

Child Exploitation

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Child exploitation is when individuals or gangs target children to carry out criminal activity. They can use force, threats or promises to persuade children to carry out activities, such as moving or dealing drugs, stealing, committing violent or sexual acts.

Exploiters are smart and can spend a long time grooming their victims and parents often aren't aware it's happening.

Protecting your child:

There are practical steps you can take to protect children, such as:

- staying alert to changes in behaviour or any physical signs of abuse
- being aware of new, unexplained gifts or possessions
- monitor any episodes of staying out late or not returning home
- making sure you understand the risks of online grooming and make sure your child knows how to stay safe online
- be aware of who your child is friends with and any relationships they may have where there appears to be an imbalance in power

Talk to your child:

Having open and honest conversations with your child can help, you could:

- describe the behaviour changes you've noticed and explain why they have worried you
- speak to them about differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships
- explain that in a healthy relationship no-one is pressured, bullied, or threatened into doing anything they don't feel comfortable doing

If a child is being sexually exploited, they possibly won't recognise they're being abused. They may reject your attempts to help them, but it's important to make sure your child knows:

- you are there for them
- there are plenty of people who care for them and who can help
- If the child doesn't feel comfortable talking to you let them know they can call **Childline** on 0800 1111, or speak to a teacher or social worker.

Report it to the police:

Children who go missing are at increased risk of exploitation. If your child is not where they are supposed to be and you are not able to quickly locate them, it is important that you report this to the police on 101. You should report them missing as soon as you are worried. If you have concerns they are in immediate danger, phone 999.

Who to contact:

If you think your child is being exploited it's important to know that you are not alone and you are not to blame. If you are worried, you should speak to a professional who will be able to give you advice to protect your child. This could be:

Our School Safeguarding Team

Your GP

the Police, call 101

NSPCC's helpline on 0808 800 5000

Get more information:

Preventing child exploitation in Dorset toolkit – <https://pdscp.co.uk/working-with-children/child-exploitation/child-exploitation-toolkit/>