or have experienced care may be particularly vulnerable. Young people with a special educational need or disability are at higher risk of exploitation as are those who may be questioning their identity.

The victims of abuse are not at fault. Abusers refine their methods and become skilled in the way they manipulate and take advantage of the young people they abuse.

As a parent or carer, it is important to discuss with children the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships to help them understand potential risks. Children and young people say they want to get more information, support and guidance about healthy and unhealthy relationships including information about sex, drugs and alcohol from their parents or carers.



There are a number of practical steps you can take to support your children:

- 1** Spend time with your child, support them and let them know you love them. Remind them that if they ever have a problem or are concerned by something/ someone they can come to you.

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- 2** Encourage them to talk to you about anything, remind them it's ok for them to ask questions or share things with you, even when things have gone wrong.

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- 3** Know who their friends are, talk about them with your child and be cautious of any friends or older people who seem to have power over them.

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- 4** Make sure that when they take their phone with them, it's charged and has credit or can be used to message you for free. Being on the same network often means you can message each other for free or there are simple apps available that can help you stay in touch.

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- 5** Know where they go to hang out, make sure you feel it's an appropriate place for your child to be.

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- 6** If they're going out encourage them to have a plan of how they are getting where they are going and how they are getting back. Ensure they have got enough money for this plan and agree a time to return home.

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- 7** Drinking alcohol and taking drugs can make children unaware of risky situations and can make them a target for someone who may want to hurt them. If you think your child is drinking chat to them about the dangers, how to know their limits and how to seek medical help if they or a friend feels unwell.



- 8** If your child seems to be receiving free gifts/things from someone encourage them to think about what that person might want in return.

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- 9** Take an interest in your child's on-line life; the people that they're friends with, talk to, game with and the photos they post or receive. If they want to meetup with people offline make sure they take an adult with them and meet in a public place.

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- 10** Help your child stick to age restrictions on games, websites, videos and apps. If they are designed to be used by adults then chances are your child will be interacting with people older than them. Ask yourself if you would feel uncomfortable if your child was chatting to lots of unknown adults in the street and apply the same process.

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- 11** If they are staying out with a friend, ask for the phone number and address of the friend's parent or carer and check with them that its ok for your child to stay with them.

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- 12** If possible make sure you physically see your child before they go out, clarify they have understood any agreement you may have made about where they are going and when they will be back. Remind them to stay safe, be alert and that they can call or text you at any time if they have any concerns.

## How to talk to your child about exploitation



**Do not become cross with yourself if you cry and feel angry– it is a natural response to seeing your child upset.**

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**Believe them when they tell you what has happened!**

**Reassure them it wasn't their fault.**

**Use active listening skills, for example summarise briefly what you think they have said, ask them if you have understood them correctly.**

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**When your child has told you as much as they feel able, tell them again that you believe them.**

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**Try to write down what your child said including any dates, time's names and locations.**

**Do not be tempted to add anything or take anything away from what your child has said.**

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**Be curious. If you hear something you are unsure of ask your child if they know what it means. This helps to give you an indication of their understanding of the issue and opens up further conversation.**

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**If the exploitation involves rape or sexual assault which is recent, it is strongly advisable that you call the police, even if the child does not want you to. If this happened in the last 2 months you can also contact The Havens. See page 29 for contact details.**

