Centre of
expertise
on child
sexual abuse

Key messages from research on child sexual exploitation

Emilie Smeaton

Second edition, January 2026

Key messages

Challenges relating to definitions of child sexual exploitation include difficulties delineating the boundaries between this and other forms of child sexual abuse. These challenges contribute to confusion and inconsistency in application, hindering the identification of sexually exploited children and posing challenges for practice responses.

Child sexual exploitation is perpetrated in many ways, mainly by males. Online and in-person exploitation can occur separately and overlap.

Networks for child sexual exploitation are often far from organised, and generally do not come together with a specific intent to sexually exploit children. The concept of 'grooming gangs' is not clearly defined, does not correspond to any established legal categories, is not captured clearly in any official data sets, and its use often reflects a racialised stereotype disproportionally targeting Asian and Muslim men.

Data on the ethnicity of offenders is of poor quality; the limited evidence suggests that no one ethnic group is predisposed to offending.

Vulnerability to child sexual exploitation is formed by structural forces, situational dynamics and individual factors. Research has identified some particular patterns of sexual exploitation for children within diverse cultural contexts, alongside barriers to disclosure and access to support. Being raised in economically disadvantaged communities and experiencing racism has been found to make Black children vulnerable. Disabled children have specific vulnerabilities and require distinct considerations relating to responses, including meeting individual impairment needs. Isolation and lack of acceptance relating to sexuality or gender identity can lead children to seek support via adult groups and settings, increasing their vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Looked-after children are also significantly vulnerable, but carefully chosen placements can reduce risks.

While boys as well as girls are sexually exploited, boys can be 'hidden' victims/survivors owing to the predominant focus upon girls in strategic and practice responses.

Child sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation can take place together: sexual abuse can be a means of initiation into criminal activities and control.

Some children are less likely to receive support and are treated as responsible for the harm they experience. Children can have both vulnerability and agency, requiring a balanced approach to reconcile risk and protection. Professionals benefit from taking an intersectional approach and applying curiosity and judgement to explore children's needs and circumstances.

Practitioners acknowledge that responses to child sexual exploitation do not require disclosure by the child, but can be based on recognition of risks, signs and indicators and forming an assessment. Assessments should enable practitioners to distinguish between risk and harm, and to accurately identify children at risk of sexual exploitation and those being exploited.

Multi-agency approaches enable organisations to contribute their specific roles while developing shared actions. Contextual safeguarding offers a framework for responding to harm that children face outside the home. Trauma-informed practice can support meeting children's needs and avoid victim-blaming and punishment. Listening to the child and their family is crucial, with benefits to professionals of working collaboratively with parents to increase children's safety.

Design and delivery of prevention measures must avoid embedding existing inequalities and problematic attitudes towards children. Disruption measures are key to prevention.

Given the links between harmful sexual behaviour and being sexually exploited, responses to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour benefit from recognising and responding to traumatic experiences, and considering the wider social networks and spaces that set the context for this behaviour.

Our 'Key messages from research' papers aim to provide succinct, relevant information for frontline practitioners and commissioners. They bring together the most up-to-date research into an accessible overview, supporting confident provision of the best possible responses to child sexual abuse.

This paper incorporates research published up to mid-November 2025.

Defining child sexual exploitation

While it can be argued that all child sexual abuse is exploitative, the term 'child sexual exploitation' has developed a specific meaning which has changed over time (Casey, 2025). According to the UK Government's current definition, applying in England:

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (Department for Education, 2023:154–155)

The Welsh Government defines child sexual exploitation in similar ways, again recognising it as a form of child sexual abuse which involves some form of exchange:

[The abuse] can include sex or any form of sexual activity with a child; the production of indecent images and/or any other indecent material involving children. […] The exchange can include the giving or withdrawal of something […] Children may not recognise the exploitative nature of the relationship or exchange. Children may feel that they have given consent. […] Exchange is a fundamental part of abuse through CSE. The involvement of exchange is what makes CSE distinct from other forms of child sexual abuse. The thing that is exchanged can be:

- *Material things and experiences – money, goods, food, alcohol, drugs, accommodation, parties, trips.*

- *Things related to feelings – the meeting of an emotional need or a need related to self-esteem, feeling wanted, feeling that they belong, loved, in control and/or important.*

- *Things related to the need to be safe – the need to be free from threats and physical violence or threats to someone that the child cares about. (Welsh Government, 2021:7–8)*

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse concluded that the unique feature of child sexual exploitation is that children are "controlled, coerced, manipulated or deceived into sexual activity" (Jay et al, 2022:145), and that emphasis on exchange in definitions may not be appropriate. Current definitions of child sexual exploitation have also been criticised and recognised as problematic to use in practice (Casey, 2025). There are difficulties delineating the boundaries between child sexual exploitation and other forms of child sexual abuse, leading to inconsistencies in how definitions are applied (Karsna and Kelly, 2021). This includes practitioners recording any extra-familial child sexual abuse as exploitation (Casey, 2025; Tregidga and Lovett, 2021) or considering that sexual abuse happens to children under the age of ten and sexual exploitation to older children (Christie and Karsna, 2019). Definitional and recording challenges relating to child sexual exploitation have hindered:

- identification of children who experience, or are at risk of, child sexual exploitation (Casey, 2025; Jay et al, 2022; Weston and Mythen, 2020)

- accurate recording of child sexual exploitation (Moodie, 2021)

- practice responses (McGinty et al, 2024; Jay et al, 2022)

- identification of people who sexually abuse children (Weston and Mythen, 2020).

Child sexual exploitation is not associated with a single specific criminal offence (Casey, 2025) but falls within broader sexual offences legislation, with prosecutions utilising multiple sections of core legislation such as the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Despite challenges, child sexual exploitation remains a recognised form of child sexual abuse requiring practice and strategic responses from professionals.

Who sexually exploits children, and how?

Most people involved in sexually exploiting children are male; there is limited evidence of females perpetrating or facilitating child sexual exploitation (Dixon, 2024; Smeaton, 2013). While the number of under-18s involved in sexually exploiting other children is not known, they can be involved as facilitators, abusers or bystanders (Beckett et al, 2013; Firmin, 2011); exploitative contexts and dynamics can lead children to harm others (Beckett et al, 2013; Firmin, 2013).

