

Keeping Your Child Safe: A Parent's Guide to Harmful Sexual Behaviour, Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation

A guide for parents and carers of secondary school students

BELIEVE, STRIVE, SUCCEED

Corinthians 1:12:12 'the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body'

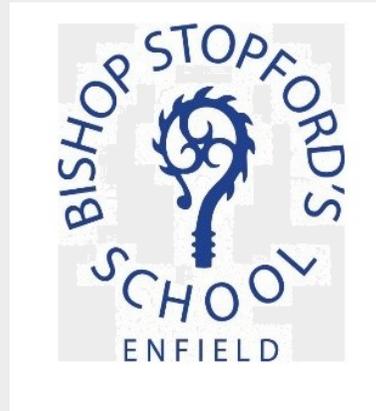
Introduction

Dear Parents and Carers,

We know that keeping your child safe is your top priority, and it's ours too. This booklet has been created to help you understand three important safeguarding issues that can affect young people: **Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)**, **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**, and **Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)**.

These are difficult topics, but it's important that we work together to protect our young people. By understanding the warning signs and knowing how to respond, you can help keep your child safe.

Remember: These issues can affect any child, regardless of their background, gender, or where they live. If you have any concerns at all, please speak to us.



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1. What is Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)?

Understanding HSB

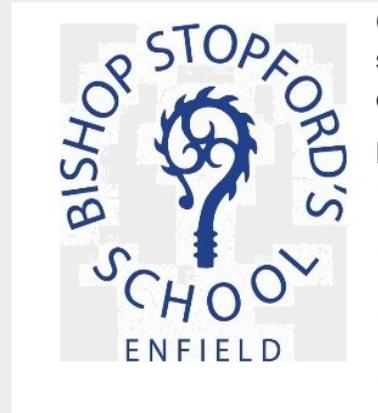
Harmful Sexual Behaviour is when a young person displays sexual behaviours that are inappropriate for their age or developmental stage, or that cause harm to themselves or others.

HSB can include:

- ◆ Making sexual comments, remarks, or jokes about other students
- ◆ Sharing nude or semi-nude images (sometimes called "sexting")
- ◆ Unwanted sexual touching or interference with clothing
- ◆ Sexual violence such as rape or sexual assault
- ◆ Taking photos under someone's clothing without permission ("upskirting")
- ◆ Pressuring someone to engage in sexual activity
- ◆ Online sexual harassment through social media or messaging

Important things to know:

- ◆ **HSB is often a sign that a young person needs help.** Young people who display harmful sexual behaviour have often experienced their own abuse or trauma, or have been exposed to inappropriate sexual content. They need support, not just punishment.
- ◆ **Both boys and girls can be victims or perpetrators.** Don't make assumptions based on gender.
- ◆ **Online behaviour counts too.** HSB doesn't just happen face-to-face. It can happen through phones, social media, and gaming platforms.



2. What is Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)?

Understanding CSE

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse where someone takes advantage of a young person, manipulating or coercing them into sexual activity.

Key facts about CSE:

- ◆ **It can happen to any child** – boys and girls, from any background
- ◆ **The exploiter may be any age** – another young person, or an adult
- ◆ **It may involve an exchange** – gifts, money, attention, affection, drugs, alcohol, or somewhere to stay
- ◆ **Young people may not realise they're being exploited** – they may believe they're in a genuine romantic relationship
- ◆ **It can happen online or in person** – through social media, gaming platforms, or face-to-face
- ◆ **It includes 16 and 17-year-olds** – even though they can legally consent to sex, they can still be exploited

What CSE can look like:

CSE can involve physical contact (such as rape, sexual assault, or inappropriate touching) or non-contact activities such as:

- ◆ Being forced or encouraged to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities
- ◆ Being involved in the production of sexual images
- ◆ Being groomed online in preparation for abuse
- ◆ Being encouraged to behave in sexually inappropriate ways

CSE can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence. It may happen without the child's immediate knowledge – for example, through others sharing videos or images of them on social media.

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3. What is Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)?

Understanding CCE

Child Criminal Exploitation is when someone takes advantage of a young person, manipulating or coercing them into criminal activity.

