

Sexual Harm: Child Sexual Exploitation

"Nothing to do but think with my body like a bird, I thought I was free"

Tracey Emin, Strangeland

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of abusive relationship where people with power or control over a child use that power to sexually abuse them. This power can result from a difference in age, intellect, authority, money, strength or social standing. Exploitation is a process that can occur quickly or over time and although any child can be at risk of CSE, there are certain characteristics that can make children more vulnerable, which include:

- a history of abuse, particularly sexual abuse
- recent bereavement or loss
- homelessness
- low self-esteem or self-confidence
- being a young carer
- being in or leaving care
- violence within intimate relationships
- social exclusion
- gang related issues
- lacking friends from the same age group

It is vital that the issues that contribute to CSE are understood and children are provided with a sensitivity, compassion and understanding. Children experiencing sexual exploitation can have a complex range of needs that require careful consideration.

Partnership work with other agencies such as Children's Social Care, Police, CSE teams and other organisations working is an important part of dealing with CSE with such vulnerable children but the addition of a therapeutically informed service can be of significant additional benefit. A therapeutic approach, matched to the needs and character of a child, taking into account their experiences, emotions and individuality can help deal with those issues that lead to their particular vulnerability to CSE and help them deal with the trauma of being sexually exploited.

At Tiptoes a range of therapeutic services are available that can be designed to meet specific needs and to provide help and support for children, their families and professionals working with the child. By working together with the needs of the child kept central, a therapeutically informed approach leads to better outcomes and reduced risks, helping to keep children safer and allowing them to move forward to sustainable and productive futures.

"You are mistaken if you think we have to lower ourselves to communicate with children. On the contrary, we have to reach up to their feelings, stretch, stand on our tiptoes."

Janusz Korczak 1925