Child sexual exploitation can take many forms, and children can be sexually exploited by people of their own age or significantly older, and by individuals or groups/networks (Berelowitz et al, 2012; Webb and Holmes, 2015). In-person and online sexual exploitation can occur separately or overlap (Fox and Kalkan, 2016). Online dynamics, features and narratives interact to change and increase the harms of contact abuse (Brown and Tregidga, 2023; Hanson, 2019). For example, grooming can take place online and children can be threatened/blackmailed with the sharing of sexual or nude images. Technological developments have resulted in increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) to generate child sexual abuse material (Internet Watch Foundation, 2024), posing threat and harm to children (Children's Commissioner for England, 2025); AI tools are also being used to create fake child profiles and personas, through which children can be groomed online for sexual exploitation (NSPCC, 2025).

That children may appear to cooperate cannot be taken as consent, as they are likely to be subject to grooming, coercion and control (Arthur and Down, 2019).

Networked and/or group-based child sexual exploitation

While there is limited evidence that distinguishes between networks and groups in relation to child sexual exploitation, both terms are used, with 'networks' tending to be used to describe more organised elements, and 'groups' to include formal and informal associations including friendship groups (see, for example, Berelowitz et al, 2013). Family members can also be involved in organised child sexual exploitation (Scott, 2023).

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse defined an organised network as two or more individuals having an association with one another and involved in the sexual exploitation of children; it used the term 'organised' simply to denote the facilitation and cooperation among individuals in networks, irrespective of the degree of organisation (Jay et al, 2022). The networks themselves are often far from organised, lacking a leader or hierarchy (Senker et al, 2020) and with loose connections (Dixon, 2024).

One study found that networks were not generally motivated by a specific sexual interest in children, and did not come together with the specific intent of sexually exploiting them: unlike individuals who operate alone in sexually exploiting children, they appeared to seek contact with vulnerable children who were easy to access and exploit in a number of ways (Dixon, 2024). Membership of networks, and the children they exploit, are characterised by pre-existing social relationships based on shared kinships, friendships, neighbourhoods, schools and places of work and worship (Cockbain, 2018; Dixon, 2024; Taylor, 2019). Any organised element to groups or networks may relate to other offences such as supplying illegal drugs (Dixon, 2024; Casey, 2025); drugs provide opportunities for grooming, including by drawing children to specific locations, creating debt and dependency, and lowering inhibitions and resistance to abuse (Dixon, 2024).

Analysis of data relating to group-based child sexual abuse as recorded by the police in England and Wales in 2023 (Child Sexual Exploitation Taskforce, 2024) found that one in six (17%, n=717) of these offences were classed as child sexual exploitation; other forms of group-based child sexual abuse included familial, institutional and ritualistic. Self-defined ethnicity was only available for a third of suspects across all forms of child sexual abuse, and broadly reflected the population aged ten and above in England and Wales (Kewley and Karsna, 2025). Reviews of available evidence have recognised that police data on offenders' ethnicity is of poor quality (Casey, 2025; Home Office, 2020), noting "it is likely that no one community or culture is uniquely predisposed to offending" (Home Office, 2020:25). There is also a recognised gap in the quality of ethnicity data collected by statutory and voluntary-sector services working with people who experience and perpetrate child sexual exploitation (Christie and Karsna, 2019).

Linked to networked and group-based child sexual exploitation is the concept of 'grooming gangs'. This term developed from a 2011 report in *The Times* claiming that Pakistani and Muslim men were acting in gangs to groom and sexually exploit female children, and became "firmly established in popular and political discourse in the UK" (Cockbain and Tufail, 2020:4). The term does not correspond to any established legal categories, is not captured clearly in any official data sets, and reflects a racialised stereotype disproportionally targeting Asian and Muslim men (Cockbain and Tufail, 2020).

Factors affecting children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation and responses to them

Any child can be at risk of sexual exploitation, but particular experiences and characteristics can mean some children are at greater risk. These include, but are not limited to, prior abuse in the family, including sexual abuse; economic deprivation; homelessness; substance misuse; disability; being in care; 'running away'/going missing; and 'gang-association' (Beckett et al, 2013; Brown et al, 2016; Franklin et al, 2015; Klatt et al, 2014; Jago et al, 2011; Smeaton, 2013). Sexually exploited children have been found to be more likely to have experienced some form of familial sexual abuse or sexual abuse/rape outside the family (Hallett et al, 2019). Some of the above indicators also appear to be present in children who are sexually exploited in online contexts (Whittle et al, 2013).

These indicators of child sexual exploitation are not evidence that it has taken place, or that there is a risk of it, but they highlight the need for professional curiosity and judgement to explore children's unmet needs and circumstances. The Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (CSA Centre) has developed a **Signs and Indicators Template** to help professionals systematically observe, record and communicate concerns about possible child sexual abuse.

Guiding principles to support the use of tools in assessing child sexual exploitation include being clear about a tool's purpose; applying professional judgement in the use of tools and the procedures/processes within which they are embedded; clearly distinguishing risk from harm; and avoiding scoring (Brown et al, 2017).

Vulnerability to child sexual exploitation is clearly influenced by structural forces and situational dynamics as well as individual factors; structural inequalities shape some children's experiences of sexual exploitation and are embedded in system responses including child protection (Wroe et al, 2023).

Some children are less likely to receive support and are treated as responsible for the harm they experience (Casey, 2025; Jay et al, 2022). Adultification occurs when notions of vulnerability and innocence are grounded in bias, particularly racial bias, and a child is viewed as more grown-up (Davis, 2022), so they are inappropriately expected to behave and think as an adult.

Aspects of a child's socio-economic background, personal characteristics and/or experiences may be met with discriminatory responses, and sexually exploited children perceived as "responsible, complicit, or more resilient and able to withstand maltreatment" (Casey, 2025:130). Understanding structural inequalities' impacts on children's experiences is key, alongside ensuring that professional responses play no part in reinforcing inequalities (Manister et al, 2023).

