

# Tackling criminal exploitation - Practitioner Guidance on Criminal Exploitation

The first document of its kind in Scotland, has been published the '[Practitioner Guidance on Criminal Exploitation](#)'. Criminal exploitation of children, young people and adults is when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive the vulnerable person into criminal activity, for the financial or other advantage of the exploiter.

Scotland's primary legislation in relation to trafficking and exploitation is the [Human Trafficking and Exploitation \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#). This legislation created two new offences; human trafficking (section 1) and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour (section 4), providing law enforcement agencies with greater powers to tackle human trafficking and exploitation and offering enhanced protection for victims.



The relationship between the exploiter and the exploited can often appear consensual, providing a challenge to professionals seeking to identify the issue. Even in these circumstances, safeguarding responses should be triggered. Victims of exploitation may not see themselves as exploited or admit to their exploitation.

#SeenSomethingSaySomething  
#KeepingThePromise

We all have a role in identifying those at risk from serious organised crime. All agencies have a responsibility to ensure staff are aware of the signs of criminal exploitation and know what to do when they have concerns. Sharing relevant information is an essential part of protecting children, young people, and adults from harm.

These safeguarding concerns should be reported to the local authority, without delay. All matters are dealt with sensitively and confidentially, and support given if required.

Physical contact between victim and perpetrator may not be necessary, the use of increasingly sophisticated technologies offers an alternative means for exploitation to take place, creating physical distance, and at times reducing the need for physical contact. The increasing number of children, young people and adults becoming involved in technology-assisted crimes, who would not usually be at risk of involvement in more traditional forms of criminal behaviour is highlighted through intelligence agencies.

## SPOTTING THE SIGNS

- Increased or unexplained material wealth.
- Individuals travelling to different areas or locations that they would not usually visit.
- Peer group changes and receiving increased numbers of texts and phone calls from unknown callers.
- Individuals who may have been groomed by a crime gang appearing agitated and nervous about answering calls, or texts and going out.

Criminal exploitation usually involves an imbalance of power due to age, gender, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, or access to money.

Exploiters use a range of tactics, adapted to the individual they are seeking to exploit and may initially involve providing the victim with something they want or need. This exploitation will often target emotional, physical, and material needs to entice individuals to engage in criminality to achieve the perceived 'gain'. Control may be exerted in several ways but can include violence or the threat of violence to force individuals to comply and engage

- Vulnerable people persistently going missing or returning late.
- Leaving the house at odd times of day or night that is out with usual routine.
- Substance use
- Increased offending with offences potentially linked to serious organised crime.
- Owning more than one mobile phone.
- Deterioration in mental health and possible self-harming.



## 7 Minute briefing