

Information for Parents & Carers

Child Sexual Exploitation - How to keep your child safe

What is child sexual exploitation?

Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse that affects thousands of young people every year in the UK. Boys & girls can be sexually exploited.

Many victims of exploitation have been groomed by an adult who will befriend them and make them feel special to gain their trust before sexually exploiting them. Through threats, bribes, violence or by telling young people that they love them, the adult has power over the young person and gets them to do sexual things for their own or other people's benefit. The abusers are very manipulative and often the young person does not recognise that they are being abused.

The rise of the internet, ownership of mobile phones, and use of social networking sites have increased the risk of children being sexually exploited.

There are 3 models of abuse; by an individual, by multiple people and by criminal gangs.

Abuse Model 1 Inappropriate relationships

Usually involves just one abuser who has physical, emotional and financial power over the young person.

Abuse Model 2 Boyfriend/Girlfriend

Abuser grooms child by striking up a normal relationship. Child may then have to attend parties and sleep with multiple people.

Abuse Model 3 Organised exploitation and trafficking

Criminal network of gangs who traffic children between towns and cities for sex. Might use child to recruit next victim.

Grooming: What is it?

'Grooming' is used to describe the process abusive adults use to trick young people into believing they are trustworthy so that they can exploit them. This can be online, on the phone or face to face.

Sometimes initial introduction might be through other young people who have been groomed themselves, or it might be their girlfriend, boyfriend, family member or family friend.

Often they will target vulnerable children. There are usually four stages of grooming:

- Targeting stage
- Friendship forming
- Loving relationship stage
- Abusive relationship stage

What can I do as a parent or carer?

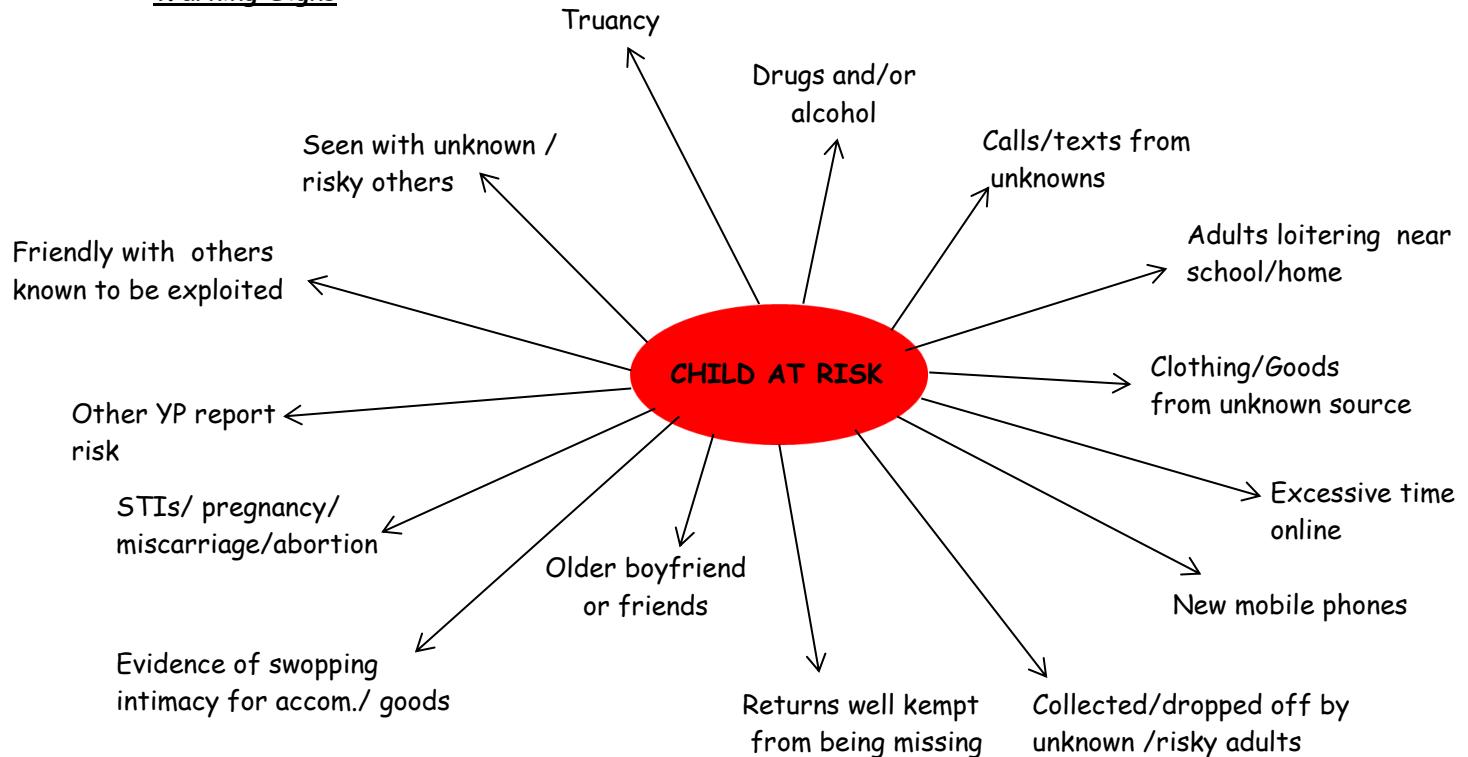
As a parent or carer, it is important to discuss with children the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships to help highlight potential risks to them.

There are also a number of practical steps you can take to protect your children such as:

- Staying alert to changes in behaviour or any physical signs of abuse such as bruising
- Being aware of new, unexplained gifts or possessions and carefully monitoring any episodes of staying out late or not coming home

- Exercising caution around older friends your child may have, or relationships with other young people where there appears to be a power imbalance
- Making sure you understand the risks associated with your child being online and putting measures in place to minimise these risks

Warning Signs



More information about child sexual exploitation & child protection can be found on the websites listed below:

Barnardo's: <http://www.barnardos.org.uk>

PACE (Parents against child sexual exploitation): <http://www.paceuk.info>

Think U Know: <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

Contacts for reporting a concern:

Social Work Centres:

Bathgate: 01506 284700

Broxburn: 01506 284440

Livingston: 01506 282252

Out of office hours: 01506 281082

Police: 101

Childline: 0800 1111

If a child is in immediate danger, call 999