While most sexually exploited children are girls, boys are also sexually exploited, including through organised networks (Jay et al, 2022). Boys can be described as 'hidden' victims/survivors because strategic and practice responses focus on girls (Coy, 2019). Lack of understanding of the sexual exploitation of boys has played a part in gendered attitudes and assumptions among professionals, resulting in a failure to recognise abuse (Beech et al, 2019; Smeaton, 2013). Barriers preventing professionals and boys themselves from recognising their sexual exploitation include notions of what it means to be male – with 'maleness' perceived as being incompatible with victimisation – as well as constructions of heterosexual masculinity and homophobia (Lovett et al, 2018). It is important to view and respond to any child, irrespective of their sex or any other characteristic, foremost as a child (Smeaton, 2013).

Looked-after children's significant vulnerability to child sexual exploitation can relate to unmet emotional and economic needs (Plowright, 2022). Teenagers in care are six times more likely than other children to be sexually exploited (Children's Commissioner for England, 2019); those with multiple placement moves or unstable social worker relationships are at higher risk (Ofsted, 2024). Carefully chosen placements that meet children's individual needs can reduce risk of sexual exploitation (Jay et al, 2022). While there is mixed evidence about the effectiveness of out-of-area placements for children who are sexually exploited, these placements can work well if the child is consulted about the decision and supported, and if the placement addresses problems from the child's perspective; disruption of those perpetrating the child sexual exploitation is also required (Jay et al, 2022). Evidence highlights the importance of transition planning, working through complexities relating to the treatment of mental health conditions, and ensuring that care staff are supported to be knowledgeable about trauma-informed responses (Scott, 2016).

Disabled children have specific vulnerabilities to sexual exploitation. A review of 205 Welsh children's services case files found that 9.3% of sexually exploited children had a learning disability/developmental condition (Hallett et al, 2019). Vulnerability can stem from societal treatment of disabled children and a failure to give them support to develop healthy relationships; they may have impairment factors such as limits to recognising risk and exploitation, impulsive behaviours, needs associated with understanding social interactions and communication, and limited capacity to consent to sexual activity (Smeaton, 2019). Specific considerations to support disabled children who experience, or are at risk of, sexual exploitation are found in an evidence-based practice guide (Smeaton et al, 2014).

The limited research findings addressing the sexual exploitation of children who are **lesbian, gay or bisexual**, and/or questioning their sexual orientation or gender **identity**, has revealed factors relating to exploration of sexuality along with an acceptance by some people – including some professionals – of sexual relationships between adult males and male children (Smeaton, 2013). Isolation and experiencing a lack of acceptance relating to sexual orientation and gender identity can also lead children to seek support via adult groups and settings (Fox, 2016).

Regarding children from **minority ethnic backgrounds**, South Asian young women have been recognised as 'missing from discourse' and facing cultural practices that form barriers to disclosure and seeking support (Sharp, 2013). Research relating to Asian, Eastern European, Roma and Traveller children has identified different patterns of child sexual exploitation within diverse cultural contexts; barriers to disclosure, identification of risk, access to services and the lack of resources to undertake work with diverse groups have been identified, alongside the need for professionals to develop wider understanding of children's communities (Smeaton, 2013). Research into network-based child sexual exploitation has found that children from diverse backgrounds are exploited (Cockbain, 2018) but that the specific needs of some of these children have been ignored (Cockbain and Tufail, 2020; Patel, 2018).

Being raised in economically disadvantaged communities and experiencing racism can make Black children particularly vulnerable to child sexual exploitation (Firmin, 2018). Unconscious race-based bias contributes to how Black children are treated in education, health, justice and child protection systems: they are perceived as less innocent – and therefore as less in need of protection – than White children and treated as older than their age and more culpable for their actions (Bernard, 2019). Black girls can be sexually exploited by gangs, facing multiple forms of abuse in that context, including racially motivated abuse (Bernard, 2019). Racist narratives and negative stereotypes about Black males and their involvement in criminality and violence, can prevent understanding and identifying Black boys as victims of sexual violence (Curry and Utley, 2018). Taking an **intersectional** approach supports both understanding the complex and subtle challenges faced by Black children at risk of child sexual exploitation (Bernard, 2019) and relational practice, alongside recognising the complex contextual factors that frame Black children's lives (Firmin, 2018). As an analytical framework examining how aspects of a person's identities combine and intersect to create discrimination and privilege, intersectionality generally supports understanding children's experiences of sexual exploitation and ensuring appropriate responses.

Avoiding victim-blaming language and working with risk and agency

Barriers to understanding child sexual exploitation and meeting children's needs can be reflected in professionals' language (Coy, 2019; Adams Elias et al, 2023; Lovett et al, 2018). Referring to a child's 'risky behaviour' and 'lifestyle', for example, plays a part in normalising exploitative contexts (McGinty et al, 2024). Language requires careful consideration to reduce victim-blaming and maximise engagement with children (Alderson and Ireland, 2020). Assessments should enable professionals to distinguish between risk and harm, and to accurately identify children at risk of child sexual exploitation and those who are already experiencing, or have experienced, child sexual exploitation (Hallett et al, 2019; Jay et al, 2022).

'Risky behaviours' are sometimes considered as a problem in themselves, not as a risk factor for child sexual exploitation; this hinders recognition and appropriate response to abuse (Mason-Jones and Loggie, 2019). Children's anger or frustration can be reinforced when professionals focus on risks and perceive the child as the problem, particularly when responses centre upon changing children's behaviours but not their circumstances (Hallett et al, 2019). Evidence supports a more dynamic approach to managing risk and addressing wellbeing in responses to child sexual exploitation (Hallett et al, 2019). This includes recognising peer relationships as sources of both support and harm (Brodie et al, 2020), and as a protective factor against child sexual exploitation (Hallett et al, 2019). It is important to gain a balanced understanding of peer relationships for assessments, planning and interventions with children and their peer groups (Adams Elias et al, 2023).

