

Parents' Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Day 13 May 2015

Realising that your child is at risk of, or is involved in, sexual exploitation will be hugely distressing for everyone in a family. Although it is relatively rare, knowing the signs of sexual, emotional, and physical abuse of children, whilst being aware of the support available, can help to equip parents and carers with the knowledge and tools to act.

Bolton Safeguarding Children Board and Phoenix EXIT are supporting today's 'CSE Day of Action' which is taking place across Greater Manchester. The aim of today's event is to help parents understand what child sexual exploitation is, to recognise the signs and to know where to get help locally.

What is Sexual Exploitation?

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is the sexual abuse of children and young people by adults in order to obtain sexual acts. It can happen to both girls and boys of any age and from any background. It can take the form of informal exchanges of sex for favours, money, drugs, accommodation or other commodities; more 'formal' forms of exploitation involving groups of organised abuse and trafficking.

Exploitation commonly happens when children and young people are 'groomed' and manipulated by adults in order to gain trust and make young people feel they are safe and loved.

Child sexual exploitation can happen in different ways. It can involve an older adult exerting financial, emotional or physical control over a young person to involve them in sexual activity. It can involve other young people manipulating or forcing other children into sexual activity with adults. Exploitation can also involve opportunistic or organised networks of perpetrators who may profit financially from trafficking young victims between different locations to engage in sexual activity with multiple men. Technology is widely used by CSE offenders as a method of grooming and coercing victims, often through social networking sites.

How Can I Recognise It? What should I look out for?

If you are worried, or think that your child is dealing with something bigger than the usual ups and downs of being a teenager, then there are signs to look out for. Some of these are typical of all teenagers, so need to be treated with caution. As a general rule, talk to someone about your worries if three or more of these make you think of your child:-

- Become especially secretive and stop mixing with their usual friends and/or start to mix with older adults (men and women) - be aware that CSE offenders can use a child's peers and friends from school to develop relationships
- Become particularly prone to sharp mood swings or developed an entirely different personality; whilst mood swings are common to all teenagers, it is the severity of behavioral change that should be considered
- Start to go missing from home or be defensive about their where they are going or what they are doing; return home late or staying out all night. Be aware that CSE offenders know that parents will immediately suspect

something is wrong if their child stays out all night, so they may initially drop the child off at the home address on time.

- Starts to receive odd calls and messages on their mobiles or social media pages from unknown, possibly much older associates from outside their normal social network; they may even have more than one mobile phone or have set up a number of social media accounts using different names
- Start to receive new, expensive items which they couldn't normally afford, such as mobile phones, iPods or jewelry

Remember these are only a few of the possible indicators. One of the most important things at this age is to keep talking to your child. Let them know that you are there to help and support them, no matter how bad they think things may be. If you want to find out more about signs and indicators a few useful websites are:-

- <http://www.itsnotokay.co.uk/parents/>
- <http://www.paceuk.info/the-problem/spotting-the-signs/>
- <http://boltonsafeguardingchildren.org.uk/working-with-children-and-young-people/child-sexual-exploitation/>

Where Can I Go For Help?

If you are worried that your child may be being sexually exploited you should speak to PHOENIX EXIT, Bolton's Child Sexual Exploitation Team for advice on 01204 337195 or email Phoenix.ExitTeam@gmp.pnn.police.uk

You can also get help and support from PACE (Parents Against Child Exploitation). Pace is a unique resource that helps parents across the UK understand what is happening to their child and how parents are the prime agents in helping their child exit exploitative relationships. It does this by offering:-

- One-to-one telephone advice and support to parents
- Facilitating meetings with similarly-affected parents for peer support
- Advising how to establish rights as parents and work in partnership with statutory agents such as police and social workers
- Advice and support when pursuing disruption and prosecution of the perpetrators of child sexual exploitation
- Befriending scheme

You can find out more about PACE by visiting their website @ <http://www.paceuk.info>; they also provide a telephone helpline on 0113 240 5226

You can also show your support for this important event by 'Following/Like us' on:-

- Facebook: www.facebook.com/notokayGM
- Twitter: www.twitter.com/notokayGM
- #itsnotokay