

FURTHER HELP AND SUPPORT

Pace: Parents against child sexual exploitation helps parents across the UK understand what is happening to their child and how they can leave exploitative relationships. www.paceuk.info

Parents Protect: helps parents and carers protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation by providing child safety resources. www.parentsprotect.co.uk Tel: 0808 1000 900

The Children's Society: Provides useful information and resources in relation to CSE. www.childrenssociety.org.uk

CEOP: Provides information, advice and resources for supporting your child with their online safety www.ceop.police.uk

Brook: Provides useful guides to sexual health and wellbeing www.brook.org.uk

BISH: Provides useful guides to talking about sex, relationships and pornography with your teenager www.bishuk.com/parents

NSPCC: provides a wide range of services including information for parents on their website and a helpline number. www.nspcc.org.uk parent helpline: 0808 800 5000

**YMCA
DOWNSLINK GROUP**



YMCA WISE PROJECT

Supporting children and young people to stay safe

FOR MORE
INFORMATION PLEASE
SEE OUR WEBSITE:
www.ymcadlg.org/wise



THE WISE PROJECT



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**YMCA WISE PARENT
AND CARER'S GUIDE TO
COPING WITH CHILD
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
PART 1**

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse that occurs outside of the family unit. Suspecting, finding out and living with this form of abuse can put a real strain on every member of the family. As parents or carers you will be living with the daily stress of knowing your child is being exploited whilst trying to maintain some kind of normal family life, holding down a job and running a home.

Why didn't they tell me?

- **Grooming:** The early stages of grooming can be exciting and your child will naturally want to conceal experimentation with sex, drugs and alcohol from you. Perpetrator(s) will then isolate them further from you by telling your child they weren't really loved or 'understood' at home. Finally threats and coercion are used to ensure your child is under the perpetrators control.
- **Blame:** Sexually exploited children may blame themselves for the abuse or be worried they will be in trouble with the police. They may also have been threatened with violence towards themselves or their family.
- **Shame and embarrassment:** If perpetrators have access to indecent images of your child then your child may be being blackmailed or feel too embarrassed to disclose to you.

Why do they keep going back?

- **Trauma Bonding/Stockholm Syndrome:** an intense emotional bond can be formed between the perpetrator and the victim in response to being threatened with or being in real danger, believing there is no escape, receiving harsh treatment interspersed with small acts of kindness and being isolated from all other perspectives than that of their abuser. This leads to negative feelings towards those that may try to break the bond. Even if the victim is isolated from the abuser a text message or phone call can be enough to re-ignite the bond.
- **Freeze and endure:** when in a dangerous situation the logical part of the brain which exercises choice, reason and thought is suppressed by the primitive, survival part of the brain, the amygdala resulting in actions to survive rather than sensible choices. For a child being sexually exploited this can result in freezing and enduring the sexual act as resisting may be dangerous. The more this happens the more likely it will become an automatic response, allowing the cycle of abuse to continue.

What effect does this have on siblings?

- **Jealousy:** siblings may exhibit attention seeking behaviour as they are jealous of the attention directed at the exploited sibling.
- **Being the 'good' child:** siblings may feel they have to do this because of the stress on the family from their exploited sibling.
- **Parents becoming more strict:** parents may be more strict with siblings to protect them from suffering the same abuse.
- **Not understanding what is happening:** parents often feel uncomfortable talking about sexual exploitation especially with younger siblings.

What about me?

- **Physical health:** you may suffer physical reactions such as headaches, heart palpitations, sleep deprivation or insomnia.
- **Mental health:** you may suffer from anxiety or depression.

How will this affect my work?

- **Difficulty concentrating:** you may find it difficult to maintain focus on work while worrying about your exploited child.
- **Taking personal calls or time off:** you may need to take calls from your child or police, social workers, school etc in work time or need to take time off to attend meetings.

What about school?

Children who are sexually exploited often go missing regularly from school, causing attainment levels to decrease and subjecting them to disciplinary measures.

What about sexual health?

- **Sexually transmitted infections:** Child sexual exploitation brings inevitable risk of exposure to sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Should your child contract a STI it may prove vital for their future health that they receive the right treatment.
- **Contraception:** There are specialist sexual health services available to young people that operate in strict confidentiality, so you should be prepared for your child to receive contraceptive advice or medication without you being consulted.
- **Pregnancy and abortion:** It is possible to terminate a pregnancy through medication rather than surgery, but only before the ninth week of pregnancy. It is important that the doctors and nurses know about the circumstances of the conception, as abortion records may be used as evidence in a police investigation. If your daughter continues a pregnancy while she is still being sexually exploited, then there is likely to be an escalation in social care intervention throughout the pregnancy.