

Information For Parents – Child Sexual Exploitation

- Child sex exploitation is something that parents and carers everywhere should be aware of. It can be committed by all ethnicities and against boys as well as girls. This type of offending is about older men taking advantage of vulnerable young people for their own sexual gratification.
- Parents and carers should talk to their children, take an interest in what they are doing and warn them not to go off with strangers, no matter how tempting it might seem.
- Victims of child sexual exploitation often do not recognise that they are being exploited and sometimes confuse what is exploitation and what is genuine affection.
- The grooming process itself often means some victims don't see themselves as victims of sexual abuse and are unwilling to disclose information to police or other authorities.
- It is only by proactively looking for child exploitation that agencies are able to identify and support victims and this requires a long term and coordinated approach.

Telltale signs to look for include:

- **disengagement from education**; young people who are not in school during the day may be more at risk of sexual exploitation. Children who are becoming involved in this activity may begin to skip school or become disruptive
- **risky behaviours**; including secretive use of mobile phones and the internet
- **unexplained gifts**; children who appear to have new clothes, jewellery, mobile phones or money that cannot 'plausibly' be accounted for
- **peers and friends**; involved in sexual exploitation and with 'older' boyfriends/girlfriends
- **drugs/alcohol**; drug or alcohol abuse may leave children more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, it is also true to say that 'abusers' may use drugs and alcohol to help control children
- **sexual health issues**; a history of unprotected sex leading to STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infection) or inappropriate sexual behaviour.

- If anyone has been a victim of sexual assault themselves they can get support and don't have to speak direct to police. They can contact REACH Tel: 0191 221 9222 for independent and confidential advice and help,
- If you are concerned about a member of your family or someone you care for please speak to police Tel: 101.