

PARENTS AGAINST CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION PACE



www.paceuk.info



0113 240 3040

Adolescence is a time of necessary experimentation and can be a particularly challenging period for the parent-child relationship.

Most parents understand the value of young people learning about themselves through new experiences, but simultaneously want to protect their child from harm.

Child sexual exploitation is a particularly insidious form of harm because it occurs only after a child has been persuaded that the sexual activities are a 'normal' part of adult life, or an 'exciting' opportunity which confirms their maturity and independence. This inevitably means a greater effort on the part of the child to conceal their actions from you. The perpetrators are both skilled and strategic; they aim to drive a wedge between you and your child, closing down the normal channels of communication and emotional bond between you both.

If you are worried and suspect that your child is grappling with something bigger than the usual ups and downs of adolescence, then there are warning signs. Many of these are typical of *all* teenagers, so need to be treated with caution. As a (very) general rule, we would recommend escalating your concerns if your child is exhibiting **three or more** of the following warning signs:

- **Your child may become especially secretive and stop engaging with usual friends.** They may be particularly prone to sharp mood swings; many parents come to Pace reporting that their child seems to have acquired an entirely different personality. Whilst mood swings are common to all adolescents, it is the severity of behavioural change that is most indicative here.
- **They may be associating with, or develop a sexual relationship with older men and/or women** (although bear in mind that the perpetrators **could approach the child through a peer** from school who is already being exploited, or through the youngest member of the grooming network).
- **They may go missing from home – and be defensive about their location and activities, often returning home late or staying out all night** (again, perpetrators know that parents will immediately suspect something is wrong if their child stays out all night, so they may initially drop the child off at the home address and before their curfew. They may even pick them up outside the school gates).
- **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, iPods or jewellery.

YOUR CHILD MAY ALSO:

- Exhibit a sudden change in dressing patterns or musical taste
- Look tired and/or unwell, and sleep at unusual hours
- Have marks or scars on their body which they try to conceal
- Adopt new 'street language' or respond to a new street name

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS:

If you are worried about a child exhibiting any of these signs, **talk through your concerns** with our trained parent

support workers or visit our **advice centre** for information on **how to collect and log information** that could help to create a picture of what is happening.

MORE INFORMATION:

- Check out our advice centre as a starting point for information
- Contact us to speak to one of our trained parent support workers
- Search the NWG directory to find local services in your area

HOW WE WORK WITH PARENTS

Pace recognises and celebrates the lifelong commitment parents have for their child. We understand the lengths to which they will go to keep their child from harm.

Pace is therefore a **unique** resource that helps parents across the UK understand what is happening to their child and how **parents** are the prime agents in helping their child exit exploitative relationships. It does this by offering:

- One-to-one telephone advice and support to parents
- Facilitating meetings with similarly-affected parents for peer support
- Advising how to establish rights as parents and work in partnership with statutory agents such as police and social workers
- Advice and support when pursuing disruption and prosecution of the perpetrators of child sexual exploitation
- Befriending scheme

“ It was only when I finally got in touch with Pace that I realised nobody had been supporting us through this darkest of journeys.

Faye

ONE-TO-ONE TELEPHONE ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Pace understands that just as every child is unique, every family's situation requires an individual response. Therefore we offer one-to-one telephone support for parents whose children are being sexually exploited, or for those who are concerned their child is at risk.

Our parent support workers provide independent, non-judgmental and confidential support, which fully recognises

your rights as a parent and your decisions on how to reduce the risk of harm to your child. We are here to listen to your concerns, give information on statutory agencies and procedures and to pass on advice from other affected parents, should you require it. We will never blame you for what is happening to your child and aim to help **you** find the best solution for **your** family.

PARENT NETWORK DAYS

Pace holds thrice-yearly Parent Network Days around England to allow parents affected by child sexual exploitation to meet each other and share their experiences. The idea is to reduce isolation, share knowledge and create independent support networks. Pace can also organise workshops that focus on particular concerns – such as how to record and collect evidence for the police or preparing your child to give a police statement or appear in court.

Many parents choose to attend Parent Network Days even when their child has exited an exploitative relationship. They understand the difficulties faced by parents new to the situation and want to offer hope of a positive outcome. Others find that they need to support to deal with the aftermath of their child's sexual exploitation. Some parents feel that parents' voices are marginalised in government discussions on child sexual exploitation and wish to campaign with Pace to change this. Click here for information and dates for the next Parent Network Day.

SECURE PARENT FORUM

For the time in between network days, parents of a child who is at risk or being exploited can offer and receive mutual support through our [secure online forum](#). The parent forum is a safe space for parents to connect online to get to know each

other and to share experiences, information on what works, news, and support to keep going when things are difficult. Find out more about what parents are saying about the forum and how to join [here](#)

BEFRIENDING SCHEME

Depending on your location, Pace can also offer a voluntary befriending scheme to help break the isolation many parents feel and provide a friendly yet informed ear.

Pace volunteer befrienders are fully trained and supported to

develop a non-judgemental relationship with a parent, based on mutual trust and an ability to empathise with the issues that parents present. Matches are designed to last between 6 – 12 months. Learn about training to be a Pace befriender.