

Dear Parent/Carer,

Child Sexual Exploitation – parental/carer awareness



I write to you on behalf of Cheshire West and Chester Children's Services, Cheshire Police and the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner about the challenging subject of child sexual exploitation (CSE). The reason we are writing to you is to highlight that we take the safety of our children and young people seriously and recognise that you have the most critical role in helping us to achieve this, either as a parent, neighbour or as a member of your community.

The numbers of children identified as being either at risk of, or actually being sexually exploited, are relatively small.

However, technologies such as mobile phones and the internet mean that exploitation may occur without your child's permission or without your child even recognising that they are being exploited; for example through being persuaded to post sexual images over the internet or through mobile phone images.

The Police and the Council want to be proactive in helping you be aware of the risks that your children may meet, either face-to-face or virtually through social media and the internet.

By being aware of the warning signs of CSE you can help stop abuse before it develops further. Some of the warning signs are:

- Your child may become especially secretive and stop engaging with their usual friends.
- They may be associating with, or develop a sexual relationship with older males or females
- They may go missing from home – and be defensive about their location and activities, often returning home late or staying out all night
- They may be missing school

- They may receive odd calls and messages on their mobiles or social media pages from unknown, possibly much older associates from outside their normal social network
- They may be in possession of new, expensive items which they couldn't normally afford, such as mobile phones, iPads or jewellery
- They may exhibit a sudden change in dressing patterns or musical taste
- They may look tired and/or unwell, and sleep at unusual hours
- They may have marks or scars on their body which they try to conceal
- They may adopt new 'street language' or respond to a new 'street' name
- You may also have these worries about a friend of your child
- You can also help prevent abuse by talking to your child about:
 - Healthy and risky relationships
 - Which websites they're using and ask them to show you how they work
 - Being very careful to befriend and communicate with only trusted people that they know
 - Assuring them that it's OK to come to you or another trusted adult if they feel threatened by or uncomfortable about something they have seen or done on a social networking site/instant messaging service

The Local Authority and the police have the statutory duty to safeguard all children living in Cheshire West and Chester irrespective of which school they attend and we work in partnership with others to achieve this.

If you are concerned your child or another child known to you is at risk you can contact Cheshire Police by calling 101 or 999 in an emergency. You can also contact the local authority's consultation service – 01606 275099; Out of hours 01244 977277
Alternatively, you can speak to a member of staff at school for advice.

For further information about how you can help protect your child/children from the risks of CSE, visit <http://www.knowandsee.co.uk/#team> or <http://www.paceuk.info/support-for-parents/advice-centre/>

Yours sincerely



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Children and families



Simon Byrne
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