Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Criminal Exploitation is when individuals or gangs target children and force them to carry out criminal activity. Exploiters may force young people to deal drugs, steal, commit violent or sexual acts and traffic them.

Children who are being criminally exploited will usually be subject to physical violence and threats – but exploiters are smart: they'll spend months or years grooming their victims, and parents often aren't even aware it's happening. If you think your child is being exploited it's important to know that you are not alone and not to blame.

You should:

Report your concerns to Children's Social Care or the NSPCC's helpline on 0808 800 5000. A social worker can help you take steps to protect your child. They will make an assessment based on concern your child is at risk of harm from outside of the family.

Seek further information on the NSPCC website: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/gangs-criminal-exploitation/

You can also report your concerns to the police using their non-emergency number. If you feel your child is in immediate danger, then call the police on 999. Don't be worried about contacting the police – you are trying to protect your child. If you would like more support, go to other professionals who can help: your GP, school, police or a youth worker.

If your child isn't where they are supposed to be, report them missing straight away on 101. You do not have to wait 24 hours.

If your child is picked up in a car, or has train or bus tickets, keep a record of this information to give to the police or social worker.

There may be other evidence that your child is being exploited, such as interactions on social media, unexplained money or phones, clothing or gifts, change in behaviour; where possible try to keep a record of this.

If you're able to speak to your child then let them know they aren't in trouble – and that you're worried about them. Remember that there may be threats made against you or your family by the people exploiting your child. Your child may believe that they are protecting you. Let your child know that you know about this risk and that it is not their responsibility to protect you.

If they don't want to talk to you, let them know that they can always call ChildLine on 0800 1111 or Get Connected on 0808 808 4994 (text 80849).