

## GUIDANCE

Recognising the **WARNING** signs of Potential Child Sexual Exploitation  
(Particularly when performing a 'safe and well' check regarding a missing child)



All Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers



Officers to be aware of how they can improve outcomes and safeguard children's futures

### Warning Signs



- Repeatedly going missing- particularly overnight
- Coming home with unaccounted gifts, i.e clothes, money, food, jewellery and drugs. (A common one being a mobile phone).
- Having a relationship with an older partner with whom there may be concerns.
- Mood swings and changes in behaviour.
- Excessive & secret use of Internet and/or mobile.(Potential Grooming)
- Having several SIM cards, frequent mobile phone top ups
- Being unusually secretive (e.g. where they've been, who their friends are)
- Losing contact with family and friends of their own age & associating with an older age group.
- Unrecognised cars arriving at the home, especially at strange times.
- Alcohol / Substance misuse.
- Unexplained Injuries.
- Lacking self esteem, leading to a change in personal appearance.
- Excessive washing or bathing particularly when return from missing episodes.
- Possibly involved in petty crime



All children are vulnerable.

In this instance children in Care are particularly vulnerable due to their "distance" from a Guardian.

Safeguarding is everyone's role- IF NOT YOU THEN WHO?!



### How to proceed

- Discuss your concerns with family/carer of child (where appropriate).
- Not appropriate would be if child is spending disproportionate amounts of time away from home and/or seems guarded in front of parents or carer.
- As soon as possible, discuss with your Supervisor.
- As soon as possible, inform your Public Protection Unit.
- Submit a National Intelligence Report

Can you recognise the warning signals?

It is important that we are all aware of the indicators of sexual and physical abuse and exploitation, such as those listed opposite.

Obviously there could be other explanations and further exploration with family, carers, friends and Police intelligence systems could prove helpful.

If a child confides in you, it is important that you believe them, make it clear that telling you what happened was the right thing to do.