

Child Criminal Exploitation 7 Minute Briefing

1. Background

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 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.

2. What is it?

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'.

3. Why it matters?

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.

4. Recognising vulnerability

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.

5. The signs

CCE can be difficult to identify, however there are several factors to look out for. These include children who go missing from home/school, being found a distance from home, associating with other children at risk of CCE, carrying weapons, unexplained injuries, excessive receipt of calls or texts, self-harm or changes in emotional wellbeing, experimenting with drugs and alcohol, unexplained acquisition of money, phones or clothing, appearing nervous, scared, evasive or secretive, evidence of criminal behaviour.

6. Questions to consider

Are you confident in understanding the signs and indicators of CCE? Consider accessing Child Exploitation Training provided by Salford 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?

7. What to do?

Recognise, Record and Refer

If you are worried that a child is at risk of CCE discuss with your line manager immediately and/or the Bridge on 0161 603 4500. If you think a young person may be at immediate risk of harm ring 999.

www.programmechallenger.co.uk/Trapped has information and support around CCE in Greater Manchester.

Additional Information

Visit: <https://safeguardingchildren.salford.gov.uk/>

Email: SSCP@salford.gov.uk

Date published: 02/12/2020
