

Indicators of Risk of Online Child Sexual Exploitation

“Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child’s immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain”

Safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation: supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children. DCSF (2009)

The prolific use of the internet and mobile technology by children and young people today brings many exciting opportunities for them to communicate and share with a worldwide audience. However, it can also increase their vulnerability and put them at risk of online exploitation without them even realising it is taking place. The following may indicate that a young person is being sexually exploited through the internet or mobile technology.

- Spending increasing amount of time on social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, chat Apps, online gaming, and chat forums) or using webcams.
- Unexplained increased mobile phone/gaming credits.
- Accessing dating Apps or websites.
- New contacts with people outside of the city.
- Spending increased amount of time with online friends and less time with friends from school or neighbourhood.
- Going online during the night.
- Being secretive about the use of their mobile phone.
- Increasing number of chat and image sharing Apps on mobile phone.
- Unwilling to share online ‘friends’.
- Concern that a young person is having an online relationship.
- Agreeing to meet people met online.
- Concern that a young person is taking inappropriate images of themselves using a mobile phone or webcam.
- Sharing inappropriate images with other people.
- Concern that a young person is being bribed, blackmailed or threatened by someone for illegal or inappropriate sexualised online activity.
- Concern that a young person is selling images via the internet for money.
- Concern that a young person is being drawn into providing increasingly provocative/sexualised images or performing sexual acts for payment.
- Concern that a young person is selling sexual services online.



Child Exploitation warning signs and Vulnerabilities Checklist

The following are signs and behaviour general seen in children who are already being sexually exploited:

- Missing from home or care
- Physical injuries
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Involvement in offending
- Repeated sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations
- Absent from school
- Change in physical appearance
- Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites
- Estranged from family
- Receipt of gifts from unknown sources
- Recruiting others into exploitative situations
- Poor mental health
- Self-harm
- Thoughts or attempts at suicide

Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups/Interim Report