

7 Minute Briefing

Child Criminal Exploitation

RNOH Safeguarding Children Team

Background

1

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is a growing problem that occurs throughout the UK. It affects boys and girls who are under 18 from any social, ethnic and economic background, some victims are as young as primary school aged children. It robs victims of their childhood and has serious long-term effects on every aspect of their lives and may be life threatening. This is an issue of abuse not a lifestyle choice and the children who are criminally exploited are victims.

What is it?

2

CCE is a growing issue where criminals target young people, often vulnerable, to carry out criminal activity. There is an imbalance of power that enables the perpetrator to coerce, control, manipulate and deceive the child. Children often do not realise they are victims and the activity can appear consensual; however, it is important to remember that this is not a 'choice'.

What to do?

7

If you are worried about a child suffering from child criminal exploitation please initially consult with the Safeguarding Children Team to discuss what action and procedure you should follow. Contact us on: 020 8909 5337

If you think a young person may be at risk of immediate harm phone 999.

Questions to consider

6

Are you confident in understanding the signs and indicators of CCE? Consider accessing

Child Exploitation Training provided by Harrow Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Do you know who to discuss your concerns within relation to CCE and how to refer a young person who may be at risk? What are the links with Child Sexual Exploitation?

Signs

5

- * Parental concerns
- * Significant decline in school performance
- * Persistently going missing from school/ home or being found out of area
- * Leaving home/care without explanation
- * Excessive receipt of texts or phone calls
- * Unexplained acquisition of money/ clothes/mobile phones
- * Suspicion of self-harm or physical assault/unexplained injuries
- * Significant changes in emotional wellbeing
- * Relationships with older controlling individuals/ gang association

Why it matters?

3

Criminals and/or organised crime groups exploit children and young people to deal drugs and carry out other criminal activity on their behalf. Children and young people are seen by perpetrators to be easily controllable and inexpensive to resource. Victims can also fall into debt (known as debt bondage) to these groups which can often lead to threats and violence. The children involved do not recognise that they are victims of exploitation as they consider they have acted voluntarily and most often it can be about status – to be part of the group, a sense of belonging, i.e. initiation and not to look like a grass. Perpetrators groom children through giving them money, drugs or clothing to keep them involved in the criminal activity.

Recognising vulnerability

4

Several factors that make a young person vulnerable to being criminally exploited. These include the child having a history of abuse, living in a chaotic household, children in care, bereavement or loss, low self-esteem, learning disability or mental health issues, exposure to violence. This list is not exhaustive and professional curiosity is essential in identifying children at risk as not all victims are typically vulnerable. For exploitation to take place, adverse childhood experiences (ACE's), trauma, learning needs and particularly for online grooming, a need to find nurture and protection from somewhere else if the young person is not getting this from within the home. Significant influences leading to exploitation can come from outside the family home and be contextual such as from a peer group, be online, at school and/or in the neighbourhood.

