

NATIONAL CHILD EXPLOITATION AWARENESS DAY 2021

Spotlight on Child Exploitation. Our thanks to the MET Hub Team for their input.

National Child Exploitation Awareness Day 18 March 2021

What is child exploitation?

Child sexual and criminal exploitation involves children under 18 being forced, manipulated or enticed into engaging in sexual or criminal activities, by individuals or groups (peers or adults) who have power over them. CSE and CCE affects thousands of children each year and happens in all areas – including Southampton!

It's important we make sure we understand what exploitation is, how to respond to it and how it affects young people and families.



Remember, exploitation can:

- Happen to 16- and 17-year olds as well as those under 16.
- Happen to both boys and girls – both sexual and criminal exploitation.
- Occur both online and offline – and sometimes a combination of both.
- Present as 'consensual' on the surface at times – it is complex and often not easy for young people to understand the dynamics.
- Be really difficult for young people to identify and make sense of, let alone talk about – we should seek to understand young people's experience but not chase disclosures they might not be ready to make.

A few key words/terms:

- County Lines – term used to describe criminal gangs/networks supplying drugs across ‘county lines’ to other areas (often suburban, market, coastal towns) using dedicated mobile phone lines or ‘deal lines’. Most commonly associated with supply of Class A drugs – crack and heroin due to it being most lucrative but can involve cannabis or other drugs.
- Cuckooing – when vulnerable young people/adults have their address taken over by the gang/dealers for use as a base for drug supply
- Trafficking – when someone’s travel is arranged or facilitated for the purposes of them being exploited. It can include short distance travel and doesn’t have to be on a train or international.

Views from young people to help understand their experiences:



“They didn’t exactly threaten me. They showed me some photos of them holding guns. I wouldn’t tell anyone who they are because I know what they could do to me.”

“He’s just not the kind of person you’d mess with”

“Just because I might have said I didn’t want to see someone (professional), doesn’t mean I wanted them to stop trying”

“I know people would think: ‘why would she go back there?’ - I felt like the fear of not knowing what they would do if I didn’t go back, that was scarier than going back there, so I went”

“It affected me socially really bad... anytime I was out I felt like I had to watch my back. I felt in constant fear of people, wondering if they know about me, or if I’d see the people that did it.”

“When you talk about it, it’s horrible because it makes you realise that this is your reality, like shit this really happened, when all I kept thinking was that it’s just a really bad nightmare.”

“I feel like everyone was judging me when I was shoplifting and doing drugs. The police hate me. I saw one of the officers the other day and she gave me the dirtiest look, just looked me up and down.”



The language we use when talking about children – especially those who we believe could be being exploited - is really important.

Here are some terms used by professionals to reflect on:



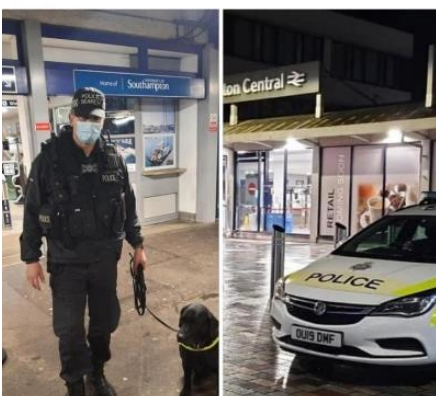
- ❖ “is putting him/herself at risk” - puts blame on the child for any abuse/exploitation he/she is experiencing.
- ❖ “is difficult to engage” - identifies the child as the problem and
- ❖ doesn’t acknowledge the barriers or reasons they may not trust professionals or see benefit in working with them.
- ❖ “is promiscuous” - puts blame on the child and shows little recognition of abuse/exploitation which may be occurring. It is also often generally only used to describe females, not males.
- ❖ “is exchanging sex for drugs/money” - does not recognise the exploitation that this child is experiencing.
- ❖ “is drug running” - suggests the child is in control of what is happening and does not recognise exploitation risks or power imbalances.

