

## Child Sexual Exploitation

### Fact Sheet 2 – The indicators

A list of indicators that might suggest CSE is taking place:

#### Emotional and Behavioural Development

- changes in temperament and behaviour - depression, violent aggressive and emotional outbursts, mood swings or bullying
- secretive behaviour – concealing mobile phones, guarded phone calls, texts and messages; late night phone or internet use, contact with adults or unknown young people on the internet e.g. chat rooms.
- involvement or escalation in minor crime such as shoplifting or anti-social behaviour
- regularly coming home late or being absent without permission
- found in areas or addresses where they have no known connection
- regular missing or absent episodes from home or care placement
- regular breakdown of placements for looked after children due to behavioural problems
- in an age-inappropriate relationship, has older boyfriend (5years+); has more than one boyfriend or shares a boyfriend (please be aware that a boyfriend of similar age can also be responsible for exploitation).
- associations – with other young people involved in exploitation; with manipulative peers/adults; with regular missing children; with unknown adults; seen entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults
- displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- having or sending sexualised images on or from mobile phones or through social media
- has a reputation or there is gossip amongst peers of sexual promiscuity

#### Education

- disengaging and losing interest in education
- noticeable change in performance
- disruptive and poor behaviour
- regular absences or truanting
- breakdown of school placements due to behavioural problem

#### Health

- changes in physical appearance – signs of weight loss, malnourishment and poor hygiene
- poor eating habits, eating disorders
- experimental or regular use of substances, cigarettes, alcohol or drugs. Evidence of dependency or overdosing. Has the young person been seen or been found in areas or at addresses known to be associated with drug supply/use?
- unexplained physical injuries. There may be attempts to explain these away as 'playful fighting' or attempts to conceal the injury

- disclosure of physical or sexual assault, followed by non-cooperation & withdrawal of allegation
- signs of self-harm or showing suicidal tendencies
- being sexually active, inappropriate sexualised behaviour or activity
- disclosure or information that the young person has been/is involved in providing sex for money or gifts. Has the young person been seen or been found in areas known to be associated with the sex trade?
- inappropriate sexual activity with peers
- evidence of sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, terminations or miscarrying
- disengaging with professionals, social, support and health services

## Personal Identity

- receipt of unexplained gifts, phone credit, clothes, haircuts or money
- a sudden change in normal appearance such as more make-up or overly sexualised dress
- appearing to be well cared for despite extended periods of missing; or having access to premises not known to the parent or carer
- membership or association with a gang; having a family member or friend involved in gang membership, or demonstrating intent to join a gang

## Family and Social Relationships

- becoming physically aggressive or hostile towards family and friends
- reduced contact with family and friends
- difficulty in making or maintaining relationships with family or friends; having no healthy friendships
- detachment from normal age-related activities and social groups
- going missing for periods of time or regularly returning home late

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## Who is at risk?

Children who are sexually exploited come from all different backgrounds and environments. There is no single CSE victim profile, so professionals should keep an open mind when identifying those at risk and dealing with referrals. However, there are certain risk factors that may indicate that a child is more susceptible to being exploited. Children who are already vulnerable, whom have complex and problematic lives, and who are already in the care system may be at a heightened risk from perpetrators. Those at increased risk of CSE may include:

- looked after children living in residential care, foster care, semi-independent or 16+ accommodation, bed and breakfast or hostels
- living in or coming from a chaotic or dysfunctional family environment – where there is a history of domestic abuse, emotional/physical abuse, neglect, familial child sexual abuse, honour based abuse.
- have parents or carers with drug, alcohol, mental health related issues or who are involved in criminality
- have parents with health problems and where the child becomes the 'carer' within the family
- have regular missing episodes from home or care

- have a physical disability, learning difficulties or their own mental health problems
- have alcohol and drug/substance related issues
- have a history of or thoughts of self-harm, suicide, suffer from low self-esteem or self-confidence
- have gang involvement, associate with gang members, live in a gang afflicted community
- have suffered a bereavement or some other form of trauma
- have a history of homelessness or sleeping rough
- have problems relating adjusting to their sexual orientation and may be unable to confide in their family
- are socially removed from friends in the same age group, are being bullied or experience exclusion because of poverty
- are allowed regular or constant unsupervised access to social networking sites or chat rooms
- have poor education attendance or who are or have been excluded from mainstream education
- associate or attend education with other exploited children
- have been trafficked

## Hot Spots

Whilst CSE can occur anywhere, there are a number of locations that are often associated and targeted by perpetrators:

- residential children's homes, 16+ and semi-independent accommodation
- hotels or bed & breakfast particularly at the budget end of the market
- hostels
- transport hubs
- take-away fast food outlets, cafes and ice cream bars
- local parks or public open spaces
- taxi ranks
- schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRU)
- shopping centres
- arcades
- small retail outlets trading late (corner shops)
- pubs and nightclubs
- festivals

More information on CSE can be found in the 'The London Child Sexual Exploitation Operating Protocol – 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition' which also includes the S.A.F.E.G.U.A.R.D. warning signs mnemonic. The protocol can be found at: <https://www.cscb-new.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/LONDON-CSE-PROTOCOL.pdf>

Notes:

