

## SchoolBeat Officer Blog

March 18th is National Child Exploitation Awareness Day.

The day aims to highlight the issues surrounding Child Exploitation and encouraging everyone to think, spot and speak out against abuse.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of sexual abuse that involves the grooming and/or coercion of children and young people under the age of 18 into sexual activity.

Criminal Exploitation can sometimes be linked to trafficking and County Lines where a child is moved around, abused and/or used to carry drugs and weapons.

So, what can you do to help keep your child safe?

Spotting the signs is the first step. It can be difficult sometimes to spot the differences between ordinary teenage behaviour and involvement in exploitation, but there are signs that you can look out for.

You might notice the following;

The child may change how they look, and have new clothes and possessions  
They may have 'new friends.' These friends may be older, and unknown to you as a family

They may become very secretive about where they have been and who they are with

They may become disengaged from school and have periods of unexplained absence

They may stay out at night, or go missing

They may be self-harming and may have bruises or unexplained injuries

Often, children displaying changes in behaviour can be blamed for being out of control. Boys especially can be overlooked, and their behaviour can sometimes be explained as 'just being boys'.

As adults, we should always be mindful of relationships where there is a power imbalance.

If you are ever worried or concerned for a child or young person remember there is always help available. You can call 101 or report anonymously to Crimestoppers.

Let's all unite - Think, Spot and Speak out against abuse!

Thank you for taking the time to listen.