

Breaking the myths about Child Sexual Exploitation

**CREATING
DRAMA
CREATING
CHANGE**

**ALTER
EGO
CREATIVE
SOLUTIONS**

The Myth

Child Sexual Exploitation is very rare and doesn't happen where we live.

The Fact

It is much more widespread than most people imagine. It is often hidden and can only be uncovered by people being vigilant and reporting their concerns. To ignore the signs is to collude in the abuse!

The Myth

Child Sexual Exploitation only happens to girls and young women.

The Fact

It can and does happen to boys and young men as well - although the warning-signs that suggest that they are victims are often missed. Boys and young men can also find it more difficult to talk to anybody about what is happening to them.

The Myth

Child Sexual Exploitation only happens to children who are in care, who come from a 'bad' family, or are of a particular race, religion or economic background.

The Fact

Any child can potentially become a victim. Young people are more at risk if they are 'vulnerable' - but 'vulnerability' can manifest itself in many ways. Naivety is a vulnerability that is easy to exploit!

The Myth

Child Sexual Exploitation only happens to older children.

The Fact

The average age that young people are most at risk is between 12 and 15, although it can happen older and it can happen younger.

The Myth

Child Sexual Exploitation only takes one form.

The Fact

There are various different forms or 'models' that CSE can take. These include, but are not limited to:-

- Individual. A single perpetrator may groom and exploit the victim(s)
- Gang. Exploitation may form part of a gang culture and may be used as an initiation or as a punishment
- Group. A group of people come together with the explicit aim of grooming and sexually exploiting young people
- Peer-on-peer. Exploitation is perpetrated by a person or persons of the same age as the victim(s)
- Online. Grooming and exploitation take place entirely online and the victim(s) and the perpetrator(s) never meet in real life
- Abuse of Authority. Grooming and exploitation is carried out by somebody with authority over the victim(s)
- Party. Victim(s) are invited to a party where they may be plied with alcohol or drugs and then sexually exploited

There are different ways in which these models can work and there can be cross-overs of models used. The perpetrators of CSE are not stupid. They have thought about this, are well rehearsed and know how to get what they want.

The Myth

A lot of these 'exploited' children are over 16 and have consented to sex.

The Fact

The sexual exploitation of any young person aged under 18 is child abuse and needs to be stopped, or even better, prevented from happening in the first place. Even if a young person 'seems' to have given consent it is not 'true' consent if they have been manipulated or pressured into giving it.

For more information you can go to the following websites:-

www.nspcc.org.uk www.nationalworkinggroup.org www.thinkuknow.co.uk www.barnardos.org.uk