



Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

What is CSE?

CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity

- (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants

AND/OR

- (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology (*May 2017 definition, Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI*).

Who does CSE affect?

Any child, male or female, from any walk of life can be a victim of CSE, including those who can legally consent to have sex. However it primarily affects young people of a post-primary age with the average age at which concerns are first identified being 12 – 15 years of age.



Some factors which can increase the risk of CSE:

- Social isolation
- Low self esteem
- Poverty or financial hardship
- Substance misuse
- Having a disability
- Prior experience of abuse, particularly sexual abuse
- Family breakdown
- Bereavement
- Involvement in crime
- Online vulnerability
- Links with other young people who are sexually exploited

Identifying CSE

Potential indicators of CSE include, but are not limited to:

- Unexplained gifts – money, clothes, mobile phone etc.
- Leaving home/care without permission
- Persistently going missing or returning late
- Receiving lots of texts/phone calls prior to leaving
- Returning distraught/dishevelled and/or under the influence of substances
- Truancy from school
- Entering or leaving cars driven by unknown adults or by taxis
- Significantly older 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend'
- Secretiveness around behaviours
- Concerning use of the internet
- Physical symptoms or infections
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age

CSE can be difficult to identify. Many children and young people, and professionals, can misinterpret such experiences as consensual and fail to recognise the exploitation involved.

CSE can be perpetrated by adults or peers, on an individual or group basis. Whilst CSE is not a specific criminal offence in itself, it does encompass a range of sexual offences (The Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008).



Reporting

If a member of staff/volunteer has concerns that a child or young person they are working with may be at risk of or experiencing child sexual exploitation, they must follow their organisation's reporting procedures and contact their Designated Officer immediately.

Further information:

NSPCC- www.nspcc.org.uk

Barnardo's- www.barnardos.org.uk

Stop CSE- www.stop-cse.org

Safer to know- www.safertoknow.info

The Marshall Report - <https://www.rqia.org.uk/>