

# Keep them safe:

## An introduction to protecting children from sexual exploitation

### Introduction

You've already taught your child about stranger danger, bullying, and staying safe online. As your child develops into adolescence and begins exploring relationships, there's another thing you and your child need to be aware of to stay safe.

Adolescence is a time of change for your child, so how do you tell the difference between typical teenage behaviour and something that indicates there is a deeper problem, like an unsafe relationship? Knowing the signs to look for can equip you as a parent to prevent your child from entering an exploitative relationship, intervene early if they are vulnerable, and get the right help to stop the abuse if it is occurring.

### Did you know?

Every year, thousands of children in the UK are forced or manipulated into sexual activity in a form of abuse called child sexual exploitation.

Individuals or groups befriend, or 'groom', the child in a process designed to break down their existing relationships with family and friends to establish control.

It may be that a child or children at the school may be involved in this grooming process. They may be exploited themselves and be forced by the abusers to 'recruit' other children for exploitation.

Grooming can take place online or offline and can include violence, lies, blackmail, or threats.

Once groomed the child is expected to participate in sexual activities, often in

exchange for something such as alcohol, gifts, money, affection, drugs, or a place to stay.

The child might not view the relationship as abusive, but it is important to remember that children cannot agree to being abused

Girls and boys from all cultural and social backgrounds can be vulnerable to this happening to them

## How can you and your child stay safe?

Here are some steps you can take to safeguard children from sexual exploitation:

- Talk to them openly about what makes a healthy relationship
- Keep up to date with technology and show an interest in what they do online
- Be alert to sudden changes in behaviour or appearance
- Be aware of who their friends are
- Be aware of any unexplained gifts or possessions
- Talk to your child's teacher or local safeguarding team about any concerns
- Report anything suspicious to the police

If you feel something is not right, trust your instincts and seek help. Never put yourself or your child at greater risk by confronting the abuser yourself.

“ Families don't have to go through this alone.

## What support is available?

When a child is the victim of sexual exploitation, the consequences can be devastating and long-term for the entire family, but families don't have to go through this alone.

If you are concerned that a child you know may be a victim of child sexual exploitation, report it to West Yorkshire Police by calling 101 or call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111. In an emergency or if a crime is ongoing always dial 999. You can also call or email your local Police Safeguarding Unit at [leeds.safeguarding@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:leeds.safeguarding@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk) or 0113 2414180.

More support is available from:

**Pace:** Support for parents and carers of children who are, or are at risk of being, sexually exploited by perpetrators external to the family. For help advice and information call us on 0113 2403040. Email us at: [info@paceuk.info](mailto:info@paceuk.info). Find out more at [www.paceuk.info](http://www.paceuk.info)

**NSPCC Hotline:** Report your concern or get advice on the NSPCC's 24/7 adult helpline by phone, text or email.

**Childline:** Counselling support for children through email, phone, and chat.  
**Isis:** Supporting young people against child sexual exploitation.

**Blast project:** Support for boys and young men who have experienced sexual exploitation.

**SARSVL:** Support after rape and sexual violence Leeds.

**CEOP:** Report concerns related to online contact and grooming.