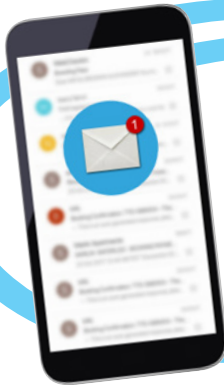
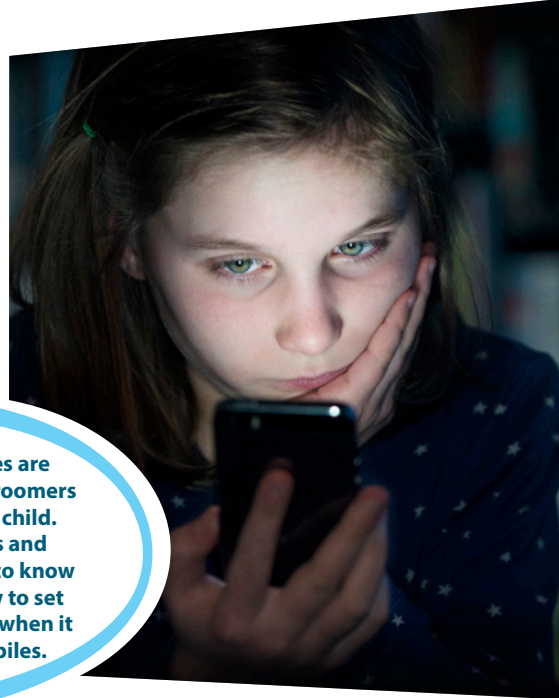


**Remember you can also report information anonymously to Crimestoppers on**

**0800 555 111**

## Preventing on-line exploitation

Children growing up today might not see a difference between 'on-line' and 'off-line' worlds and being on-line is very much a part of their normal social experience. Technology moves quickly and it can be difficult for parents, carers and professionals to keep up and to know what safeguards might help reduce the risks children could encounter on-line.



**Mobile phones are often used by groomers in grooming a child. Many parents and carers struggle to know where and how to set the boundaries when it comes to mobiles.**

There are a number of ways parents or carers can reduce risks with their child and mobile phone. We acknowledge that some of these boundaries may be difficult to put in place, however this is where support from professionals can be useful.

**Consider taking a child's mobile from them at night when they go to bed.**

Turning off Wi-Fi overnight or at specific times.

**Ask friends/family to follow your child's social media accounts.**

**Limit ability to send photo messages.**

Limit ability to download or buy apps.

**Monitor what apps are being used.**

Install on your own phone apps such as **Selfie Cop**, an app that will send a copy of any photo taken on the mobile to you.

**Monitor or have rules as to where phones can be used - isolated areas such as toilets and bathrooms are a no go.**

If possible, keep a list of your child's usernames, pins and passwords for all of their social media accounts as this information may be helpful to the police in an investigation.



Through a site's 'privacy settings' you are usually able to control:

- Who can search for you
- Who sees what you share (It is a good idea to restrict accounts for young people to friends only)
- Who can post information about you

It is important that you stay up-to-date with the privacy settings for any social media that your child uses and to help them stay in control of their profile. Remember that your child may change the settings so check regularly.

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The following links will give you access to information and advice on keeping your child safe on-line including a step by step guide to parental controls for Broadband, mobile, smartphones, social media search engines and more.

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

[www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/)



# What if my child goes missing?

**If your child is missing you must report them as missing to the police.**

One of the most common signs of child exploitation is if your child goes missing. It is then really important that you report your child missing to the police every time they go missing, even if this is happening on a daily basis.

This means that the police and other professionals can build a true picture of your child's risk and take action.



**Before calling the police**

**Check where they might be**

**Try to speak to them or friends**

**Check where they last were (e.g. school)**

**Check they are not hiding somewhere at / near home**

**Search local 'hang outs' that they go to**

**Ask other people if they know where they are as they may not want to speak to you**

It is frequently thought that you should wait 24 hours before reporting somebody missing, but this is NOT TRUE.

You can make a report to the police as soon as you have done as much as possible to find your child and that you believe them to be missing.

If you have spoken to your child and they have given you their location but you cannot be sure this is where they are and that they are safe, still call the police and pass this information on and your concerns. You can inform the police that your child is at risk of exploitation and that you are worried about their safety.







You can report your child missing by visiting your local police station, or over the phone by dialing

**101**

which will automatically transfer you to your local police.

When you call the police, you are often put through to a call-handler rather than an officer.



It is important that you ask for the police incident number. Keep it for future reference.