Complex dynamics are at play when considering children's ability to make informed choices and take actions in the context of child sexual exploitation: desire and meaning in sexual relationships, and understanding of abuse and exploitation, can co-exist (Brown, 2019). Recognising children's agency does not mean shifting responsibility for abuse to the child. There is a need for practitioners to adopt an integrated position of 'both/and', as opposed to 'either/or' (Lefevre et al, 2019), signifying that children make their own choices and may engage in risk-taking behaviours while also requiring protection (Hanson, 2019; Lefevre et al, 2019). To manage this balance requires recognition that children can have both vulnerability and agency, alongside being simultaneously struggling and competent, and exploited and autonomous (Lefevre et al, 2019). Enabling practitioners to explore this within safe, reflective spaces can help to address any tensions and concerns when working to reconcile risk and protection (Lefevre et al, 2019).

Child sexual exploitation, offending and child criminal exploitation

Sexually exploited children are sometimes misidentified as offenders (Jay et al, 2022), but some may become involved in offending behaviour as a consequence of their exploitation (Casey, 2025). Children may be coerced to commit offences alongside their abusers, warranting further consideration of the links between youth offending and child sexual exploitation (Arthur and Down, 2019; Casey, 2025). People involved in group-based child sexual exploitation may coerce their victims to engage in criminal activities, including the recruitment of other children for exploitation (Casey, 2025). Within networks, children can be recruited or forced into the preparation, holding or selling of drugs (Dixon, 2024). Fear of repercussion may prevent children from reporting child sexual exploitation to the police and other professionals (Arthur and Down, 2019; Casey, 2025).

Child criminal exploitation occurs when a group or individual coerces, controls, manipulates or deceives a child into criminal activity in exchange for something the child needs or wants, for financial or other gain of the person facilitating and/or through violence or threat of violence (Home Office, 2025). There is significant overlap with child sexual exploitation (Jay et al, 2024; Manister et al, 2023; Roberts, 2024): children may be sexually exploited as initiation into criminal activities and to coerce or control (Casey, 2025), and many children in child sexual exploitation networks also experience criminal exploitation (Dixon, 2024).

Increased awareness of child criminal exploitation has affected identification of child sexual exploitation, with a move away from discussion of child sexual exploitation to 'child exploitation' (Casey, 2025). Ian Critchley, National Police Chiefs' Council lead for child protection, has noted continuing shifts in focus and resourcing between child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation, when there needs to be a nuanced response to both (Jay et al, 2024).

Responses that meet children's and families' needs

The importance of integrated **multi-agency** approaches – including both statutory and voluntary-sector organisations – to preventing, disrupting and responding to child sexual exploitation is well recognised (Berelowitz et al, 2013; Cockbain et al, 2014; Pearce, 2014). Strategic planning in partnership and joined-up working have been found to be essential to an effective response (Berelowitz et al, 2013).

Contextual safeguarding offers a vision, approaches and framework for how safeguarding partnerships and children's social care can respond to harm, including child sexual exploitation, faced by young people outside the home (Firmin and Lloyd, 2023), in settings including neighbourhoods, schools, peer groups and online spaces. Contextual safeguarding supports professionals to understand structural inequalities and systemic harm (Wroe et al, 2023), alongside promoting shared responsibility across settings and agencies to support responses to children and their families.

Within **policing**, a programme to improve the investigation of rape and serious sexual offences identified "tangible changes [that] would produce a procedurally just outcome for victims" (Stanko, 2022:17). The resulting **National operating model** highlights the importance of ensuring that the full context of these offences is considered, including centring victims' rights and needs throughout the investigation process.

As child sexual exploitation can be a form of slavery, there is scope to utilise the **Modern Slavery Act 2015** to protect child victims of networked and group-based sexual exploitation (Arthur and Down, 2019). A **National Referral Mechanism** referral should also be considered (Wager et al, 2021).

When working with children who have been sexually exploited, applying **trauma theory** and **trauma-informed principles** supports meeting their needs (Yeo et al, 2023), and avoids victim blaming and responses that punish the child (Christie, 2018). This includes understanding how trauma influences a child's view, choices and actions; showing culturally competent understanding of the contexts in which children are sexually exploited; ensuring that children who have been exploited and controlled are not retraumatised through restrictive approaches to keeping them safe; recognising that it may take a long time for children to feel safe; and giving professionals the time and flexibility to build trust-based relationships (Hickle, 2019). Professionals benefit from supervisory arrangements able to address working with trauma through formal and informal reflective support (Lefevre et al, 2019).

Professionals are accustomed to identifying, recognising and recording child sexual exploitation based on signs and indicators that it may be happening, rather than waiting for children to say they are being sexually exploited (Roberts, 2020). Nevertheless, feeling able to tell someone what is happening or has happened to them can significantly improve children's emotional/mental health and capacity to recover (McGinty et al, 2024); **listening** to children and their families is crucial, otherwise clear disclosures and non-verbal presentation of abuse may be missed (Mason-Jones and Loggie, 2019). The **Communicating with Children Guide** developed by the CSA Centre offers detailed information to support professionals whose role brings them into contact with children.

Practitioners must also be able to work confidently to explore risks and changing behaviours with children who may not accept they are unsafe (Lefevre et al, 2019). Having a supportive adult who can undertake direct work over a long period of time is key (Hallett et al, 2019); children often prefer having one key worker who shows they care and does not withdraw when the child disengages or 'acts up' (Scott et al, 2019).

Child sexual exploitation is extremely difficult for **parents/carers** and the wider family. Parents/carers may benefit from support relating to their relationships with their child, their emotional wellbeing, dealing with systems, and building resilience and sources of support (Scott et al, 2019). It is important for professionals to avoid stigmatising and blaming parents/carers, and to work collaboratively with them as partners to increase their children's safety (Thornhill, 2023). The CSA Centre's **Supporting Parents and Carers Guide** provides further information.

Children referred to specialist services because they have experienced child sexual exploitation, or are at risk, have similarly high levels of past trauma as those referred to services addressing harmful sexual behaviour; responses to them need to recognise and respond to their traumatic experiences (Hallett et al, 2020). There is a need for practitioners to be reflexive regarding their **assumptions about sexual norms and behaviours**, particularly in relation to gender, and perceptions of vulnerability and risk (Hallett et al, 2020). It is also important to consider wider social networks and spaces that create the context for **harmful sexual behaviour** (Allardyce and Yates, 2018). This is particularly pertinent to victims/survivors of child sexual exploitation who have recruited other children to be exploited. They may, for example, have "naively" introduced their friends to exploitation networks by including them in their social activities, or have actively managed or abused other children on behalf of those exploiting them; engagement in offending behaviours may also be to please the person exploiting them or reduce their own abuse (Dixon, 2024).

