

Exploring Exploitation

Insight

What is Exploitation?

Exploitation occurs when someone is groomed, pressured, or coerced into engaging in activities against their will for the benefit of someone else.

Types of Exploitation:

Sexual: A form of sexual abuse where children are manipulated or forced into sexual activity in exchange for something

Criminal: When children are coerced, manipulated, or forced into criminal activities such as drug trafficking.

Labour: Includes forced labour, low wages, excessive working hours, and unsafe conditions, often under threat or coercion.

Modern slavery & human trafficking: Victims are recruited, transported, or held against their will for exploitation (e.g., forced labour, sexual exploitation, organ harvesting).

Financial: Taking advantage of someone's financial resources through fraud, theft, coercion, or misuse of power.

Domestic: Occurs within households, where individuals (often domestic workers) are forced to work without pay, under abusive conditions, or through coercion.

Radicalisation & extremist: When individuals, often young or vulnerable people, are manipulated into adopting extremist ideologies or engaging in acts of terrorism.

Neglect & institutional: When care settings (e.g., residential homes, hospitals) fail to meet the needs of individuals, leading to harm, abuse, or neglect.

How they present:

Exploitation often presents through signs such as unexplained gifts or money, secrecy, missing episodes, controlling relationships, physical injuries, exhaustion, poor living conditions, and fear of authority figures. Victims may appear withdrawn, malnourished, or unable to speak freely, with sudden changes in behaviour, finances, or associations. Exploitation can occur online, within homes, workplaces, or institutions, often targeting vulnerable individuals through coercion, manipulation, or threats.

Grooming:

Grooming is a manipulative process where a perpetrator builds trust with a victim to exploit them. It typically involves targeting a vulnerable individual, gaining their trust through attention or gifts, isolating them from support networks, and then coercing them into harmful activities. The perpetrator maintains control through threats, blackmail, or emotional manipulation, making it difficult for the victim to seek help. Grooming can occur in person or online.

Key Findings:

There has been a shift in county lines operations, with a threefold increase in drug lines starting and ending within the same police area. Drug runners, often teenagers, now travel shorter distances and are usually found in different parts of their city. Recruitment, frequently via social media, is also becoming more localised.

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