



CHILD EXPLOITATION



Child exploitation can affect any child or young person, male or female, under the age of 18. The main types of exploitation experienced by young people are criminal and sexual exploitation.



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The Children's Society¹ defines criminal exploitation as:

'when someone you trusted makes you commit crimes for their benefit'

Criminal exploitation may include:

1 County lines, when gangs or organised criminal networks use dedicated mobile phone lines to export illegal drugs into more rural areas. Children can be exploited to move, store and sell drugs or money

A young person defined sexual exploitation² as:

2 Drug dealing, when children are used to move, store and sell drugs within the local drugs market

3 Holding or storing illegal items such as weapons, drugs or stolen goods

4 Forced robbery or theft

5 Other forms, such as cannabis cultivation or forced begging.



"Someone taking advantage of you sexually, for their own benefit. Through threats, by bribes, violence, or humiliation, or by telling you that they love you, they will have the power to get you to do sexual things for their own or other people's benefit or enjoyment (including: touching or kissing private parts, sex, taking sexual photos)."

Preventing child exploitation is a priority for Avon and Somerset Police. There are similarities between criminal and sexual exploitation, which may also overlap. Victims may, at any one time, be experiencing both. People who exploit children for criminal or sexual purposes can use similar techniques, such as pressure, violence and intimidation, and hold all of the power in the relationship.

Common traits of child exploitation

- It can still be exploitation even if it looks like the young person has agreed to take part in the behaviour
- The young person may not see the pressure they are under or see themselves as a victim
- It can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and young people or adults
- It does not have to happen face to face - young people can be manipulated and pressured through social media.
- Spending time in places a long distance from home that they have no connection to
- Sexual activity or concerns about lack of consent to sexual activity
- Seen entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown people
- Becoming increasingly secretive or private
- Spending a lot of time online or on social media
- Unexplained money or cash, including bank account transactions
- Spending time with new friends or people, who may be a similar age or older
- Sudden change in behaviour or appearance, including a change in interest or hobbies.

Spot the signs of possible child exploitation

- Having more than one mobile phone and/or it seeming like they are controlled by their mobile phone
- Having weapons, balaclavas or items associated with drug dealing (e.g. digital scales, small plastic self-seal bags, condoms)
- Having new possessions or receiving deliveries, e.g. clothes, trainers, jewellery, iPads
- Staying away overnight or going missing for a number of days
- Returning from being away from home looking tired and dirty, maybe in the same clothes
- Not going to school or college
- Being in trouble with the police and/or found in possession of drugs
- Unexplained injuries, including cuts, burns or bruises

A report by The Children's Society³ identified the following risks to young people who are exploited:

- Physical injuries: risk of serious violence and death
- Emotional and psychological trauma
- Sexual violence: sexual assault, rape, indecent images being taken and shared, internally inserting drugs
- Debt bondage - young person and families being 'in debt' to the exploiters, which is used to control the young person
- Neglect and basic needs not being met
- Living in unclean, dangerous and/or unhygienic environments
- Poor attendance and/or attainment at school, college or university.

What do you do?

As a parent, it is important to remember that neither you nor your child are to blame - they are a victim of their exploiters. Here are some of the things you could do:

● Talk to your child

Stay calm, ask them questions about what's going on, tell them that you want to help them and keep them safe; try to get them to see the reality of their situation; be open, honest and non-judgemental; remember they may be scared.

● Gather evidence

If your child is picked up in a car or has rail or bus tickets, keep a record of these for the Police.

● Report

If you have any concerns that your child is being exploited, you should report this to the Police. If your child stays away from home you should report them as missing to the Police immediately.

Always call 999 in an emergency.

If you spot these signs call **101** as soon as possible. You can also report by contacting Crimestoppers 100% anonymously on **0800 555 111** or visit **www.crimestoppers-uk.org**

● Get help and support

from professionals and organisations. Talk to your child's school - they may have more information.

For more information visit the following:

- **Avon and Somerset Police**
www.avonandsomerset.police.uk
- **Barnardos**
www.barnardos.org.uk
- **The Children's Society**
www.childrenssociety.org.uk/news-and-blogs
(Search 'different forms of child exploitation')
- **NSPCC**
www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse
- **Parents Against Child Exploitation**
www.paceuk.info
- **Say something if you see something:**
www.stop-cse.org/what-is-cse

