

Q. How would I recognise if a child or young person was being sexually exploited?

A. It can be difficult to recognise if someone you know is being exploited, or if you are being exploited yourself.

The warning signs might look like normal behaviour for a young person, but can mean that they are in a very dangerous situation. Some of the warning signs that a young person is being sexually exploited are if they:

- > Go missing from home, care or school
- > Receive gifts from new or unknown people
- > Misuse drugs or alcohol
- > Have physical injuries or poor mental health
- > Have a number of sexually transmitted infections, pregnancies or abortions
- > Self-harm or have thoughts about (or try to commit) suicide
- > Change in physical appearance

Grooming: when an exploiter gains a victim's trust so that they can sexually exploit them. Often victims don't realise they've been groomed. Grooming can happen online, with the exploiter getting a young person to send sexual images of themselves. They may pressure the child to meet face-to-face.

Getting help

If you have been or are being exploited or you know someone who might be, please get in touch. If you don't want to make the phone call yourself, ask someone that you trust to do it for you.

You can get help in either of these ways:

- Call **Barking and Dagenham MASH** 020 8227 3811 Monday to Friday 8.45am to 4.45pm
- Outside of these times please call 020 8594 8356
- **In an emergency** – such as when someone is being violently threatened – call the Police on 999.

For advice on how to stay safe or get help, you can use the following services:

- **ChildLine:** call 0800 1111 or visit www.childline.org.uk for advice and support
- **CEOP** www.ceop.police.uk reporting online safety issues
- **ChatHealth;** safe and secure text messaging service for secondary school aged pupils in Barking and Dagenham 07520 632 503
- **NSPCC:** visit www.nspcc.org.uk
- **Thinkuknow:** visit www.thinkuknow.co.uk for advice on online safety
- **Say Something:** 116000 (call or text 24/7 FREE and anonymous)
- **Fearless.org** : anonymously report a crime

Child Sexual Exploitation Can you spot the signs?

A guide by and for children and young people

newsite.bardag-lsrb/children-and-young-people/



Q. What is Child Sexual Exploitation?

A. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child abuse.

It involves children and young people under the age of 18 being put into situations where they receive something in return for them performing, or being involved in, sexual activities.

The person (or group) exploiting the child or young person will gain power over them by giving them something material, like gifts, money, drugs or alcohol, or something emotional, such as affection, a sense of importance or a feeling of 'being somebody'.

The victim often doesn't realise that they are being exploited because they see the exploiter as their boyfriend or someone who will look after them. This makes them very vulnerable and limits their choices.

The exploiter can become threatening, intimidating and violent, making it very difficult for the victim to escape from the situation. CSE does not always involve physical contact. Young people can be groomed and exploited online.

Q. What are the Push and Pull Factors?

A. Young people can be made vulnerable to CSE by 'push factors' – things that push them away from situations where they are safe and happy – and 'pull factors' – things that draw young people towards their exploiters.

Push factors for young people include experiencing:

- Violence or physical, emotional or sexual abuse at home
- Feeling low, unloved or unwanted
- Parents who are neglectful or critical of their children, or absent altogether
- Being bullied or having no friends
- Having disabilities or special needs.

Remember: those under 18 cannot legally consent (agree) to their own sexual exploitation. This means that even if a child says they consent, the exploiter is still breaking the law. CSE affects boys and young men as well as girls and young women

Pull factors include when a young person is:

- Given attention by someone they look up to – this can be either an individual or a group or gang
- Given gifts, money, alcohol or drugs
- Encouraged to do adult things such as going to clubs and staying away from home
- Encouraged to take risks, including sexual risks
- Told by the exploiter that they understand them and will treat them like an adult and that others, like their parents, teachers or friends, don't do this.

