



Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

What is CSE?

'Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse' (SBNI 2014, adopted from CSE Knowledge Transfer Partnership NI).

As noted in the definition above, CSE is a form of sexual abuse. The key factor that distinguishes cases of CSE from other forms of child sexual abuse is the concept of exchange – someone coerces or manipulates the child into engaging in sexual activity **in return for something** they need or desire and/or for the gain of those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse.

The 'something' received by the child or young person can include tangible items such as food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, money, gifts and/or intangible 'rewards' OR 'benefits' such as affection, a sense of value or belonging. The gain for those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse can include financial benefit, status or control.

CSE can take a variety of forms and it can take place in person and online; or a combination of both. Like other cases of child sexual abuse, it can involve both contact and non-contact sexual activities.

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
- Truancing 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.

The above information has been taken from '*Child Sexual Exploitation: Definition and Guidance*' (SBNI 2014)

Further information:

The Marshall Report - www.rqia.org.uk

www.safertoknow.info

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.barnardos.org.uk

www.stop-cse.org