



Talking to your child about exploitation

It may seem daunting speaking to your child about exploitation but in reality, it is no different to having a conversation about stranger danger or wearing a seatbelt, it's just another topic to talk with your child about in order to help them keep themselves safe.

We have some tips and ideas to make this conversation easier:

Finding the time

Find a sensible time to have a chat with your child – when they are happy, relaxed and not distracted or in the middle of doing something else.

- Talking when in the car or when out walking somewhere can be a good option as there are less distractions and possible interruptions.
- Approach the topic gently, you know your child and what language they will respond to and understand.
- Sometimes it helps to start the conversation if you can relate it to something they know about – a TV programme, or if they've been having relevant PSHE lessons in school?
- If it's not the right time and they don't want to engage then don't push it, let them know you are available whenever they want to talk.
- Also, if talking isn't the right way to communicate then consider drawings or books instead.

Talking to your child about exploitation

Lay the foundations

Spend time with your child. Understanding their interests, their friends, what they are doing online, helps you better understand them, find things to talk about, and spot when something changes in their habits or behaviour.

Make sure your child knows they can talk to you about anything. That you love them and will always help and support them, and – importantly – will always believe them.

What if a young person tells you they are being exploited?

If your child, or any young person you might know or come into contact with (through work, volunteering or your own children's friends) tells you that they are being exploited, here is some advice:

- Firstly, listen to anything they have to say
- Let them have time to speak and in their own words
- Tell them you believe them
- Make sure they know that they have done nothing wrong, and it isn't their fault
- Make sure they know you will help them, but will support them and let them know what will happen next

What to talk about

As a parent you know your own child and what language they understand. This will determine the level of detail you can go into, but for all ages the key themes to talk to your child about exploitation are:

Consent: being able to say No and being allowed to say No.

Not doing things you don't want to do: It is important to talk to your child about not doing things they feel uncomfortable doing and if someone is trying to force them to do things they don't want to, then it is really important to talk to a trusted adult.

Accepting gifts or presents: Often exploiters will try to befriend a young person by buying them gifts, or giving them presents – this could be anything from phone credit or gaming credit, through to new trainers, phones, alcohol or drugs. Try to explain that it's important not to accept gifts and to be wary of "new friends" who want to buy them things or give them things.

Talk to someone: They need to always know that they can talk to you if they are upset, scared or worried and they will never be in trouble.

They aren't in trouble: this is so important to stress.

You need to tell someone who can help and make the exploitation stop. Contact Essex Police, the NSPCC or if you need more support speak to your child's school who will be able to help you through their safeguarding duties.