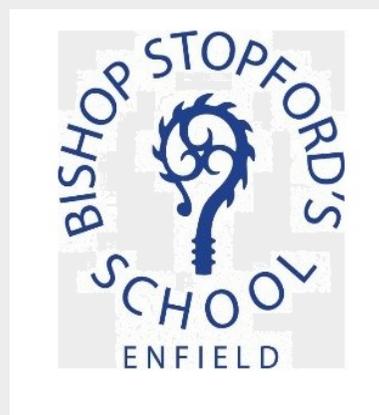
Key facts about CCE:

- ◆ **Young people involved in criminal activity may be victims, not criminals** – even if they appear to have "agreed" to take part
- ◆ **It affects both boys and girls** – though the indicators may look different
- ◆ **It can involve violence or threats** – to the young person or their family
- ◆ **Young people can become trapped** – through manufactured "debts" or threats
- ◆ **It often involves "county lines"** – drug dealing networks that exploit children

What CCE can look like:

- ◆ Young people may be forced or manipulated into:
 - ◆ Transporting or selling drugs ("county lines")
 - ◆ Working in cannabis factories
 - ◆ Shoplifting or pickpocketing
 - ◆ Vehicle crime
 - ◆ Committing or threatening serious violence
- ◆ Carrying weapons

Important: Children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, which means their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised. They may still have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be something they agreed to



4. Warning Signs to Look Out For

Physical Signs

Look out for:

- ◆ Unexplained injuries, bruises, or marks
- ◆ Appearing tired, exhausted, or unwell
- ◆ Changes in physical appearance (looking older, wearing more makeup)
- ◆ Signs of drug or alcohol use
- ◆ Sexually transmitted infections (in older teens)

Behavioural Changes

Your child may:

- ◆ Become secretive about where they're going and who they're with
- ◆ Stay out late or go missing
- ◆ Withdraw from family, friends, or activities they used to enjoy
- ◆ Become aggressive, defensive, or emotionally distant
- ◆ Show changes in mood or emotional wellbeing
- ◆ Display sexual behaviours beyond what's expected for their age
- ◆ Seem anxious, scared, or distressed
- ◆ Have nightmares or difficulty sleeping

Material and Financial Signs

Watch for:

- ◆ New expensive items (phones, trainers, clothes, accessories) that you didn't buy
- ◆ Unexplained money or gifts
- ◆ Hotel key cards or receipts
- ◆ Multiple mobile phones or SIM cards

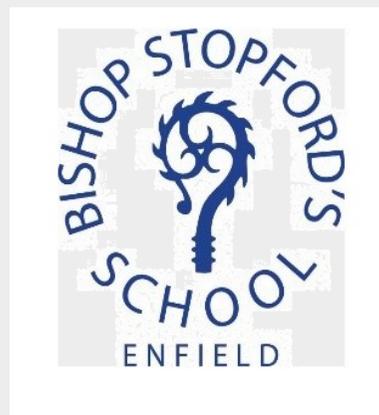
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Relationship Changes

Be concerned if your child:

- ◆ Has a new "boyfriend" or "girlfriend" who is significantly older
- ◆ Is spending time with new "friends" you haven't met
- ◆ Talks about older friends or people they've met online
- ◆ Is in a relationship that seems controlling or unhealthy
- ◆ Receives excessive calls, texts, or messages, especially late at night
- ◆ Becomes extremely distressed if you try to take their phone away



School-Related Signs

The school may notice:

- ◆ Declining grades or missed coursework
- ◆ Increased absence or lateness
- ◆ Falling asleep in lessons
- ◆ Appearing distracted or distant
- ◆ Changes in friendship groups
- ◆ Reluctance to participate in activities (especially PE or changing rooms)

Online Activity

Warning signs include:

- ◆ Being very secretive about online activity
- ◆ Having multiple social media accounts you don't know about
- ◆ Receiving messages or calls from unknown numbers
- ◆ Spending excessive time online, especially late at night
- ◆ Showing you inappropriate images or videos
- ◆ Being contacted by people they don't know in real life

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5. How to Talk to Your Child

Create the Right Environment

Do:

- ◆ Find a private, comfortable space
- ◆ Choose a calm moment when you're both relaxed
- ◆ Turn off distractions (TV, phones)
- ◆ Be patient and give them time to talk
- ◆ Stay calm, even if you're shocked or upset by what they tell you

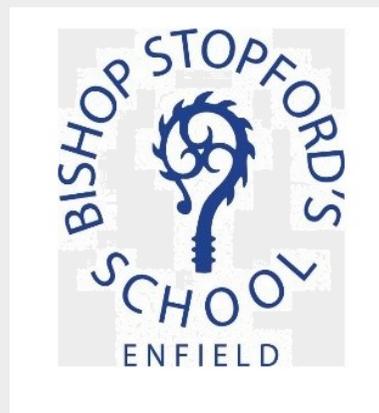
Don't:

- ◆ Have the conversation when you're angry or upset
- ◆ Talk in front of siblings or other family members
- ◆ Make them feel they're in trouble
- ◆ React with anger or panic

Starting the Conversation

Try these conversation starters:

- ◆ "I've been learning about how to keep young people safe online and offline. Can we talk about it?"
- ◆ "I saw something in the news about [topic]. It made me think we should talk about staying safe."
- ◆ "The school has been talking to parents about [topic]. I want to make sure you know you can talk to me about anything."
- ◆ "I love you and want to make sure you're safe. Can we talk about relationships/friendships?"



