Where can I learn more about child criminal exploitation?

There are other organisations that can provide you with more information online, or that can be contacted for further support:

PACE (Parents Against Child Exploitation)	https://paceuk.info/for-parents/	0113 240 5226
Think U Know	https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/	
Fearless	https://www.fearless.org/en	
Children's Society	https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/tackling-criminal-exploitation-and-county-lines	
Childline	https://www.childline.org.uk/	0800 1111
NSPCC	https://www.nspcc.org.uk/	0808 800 5000

South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership

Child Criminal Exploitation:

A guide for parents and carers

What is child criminal exploitation?

Child criminal exploitation is where an individual or group takes advantage of a child. The child is coerced, controlled, manipulated or deceived into taking part in criminal activities for someone else's benefit.

Criminal exploitation can take many forms including:

- being coerced to move drugs or money across the country (one form is known as 'County Lines')
- being forced to work in cannabis factories
- forced to shoplift or pickpocket
- forced to "steal to order", which can involve burglaries or car theft
- made to threaten other young people and adults

Children are convinced to trust the person or people exploiting them, but then become trapped. They may be assaulted or threatened, and often feel they cannot escape or tell anyone what is happening. An exploiter can spend a long time grooming their victims, and parents often aren't aware it is happening. A lot of grooming now also takes place online, where it is more difficult to monitor.

Who is at risk of being exploited?

All children are at risk of being exploited. Children from as young as seven have been criminally exploited in the UK, and boys and girls are both at risk.

Some criminals will deliberately target children who are vulnerable, such as those in care or with problems at home or school.

However, criminals will also target those children who do not at first seem to be at risk. They may be happy at home and have good grades at school. Criminals refer to these children as "clean skins", as they may have no involvement with services and won't be associated with criminal activity.

How can I tell if my child is being exploited?

Children who are being exploited can show changes in the way they dress and behave. Some of the following signs might be seen in a child who is being exploited:

- SKIPPING SCHOOL / GETTING EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOL
- STAYING OUT LATE OR OVERNIGHT
- FRIENDSHIP OR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OLDER ADULTS
- EXCESSIVE TIME SPENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA TALKING TO 'FRIENDS'
- BECOMING WITHDRAWN OR ISOLATED FROM FAMILY / FRIENDS
- CHANGES IN APPEARANCE (DIFFERENT CLOTHES, HYGIENE ETC.)
- SECRETIVE BEHAVIOUR
- SUSPECTED DRUG AND/OR ALCOHOL MISUSE, OR SMOKING
- UNEXPLAINED GIFTS / NEW POSSESSIONS, OR MONEY
- UNEXPLAINED INJURIES
- POOR MENTAL HEALTH OR SIGNS OF SELF-HARM

What should I do if I think my child is being exploited?

If you are worried that your child or a child you care for is being criminally exploited, there is help available to support you both.

If you are concerned about your child's safety right now, you should contact the police on 999.

If you have concerns for your child, but they are not immediate, you can report them to the police by calling 111. You can also contact Children's Social Care for more advice and support—01642 .