

Child Sexual Exploitation

Advice for
parents
and carers



About

Sunrise is the multi agency team that tackles sexual exploitation and related harm in the borough of Rochdale. We bring together professionals from the police, children's social care, sexual health and Early Break.

Tackling child sexual exploitation together

Sexual exploitation affects young people and children across the UK every day. As a parent, knowing or suspecting that your child is being sexually abused can be incredibly traumatic. It can be difficult to know how to begin to do something about it. We understand that reporting your concerns is not easy, particularly when the abuser is someone that you know and trust. However, to protect your

child, it is vital that you do speak out.

Sexual abuse is currently under reported, but we know from our work with children that it's crucial they have a chance to seek any help and support they may need. Coping with sexual abuse alone or burying the problem doesn't help. And in some cases, it can also mean children are left in abusive situations.

What is child sexual exploitation?

Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where a young person is encouraged or forced into taking part in a sexual act. It 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 the abuser is their friend, or even their boyfriend/girlfriend, but they will put them into

dangerous situations, forcing the young person to do or see things of a sexual nature. The abuser may or may not use violence, but they will control and manipulate their victim, trying to isolate them from friends and family.

The victims are not at fault, and sometimes are not even aware it is happening. Abusers can be very clever in the way they manipulate, groom and take advantage.

How it happens

Sometimes young people are 'groomed' by an abusing adult who befriends them and makes them feel special by buying gifts or giving them lots of attention. Young people can be targeted online or in person.

Sexual exploitation can also occur between young people of a similar age. Often the abuser will have power of some kind over the young person. They may be older or more emotionally mature, physically stronger or in a

position where they can control the young person.

There are some situations that can make young people more vulnerable to exploitation – by becoming distant from the people who would usually look after them. Young people who are having difficulties at home, regularly go missing or have been in care may be particularly vulnerable but this kind of exploitation can happen to any young person.

Look out for the signs and BE ALERT

Sexual abuse can be very difficult to identify. Children who have been sexually abused may show a variety of signs and symptoms, including:

- Becoming withdrawn, anxious or clingy.
- Going missing and/or regularly returning home late.
- Appearing with unexplained gifts.
- Depression.
- Aggressive behaviour.
- Obsessive behaviours, eating disorders.
- Sleep problems, bed-wetting or soiling.
- Problems with school work or missing school.
- Risk taking behaviour during adolescence.
- Alcohol and substance misuse.
- Becoming sexually active at a young age.
- Promiscuity.

What you can do

As a parent or carer, it is important to discuss with children the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships to help highlight potential risks to them.

There are also steps you can take, including:

- Stay alert to changes in behaviour or physical signs of abuse such as bruising.
- Encourage your child to wait until they're mature enough to have a sexual relationship and help them recognise the signs of abuse.
- Being aware of new unexplained gifts or possessions, and carefully monitoring any late nights or episodes of a young person not returning home overnight.
- Be aware of secretive behaviour, especially around your child's use of their mobile phone or the internet.
- Be cautious about older friends your child may have, or relationships with other young people when there appears to be a power imbalance.
- Make sure you understand the risks of your child being online and put measures in place to minimise these.



Sunrise have put together a range of materials, guidance and support for you to use.

These resources are available from our website.

If you are concerned that a child is at risk of sexual exploitation please contact:

**Rochdale First Response Team
on 0845 226 5570.**

Contact us

t. 0161 856 1734

8.30am - 4.45pm Monday to Friday

e. advice@thesunriseteam.co.uk

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