If They Open Up

Do:

- ◆ Listen without interrupting
- ◆ Believe what they tell you
- ◆ Stay calm and supportive
- ◆ Thank them for trusting you
- ◆ Tell them it's not their fault
- ◆ Reassure them that you'll help keep them safe
- ◆ Take what they say seriously

Don't:

- ◆ Dismiss their concerns as "just part of growing up"
- ◆ Blame them or make them feel guilty
- ◆ Promise to keep secrets if they're at risk
- ◆ Confront the alleged perpetrator yourself
- ◆ Investigate on your own

What to Say

Helpful phrases:

- ◆ "Thank you for telling me. That took a lot of courage."
- ◆ "This is not your fault."
- ◆ "I believe you."
- ◆ "I'm here to support you."
- ◆ "We'll work through this together."
- ◆ "You're not in trouble."
- ◆ "I'm proud of you for talking to me."

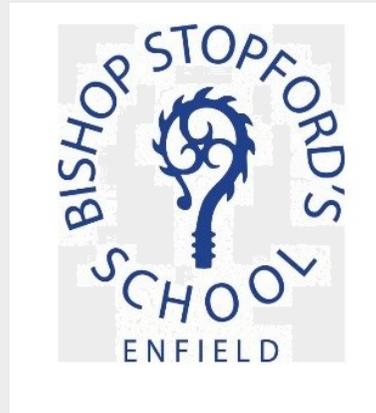
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6. How to Support Your Child

Emotional support:

- ◆ Maintain routines and normality where possible
- ◆ Be patient – recovery takes time
- ◆ Don't force them to talk, but let them know you're available
- ◆ Acknowledge their feelings without judgment
- ◆ Celebrate small steps forward
- ◆ Consider professional counselling or therapy



Practical support:

- ◆ Monitor their online activity (while respecting privacy)
- ◆ Know who they're spending time with
- ◆ Know where they are and when they'll be home
- ◆ Keep communication open
- ◆ Set clear, consistent boundaries
- ◆ Work with the school on safety plans

Safety planning:

- ◆ Agree on check-in times when they're out
- ◆ Make sure they have a charged phone and emergency credit
- ◆ Establish a code word they can use if they need help
- ◆ Discuss safe ways to get home
- ◆ Talk about what to do if they feel unsafe
- ◆ Keep lines of communication open

What NOT to Do

Avoid:

- ◆ Restricting them so much they feel punished
- ◆ Taking away their phone completely (this may increase risk)
- ◆ Confronting the alleged perpetrator or their family
- ◆ Posting about the situation on social media
- ◆ Blaming your child or making them feel guilty
- ◆ Isolating them from all friends
- ◆ Giving up if they don't engage immediately

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7. What to Do If You're Worried

If you have concerns about your child:

Step 1: Talk to your child

- ◆ Express your concerns calmly
- ◆ Listen to what they have to say
- ◆ Let them know you're there to help

Step 2: Contact the school

- ◆ Speak to your child's Form tutor, Head of Year, or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- ◆ Share your concerns, even if you're not sure
- ◆ Ask what support the school can provide

Our school's DSL is: Gbenga Sonuga

safeguarding@bishopstopfords.enfield.sch.uk

Step 3: Contact other agencies if needed

If your child is in immediate danger:

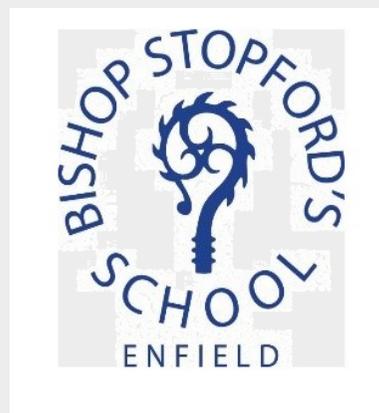
- ◆ Call 999

If you suspect exploitation or abuse:

- ◆ Contact your local authority children's social care
- ◆ Contact the police on 101

If your child has gone missing:

- ◆ Contact the police immediately on 999



What Will Happen Next?

