

CHILD EXPLOITATION

As GPs are often the first port of call for all health problems, you are well placed to identify behaviour patterns and risk factors which could indicate that a child is at risk of or currently experiencing exploitation.

It is important to remember that any young person may be at risk of exploitation. Even those who are not already known to services.

CONSIDER EXPLOITATION EVERYTIME YOU SEE A YOUNG PERSON.

What should you do if you suspect exploitation?

Protecting a young person from the harms associated with exploitation **MUST** over-ride any other consideration, including patient confidentiality in most cases.

If you believe a child or young person is in immediate danger, keep them in a place of safety and call 999.

Record all concerns. Report concerns without delay to your Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) using the Multi-Agency Referral Form - MARF (Coventry) or Multi Agency Contact Form - MAC (Warwickshire). These forms can be found on your Local Children's Safeguarding Partnership Websites:

www.coventry.gov.uk/cscpcontacts
www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk

What should you look for?

- Frequent attendances which are unusual due to the child/young person not having any chronic/acute health needs.
- Missing scheduled appointments frequently – refer to Child Not Bought policy and procedures.
- Aiming to see a different GP at each visit – attending alone or with a person who is not a family member.
- Multiple A&E attendances in a short space of time and attending A&E departments in different cities or towns out of area.
- Presenting with unusual injuries and bruising.
- Frequent calls to Out Of Hours (OOH)
- Ano-genital injuries (lacerations, bleeding, dilation, abrasions, bruising to the perineum) and recurrent infections – may be indicative of “plugging” – concealing drugs or money anally or vaginally.
- Social, emotional and mental health needs – changes in mood, anxiety, depression and behaviours such as self-harming.
- Unexplained, recurrent medical symptoms, headaches, abdominal pain etc.
- Use of alcohol and substances.
- The onset of early sexual activity, pregnancy, STI's, terminations, request for contraception.
- Parent/carer concerns.

Factors that MAY increase risk of exploitation.

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Economic deprivation
- Unstable family environment
- Not in education, training or employment
- Child Protection/Child In Need/Looked After Children (LAC)
- Previous missing episodes



PLUGGING

Know the Risks

One of the taboo and lesser talked about aspects of Child Criminal Exploitation is "Plugging", a term used to describe the concealment of drugs and money in the rectal or vaginal cavity. Plugging is a popular method used by children and young people involved in County Lines activity, to avoid detection if stopped, searched and detained by the police.

There are many potentially serious consequences associated with plugging. Risks include:

- Damage to the vaginal /rectal membranes which may increase the likelihood of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and Blood Borne Viruses (BBVs)
- Infection due to lack of handwashing and taking place in a non-sterile environment.
- Aggravation of pre-existing medical conditions such as Crohn's Disease and anorectal diseases.
- Trauma. Anal plugging is a form of violation and often requires someone else to assist with the plugging.
- Overdose and death. If the seals containing drugs rupture, absorption of drugs via rectal membranes is much more rapid and can result in overdose and death.