Prevention

Because of its short- and long-term impacts on physical and psychological health, and associated costs, child sexual exploitation is a major **public health concern** warranting systematic responses. Approaches must be evidence-based, integrated across programmes and services, and meet diverse needs (McGinty et al, 2024). Outreach work benefits from a scoping stage to assess local needs, identify effective strategies, and engage the right partners and agencies. Outreach should be tailored to different communities and involve professionals and community members with knowledge of diverse groups. It needs to be flexible while maintaining clear goals and prioritising the safety and welfare of professionals and children (Scott et al, 2019).

As a sole intervention, preventative awareness-raising approaches in **schools** are identified as having limited effects in safeguarding children from sexual exploitation (Hallett et al, 2019; McGinty et al, 2024; Scott et al, 2019). However, they may offer a culture of transparency about child sexual exploitation and shared language, and opportunities for children to disclose (McGinty et al, 2024). To support positive effects on children's knowledge and attitudes, schools should take a whole school approach (Scott et al, 2019) and integrate substantial sustained awareness-raising into existing personal, social, health and economic education curricula and school policies; adopt a needs-based approach; work collaboratively with pupils, parents, and communities; be inclusive of boys and tailored to children from diverse backgrounds; and have credible facilitators utilising a variety of active teaching methods which engage diverse learning styles (Hallett et al, 2019). It is also necessary to ensure that resources, such as films, and approaches to school-based prevention do not traumatise children (Scott et al, 2019; Taylor, 2018).

Disruption measures are key to prevention. Examples considered useful include child abduction warning notices; automatic number plate recognition; CCTV; Police National Computer markers; risk flagging of vehicles, property or people; sexual risk orders (SROs) and sexual harm prevention orders (SHPOs); and identification of images on the Child Abuse Image Database (Wager et al, 2021). The Home Office's *Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit* includes guidance on, for example, how to use SROs and SHPOs.

Wider prevention of child sexual exploitation requires **addressing prevailing conditions** including poverty, race-based and gendered inequalities, and societal attitudes; the design and delivery of prevention measures must not further embed existing inequalities and problematic attitudes towards children (McGinty et al, 2024).

References

Adams Elias, C., Thornhill, L. and Millar, H. (2023) Value-informed approaches to peer mapping and assessment: Learning from test sites. In Firmin, C. and Lloyd, J. (eds.) *Contextual Safeguarding: The Next Chapter.* Bristol: Policy Press. **https://doi. org/10.51952/9781447366454.ch004**

Alderson, K. and Ireland, C. (2020) Child sexual exploitation: Definition and the importance of language. *Abuse: An International Impact Journal,* 1(1):50–59. **https://doi.org/10.37576/abuse.2020.004**

Allardyce, S. and Yates, P. (2018) *Working with Children and Young People Who Have Displayed Harmful Sexual Behaviour.* Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press. **www.research.ed.ac.uk/en/ publications/working-with-children-and-young-people-who-have-displayed-harmful**

Arthur, R. and Down, L. (2019) Preventing the criminalisation of children who have been victims of group-based sexual exploitation involving grooming tactics – Understanding child sexual exploitation as enslavement. *The Journal of Criminal Law,* 83(5):370–380. **https://doi.org/10.1177/0022018319879013**

Beckett, H. with Brodie, I., Factor, F., Melrose, M., Pearce, J., Pitts, J., Shuker, L. and Warrington, C. (2013) *"It's Wrong… but You Get Used to It": A Qualitative Study of Gang-associated Sexual Violence and Exploitation of Young People in England.* London: Office of the Children's Commissioner. **www.childrenscommissioner.gov. uk/resource/its-wrong-but-you-get-used-to-it**

Beech, A., Hooper, B., Lewington, K., Marcarian, R. Phillips, R. and Matthews, P. (2019) *Boys 2: Development of Tools and Resources to Better Identify and Engage 'Young Males' at Risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Sexual Abuse.* Barkingside: Barnardo's. **www.barnardos.org.uk/resources-help-identify-and-engage-young-people-risk-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation**

Berelowitz, S., Clifton, J., Firmin, C., Gulyurtlu, S. and Edwards, C. (2013) *"If Only Someone Had Listened."* Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups: Final Report. London: OCC. **www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/ resource/if-only-someone-had-listened**

Berelowitz, S., Firmin, C., Edwards, G. and Gulyurtlu, S. (2012) *"I Thought I Was the Only One. The Only One in the World." The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups: Interim Report.* London: OCC. **https://assets. childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2017/07/I-thought-I-was-the-only-one-in-the-world.pdf**

Bernard, C. (2019) Using an intersectional lens to examine the child sexual exploitation of black adolescents. In Pearce, J. (ed.) *Child Sexual Exploitation: Why Theory Matters.* Bristol: Policy Press. **https://doi.org/10.51952/9781447351429.ch010**

Brodie, I., Latimer, K. and Firmin, C. (2020) *Peer Support Interventions for Safeguarding: A Scoping Review.* Luton: University of Bedfordshire. **http://hdl.handle. net/10547/625042**

Brown, K. (2019) Vulnerability and child sexual exploitation: Towards an approach grounded in life experiences. *Critical Social Policy,* 39(4):622–642. **https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018318824480**

Brown, S., Brady, G., Franklin, A., Bradley, L., Kerrigan, N. and Sealey, C. (2016) *Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation: Understanding Risk and Vulnerability.* London: Early Intervention Foundation. **www.eif.org. uk/report/child-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation-understanding-risk-and-vulnerability**

Brown, S., Brady, G., Franklin, A. and Crookes, R. (2017) *The Use of Tools and Checklists to Assess Risk of Child Sexual Exploitation: An Exploratory Study.* Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse. **https://doi. org/10.47117/RVVJ8681**

