

Safeguarding Snapshot - 06.02.26

Understanding Exploitation

Exploitation occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, or deceive a child (anyone under 18) into activities for the exploiter's benefit. In order to safeguard and protect our children, the students and staff at Vyners School have been taught signs to look out for. In order to support these conversations at home we have provided a short guide with links to additional resources.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

CCE is a form of child abuse where children are manipulated into committing crimes. This can involve:

- County Lines: Organised criminal networks using children to move and store drugs or money, often across different counties.
- Cuckooing: Criminals taking over a person's home to use it as a base for drug dealing.
- Forced Activity: Being made to shoplift, pickpocket, or work in cannabis farms.
- Weapon Carrying: Coercing children into carrying knives or other weapons for the group.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE is a form of sexual abuse where a child is pressured or tricked into sexual activity. This is often done in exchange for:

- Gifts or Money: New clothes, phones, or cash.
- Affection: Being made to feel loved or "special" (Grooming).
- Essentials: Food, cigarettes, alcohol, or a place to stay.
- Status: A sense of belonging or protection within a group.

A child cannot consent to exploitation. Even if they seem to be a willing participant or believe they are in a relationship, they are victims of abuse.

Warning Signs: What to Look For

Exploiters are experts at making children feel isolated from their families. Watch for these red flags:

Behavioural Changes

- Sudden Secrecy: Being very guarded with their phone or having multiple phones/SIM cards.
- Unexplained Absences: Going missing for periods of time or staying out late without a valid reason.
- Mood Swings: Becoming uncharacteristically aggressive, anxious, or withdrawn.
- New Peer Groups: Associating with older people or a completely new group of "friends."

Physical & Material Signs

- Unexplained Items: Having new designer clothes, trainers, or cash they can't account for.
- Injuries: Unexplained bruises or marks, or returning home looking dishevelled.
- Substance Use: Signs of drug or alcohol use.
- Travel: Knowledge of areas or towns they have no obvious connection to.

How Exploitation Happens (The Grooming Process)

Perpetrators often follow a pattern to trap a child:

- Targeting: Finding a child who may be lonely, struggling at school, or needing money.
- Befriending: Providing gifts, "protection," or a sense of family.
- Isolation: Creating a wedge between the child and their parents/teachers.
- Control: Using "debt bondage" (claiming the child owes them money) or threats of violence against the child or their family to keep them trapped.

Where to Get Help and Advice

If you are worried about a child contact the police

- Emergency: Call 999 if a child is in immediate danger.
- Non-Emergency: Call 101 to report concerns to the police.

For more information please contact the Vyners School Safeguarding Team via the school office: office@vynersschool.org.uk

Additional resources

- [NSPCC](#)
- [The Children's Society](#)
- [Iverson Trust](#)
- [ThinkUKnow \(CEOP\)](#)