

# Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

## A Guide for Parents and Carers

This guide is to help inform parents, carers and family members what child sexual exploitation is, how to spot the signs, keep your child safe and get help.



Putting Families First  
in Cardiff



## What is child sexual exploitation (CSE)?

Sexual exploitation is a hidden form of child abuse and is a crime. CSE involves both male and female children being tricked, coerced or manipulated into sexual acts. It is very unlikely that children who are sexually exploited will tell the adults around them what is going on. This might be because they don't think anything is wrong or because they are afraid.

Children might be given physical things such as alcohol, drugs, trainers or gifts like jewellery by the abuser. The abuser may also draw children in by making them believe they are in a relationship. A child is unable to see that they are being used for sex because the abuser has tricked them or may hold power over them in some way. For example, they may have an explicit photo of the child that they use to threaten them and make them do what they want. This grooming and abuse can start online before happening in person and can take place within groups of friends of a similar age.


These abusers know how to target vulnerable children and they are skilled in approaching them and gaining their trust. This makes it difficult for exploited children to see and understand what is happening to them. Children may come across as putting themselves in risky situations, when in fact they are being targeted, controlled, manipulated and used.

## Where does it take place?

Child Sexual Exploitation and grooming happens in public places like hotels, pubs, clubs, takeaways and fast food outlets, taxis and parks, but it mostly takes place in people's homes.

## What can you do?

As a parent, carer or family member you have a really important role in keeping your children and the children in the community safe.



## Open communication


Children and young people need to know that if something is worrying them, they can talk to you about it. Making it a habit to chat to your child about their friends, activities and experiences will help let them know you're there for them.

## Give good information


As children reach puberty it can be difficult to talk to adults, even their parents, about sex and relationships. It can be hard for parents too. If parents don't talk to children and give good, truthful, positive information then they will only have the information passed on by others like friends at school, or what they see on television or the internet. You can't be sure that this information is reliable or truthful.

Your child's school will be able to tell you what sex and relationships education they are getting. Be available to your child to reinforce positive messages and answer any questions they may have.

## DO

- Read books, leaflets, look at a web-site or watch a DVD with your child
  - Talk while you're doing something else - washing up, driving in the car, fishing or going for a walk
  - Enjoy talking about it. Laugh with each other, not at each other - it can reduce embarrassment and stress
  - Listen rather than judge. Try asking what your child thinks. Make sure you understand what your child's question really is... it may be much simpler than it first sounds
  - Answer questions and don't be afraid to say: 'I really don't know - let's work it out or look it up together'
  - Have a phrase ready for awkward moments, such as: 'That's a good question, let's talk about it once we get home' (then make sure you do!)
  - Always respond. If you don't, she or he may think it is wrong to talk to you about sex and relationships and as a result you may find your child clams up when you raise the subject.
  - If it all feels too personal, try talking about people in books, films, and favourite television programmes such as soaps.
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# DON'T X

- Say you will tell them when they are older if they ask a question about sex. Instead, find a way to answer them in a way that matches their level of understanding. If you don't know the answer, look at ways you can find out together, for example on the internet.
  - Bombard your child with questions if they ask you a question. If you are concerned about a question or a comment they have made, gently try and find out why they are asking it. Do try and hold on to your anxieties until you have a better idea of the origins of the question. As children get older they may go through phases of wanting to be private. Let them know you are happy to talk to them whenever they are ready.
  - Talk too much. Children say it is awful to get a lecture on growing up. Try to make it a two-way conversation.
  - Be afraid to tell your children what you think, and why. It's also helpful to recognise that other people they know may have different opinions. Asking your child's opinion shows them that you are interested in what they think and might make them feel less anxious about talking to you.
  - It is important to have open discussions with your children about sexual exploitation and how they can be at risk so that they are able to spot the signs for themselves. There is a great guide for children called '**Sexual Exploitation - Sex, Secrets and Lies, Your Guide**'. You can give it to your child to read or go through it with them. It is available on the Barnardo's website [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)
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# How to keep your child safe

## Listen

Spend time with your child, let them know you are there to help them and make sure they know who they can go to if they need someone to talk to. Make sure they know how to get help in an emergency situation, like calling **999**.

Sometimes children show us rather than tell us that something is wrong. They may become secretive about their friends, who they are with and where they go, they may dress older than they are or start missing lessons at school. Talk to your child about these changes.

## Get to know your child's friends

In this way you can find out who is a positive influence. Good friends can be encouraged to support and look out for each other. Secrecy around friendships might be a clue that they're not suitable. Ask your child where they are going when they go out and check out their social arrangements to make sure they are safe.


## Technology

Know how to make sure your child is using the internet and devices safely. Ask them about the sites they use. Make sure they understand why it is important to keep personal information private and why they shouldn't send anyone a sexual image of themselves or anyone else. Help them to understand why they can't trust people they meet online – especially why they shouldn't meet in person anyone they have met online.

