

Child Sexual Exploitation Warning Signs - **SAFEGUARD**

Often, children and young people who are victims of sexual exploitation do not recognise that they are being abused. There are a number of warning signs that can indicate a child may be being groomed for sexual exploitation. To assist you in remembering and assessing these signs and behaviours, we have created the mnemonic - **SAFEGUARD**.



Sexual identity, wellbeing and choice

Sexually transmitted infections (particularly repeat infections); Pregnancy; terminations; changing or out of character sexual behaviour; exploring sexual relationships in an unsafe context or environment; unable to disclose sexual orientation and fearful of societal responses.



Absence, truancy and going missing

Truancy from school, including during the school day; missing from home or care, and repeat incidents; travelling outside borough/town when missing; unexplained absences.



Family and home

Sexual, physical, emotional abuse and neglect; risks of forced marriage or so called honour based violence; female genital mutilation; domestic violence; substance misuse; parental mental health concerns; bereavement; parental and sibling criminality; experiences of homelessness or sofa surfing; living in care or temporary accommodation; immigration status.



Emotional and physical health

Suicidal thoughts, plans and attempts; self-harm; low self-esteem/confidence/worth; learning difficulties; changing emotional wellbeing and signs of poor mental health; unexplained injuries and changes in physical appearance.



Gangs, Groups, Age Gaps and Crime

Involvement in gangs or gang affected family, peers or siblings; concerns of abusive peer groups; involvement with older individuals or groups, lacking friends in the same age groups; older 'boyfriends'; sudden changes in peer groups; bullying, both on and off line; friends of young people experiencing CSE.



Use of technology and sexual bullying

Sexting, both sending and receiving; being listed on social network pages in relation to sexual activity and, or named in videos; secretive use of the internet/phones/social networking sites; sudden behaviour changes when using the phone or internet; control via phone or internet; multiple or secretive social networking profiles.



Alcohol and substances

Reliance on and changing use of substances, both legal and illegal.



Receipt of unexplained gifts or money

Unexplained money, mobile phones; phone credit, items, clothes, money; new nails; travel in taxis; gifts where payment is required at a later date; worries about having debts



Distrust of authority figures

Resistance to communicating with parents, carers, teachers, social services, health, police and others.