You need to tell them that you are calling to report a child missing. If this is not the first time you have reported your child missing, you should inform them that your call relates to an on-going concern about your child being missing and exploitation. The call handler will then ask for your location and the length of time your child has been missing.

When you have given this information, the call handler will either put you through to a police officer, or request a police officer to call you back or visit you at home.

It is important to note that the police officer may not call back or visit you until later (it is often when they have availability of officers).

It is important that you ask for the police incident number for your future reference. If the police visit your home they will want to search your child's bedroom.

When you are contacted by a police officer, try to take some notes and you can also ask them for:

- Their name, shoulder number, any references and contact information.
- Contact details for the specialist child exploitation team within the force.

When you have reported your child missing to the police, they will make an assessment of the level of risk to your child. Your child's age, situation, possible reasons and circumstances of them being missing (eg whether or not they have been reported missing before) will dictate the level of investigation they will carry out.



Parents and carers will often continue to search for their child once they have been reported missing to the police. However, it may be good for somebody to stay in the family home in case your child returns. Check with the police about what you will do whilst they are conducting a search, to avoid things being done again.

Your child may return on their own and it is important to let Police know they have returned. If they are located by the police then they will most likely undertake a 'Return Home Interview' within 72 hours of the child's return, although this can differ from force to force. It may be carried out by a third party or another agency or person, to whom the child may find it easier to disclose exploitation.

The Return Home Interview aims to explore the reasons why the child went missing and looks for chances to prevent any further missing episodes.

This is often not straightforward in the case of child exploitation. The child will often refuse to share their whereabouts or who they were with. This can be out of loyalty to the exploiters, or because they have been groomed to believe they are in a consensual relationship.





# Dealing with alcohol and drug use

**Some parents or carers may allow their own teenagers and their friends to drink alcohol or take drugs in their home in the belief that they will come to less harm than if doing so elsewhere.**

The police can stop, fine or arrest a person under 18 who is drinking alcohol in public. If your child is under 18 it is against the law:

- for someone to sell you alcohol
- to buy or try to buy alcohol
- for an adult to buy or try to buy alcohol for you





Children and young people are advised not to drink alcohol before the age of 18 and certainly not before the age of 15. Alcohol use during the teenage years is related to a wide range of health and social problems. It can affect the normal development of the brain, liver, bones and hormones. Drinking before the age of 14 is also associated with increased health risks, including alcohol-related injuries, involvement in violence, and suicidal thoughts and attempts. Alcohol and drug usage is often encouraged by those who want to exploit children and young people. This can be so they are easier to manipulate. If your child returns home under the effect of large amounts of alcohol or drugs, it is important that they have plenty of water and that they are not left alone. It is important to remember the dangers of having a bath under the influences of drugs or alcohol.

Children under the influence of drugs may be likely to panic and may be disorientated, so it is important to keep calm, stay with them and help them to breathe slowly.

Remember that groomers have a deliberate aim to try and keep your child away from you, and have a form of power and control over your child. It is important for you to make sure your child is still loved and wanted by you and your family whatever has happened.

The NHS has some good tips about how to talk to your child about the dangers of alcohol:

[www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/childrens-health/should-my-child-drink-alcohol](http://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/childrens-health/should-my-child-drink-alcohol)

For more detailed information on the effect of drugs on young people, visit [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)



# How to support your child if they are arrested

If your child has been arrested it is important that you make sure that they get fair treatment, no matter what they have been arrested for. You may feel angry about what has happened but try to stay calm so that you are able to support them.

If a child is arrested for committing a criminal offence and they are 10-17 years old, the police must inform the parents or guardian as soon as possible. Children who are arrested should be made aware of their rights when they are arrested or first brought to a police station. One of these rights will be that a parent or guardian can be informed of the arrest straight away. They also have the right to have an adult present at the police station. Children should also be allowed to talk to this adult in private if they wish to do so.

