

Safeguarding Theme of the Month: March 2018 – Child Exploitation

What is child sexual exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse. Victims are manipulated or forced into taking part in a sexual act, either as part of a seemingly consensual relationship, or in return for attention, gifts, money, alcohol, drugs or somewhere to stay.

The young person may think that the abuser is their friend, or even their boyfriend or girlfriend. But they will put them into dangerous situations, making or forcing them to do things that they don't want to do or can't say no to. The abuser will create some form of dependency between the young person and them and may physically or verbally threaten the young person or be violent towards them.

They will try and isolate them from friends and family so that they can control and manipulate them.

Who does it affect?

This type of abuse could happen to any child or young person up to the age of 18 from any background. It happens to boys and young men as well as girls and young women.

The victims of abuse are not at fault. Abusers are very clever in the way they manipulate and take advantage of the young people they abuse. Often young people don't recognise what is happening to them as abusive because they have been manipulated so much.

What are the signs

Often the victims of sexual exploitation are not aware they are being exploited. Signs of sexual exploitation can be:

- mood swings
- changes in physical appearance
- changes in eating patterns
- chatting online to people you have never met
- appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- being in a relationship with or associating with an older person
- increased or secretive mobile phone and computer use
- showing inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- regularly going missing for periods of time or returning home late

Safeguarding Theme of the Month: March 2018 – Child Exploitation

What can you do?

- Discuss with young people the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships to help highlight potential risks to them.
- Be aware of the tell-tale signs.
- Exercise caution around older friends younger people may have, or relationships with other young people where there appears to be a power imbalance.
- Understand the risks associated with young people being online and using social networking sites and put measures in place to minimise these risks.
- Stay alert to changes in behaviour.
- Talk about it. Talk it through with someone else you know and can trust such as your Assessor, safeguarding representative at your training provider, or another service for young people child may be involved with. You can also talk to a social worker or the police.

QUIZ

TRUE/FALSE

- 1. Child Sexual Exploitation mainly happens to children who are in care, or who come from dysfunctional families.**
- 2. Over the past 5 years the average age of service users, accessing services is 15 years old.**
- 3. Trafficking' involves moving victims from one country to another.**
- 4. Street gangs protect 'their own'. Child sexual exploitation is not an issue within gang culture.**
- 5. Child sexual exploitation is very rare and only happens in a few locations, particularly big cities.**
- 6. The age profiles for the majority of child sexual exploitation offenders is 18-24**
- 7. 'Runaways' who are sexually active, are 'streetwise', resilient and able to look after themselves.**

Safeguarding Theme of the Month: March 2018 – Child Exploitation

ANSWERS

- 1. Child Sexual Exploitation mainly happens to children who are in care, or who come from dysfunctional families.**

FALSE - All children from all kinds of families and backgrounds are equally vulnerable, by virtue of their age

- 2. Over the past 5 years the average age of service users, accessing services is 15 years old.**

FALSE – Barnado’s 2 year London study in 2006 indicated that the peak age for exploitation was 15, although children as young as 10 were identified as being at risk. However, over the past 5 years the evidence shows that victims are getting younger, with the average age of service users falling from 15 to 13 years of age.

- 3. Trafficking’ involves moving victims from one country to another.**

FALSE – “Trafficking” can involve victims being moved across borders, but it can also mean children and young people being moved around within a country, between cities, towns or even within a locality, between streets, for the purpose exploitation. There is increasing concern that child sexual exploitation is becoming more organised, with networks moving children from town to town, or locality to locality within a city, specifically to be abused.

- 4. Street gangs protect ‘their own’. Child sexual exploitation is not an issue within gang culture.**

FALSE – The extent of sexual exploitation of young women and young men in gang-affected neighbourhoods is hidden behind the apparent “normalisation” of sexual violence, the fear of reprisal following disclosure of violence and a belief amongst young people that involvement in criminal activity negates their right to protection from the state.

- 5. Child sexual exploitation is very rare and only happens in a few locations, particularly big cities.**

FALSE – CSE is far more prevalent than people imagine. It can happen anywhere, not just large towns and cities. However, it will be hidden, and only uncovered by people having a better knowledge of the risks, vulnerabilities, methods, and indicators, being vigilant and reporting their concerns.

- 6. The age profiles for the majority of child sexual exploitation offenders is 18-24.**

TRUE - Research conducted by CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Agency) indicated that offenders are usually young adults within the 18-24 age range, with almost half of the offenders being under 25 where their age is known. The relative youth of the offender population is a striking feature of the data that is distinct from a common profile of the older male abuser.

Safeguarding Theme of the Month: March 2018 – Child Exploitation

7. Runaways' who are sexually active, are 'streetwise', resilient and able to look after themselves.

FALSE - Victims have a range of different vulnerabilities but there are some common themes that emerge:

Sexually exploited children frequently go missing from home or run away for varying periods of time. Similarly, as identified in the data, many victims were reported to be in the looked-after system before or during exploitation;

The majority of victims were disengaged from school. This was manifested in truanting, a lack of interest and frequent poor behaviour, including bullying peers. Many victims were also themselves victims of bullying;

Victims exhibited a number of signs of having been exploited. These indicators include injuries as a result of physical/sexual assault during the exploitation and problematic sexual behaviour, including unwanted pregnancies and STIs

Many victims feared that their exploiter would be violent towards them should they fail to comply with their demands or if they were to cooperate with the police;

Offenders use one victim to gain access to others, asking victims about their friends and encouraging them to bring their friends to pre-arranged meetings.

Victims were often targeted by perpetrators in public places, including town or city centres (particularly shops, restaurants and takeaways) and local parks. After initial meetings with offenders

Overall, victims are unlikely to disclose exploitation voluntarily, as a result of fear of exploiters, loyalty to perpetrators, a failure to recognise that they have been exploited and a negative perception or fear of authorities.

HELPING AGENCIES – CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION				
CHILDLINE	<p>Call free on 0800 1111 or chat to us online. Free, confidential 24-hour helpline that offers support for any kind of problem. Tel: 0800 11 11</p> <p>www.childline.org.uk</p>			
Barnardo's	<p>Find our regional services – for our next review find out the contact details for Barnados on Merseyside.</p>			
NSPCC	<p>Child protection helpline gives information, advice and counselling to anyone worried about a child.</p> <p>Tel: 0808 800 5000 – www.nspcc.org.uk</p>			



Safeguarding Theme of the Month: March 2018 – Child Exploitation
