



St. Helens Council

Atlas House
Corporation Street
St Helens
WA9 1LD

March 2015

Dear Parent/Carer,

Child Sexual Exploitation – parental/carer awareness

I write to you on behalf of Merseyside Police and the local council about the sensitive subject of child sexual exploitation (CSE).

Current intelligence suggests that the numbers of children identified as being either at risk of, or actually being, sexually exploited across Merseyside, 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 St Helens 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. These 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





St. Helens Council

- 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 can also help disrupt 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

If you are concerned your child is at risk you can contact Merseyside Police either by calling 101 or 999 in an emergency. You can also contact the Children & Young People's Contact Centre on 01744 676600.

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 www.listentomystory.co.uk or www.ceop.police.uk

Yours sincerely,

Andy Dempsey
Director of Children's Services