As a parent or guardian you can act as an 'Appropriate Adult' for your child. This is someone that supports a young person when they have been arrested. This means you can observe the interview between your child and the police, called a PACE interview (Police and Criminal Evidence Act interview), to ensure that it is carried out fairly and properly.

**You could be at the police station for up to 24 hours. It is important to get as much help and advice as you can while you are there and to get legal representation. A solicitor can help prepare your child for the police interview and let them know what to say. Make sure the solicitor has enough time to talk with your child before the interview starts. If you do not have a solicitor, ask the custody officer at the police station if a duty solicitor has been called. You can ask for a solicitor to act on your child's behalf free of charge. Be prepared to wait up to two hours for the solicitor to arrive at the police station.**



When you arrive check that 'reviews' have been carried out by asking to read the custody records. Reviews involve checking the young person's health and that she or he has been offered food and drink. A review should happen after six hours, then every nine hours, for up to a maximum of 24 hours. But you can ask the police for food or drink for your child at any time if needed.

You can speak to your child in private before an interview. This is an opportunity to find out how they are feeling and if they are ready to be interviewed. You don't have to wait for the solicitor. If you don't think your child is well enough you can ask for the interview to be delayed until they are.

When a young person is brought into a police station following arrest it can be tempting to

answer 'no comment' to every question. As a suspect is 'innocent until proven guilty' they are perfectly within their rights to choose not to answer questions. While they have a 'Right to Silence' the court can also decide whether a decision to stay silent was reasonable.

Admitting to any offence in a police interview may, however, demonstrate remorse for having offended which may also significantly reduce the length or type of sentence. Admitting something early can also mean that prosecution can be avoided. To receive a caution or restorative justice disposal instead of sentencing an admission will normally be required.



For more information on 'No Comment' Interviews:

- [www.vhsfletchers.co.uk/no-comment-interviews/](http://www.vhsfletchers.co.uk/no-comment-interviews/)
- [www.stokenewingtonchambers.co.uk/should-i-go-no-comment-at-my-police-interview/](http://www.stokenewingtonchambers.co.uk/should-i-go-no-comment-at-my-police-interview/)

Every case is considered on a case by case basis and it is advisable to take the advice of the police station representative or duty solicitor as they will have seen the police disclosure.

**Following the interview, the Police need to make a decision on the next steps.**

This can be to charge and have your child appear at court. The Police can decide to bail your child to a future court date. Bail means that they are releasing your child until that date and this can include conditions, such as living and sleeping at their address and being home at a certain time or not associating with other people involved in the offence. If charged you should accompany him or her through the fingerprinting, photographing and DNA testing procedures.

The Police could decide to refuse bail after charge, which means your child has to be transferred to the accommodation of children's service. If they do not have accommodation available your child may stay in the cells until the court hearing. If they do go to accommodation, they are still in police custody but sleeping somewhere else. It does not mean they have become looked after and the custody ends when they arrive at court, which must be on time.

The Police may decide they need more information and could bail your child to a future date to return for another interview or an update on the case. Bail can have conditions for this period, which should not be for more than 28 days. They could decide to 'release under investigation', which has no return date or conditions.

The Police could decide the offence is of a low enough gravity, particularly if your child has not got any previous convictions, and has admitted to the offence to refer the matter to the Youth Offending Team for a pre-court disposal. This can be either a Triage (no further action), Caution (formal warning on file) or Youth Conditional Caution (formal warning with conditions to be adhered to for 3 months).

If your child has a social worker you can contact them for further advice and support or you can also contact your local Youth Offending Team for advice.

The youth offending team gets involved if a young person:

- gets into trouble with the police or is arrested
- is charged with a crime and has to go to court
- is convicted of a crime and given a sentence

Working with the youth offending team is the best way to support your child.





# Living and coping with exploitation

**It is important to remember that you and your child are not to blame for your child's exploitation and that they have been targeted by an adult or peer who is using your child's vulnerabilities against them.**

Parents and carers learning that their child is being exploited are often worried about how they talk about the subject with their child.

