

What can I do?

In your work you may see or suspect cases of child sexual exploitation. Talk to your manager, staff and colleagues about what you would do to protect children from being put at risk where you work, and how you could take action if you did suspect abuse.

You can ask your local council for guidance on what to do and who to contact about concerns.

If you do see any of the signs of sexual exploitation, or you feel that something is suspicious, you can take steps to help protect young people by:

- contacting the police on 999 if a young person appears to be in immediate danger
- raising your concerns immediately with your manager or other senior staff, who may have specific procedures for child protection concerns
- letting customers know that your company will not tolerate child sexual exploitation
- letting young people know how to get help, for example by putting up information about children's helplines or local services
- telling the police and your local council about your concerns

If you are concerned that a child is at risk of sexual exploitation, you may want to contact one of our specialist sexual exploitation projects for advice: www.barnardos.org.uk/specialist_sexual_exploitation_projects

If a child is in immediate danger, call 999 or contact the local police

Barnardo's has launched its Cut them free campaign to reduce the number of children experiencing the horror of sexual exploitation in the UK.

You can find out more and show your support at:
www.barnardos.org.uk/cutthemfree

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Barnardo's

www.barnardos.org.uk

Head Office, Tanners Lane,
Barkingside, Ilford,
Essex IG6 1QG
Tel: 020 8550 8822
Fax: 020 8550 8822

Barnardo's Registered Charity
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Help cut children and young people free from sexual exploitation



Sexual exploitation affects thousands of children and young people across the UK every year. Most sexual exploitation takes place in private, but public places such as cafes, hotels, bars, parks or taxis can be used to meet, groom and abuse children. If you suspect exploitation you can take steps to help cut children free from this horrific abuse.

What is child sexual exploitation?

Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse, in which young people up to 18 years old are manipulated, or forced into taking part in sexual activity. This could be as part of what looks like a consenting relationship, or in return for attention, money, food, alcohol or somewhere to stay.

The young person may think that their abuser is their friend, or even a boyfriend or girlfriend. But the abuser will put them into dangerous situations, forcing the young person to do things they don't want to do. The abuser 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.

Who does it affect?

This abuse can affect young people from any background. Boys and young men are abused as well as girls and young women.

The victims of abuse are not at fault. Abusers are very clever in how they take advantage of the young people they abuse.



How does it happen?

Many of the young people Barnardo's works with have been 'groomed' by an abusing adult who befriends the young person and makes them feel special by buying them gifts or giving them lots of attention. Young people may be targeted online or in person. Sexual exploitation can also occur between young people of a similar age; it is still a form of abuse.

In most cases, the abuser has some power over the young person. The abuser may be older or stronger than the young person, or they may be in a position where they are able to control the young person.

There are some situations that can make young people more vulnerable to sexual exploitation by becoming distant from the people who would usually look after them.

Major cultural or sporting events (such as the Olympics) may create particular risks for vulnerable young people, although it is always important to be alert to child sexual exploitation.

What are the signs?

Children and young people who are the victims of sexual exploitation often do not recognise they are being exploited. However, there are signs that a young person may be being groomed or abused.

These might include:

- being taken into a hotel room by one or more adults who do not seem to be family members
- being in a hotel room which is visited or requested by a number of additional adults
- going by taxi to a hotel or other venue to meet a group of adults who do not seem to be family members
- being out late with older adults who do not seem to be family members
- being bought alcoholic drinks by adults although the young person is already intoxicated
- being in the company of adults who are known or suspected of being involved in adult prostitution
- being bought food or drinks by a much older adult whom they seem to see as a boyfriend / girlfriend
- indications of sexual activity with one or more adult who is significantly older than the young person
- indications of sexual activity involving a young person who you know or suspect to be under 16