What is sexual exploitation?
Sexual exploitation means swapping sex for things like drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and other presents, or selling sex for money. You may feel you have to have sex because an adult gives you something, or because they threaten or frighten you.

Some young people may want the sexual touching or sex because they think the adult is their boyfriend or girlfriend but they are not - they are adults wanting to abuse the young person. Boys and young men, as well as girls and young women can be abused sexually and exploited. Sometimes women as well as men are abusers.

How does it happen?
We know from experience that some grown-ups target young people and draw them into abusive sexual relationships. This is how it works:
- Older adults show them a lot of interest and affection at the beginning and make them feel special
- Sometimes they ask groups of young people to come back to their house or go to parties
- They offer you drugs and alcohol and a place to chill out
- They may buy you presents like clothes, a mobile phone or money to buy alcohol and cigarettes
- When they have gained your trust and affection, they may change how they act around you
- They will ask for sex or sexual touching for themselves or other people, in return for alcohol, drugs, presents, money, all the things they gave you for free a while ago
- They stop being nice and can become threatening or violent

What happens next?
When people are worried about you it means that either your parents or carers, or a professional like a teacher, doctor or social worker has noticed the warning signs. They are worried you may be on the path to sexual exploitation.

A meeting will be arranged so everyone who is concerned about you can talk about how you can be helped and protected.

A social worker will come and talk to you and your parents or carers about why we are worried about you and what you and the adults can do to keep you safe.

At the meeting there will be someone taking notes and everyone will receive a copy, including you. A plan will be made to keep you safe.

Another meeting will be arranged so that we can all check how we are getting on with the plan.

Have your say
It is important for people at the meeting to understand your views. You may feel angry and upset because of what is happening. Or you may not think you are being exploited or at risk. Before the strategy meeting, your social worker will talk to you about how you feel. You could also write something down and ask them to read out your message at the meeting.
You are friends with older adults

You have an older boyfriend or girlfriend

You stay out late or even all night

You don’t stay with your family, and friends your own age very much

You don’t go to school

You’ve tried and use drugs and alcohol

You are chatting to people online who you have never met

If you can tick some of the boxes you are at risk of being sexually abused

If you are worried about another young person or you think you have been sexually exploited you should talk to an adult you trust straight away.

Throughout Plymouth, we have specialist professionals ready to support children and young people who have been sexually exploited. There are social workers, youth workers, health workers, family support workers and police officers who are ready to talk with any child or young person. Agencies including Barnardo’s, The Zone and the NSPCC offer support, privacy and respect and ensure safety. Please contact us:

Children, Young People and Families Services 01752 668000
Youth Service: 01752 306590
Childline: 0800 11 11
NSPCC: 0808 800 5000
The Zone Sexual Health and Relationships: 01752 206626

Notes

This document is available in other formats please contact Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board:
Tel 01752 308600
www.plymouthscb.org.uk

You’re worried about you