Raising the subject directly, but gently – and avoiding conflict with your child is the best way to try to manage this. We also suggest that you speak to your child in the language that they understand, rather than in terms of abuse, exploitation or adult language.

The most important thing is for your child to feel that they can always come and talk to you, no matter what they have to say; and that you will always be there for them. Those doing the exploitation have a deliberate aim to separate your child from you, so your relationship is likely to come under some strain. It is important for you to make sure your child is still loved and wanted by you and your family whatever has happened.

A diagram showing a profile of a human head with a brain inside. To the right of the brain are four horizontal bars, each with a label: Physical, Cognitive, Emotional, and Social. The bars are purple and white.

When talking with your child it is important to remember that the adolescent brain continues to develop and change as they grow. Scientists now know that an adolescent's understanding of risk and harm is not fully developed. What may seem dangerous to you or I may not seem so to them (even if they say they understand the danger or risk they may think "it won't happen to them").



**Knowing your child is experiencing exploitation can be very distressing for you and your family. It is important that you and others who parent your child with you still continue to include all family members in activities and daily life.**

**It is important that parents and carers seek support for themselves so they can cope with the demands of a young person experiencing exploitation.**

**(See back page for numbers)**



**Many parents and carers feel particularly upset that their child had been suffering abuse for some time before it was discovered or disclosed. The following points offer some reasons that may have stopped your child from telling you.**

- No understanding that they are experiencing abuse or exploitation
- Belief that the abuser is their friend, loves or cares for them and that they are in a relationship
- Not wanting to talk about sex and sexual relationships
- Length of time that might have gone by from the time of abuse
- Not knowing who to tell
- Anxiety, embarrassment and shame
- Fear of not being believed or of being judged or rejected
- Fear for personal and family safety. They may have been threatened by the abuser if they tell.
- Dependency on abusers (emotional, for substances or for finance)
- A sense of powerlessness and/or isolation
- Numbness of feeling ('It happened to someone else')
- Fear of disappointing loved ones and losing family and friends.
- Fear of "getting into trouble" for crimes they may have been involved in during exploitation
- Feeling they owe the abuser
- Not wanting to appear as a 'snitch'. There may be a real or perceived risk of violence if they are seen to have 'snitched'.
- If they have been blackmailed or threatened not to tell.



Your relationship with your child may be extremely difficult when they are in an exploitative and abusive situation. It is important to remember that you can still care for your child if they are still living in the family home. Still preparing a hot meal for your child, even if they have been missing for several hours and do not return until late into the night gives a message to your child that you still care and love them.

Some parents and carers told us they would put a hot water bottle in their bed, tell their child they were glad they came home and they loved them and leave them to rest before talking to them. Parents and carers said that giving this space gave both their child and them the opportunity to have a calmer chat in the morning or later in the day.



When working with families, parents and carers we often ask if they could keep a note of all incidents, times and dates, number plates of any cars they see, descriptions of any adults or peers, anything new the child comes home with or any notable differences in the child. This supports professionals and agencies to work with your child and can assist in investigations.

Professionals working with your child will be able to support, advise and direct you to other support services who can offer you guidance.



**Please always ask for help whenever it is needed.**



# What the police and local authorities can do about exploitation

**Local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that no child is at risk of or experiences any form of exploitation. Local authorities meet with their statutory partners in health and the police to discuss how best to support individual children and their families to prevent exploitation.**



They work together to put in place policies, procedures and strategies to prevent exploitation from happening. For more information about this please see your local children's safeguarding partnerships websites.

There are a number of disrupting actions that are available to the police. Many offences can be committed by exploiters either directly or indirectly and these can lead to arrests and convictions. These will not always require the participation of your child in any prosecution, but may require information you can collect around any suspected exploiters to assist police.