Make sure your child has access to a phone with credit when they are out so they can call for help.

If your child is not back on time or if they're not where they're supposed to be, call the police to report your child missing. They will help you look for him or her. Try and find your child, ask friends and relatives for help.

If you see something that doesn't seem right and you believe your child is being sexually exploited, **pass it on**. There are people who can help.



## Spot the signs

These are some signs that a child may be at risk of sexual exploitation:

- You don't know where your child is
- They have a much older boyfriend or girlfriend
- They hang out with adults or much older friends
- They go to house parties where people drink alcohol and take drugs
- They have money or things such as clothing or phones and you don't know where they came from
- They get into cars or vans with people you don't know
- They take taxis and you don't know who is paying
- Their mood or behaviour changes, like becoming secretive, depressed or aggressive
- They receive or send sexual images or become secretive about using the internet or their phone
- They have met someone in person who they first met online
- They are missing school and no one knows where they are

If something happens that concerns you or you have seen some of these signs, talk to your child, ask them about their behaviour and tell them what you're worried about. Reassure your child that it is not their fault and that you will be there for them. Children who are now adults and have been through this have said they didn't tell anyone when it was happening because they were worried they would not be believed or they did not want to upset anyone.

## 'Pass it on!'

If you suspect your child is being sexually exploited you can talk to the police on **101**, speak to a social worker for advice and information by calling **02920 536490** or talk to your own social worker if your family has one. You can also talk to the child protection teacher in your child's school.

Keep a diary of things that concern you like unusual calls and times your child is missing. Collect as much information as possible such as descriptions of people, names or nick names and car registration numbers. This will help the police if they have to take action.

**Always call 999 if you think any child is in immediate danger.**

## What police and children's services can do to help

Police and children's services have a legal responsibility to protect children at risk of harm. Police can look into your concerns and children's services can offer advice and support. You can contact Children's Services at the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub on **02920 536490** and speak to the duty social worker. Your child's school or another professional may contact children's services or the police if they are worried.


If your family needs a social worker, children's services will work with you and your child to look at what support is needed.

A meeting will take place with all the people working with your child. Your social worker should explain when the meeting is being held and get yours and your child's views for the meeting.

The meeting will create a safety plan to support you and your child; the plan will include a worker who works directly with your child to help them understand what has happened to them. Support for parents and carers will also be available to make sure that everyone knows what has to happen to keep your child safe. The meeting will ensure action is taken against any adult that is harming a child.

## Other useful resources

### Phone and Internet Safety Apps

- **Selfie Cop**  
This app helps prevent children 'sexting' and sharing indecent images. It can be downloaded from the usual app stores or [here](#).
  - **"ZIPIT"**  
This is an app from the NSPCC to help children avoid getting drawn into sexting. It can be downloaded from the usual app stores or [here](#).
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- **“Wud U?”**  
This is an app from Barnardo’s that aims to show young people the behaviours that could put them at risk of being sexually exploited through illustrated interactive stories. It can be downloaded from the usual app stores or here.

## Online support and advice for Children and Families

- **Public Health Wales** has a useful website Public Health Network Cymru with range of bilingual fact sheets.
- **‘Say Something’**  
This is a 24/7, free and anonymous helpline for children and young people in relation to CSE. They can be called or text on **116000**. Their website has information and resources about CSE for young people. <http://www.stop-cse.org/saysomething>
- **CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre)**  
**‘Think you know’ – Campaign for children and young people**  
This provides the latest information for children and young people aged 5 to 18 including information on websites young people visit, mobile phones and new technology. There is information for children, young people, families and professionals. This has a reporting function for anyone who has concerns about online communication. <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk>
- **Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)**  
This is an organisation who will arrange for the removal of any child sexual abuse content hosted anywhere in the world and non-photographic child sexual abuse images hosted in the UK. You can report online at <https://www.iwf.org.uk/>
- **‘FaceUp2It’ – CSE campaign for young people**  
This is an online resource for young people by young people (male and female) who are aware of the dangers of grooming and sexual exploitation. The website was developed by them to help other young people who are vulnerable or taking risks. This website informs them of the dangers and how to keep safe, it includes stories of young people’s experiences of sexual exploitation and video resources young people can relate to. <http://www.faceup2it.org/>
- **BLAST! (Male Sexual Exploitation Service)**  
BLAST! is a useful web resource for young men and boys involved in or at risk of sexual exploitation. It offers information about grooming, sexual exploitation and safe relationships. <http://mesmac.co.uk/projects/blast>
- **Parentinfo.org** has a broad range of expert information and advice on internet safety, safe relationships as well as many other aspect of parenting.