

Child Exploitation

Child Exploitation can be sexual and/or criminal. As with all abuse, there is an imbalance of power within the relationship; the perpetrator holds power over the victim, increasing the dependence of the victim on the perpetrator as the exploitative relationship develops. Child Exploitation can take many forms; from a new friendship group or a seemingly 'consensual' relationship where sex is exchanged for attention and gifts, to serious organised crime and child trafficking.

Child Exploitation results in children and young people suffering harm, which can cause significant damage to their physical and mental health. Whilst some children can be supported to make a recovery, others may suffer serious life-long impairments which may, on occasion, lead to their death.

Any child or young person can be a victim of exploitation, but children are believed to be at greater risk of being exploited if they:

- are homeless
- have feelings of low self-esteem
- have had a recent bereavement or loss
- are in care
- are a young carer

However, there are many more ways that a child may be vulnerable to exploitation and the signs that a child is being exploited are not easy to identify.

Signs of Grooming and Exploitation

Signs of Child Exploitation include the child or young person:

- going missing for periods of time or regularly returning home late
- skipping school or being disruptive in class
- appearing with unexplained gifts or possessions that cannot be accounted for
- experiencing health problems that may indicate a sexually transmitted disease
- displaying changes in appearance and/or behaviour
- using drugs and/or alcohol
- displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour, such as over-familiarity with strangers and/or dressing in a sexualised manner, or sending sexual messages and/or images by mobile phone ("sexting")
- being arrested
- showing signs of unexplained physical harm, such as bruising and cigarette burns

If you have a concern about a student being groomed or exploited, please contact our school's Designated Safeguarding Lead.