Where a prosecution is not possible police can look at disruption options including Child Abduction Warning Notices. These can be issued against individuals who are suspected of exploiting children by stating that they have no permission to associate with the named child and that if they do so they can be arrested under the Child Abduction Act 1984 or the Children's Act 1989 depending on their age and care status.

They can be a useful tool for parents and carers because they require a statement from the person(s) with parental responsibility for the child. This is important if you identify a risk as a parent or carer, but your child insists that the person is a legitimate 'friend' or 'boy/girlfriend'.

Child Abduction Warning Notices are only able to be issued for children up to the age of 16 if they are living at home and 18 years if they are in the care of the local authority.

Social Care treats child exploitation seriously and aims to work with the police, health and education partners to support the child and you as a family to overcome the impact of the exploitation and harm. If the level of harm is significant this may require a Child Protection response, partners will come together to agree who needs to do what to disrupt the harm and protect the child. They will work with you to help protect your child.





# Getting help

## Local support options

### London Borough of Merton

#### **Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub:**

020 8545 4226, mash@merton.gov.uk  
www.merton.gov.uk/mash

#### **Catch22: Merton Young Person's Risk and Resilience Service**

Young people's drug and alcohol, missing and CSE Service

020 3701 8641, msm@catch-22.org.uk  
www.catch-22.org.uk

**Merton Youth Offending Team:** 020 8274 4949

#### **School health services, Merton CLCH**

020 8102 3350  
clcht.schoolnursingmerton@nhs.net  
www.clch.nhs.uk/services/school-nursing

### London Borough of Wandsworth

#### **Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub:**

020 8871 6622 (or 020 8871 6000 out of hours),  
mash@wandsworth.gov.uk

**EVOLVE exploitation and missing team –**  
evolve@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk

#### **Catch 22 substance misuse and emotional well-being service**

07770 573 131, YPhealth.office@catch-22.org.uk  
www.catch-22.org.uk

#### **Wandsworth Youth Offending Team:**

0208 871 6222

#### **School Health Services, Wandsworth: CLCH**

0330 058 1679  
clcht.0-19wandsworthandrichmondadmin@nhs.net  
www.clch.nhs.uk/services/school-nursing

## London Boroughs of Richmond and Kingston

### Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub/SPA

#### (Single Point of Access):

020 8547 5008 (or 020 8770 5000 out of hours)

[www.richmond.gov.uk/single\\_point\\_of\\_access](http://www.richmond.gov.uk/single_point_of_access)

**Project X** - work with children and young people at risk of exploitation or harm, alongside the Youth Justice team and other services. They also offer support to young people who are arrested and in custody. Refer via the SPA above.

**Phoenix Project** - a specialist service working with male and female young people aged 10 to 18 who have experienced sexual exploitation and have a social worker - refer via the SPA (above).

**Adolescent Safeguarding Team** - a specialist social work team in Achieving for Children who work with children and their families where there is contextual harm - refer via the SPA (above)

**AfC Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service** for Kingston and Richmond: 020 8547 6920  
[smsreferrals@achievingforchildren.org.uk](mailto:smsreferrals@achievingforchildren.org.uk)

**Kingston and Richmond Youth Offending Team:**  
020 8547 6920

**School Health Services, Kingston:** Your Healthcare  
020 8339 8000  
[yourhealthcare.org/services/school-health](http://yourhealthcare.org/services/school-health)

**School health Services Richmond:** CLCH  
0330 058 1679

[clcht.0-19wandsworthandrichmondadmin@nhs.net](mailto:clcht.0-19wandsworthandrichmondadmin@nhs.net)  
[www.clch.nhs.uk/services/school-nursing](http://www.clch.nhs.uk/services/school-nursing)

## Sexual Health Services

### Sexual Health South West London

(Merton, Richmond, Wandsworth)  
0333 300 2100, [www.shswl.nhs.uk](http://www.shswl.nhs.uk)

### KU19 Sexual Health Services (Kingston)

0208 339 4783  
[contraception&sexualhealth@yourhealthcare.org](mailto:contraception&sexualhealth@yourhealthcare.org)