MET Hub - what we do

- We’re a specialist team within Children’s Services providing services and support in relation to missing, exploitation and trafficking issues.
- Return Home Interviews (RHI) to all Southampton children who go missing from home or care, following each missing episode.
- 1:1 support for young people identified as at risk of or experiencing sexual / criminal exploitation.
- Advice, support and training to parents/professionals.



Tackling County lines drug trafficking and protecting those vulnerable to exploitation is a priority in Southampton and indeed throughout the county. On Friday evening officers from the Southampton High Harm Team working in partnerships with colleagues from British Transport Police (BTP) Ministry of Defence Police and the Missing, exploited and trafficked team completed an operation at Southampton Central railway station. Despite the reduced footfall at the station, Police dog Ted with handler PC Morby were the star of the show making 10 positive finds.
#countyline #Fortress
PC 25174 Williams



What we’ve been doing lately

- ✚ Last month MET Workers were at Southampton Central Train Station with Police to support the efforts to tackle County Lines drug trafficking and identify and engage with young people exploited through this.
- ✚ Delivering training to YMCA and Two Saints supported accommodation staff on missing, exploitation and trafficking issues to promote their confidence in identifying and responding to these issues.
- ✚ Currently working with 35 young people who have been identified as at risk of or experiencing exploitation, and also completing Return Home Interview’s (RHI’s) with many other children who have been reported missing from home/care.

Day in the life of a MET Worker:



- I start the day with a final session with a 16 year old I've worked with for 8 months – she used to be 'high risk CSE' but the risks are now considered low and she's doing well in education, is happy in her foster placement and feels good about the future. It's a positive session and she talks about how she feels life is 'back on track'.
- Straight onto another visit for a Return Home Interview chat with a teenage boy who was recently missing from home – he's not home when I arrive and has told his parents he won't talk to me. I speak with parents about ways to manage the situation today and reinforce what to do if he doesn't come home/they can't find him later. We agree I'll check in again tomorrow.
- Phone catch up with one of my young people who's been placed out of area for their safety due to worries about exploitation and trafficking. He's not in a great mood to start as he's still unhappy he's been moved and is missing home but in the end we manage to have a laugh and I remind him how much we all care about him. I email his network to update on how he's doing today.
- Consultation with a social worker about a CERAF they've completed for a 14 year old girl who is staying out late, has an older boyfriend and might be using drugs – we discuss how we don't know that she's being exploited but she could be at risk. We agree what they'll do next – setting up a multi-agency meeting (which I'll attend) and gathering some further info.
- I catch up on some case recording and chase up a referral I've made for a young person to access some employment support.
- Finish the day with a call to a new young person to explain the support I'd like to offer him. Other professionals have struggled to build a positive relationship with him and are worried about him being exploited. I'm a bit nervous about how it will go but it goes well and we make a plan to meet in a couple days to talk more.

Tools to help you:

- **Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (CERAF)** – the tool used to help identify and assess exploitation risk to a child. Available here: <https://hipsprocedures.org.uk/qkyoy/children-in-specific-circumstances/children-who-are-exploited>
- **Community Partnership Information (CPI) Form** – used by all professionals to share intelligence with the Police in order to help build a picture of issues affecting children in the community, including exploitation. Available here: <https://www.safe4me.co.uk/portfolio/sharing-information/>
- **5C's concept** (developed by Tony Saggars, adapted by Hallam Walker-Smart) – complicit, compliant, compelled, coerced, conditioned – helps to explain and understand the nuanced scale of 'choice' and the spectrum of CCE and how young people can move through this based on interactions and circumstances often outside their control. Click [here](#)

Safeguarding Children Partnership Training Opportunities

The SSCP offer a regular programme of multi-agency training and workshops on a wide range of issues.

Full details of what is currently on offer is available on their website.

[Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

If you would like to be added to their mailing list to receive updates of new training opportunities, please contact:

Safeguarding.PartnershipsTeam@southampton.gov.uk

