

Child Sexual Exploitation

Scotland's National Action Plan has been developed with specific areas of focus for tackling Child Sexual Exploitation:

- Prevention of abuse (with specific measures for dealing with particularly vulnerable children);
- Disruption and prosecution of offenders through legislation; and
- Supporting children and young people affected by Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

It is important that all practitioners have an awareness of CSE and know what to do if they suspect a child or young person may be at risk or being exploited.

Highland's definition of Child Sexual Exploitation:

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse, in which a young person is manipulated or forced into taking part in a sexual act by someone who has power over them. This could be as part of a seemingly consensual relationship, or in return for attention, affection, money, drugs, alcohol or somewhere to stay. The young person may think that their abuser is their friend, or even their boyfriend or girlfriend but they will put them into dangerous situations, forcing the young person to do things they don't fully understand or want to do.

Young people can be exploited through use of substances or being tricked or the use of technology through social media sites, instant messaging, etc. This could involve getting young people to post sexually explicit images or take part in sexual activity or sexual conversations using technology. The abuser may be male or female; they may physically or verbally threaten the young person, or be violent towards them. They will control and manipulate them, and try to isolate them from friends and family.

Highland Child Protection Committee 2015

Vulnerability and Risk Indicators

There are many factors that may make young people more vulnerable to CSE including disrupted family relationships, substance misuse, experience of bullying, disengagement from education, associating with other young people who are being exploited, being looked after and accommodated. These factors alone don't make someone more likely to be exploited but research has shown that these are common factors in many young people who are victims.

There are also a number of risk indicators which may point to CSE including the young person:

- going missing regularly – overnight, during school hours, returning late with no plausible explanation or being found in areas where they have no known links;
- being secretive about where they have been, and with whom;
- becoming estranged from family and usual friends, and associating with an older age group;
- starting a relationship with an older partner or adult;
- having money, clothes, jewellery and mobile phones they can't account for, or talks of social activities they can't plausibly fund;
- showing changed mood and behaviour, e.g. appearance / dressing to look older; eating disorders; using drugs and / or alcohol; self-harming;
- being seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation, or entering / leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults;

- using the internet inappropriately, forming risky on-line relationships, receiving phone calls, emails or letters from adults outside their usual range of social contacts;
- having keys to premises other than those known about;
- having repeat sexually-transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations or physical symptoms indicating either physical or sexual assault.

Grooming

Grooming is a process that often happens over a period of time either in person or via the internet, building trust with the victim before developing what is often viewed as a loving relationship prior to abusive behaviour occurring. The perpetrator will normally target a victim who appears vulnerable, befriend them, giving gifts and paying them particular attention. Once a relationship is developed, the perpetrator may begin to isolate the victim from other support networks by offering protection and a shoulder to cry on. The sharing of secrets or intimate details may also form part of this grooming process. Initially, there may be no expectation of any physical contact until the relationship develops and they become a 'couple'. They may be taken to pubs/clubs, given alcohol or drugs and treated as adults. Once the victim has been groomed, there are often involves blackmail, threats and/or violence. The victim may find it extremely difficult to get out of the 'relationship' and may feel scared and isolated. They have often had arguments with parents/carers and don't know where to turn.

What can we do?

- Know how to spot the signs of Child Sexual Exploitation
- Make sure young people have safe access to support
- Help young people develop safe relationships and know what to do if they feel unsafe
- Help disrupt 'hotspots' where we know young people may gather and be targeted by perpetrators
- Provide effective support to young people and their families affected by CSE

The Child Protection Committee currently has a CSE Working Group focussing on the following areas of work:

- Self-evaluation of CSE Work in Highland
- Training for professionals working with children and young people
- Awareness raising within the Night Time Economy
- Commissioning of Viewpoint to seek and record the views of young people
- Development of Educational Materials and Programmes relating to CSE

There are also a range of resources available through Barnardos, Barnardos Scotland and the NSPCC:

What is Child Sexual Exploitation?

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-exploitation/>

Working with children and young people who experience running away and child sexual exploitation: An evidence-based guide for practitioners by Emilie Smeaton

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/CSE_practitioners_guide_v2_hr.pdf

Unprotected, overprotected: Meeting the needs of young people with learning disabilities who experience, or are at risk of, sexual exploitation

Anita Franklin, Phil Raws and Emilie Smeaton

[http://www.barnardos.org.uk/
cse_learning_and_disability_policy_briefing_paper_scotland.pdf](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/cse_learning_and_disability_policy_briefing_paper_scotland.pdf)

If you are interested in the work of the CSE sub-group or for further information about training in this area, please visit the new CPC Website www.hcpc.scot (from May 2017) or the Chair of the Working Group DI Nicola Mackenzie on 01463 720561