### The Wolverton Centre for Sexual Health

at Kingston Hospital 020 8974 9331  
[www.sexualhealthkingston.co.uk](http://www.sexualhealthkingston.co.uk)

### Metro Sexual Health Advice Helpline:

020 8305 5002 [www.getit.org.uk](http://www.getit.org.uk)  
Info and health advice for young people aged 13 upwards: [www.gettingiton.org.uk](http://www.gettingiton.org.uk)

## Londonwide services

Supporting young Londoners, their families, peers and communities affected by violence and exploitation

[www.saferlondon.org.uk](http://www.saferlondon.org.uk)

0207 021 0301

[info@saferlondon.org.uk](mailto:info@saferlondon.org.uk)

### The Havens

Help for those you have been raped or sexually assaulted in the past 12 months

020 3299 6900 (for urgent advice/appointments)

0203 299 1599 (for general enquiries and follow-up)

[kch-tr.Havensinfo@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.Havensinfo@nhs.net)

[www.thehavens.org.uk](http://www.thehavens.org.uk)

## Nationwide sources of support

### Parents Against Child Exploitation:

[www.paceuk.info](http://www.paceuk.info)

### NSPCC:

Helpline 0808 800 5000

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

### FACE (Fighting Against Child Exploitation)

[www.faceup2it.org](http://www.faceup2it.org)

### Unseen

[www.modernslaveryhelpline.org](http://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org)

08000 121 700

### Crime Stoppers:

[www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)

**Childline:** 0800 1111

### CEOP – (On-line abuse or exploitation):

0370 496 762

**Anti-Terrorism Hotline:** 0800 789 321

[www.gov.uk/youth-offending-team](http://www.gov.uk/youth-offending-team)

**Prisoners Families Helpline:** 0808 808 2003.

0808 800 2222 to speak to trained family support worker.

[www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/behaviour/what-to-do-if-your-teen-gets-arrested/](http://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/behaviour/what-to-do-if-your-teen-gets-arrested/)



# Glossary of Terms

**1. Abuser:** a person who hurts a child physically, sexually or emotionally.

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**2. Bail:** The term used by police to say they are releasing your child after an arrest until a particular date. Bail can have conditions attached.

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**3. Boundaries:** set of clear instructions for safety.

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**4. Consent:** mutual agreement and or permission for something to happen or to do something.

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**5. Contextual Safeguarding:** When professionals collectively respond to harm outside the home.

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**6. Dependency:** An individual need, want, or habit for something or someone.

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**7. Disclosure:** when a child tells someone about something happening to them or someone else.

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**8. Disorientated:** confused.

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**9. Explicit:** shows sexual features without any effort to hide details.

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**10. Exploiters:** someone who uses other people for their own advantage.

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**11. Groomers:** individual who looks to build relationships for the purpose of grooming children.

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**12. Grooming:** the action by a exploiter to befriend and build a relationship with a child for their own advantage.

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**13. Incident number:**

number police give you when reporting a crime.

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**14. Isolation:** when a child is removed from or kept apart or away from family, friends and trusted adults.

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**15. Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub:**

This is where you can report or seek help about concerns relating to the safety of a child in Kingston and Richmond it is also known as the Single Point of Access (SPA).

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**16. Perpetrator:** someone who carries out a harmful, criminal or dangerous act.

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**17. Safe and well check:**

where your child is visited following them being missing by a professional.

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**18. Safeguard:** to protect.

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**19. Significant harm:**

The level of abuse is so concerning it requires protection by services. A child may experience this situation if they are being groomed or have vulnerabilities that make it easier for someone to hurt them.

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**20. Vulnerabilities:**

individuals that have a need that is not being met, which leaves them open to possible hurt or to be influenced more by others.

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## Child Exploitation Parents and Carers Support Pack

This booklet was adapted from and produced with kind permission from the London Borough of Merton.