

Child Exploitation - Parents Guide

Child Exploitation is a form of child abuse, referring to the exploitation of any child or young person under the age of 18.

It can take many forms, including criminal exploitation and sexual exploitation, with children often being subjected to more than one form of exploitation at a time.

Child Exploitation happens when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual or criminal activity. It might appear consensual, and the child might not recognise that they are a victim of abuse.

Finding Out:

- Finding out that your child is being or has been exploited is extremely traumatic.
- It is important to remember that they have been targeted by a ruthless and manipulative criminal.
- Organisations such as Parents Against Child Exploitation (PACE) can provide advice and support including advice on keeping records, dealing with disclosures, and coping guides - <https://paceuk.info/>
- Barnardos also provide support to young people who have experienced child sexual abuse- <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/protecting-children/cse>

Signs May Include:

Changes in behaviour e.g. being secretive, scared, aggressive, distant or angry

Hanging around or being in relationships with older individuals or groups and breaking ties with old friends

Dropping out of positive activities and hobbies | Unexplained bus or train tickets

Unexplained physical injuries and/or refusal to seek or accept medical treatment

Going missing from home or school, regularly returning home late or staying out late or overnight

Suddenly having lots of money or new possessions that they cannot account for

Receiving more calls/texts than usual and being very protective of their mobile phone or having multiple phones or SIM cards

Using new language, words or hand signs including unhealthy or inappropriate sexualised behaviours and language

Changing their appearance, e.g. particular style, colours

Being afraid or unwilling to visit certain places and people.

Carrying drugs, large amounts of money or weapons | Self-harming and substance misuse issues

What You Can Do:

- Don't wait for a crisis, start speaking to your children about these issues. It is better to be proactive than reactive.
- Don't scare them with 'the big talk', find everyday opportunities to speak about these issues with your child.
- Don't punish them before listening and understanding, know how to support them.
- Exploitation does not always involve physical contact, keep curious about the technology your child is using and stay up to date with platforms, apps, and trends.
- It is important to adopt good practices and set boundaries during a child's first time on the internet. This could be the moment they are bought a mobile phone, games console or laptop.
- Setting up devices and social network profiles safely allows parental controls to be switched on that will help keep children safe online by blocking inappropriate content, managing apps that can be downloaded and providing an ability to monitor their use. Location sharing should also be turned off.
- **Be aware that although you can block unsuitable content, blocks can be disabled or worked around.**
- **Find more Online Safety Help on our website - <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/onlinesafety>**

A child may not speak about the abuse because:

- They believe their involvement or relationship was consensual.
- They feared for their safety if they did tell.
- They depended on offenders emotionally, financially or for substance.
- They felt isolated.
- They feared repercussions of crimes they have been involved in.

If you think a child is in immediate danger, always call the emergency services on 999.

To discuss a non-emergency matter with the Police, call 101. Visit the West Midlands Police Website to report a crime and access advice and support.

A range of help and services are available via Early Help and the Family Hubs. Visit their website for more information and find your nearest family hub - <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/familyhubs>