Brown, S. and Tregidga, J. (2023) *Key Messages from Research on Harmful Sexual Behaviour in Online Contexts.* Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse. **https://doi.org/10.47117/GEJZ4722**

Casey, L. (2025) *National Audit on Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.* London: Home Office. **www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-audit-on-group-based-child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse**

Child Sexual Exploitation Taskforce (2024) *Group-based Offending Publication.* Sheffield: The Hydrant Programme. **www.hydrantprogramme.co.uk/ publications/hydrant-publications**

Children's Commissioner for England (2025) *"One Day This Could Happen to Me": Children, Nudification Tools and Sexually Explicit Deepfakes.* London: Office of the Children's Commissioner. **www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/resource/ children-nudification-tools-and-sexually-explicit- deepfakes**

Children's Commissioner for England (2019) *Stability Index 2019: Overview Report.* London: Office of the Children's Commissioner. **www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/resource/ stability-index-2019**

Christie, C. (2018) *A Trauma-Informed Health and Care Approach for Responding to Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation: Current Knowledge Report.* London: Department of Health and Social Care. **www.gov.uk/government/publications/child- sexual-abuse-trauma-informed-care**

Christie, C. and Karsna, K. (2019) *Improving Agency Data on Child Sexual Abuse: A Pilot Study of the Child Sexual Abuse Data Collection Template.* Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse. **https://doi.org/10.47117/UUBV2149**

Cockbain, E. (2018) *Offender and Victim Networks in Human Trafficking.* London: Routledge. **https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315628578**

Cockbain, E., Brayley, H. and Ashby, M. (2014) *Not Just a Girl Thing: A Large-scale Comparison of Male and Female Users of Child Sexual Exploitation Services in the UK.* Barkingside: Barnardo's. **www.barnardos.org.uk/ sites/default/files/2020-12/not-just-a-girl-thing.pdf**

Cockbain, E. and Tufail, W. (2020) Failing victims, fuelling hate: Challenging the harms of the 'Muslim grooming gangs' narrative. *Race & Class,* 61(3):3–32. **https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396819895727**

Coy, M. (2019) What's gender got to do with it? Sexual exploitation of children as patriarchal violence. In Pearce, J. (ed.) *Child Sexual Exploitation: Why Theory Matters.* Bristol: Policy Press. **https://doi. org/10.51952/9781447351429.ch011**

Curry, T. and Utley, E. (2018) She touched me: Five snapshots of adult sexual violation of black boys. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal,* 28(2):205–241. **https://doi.org/10.1353/ken.2018.0014**

Davis, J. (2022) *Adultification Bias within Child Protection and Safeguarding.* Manchester: HM Inspectorate of Probation. **https://hmiprobation.justiceinspectorates. gov.uk/document/adultification-bias-within-child- protection-and-safeguarding**

Department for Education (2023) *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023: A Guide to Multi-agency Working to Help, Protect and Promote the Welfare of Children.* London: DfE. **www.gov.uk/government/ publications/working-together-to-safeguard- children--2**

Dixon, S. (2024) Child sexual exploitation (CSE) networks: Reassembling structure and activity. *Journal of Sexual Aggression,* 31(3):396–412. **https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2024.2374076**

Firmin, C. (2018) Contextualizing case reviews: A methodology for developing systematic safeguarding practices. *Child & Family Social Work,* 23(1):45–52. **https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12382**

Firmin, C. (2013) Something old or something new: Do pre-existing conceptualisations of abuse enable a sufficient response to abuse in young people's relationships and peer groups? In Melrose, M. and Pearce, J. (eds.) *Critical Perspectives on Child Sexual Exploitation and Related Trafficking.* London: Palgrave Macmillan. **https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137294104_4**

Firmin, C. (2011) *This Is It. This Is My Life… Female Voice in Violence Final Report on the Impact of Serious Youth Violence and Criminal Gangs on Women and Girls across the Country.* London: Race on the Agenda. **www.rota. org.uk/publication/rota-march-2011-female-voice- violence-project-final-report-it-my-life**

Firmin, C. and Lloyd, J. (2023) Introduction: Contextual Safeguarding but not as you know it. In Firmin, C. and Lloyd, J. (eds.) *Contextual Safeguarding: The Next Chapter.* Bristol: Policy Press. **https://doi. org/10.51952/9781447366454.ch001**

Fox, C. (2016) *It's Not on the Radar: The Hidden Diversity of Children and Young People at Risk of Sexual Exploitation in England.* [Presentation.] Barkingside: Barnardo's. **https://careappointments.com/wp- content/uploads/2016/08/Its-not-on-the-radar- presentation.pdf**

Fox, C. and Kalkan, G. (2016) *Barnardo's Survey on Online Grooming.* Barkingside: Barnardo's.

Franklin, A., Raws, P. and Smeaton, E. (2015) *Unprotected, Overprotected: Meeting the Needs of Young People with Learning Disabilities Who Experience, or Are at Risk of, Sexual Exploitation.* Barkingside: Barnardo's. **www.barnardos.org.uk/research/ unprotected-overprotected-meeting-needs-young- people-learning-disabilities-who-experience**

Hallett, S., Deerfield, K. and Hudson, K. (2020) The same but different? Exploring the links between gender, trauma, sexual exploitation and harmful sexual behaviours. *Child Abuse Review,* 28(6):442–454. **https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2591**

Hallett, S., Verbruggen, J., Buckley, K. and Robinson, A. (2019) *'Keeping Safe?' An Analysis of the Outcomes of Work with Sexually Exploited Young People in Wales.* Cardiff: Cardiff University. **www.cardiff.ac.uk/research/ explore/find-a-project/view/1513282-keeping-safe**

Hanson, E. (2019) 'Losing track of morality': Understanding online forces and dynamics conducive to child sexual exploitation. In Pearce, J. (ed.) *Child Sexual Exploitation: Why Theory Matters.* Bristol: Policy Press. **https://doi.org/10.51952/9781447351429.ch005**

Hickle, K. (2019) Understanding trauma and its relevance to child sexual exploitation. In Pearce, J. (ed.) *Child Sexual Exploitation: Why Theory Matters.* Bristol: Policy Press. **https://doi.org/10.51952/9781447351429.ch008**

Home Office (2025) Crime and Policing Bill: Child criminal exploitation, cuckooing (home takeover) and coerced internal concealment factsheet. [Online.] Available at: **www.gov.uk/government/publications/ crime-and-policing-bill-2025-factsheets/crime- and-policing-bill-child-criminal-exploitation-and- cuckooing-factsheet** [Accessed 30 October 2025.]

