

SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

CSE can affect any child in any community. School staff are well placed to spot any potential indicators of CSE. Children rarely self-report CSE, so it is important that school staff are aware of the potential warning signs. Remember, all children are different so you should look out for any uncharacteristic behaviour in the individual child.

Mood changes



Look out for any general **mood swings** or changes in emotional wellbeing. Children experiencing CSE can become **defensive** or **aggressive** and can act in an increasingly **secretive** manner. Children may also find it **difficult to concentrate** in lessons or become **disruptive** in the classroom.

Physical changes

Children suffering from CSE may come into school with **unexplained marks or bruises**, or there may be signs that they are **self-harming**. The child may **lose weight** dramatically or develop signs that they have an **eating disorder**.



Out of character



Children can sometimes become **disconnected from their friends** if they are experiencing CSE. Take note if a pupil falls out with their friends and starts spending time with groups they have not spent time with before, especially if their new 'friends' are older or appear to be **gang members**.

New possessions

Watch out for pupils coming into school with **new possessions**, such as mobile phones, clothing or jewellery, and being **unable to explain** where they got them from. Be alert to any changes in behaviour regarding mobile phone usage – **are they receiving lots of calls or texts from unknown people?**



Concerning behaviour

A child experiencing CSE may begin to **frequently miss school**, and may even get **excluded**. The child may also get in trouble with the police, especially if the type of CSE they are experiencing is gang-related. Look out for any signs that a child has been using **alcohol or drugs**. Children suffering CSE may also make claims that they are being abused and then withdraw them.

REMEMBER

A child can be experiencing CSE even if there are no warning signs; likewise, potential indicators of CSE could also be explained by other vulnerabilities. The key is communication – all concerns must be reported to the designated safeguarding lead who will then investigate the case and refer the findings to relevant agencies. If you believe that a child is in immediate danger – contact the police.