



TRUTH THROUGH TRAUMA

Child Criminal Exploitation Workbook

Overview of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is a form of *modern slavery* where individuals or groups groom, coerce, and manipulate children and young people into committing criminal acts. This can include:

- Drug dealing
- Theft
- County lines
- Sexual exploitation

CCE is **never** the fault of the child. It is a serious abuse of power and a violation of their rights.

Understanding the Grooming Process

Grooming is a manipulative process used by exploiters to build trust and control over a child. It often occurs in stages:

1. **Targeting:** Identifying vulnerable children.
2. **Building Trust:** Creating a bond through kindness, gifts, and attention.
3. **Testing Boundaries:** Gradually pushing the child's limits and desensitizing them to inappropriate behavior.
4. **Isolation:** Separating the child from supportive relationships.
5. **Control:** Exercising power through threats, manipulation, and coercion.

Understanding these stages is crucial for **early intervention**.

Signs of Exploitation

Recognizing the signs of CCE is essential for safeguarding children. These signs can be:

- Changes in behavior (e.g., withdrawal, aggression)
- Unexplained absences from school or home
- Possession of unexplained money or goods
- Association with older individuals or groups

- Increased secrecy and defensiveness
- Evidence of self-harm or substance abuse

Note: These signs do not automatically indicate CCE, but they warrant further investigation and support.

Impact on Young People

CCE has devastating and long-lasting effects on young people, including:

- **Trauma:** Experiences of violence, abuse, and exploitation can lead to significant trauma.
- **Mental Health Issues:** Anxiety, depression, PTSD, and other mental health conditions are common.
- **Substance Abuse:** As a coping mechanism.
- **Criminalization:** Being labeled as a criminal due to their involvement in exploitative activities.
- **Difficulties in Forming Healthy Relationships:** Due to damaged trust and attachment issues.

A **trauma-informed approach** is critical when working with young people who have experienced CCE.

Professional Insight

This workbook adopts a trauma-informed, lived-experience led approach, recognising the profound impact of trauma on individuals affected by CCE. Prioritising safety, building trust, and fostering empowerment is crucial. Remember:

- **Active Listening:** Create a safe space for young people to share their experiences without judgment.
- **Empowerment:** Support young people in regaining control over their lives and making informed choices.
- **Collaboration:** Work in partnership with other agencies and professionals to provide comprehensive support.
- **Resilience:** Focus on building resilience and promoting recovery.

By understanding the complexities of CCE and implementing trauma-informed strategies, we can **protect** vulnerable children and help them **heal**.

Reflection Questions

Use these questions to reflect on your current practices and identify areas for improvement:

1. How do you currently identify and respond to potential cases of CCE?
2. What are the barriers to reporting and addressing CCE in your community?
3. How can you incorporate trauma-informed principles into your work with young people?

4. What resources and training do you need to enhance your understanding and response to CCE?

Practical Action

Take the following actions to strengthen your response to CCE:

- Review and update your organization's safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Provide training to staff on CCE awareness and trauma-informed approaches.
- Establish clear reporting pathways for suspected cases of CCE.
- Develop partnerships with local agencies and community organizations.
- Advocate for increased resources and support for CCE prevention and intervention programs.

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