Home Office (2020) *Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation Characteristics of Offending.* London: Home Office. **www.gov.uk/government/publications/ group-based-child-sexual-exploitation- characteristics-of-offending**

Internet Watch Foundation (2024) *What Has Changed in the AI CSAM Landscape?* **www.iwf.org.uk/media/drufozvi/ iwf-ai-csam-report_update-public-jul24v12.pdf**

Jago, S. and Pearce, J. (2008) *Gathering Evidence of the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Young People: A Scoping Exercise.* Luton: University of Bedfordshire. **www.beds.ac.uk/media/85520/gathering-evidence- final-report-june-08.pdf**

Jay, A., Bailey, S. and Geekie, C. (2024) *Shattered Lives, Stolen Futures.* Watford: Action for Children. **https:// media.actionforchildren.org.uk/documents/Shattered_ Lives_Stolen_Futures_Report_-_Full_Report.pdf**

Jay, A., Evans, M., Frank, I. and Sharpling, D. (2022) *Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks: Investigation Report.* London: Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. **www.iicsa.org.uk/reports- recommendations/publications/investigation/cs- organised-networks.html**

Karsna, K. and Kelly, L. (2021) *The Scale and Nature of Child Sexual Abuse: Review of Evidence (revised edition).* Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse. **https://doi.org/10.47117/OBKC1345**

Kewley, S. and Karsna, K. (2025) *Child Sexual Abuse in 2023/24: Trends in Official Data.* Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse. **https://doi.org/10.47117/IZAK2457**

Klatt, T., Cavner, D. and Egan, V. (2014) Rationalising predictors of child sexual exploitation and sex trading. *Child Abuse & Neglect,* 38(2):252–260. **https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2013.08.019**

Lefevre, M., Hickle, K. and Luckok, B. (2019) 'Both/ and' not 'either/or': Reconciling rights to protection and participation in working with child sexual exploitation. *British Journal of Social Work,* 49(7):1837–1855. **https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcy106**

Lovett, J., Coy, M. and Kelly, L. (2018) *Deflection, Denial and Disbelief: Social and Political Discourses about Child Sexual Abuse and Their Impact on Institutional Responses: A Rapid Evidence Assessment.* London: Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. **www. iicsa.org.uk/reports-recommendations/publications/ research/social-political-discourses.html**

McGinty, J., Scott, J., Welsh, J. and Sills, R. (2024) *Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation 2024: Overview Analysis to Inform Prevention and Response.* Glasgow: CELCIS. **www.celcis.org/knowledge-bank/search-bank/ child-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation-2024-overview- analysis-inform-prevention-and-response**

Manister, M., Wroe, L. and Adams Elias, C. (2023) Identifying and responding to structural and system drivers of extra-familial harm using a Contextual Safeguarding approach. In Firmin, C. and Lloyd, J. (eds.) *Contextual Safeguarding: The Next Chapter.* Bristol: Policy Press. **https://doi.org/10.51952/9781447366454.ch003**

Mason-Jones, A. and Loggie, J. (2020) Child sexual exploitation. An analysis of serious case reviews in England: Poor communication, incorrect assumptions and adolescent neglect. *Journal of Public Health,* 42(1):62–68. **https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdy227**

Moodie, K. (2021). *Harmful Sexual Behaviours by Children.* Glasgow: Children and Young People's Centre for Justice, University of Strathclyde. **https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/85525**

NSPCC (2025) *Viewing Generative AI and Children's Safety in the Round.* London: NSPCC. **https://learning. nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2025/generative-ai-childrens-safety**

Ofsted (2024) How local authorities and children's homes can achieve stability and permanence for children with complex needs. [Online.] Available at: **www. gov.uk/government/publications/good-decisions-children-with-complex-needs-in-childrens-homes/ how-local-authorities-and-childrens-homes-can-achieve-stability-and-permanence-for-children-with-complex-needs** [Accessed 26 September 2025.]

Patel, T. (2018) Cultural repertoires and modern menaces: The media's racialised coverage of child sexual exploitation. In Bhatia, M., Poynting, S. and Tufail, W. (eds.) *Media, Crime and Racism.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. **https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71776-0_3**

Pearce, J. (2014) 'What's going on' to safeguard children and young people from child sexual exploitation: A review of Local Safeguarding Children Boards' work to protect children from sexual exploitation. *Child Abuse Review,* 23(3):159–170. **https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2269**

Plowright, R. (2022) The significance of love in relation to looked-after children and child sexual exploitation. *Critical and Radical Social Work,* 12(1):40–57. **https://doi.org/10.1332/204986021X16523430934288**

Roberts, R. (2024) Identifying young people who are experiencing criminal and sexual exploitation. *British Medical Journal,* 387:e079497. **https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj-2024-079497**

Roberts, S. (2020) *Responding to Child Sexual Abuse: Learning from Children's Services in Wales.* Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse. **https://doi.org/10.47117/TLUU3060**

Scott, S. (2023) *Key Messages from Research on Intra-familial Child Sexual Abuse (second edition).* Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse. **https://doi.org/10.47117/IAOE4584**

Scott, S. (2016) *Aycliffe CSE Innovation Project: Evaluation Report.* London: Department for Education. **www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-sexual-exploitation-durham-aycliffe-innovation-project**

Scott, S., McNeish, D., Bovarnick, S. and Pearce, J. (2019) *What Works in Responding to Child Sexual Exploitation.* Barkingside: Barnardo's. **www.dmss. co.uk/projects/what-works-in-responding-to-child-sexual-exploitation**

Senker, S., Scott, M. and Wainright, L. (2020) *An Explorative Study on Perpetrators of Child Sexual Exploitation Convicted alongside Others.* London: Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. **www. iicsa.org.uk/reports-recommendations/publications/ research/perpetrators-child-sexual-exploitation-convicted-alongside-others.html**

