

Factors which may indicate possible sexual exploitation

The following is a combination of considerations from the National Working Group (NWG 2008), "Anchors in Floating Lives", Naseema Patel & Jenny Pearce (2004), and the domains and dimensions of the Framework for the Assessment of Children and Young People in Need and their Families (2000). They are extracted from Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (DfE 2009)

Health:

- Physical symptoms (bruising suggestive of either physical or sexual assault)
- Chronic fatigue
- Recurring or multiple sexually transmitted infections
- Pregnancy and/or seeking a termination
- Evidence of drug, alcohol or substance misuse
- Sexually risky behaviour
- Young people who are not looking after themselves
- Self-harming or eating disorders

Education:

- Missing school/disengagement with education or considerable change in performance at school

Emotional and Behavioural Development:

- Getting involved in petty crime such as shoplifting, stealing
- Secretive behaviour
- Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults
- Secretive about Internet use or using adult networking sites. This may include young people spending increasing amounts of time on social networking sites and/or an unwillingness to share online contacts
- Marked changes in presentation
- Anti-social behaviour
- Sexualised language
- Sexually offending behaviour

Identity:

- Low self-image, low self-esteem, self-harming behaviour, e.g. cutting, overdosing, eating disorder, promiscuity

Family and Social Relationships:

- Patterns of rejection
- Possession of abnormal amounts of money, gifts, new mobile phones, credit on mobile phones, number of SIM cards
- Hostility in relationship with parents/carers and other family members
- Physical aggression towards parents, siblings, pets, teachers or peers
- Placement breakdown
- Reports from reliable sources (e.g. parents/carers, friends or other professionals in contact with the child or young person) suggesting the likelihood of involvement in sexual exploitation.
- Detachment from age-appropriate activities
- Associating with other young people who are known to be sexually exploited
- Young person known to be sexually active
- Sexual relationship with a significantly older person
- Unexplained relationships with older adults
- Possible inappropriate use of the Internet and forming relationships, particularly with adults, via the Internet.

- Phone calls, text messages or letters from unknown adults
- Adults or older young people loitering outside the child's usual place of residence
- Persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation
- Returning after having been missing, looking well cared for in spite of having no known home base
- Missing for long periods, with no known home base
- Going missing and being found in areas where the child or young person has no known links
- New contacts with people who live outside of the area
- Sharing inappropriate images

Social Presentation:

- Change in appearance
- Leaving home/care setting in clothing unusual for the individual child (inappropriate for age, borrowing clothing from older young people)
- Social activities/possessions with no explanation of how funded
- Appearing with clothes phones, jewellery, drugs, alcohol cigarettes, mobile phones or other gadgets with no explanation as to how these were obtained
- Low self-esteem, poor self-image or lack of confidence
- History of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse; neglect; domestic violence; parental difficulties
- Pattern of street homelessness
- Having keys to premises other than those known about
- Possession of large amounts of money with no plausible explanation
- Acquisition of expensive clothes, mobile phones or other possessions without plausible explanation
- Accounts of social activities with no plausible explanation of the source of necessary funding
- Reports that the child has been seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation
- Seen at public toilets known for cottaging or adult venues (pubs and clubs)

Boys and Young Men

Workers should be mindful of the fact that child sexual exploitation is not limited to girls and young women. Boys and young men are also potentially vulnerable to this form of abuse.

Particular groups

In addition to the above, some children and young people may be more vulnerable to sexual exploitation due to their circumstances, this could include issues relating to:

- Young people with a Learning Difficulty and/or disability Disabilities (LDD). Young people with LDD may be targeted and can be more disempowered by the lack of appropriate education and planning to support them with choices, friendships, confidence in relation to sex and sexual relationships.
- Young people who have been rejected by their families and who do not have access to other supports. Looked After young people have featured very highly in the statistics of those who are sexually exploited as indicated above
- Financial need - Many young people report becoming prostitutes in order to get money to buy things that they cannot otherwise afford (such as consumables), to fund drug habits, (both their own and other people's) and as a means of avoiding begging or other activities
- There is particular vulnerability caused by emphasis on 'entitlement' to

resources for refugee and asylum seeking children, which may force young people to lie about their age to access resources and lead to exploitation by adults who may misuse children for their own profit

- Young people whose sexuality is not positively promoted may be particularly targeted by predatory males especially in parts of the country where services are limited. Where young people exploring sexuality are unsupported and lack access to information they may become more vulnerable to being targeted for abuse.
- Rejection and eviction, young people who have what are described as 'constrained choices' limited by economic necessity and/or the effects of abuse and neglect