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Our ref CC/AR

Date June 2016

Dear Parent/Carer,

Child Sexual Exploitation – parental/carer awareness- “think about it”

We know that there are young children of primary school age identified as being either at risk of, or actually being, sexually exploited across Derbyshire. Technologies such as mobile phones, tablet computers, gaming devices and the internet mean that exploitation may occur even when a child is in the safety of the home environment; for example through being persuaded to send and post sexualised images over the internet or through mobile phone images.

The Derbyshire Safeguarding Children’s Board want to be proactive in helping you be aware of the risks that your children may meet, either face-to-face or virtually through social media and the internet. We therefore urge you check your children’s use of devices and what access they have and to what sites and games where on line communication is possible and in doing so, ask about and check their privacy settings.

When a child or young person is being exploited it can be difficult for them to see what is happening or to know how to tell someone. It is important therefore that as parents or carers we are able to spot the warning signs and know what to do and how to offer and seek support.

By being aware of the warning signs of Child Sexual Exploitation you can help stop abuse before it develops further.

The enclosed leaflet is designed to help you talk to your child, raising their knowledge of how to stay safe and disrupt anyone who is trying to exploit them. It raises discussion about:

- Healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Internet safety
- Being very careful of who they trust
- Assuring them that it’s OK to come to you or another trusted adult if they feel threatened or uncomfortable about something they have seen or done on a social networking site/instant messaging service or that has happened in person.

In addition parents and carers can access a free on-line learning course designed specifically for them by going to the website <http://www.paceuk.info/the-problem/keep-them-safe/> and follow the simple registration process.

The material itself is brief, easy to navigate, and is not graphic in any way. It sensitively provides parents and carers with information on the warning signs of CSE, and also gives information on what to do if you are concerned about your child, or indeed any child.

The ultimate aim is to prevent children being exploited and for adults to recognise at an early stage that there is a potential problem.

There is helpful information in the leaflet about getting help and advice.

If you are concerned that a child is a victim or a child is suffering CSE or is at risk of significant harm you can call 01629 533190. This is a contact and referral service for Derbyshire.

You can contact the police on 101 or in an emergency you can contact the Police on 999.

Alternatively, you can always speak to a member of staff at school for advice.

The NSPCC have a very useful site helping parents and carers www.nspcc.org.uk/ShareAware and Net Aware www.net-aware.org.uk can assist professionals, parents and carers in their understanding of the current sites, chat rooms and games.

Warning signs may include:

- Your child may become especially secretive and stop engaging with their usual friends.
- They may be associating with young people who are a bit older than normal for their peer group.
- They may receive odd or excessive calls and messages on their mobiles or social media pages from people you and/or they don't know, or adults as 'friends' on gaming or social networking sites.
- They may become obsessive with their phone or device, and may refuse to hand over or give up their devices and wish to use it for increasingly longer periods, at odd times and including during the night and decline to talk about what they are doing.
- They may be in possession of new items which they can't readily explain or talk about people who suddenly have become very important to them.
- They may exhibit a sudden change in behaviour and readiness to attend school, or even in clothes and musical taste.
- They may look tired and/or unwell, and sleep at unusual hours.
- Displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour.
- They may have marks or scars on their body which they try to conceal.
- They may be arranging sleep overs with peers but they are not going and arranging risky activities and asking their peers to cover for them.
- They may have started coming back late from school, staying out after curfews or even going missing.

Yours sincerely



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www.derbyshirescb.org.uk