- ◆ When you report concerns:
- ◆ The school or authorities will take your concerns seriously
- ◆ They will carry out a risk assessment
- ◆ They will put a safety plan in place
- ◆ They may involve other agencies (police, social care)
- ◆ You will be kept informed (where appropriate)
- ◆ Your child will be supported

Remember: Early intervention can prevent situations from escalating. It's always better to raise a concern, even if you're not sure.

8. Where to Get Help

School Support

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Gbenga Sonuga

Contact: safeguarding@bishopstopfords.enfield.sch.uk

Deputy DSL: Michelle Williams

Contact: safeguarding@bishopstopfords.enfield.sch.uk

Main school number: 0208 804 1906

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Emergency Services

In an emergency, always call 999

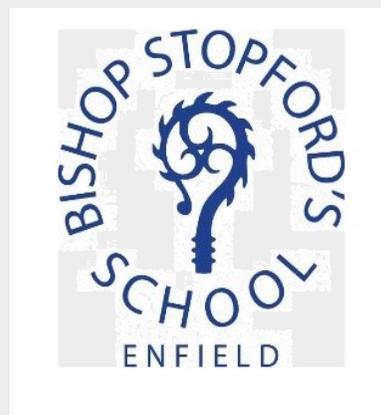
Police (non-emergency): 101

Local Services

Local Authority MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub): 0208 379 5555 / childrensmash@enfield.gov.uk

Out of office hours on 020 8379 1000 (select option 2)

Local Mental Health Support: Barnet, Enfield and Haringey mental health crisis team—0800 151 0023



National Helplines and Support

Childline

Phone: 0800 1111 (free, confidential, 24/7)

Online chat: www.childline.org.uk

For children and young people to talk about any problem

NSPCC Helpline

Phone: 0808 800 5000

Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

For adults concerned about a child

The Mix

Phone: 0808 808 4994 (free, confidential)

Online chat: www.themix.org.uk

Support for under-25s

Stop It Now! Helpline

Phone: 0808 1000 900

For concerns about sexual behaviour

Confidential support for families

National Crime Agency CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection)

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/>

Report online sexual abuse or grooming

Rape Crisis

Phone: 0808 802 9999 (daily, 12pm-2:30pm, 7pm-9:30pm)

www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Support for victims of sexual violence

Victim Support

Phone: 08 08 16 89 111

www.victimsupport.org.uk

Support for victims of crime

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation

www.stopitnow.org.uk

www.shorespace.org.uk (for young people)

Support around harmful sexual behaviour

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9. Frequently Asked Questions

"My child says nothing is wrong. Should I still be concerned?"

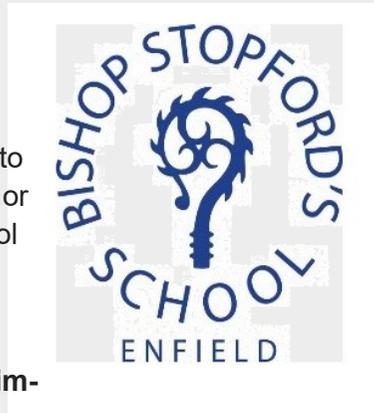
Yes, if you've noticed warning signs. Young people who are being exploited often don't recognise it, or may be too scared to speak up. They may believe they're in a genuine relationship, or feel ashamed. Trust your instincts and seek advice from school or other professionals.

"Will my child get in trouble if they've been involved in criminal activity?"

Children involved in criminal exploitation are victims, not criminals. The focus should be on protecting them and providing support. However, each situation is assessed individually. The school and other agencies will work together to keep your child safe.

"What if the person exploiting my child is another young person?"

Child-on-child abuse is taken very seriously. Both young people will need support – the victim needs protection and support, and the young person causing harm may also have experienced abuse themselves. The school and other agencies will assess the situation and put appropriate measures in place.



"My child is 16. Can they consent to a sexual relationship with an adult?"

While 16 is the age of consent for sexual activity, a 16 or 17-year-old can still be sexually exploited. If there's a significant power imbalance, manipulation, coercion, or exchange involved, this is exploitation regardless of age.

"What if I'm worried about someone else's child?"

If you have concerns about any child, you should report them. Contact your local authority children's social care, or the NSPCC helpline (0808 800 5000). You don't need proof – professionals will investigate.

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