Sharp, N. (2013) Missing from discourse: South Asian young women and sexual exploitation. In Melrose, M. and Pearce, J. (eds.) *Critical Perspectives on Child Sexual Exploitation and Related Trafficking.* London: Palgrave Macmillan. **https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137294104_8**

Smeaton, E. (2019) Understanding models of disability to improve responses to children with learning disabilities. In Pearce, J. (ed.) *Child Sexual Exploitation: Why Theory Matters.* Bristol: Policy Press. **https://doi. org/10.51952/9781447351429.ch012**

Smeaton, E. (2013) *Running from Hate to What You Think Is Love: The Relationship between Running Away and Child Sexual Exploitation.* Barkingside: Barnardo's. **https://basw.co.uk/policy-and-practice/resources/ running-hate-what-you-think-love-relationship-between-running-away**

Smeaton, E., Franklin, A. and Raws, P. (2014) *Practice Guide: Supporting Professional to Meet the Needs of Children and Young People with Learning Disabilities Who Experience, or Are at Risk of, Child Sexual Exploitation.* Barkingside: Barnardo's. **https://tce. researchinpractice.org.uk/practice-guide-supporting-professionals-to-meet-the-needs-of-young-people-with-learning-disabilities-who-experience-or-are-at-risk-of-child-sexual-exploitation**

Stanko, B. (2022) *Operation Soteria Bluestone Year 1 Report 2021–2022.* London: Home Office. **www.gov. uk/government/publications/operation-soteria-year-one-report**

Taylor, J. (2018) *Can I Tell You What It Feels Like? Exploring the Harm Caused by Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Films.* London: VictimFocus. **https://www. researchgate.net/publication/323150715_Can_I_tell_ you_what_it_feels_like_Exploring_the_harm_caused_ by_child_sexual_exploitation_CSE_films**

Taylor, M. (2019) Group-associated child sexual exploitation: Exploring the networks. [Doctoral thesis.] Glasgow: Glasgow Caledonian University. **https:// researchonline.gcu.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/group-associated-child-sexual-exploitation-exploring-the-networks**

Thornhill, L. (2023) Parents as partners: Destigmatising the role of parents of children affected by extra-familial harm. In Firmin, C. and Lloyd, J. (eds.) *Contextual Safeguarding: The Next Chapter.* Bristol: Policy Press. **https://doi.org/10.51952/9781447366454.ch009**

Tregidga, J. and Lovett, J. (2021) *Identifying and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse within Complex Safeguarding Approaches: An Exploratory Study.* Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse. **https://doi.org/10.47117/THNC3002**

Wager, N., Myers. A. and Parkinson, D. (2021) *Police Disruption of Child Sexual Abuse: A Scoping Review.* Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse. **https://doi.org/10.47117/ZWRV8871**

Webb, J. and Holmes, D. (2015) *Working Effectively to Address Child Sexual Exploitation: An Evidence Scope.* Dartington: Research in Practice. **https://gala.gre. ac.uk/id/eprint/15311**

Welsh Government (2021) *Working Together to Safeguard People, Volume 7 – Safeguarding Children from Child Sexual Exploitation.* Cardiff: Welsh Government. **www.gov.wales/safeguarding-children-child-sexual-exploitation-0**

Weston, S. and Mythen, G. (2020) Working with and negotiating 'risk': Examining the effects of awareness raising interventions designed to prevent child sexual exploitation. *British Journal of Criminology,* 60(2):323–342. **https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azz045**

Whittle, H., Hamilton-Giachritsis, C., Beech, A. and Collings, G. (2013) A review of young people's vulnerabilities to online grooming. *Aggression and Violent Behavior,* 18(1):135–146. **https://doi.org/10.1016/j. avb.2012.11.008**

Wroe, L,. Lloyd, J, and Manister, M. (2023) From peers and parks to patriarchy and poverty: Inequalities in young people's experiences of extra-familial harm and the child protection system. In Firmin, C. and Lloyd, J. (eds.) *Contextual Safeguarding: The Next Chapter.* Bristol: Policy Press. **https://doi.org/10.51952/9781447366454.ch002**

Yeo, A., Kiff, J., Millar, H. and Beckett, H. (2023) *Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme: Practice Principles Research Summary.* Totnes: Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme. **https://tce. researchinpractice.org.uk/research-summary**

Practice guides and resources

College of Policing (2025) National operating model for investigating rape and serious sexual offences. [Online.] Available at: **www.college.police.uk/national-operating-model-rasso** [Accessed 20 October 2025.]

Glinski, A. (2021) *Signs and Indicators: A Template for Identifying and Recording Concerns of Child Sexual Abuse.* Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse. **https://doi.org/10.47117/KUFV5039**

Glinksi, A. and Sabin, N. (2025) *Communicating with Children: A Guide for Those Working with Children Who Have or May Have Been Sexually Abused (second edition).* Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse. **https://doi.org/10.47117/JWPC8394**

Home Office (2022) *Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit.* London: Home Office. **www.gov.uk/government/ publications/child-exploitation-disruption-toolkit**

Home Office/UK Visas and Immigration (2025) National referral mechanism guidance: adult (England and Wales). [Online.] Available at: **www.gov.uk/government/ publications/human-trafficking-victims-referral-and-assessment-forms** [Accessed 30 October 2025.]

Parkinson, D. (2022) *Supporting Parents and Carers: A Guide for Those Working with Families Affected by Child Sexual Abuse.* Barkingside: Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse. **https://doi.org/10.47117/CMSJ9024**

Other papers in the 'Key messages from research' series

Harmful sexual behaviour in online contexts

Child sexual abuse by adults in online contexts

Intra-familial child sexual abuse (second edition)

The impacts of child sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse in institutional contexts (second edition)

Children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour (second edition)

Child sexual abuse perpetrated by adults

Identifying and responding to disclosures of child sexual abuse

Looked-after children and child sexual abuse

Visit **www.csacentre.org.uk/research-resources/key-messages**

This paper replaces our suite of eight profession-specific *Key Messages from Research on Child Sexual Exploitation* papers published in 2017.

Centre of expertise
on child
sexual abuse