



**A campaign for
supportive conversations
to help keep children safe
from exploitation**

Be curious
Reach out
Ask questions
Voice concerns
Empower each other

ABOUT

READY TO TALK

Ready to Talk is a Renfrewshire-based campaign which aims to keep young people safe from child sexual exploitation (CSE) by recognising the importance of having supportive conversations about (un)healthy relationships. Young people need to feel heard, reassured and supported in a non-judgmental way. Our aim is to help adults feel more confident when talking about relationships or when they are worried about a young person's safety or wellbeing.

WHAT IS CSE?

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. It happens **when a child or young person is coerced, manipulated or deceived into sexual activity in exchange for things that they may need or want** like gifts, drugs, money, status and affection. Children and young people are often tricked into believing they're in a loving and consensual relationship so the sexual activity may appear consensual. This is called grooming and is a type of abuse. Young people may trust their abuser and not understand that they're being abused.

- CSE can also occur **through the use of technology** - for example, a child might be forced to send or post explicit images of themselves, film sexual activities or have sexual conversations online.
- Sometimes abusers use violence, intimidation or blackmail to frighten or force a child or young person, making them feel as if they've no choice.
- Anybody can be a perpetrator of CSE, no matter their age, gender or race.
- Although the age of consent is 16 years old, children and young people over 16 can be exploited.

SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF CSE

CSE can be difficult to identify and can sometimes be mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour. Signs can include, but are not limited to:

- **Physical signs:** Unexplained physical injuries, scars of self-harm, sudden change in physical appearance including clothes and hygiene levels, or weight loss, repeated sexually transmitted infections.
- **Behavioural signs:** inappropriate sexual behaviour, being frightened of some people, places or situations, being secretive, sharp changes in mood or character, having money or things they can't or won't explain, alcohol or drug misuse.
- Other signs can include staying out late or overnight, having a new group of friends, missing from home or care, stopping going to school/college, getting involved in criminal activities or in gangs.

HAVING CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR CHILD/YOUNG PERSON ABOUT HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Having positive conversations with young people about their feelings and their safety can help make them feel supported. Here are some top tips:

- Think of how to make a safe space – when and where is best to talk? Your child might not want to talk right now, but it's important that they know you're available.
- Show interest in their lives, ask how their day is going, celebrate achievements and offer support when things are not going so well.
- Learn together – it's ok if you don't always understand or don't have all the answers. You can use this opportunity to research together how to stay safe, or what support services are available.
- Make the conversation relevant to them – you can reference a TV show or a film and ask what they think about it.
- Age-appropriate support can go a long way – for example, you can start by talking about what consent means in everyday contexts from a young age, then introduce terms like 'boundaries', 'control', 'grooming' when they get older.

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE

It can be difficult for parents and carers to understand and hard for the young person to acknowledge that they are being exploited. Finding out a child has been sexually exploited can be distressing and you might not know what to do next.

- **Young people want to feel cared for and supported** – it is incredibly hard to come forward if you have been involved in exploitation. Listen carefully to what they are saying.
- Keep a **supportive, non-judgmental, reassuring approach**. See what immediate help they may need, such as medical attention, and say you will take them seriously.
- Tell the young person **it's not their fault** and they've done the right thing by telling you.
- Explain what you will do next and report what the child has told you.
Support is available - There are lots of places to get help and learn more (see back of this resource for some suggestions).

SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE



Nude image of you online?
We can help take it down.



Having nudes shared can feel scary, and it can leave young people feeling worried or even ashamed. Children and young people can report nude images or videos of themselves to be taken down from the internet using the **IWF** and **Childline Report Remove** tool.

CHILDLINE

Support for children and young people is available 24/7 through Childline on **0800 1111** or at **Childline.org.uk**.

NSPCC HELPLINE

For adults, if you have any concerns about the safety of a child, you can call the NSPCC Helpline on **0808 800 5000**.



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page

