

Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation in Hotels

Information and guidance for hotel staff

2024


Makesafe

What is child sexual exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity

(a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or

(b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

While this guidance focuses on Child Sexual Exploitation, children can be exploited for a range of purposes including but not limited to moving drugs, being made to steal, carry weapons and launder money. It is therefore important that hotel staff learn to spot the signs and take action to protect children from all forms of exploitation.

Any child can be exploited, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity or any other characteristic.



Why do hotel staff need to know about child exploitation?

Hotels are often used as a place to exploit and abuse children – recent analysis found over 500 offences of child sexual abuse to have taken place in hotels in England & Wales over a period of 12 months.

As hotel staff you have a vital role to play in helping to change this, ensuring that your young customers and children more widely receive help and not harm while at your premises. By learning to spot the signs of child sexual exploitation, you can help protect children from unimaginable abuse and the potential of long-lasting trauma.

It is only by working together that we can prevent child exploitation. Police forces across England and Wales deliver awareness raising training to hotel staff and conduct other engagement activity under the banner of Operation Makesafe.

Indicators of child exploitation:

Reception/Booking Staff:

- Children or young people who seem withdrawn, highly anxious or scared.
- Last minute or walk-in bookings.
- Guests only using the room for a few hours despite booking for one night or the use of hourly hotel rooms - whilst there may be legitimate reasons for this type of behaviour this may warrant further investigation.
- Guests refusing to provide identification or card details, or insisting on paying in cash.
- Guests having little or no luggage.
- Guests arriving with large amounts of alcohol on their person, this may for example be concealed in shopping bags.
- Guests requesting a room that is isolated, or near the rear exit of the premises, fire exits or car park entrances.
- Bookings made in a different name to the person checking in without a valid reason, for example employers booking a room on behalf of an employee.
- Guests arriving and asking for a specific room number, but they don't know the name in which the room is booked.
- Guests or visitors who appear secretive about who they are with.
- Multiple visitors to a room.
- Young people meeting others in the hotel's public areas eg. Bar or car park.
- Young people booking a taxi via reception.
- Young people suspected to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Noise complaints.





Housekeeping staff:

- Guests who don't want rooms cleaned or use the 'do not disturb' sign for long periods – your company may well have policies around checking rooms after 24/48 hours please adhere to these guidelines.
- Signs of sexual or criminal activity having taken place, such as evidence of alcohol or substance misuse and/or contraception wrappers in guest rooms where young people have been. This could also be identified by finding young people's ID in these rooms, even if young people have not been named as guests – if you come across such evidence, please do not touch it and ensure no one else enters the room.
- Large quantities of cash being seen in the room.

Bar/Room Service Staff:

- Alcohol orders to rooms where there are guests who appear to be underage – your company may promote Challenge 25 or similar schemes. You can use these schemes to legitimately seek age verification.
- Young people in the company of adult guests in the bar area.
- Adult customers purchasing alcohol for young people, or young people trying to purchase alcohol without ID or with a forged ID.

All staff should be aware of young people who appear anxious, frightened, angry or aggressive, show signs of neglect, or display behaviours that cause you concern.



What are the potential consequences if hotel staff don't recognise child exploitation and take action?

By raising awareness of child sexual exploitation and ensuring staff know what to look out for and how to respond, hotels can contribute to the safeguarding of children.

If those indicators are missed, then a child may become a victim of abuse. This is ultimately the most significant consequence if opportunities are lost to recognise child sexual exploitation within hotels. However, for the business there can be reputational damage associated with child sexual exploitation taking place in a hotel.

Whilst the hospitality trade recognises the need to work to safeguard children from exploitation in their premises and the overwhelming majority of employees act in a responsible way, there can be significant consequences for hotels if they do not take sufficient action to protect children from harm. For those hotels operating under the Licensing Act, it is the responsibility of premises license holders and their managers to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to protect children from harm. In some circumstances failing to do so could result in:

- **A Closure Notice** (Section 76 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014) placed on their business and an application made to court for a Closure Order to close the premises for up to three months.
- A criminal **prosecution** against an individual staff member under the Modern Slavery Act 2015.
- **Licences reviewed or removed** if premises are suspected of being used for child exploitation, under Section 51 of the Licensing Act 2003. There is a legal requirement under the Licensing Act 2003 to prevent child exploitation in the premises.

Under Section 116 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, the Police have powers to serve a notice to a hotel owner, operator or manager, requiring them to provide all guest information for a set time period in connection to child exploitation. This notice can be served when an officer reasonably believes a hotel premises has been or will be used for the purposes of child exploitation or connected activity. Failure to comply with this request could result in further action, including fines.



What to do if you suspect child exploitation is taking place

It is not your responsibility to assess whether a child is being exploited.

It is your responsibility to report your concerns.

If something doesn't feel right, it might not be. Don't wait, report it.

Call the police on **101** or **999** in an emergency – if you are concerned a child is in the company of someone wishing to harm them you must always call 999.

You can also [report to the police online](#). Only report your concerns when it is safe for you to do so, even if this is after the event that your concerns initially arose.

Contact your Neighbourhood Policing Team or Licensing Officer for further support.

Call Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**.

If you have information on child exploitation and abuse or suspect it may be happening but want to remain completely anonymous, you can [contact the independent charity Crimestoppers online](#) or on the phone.

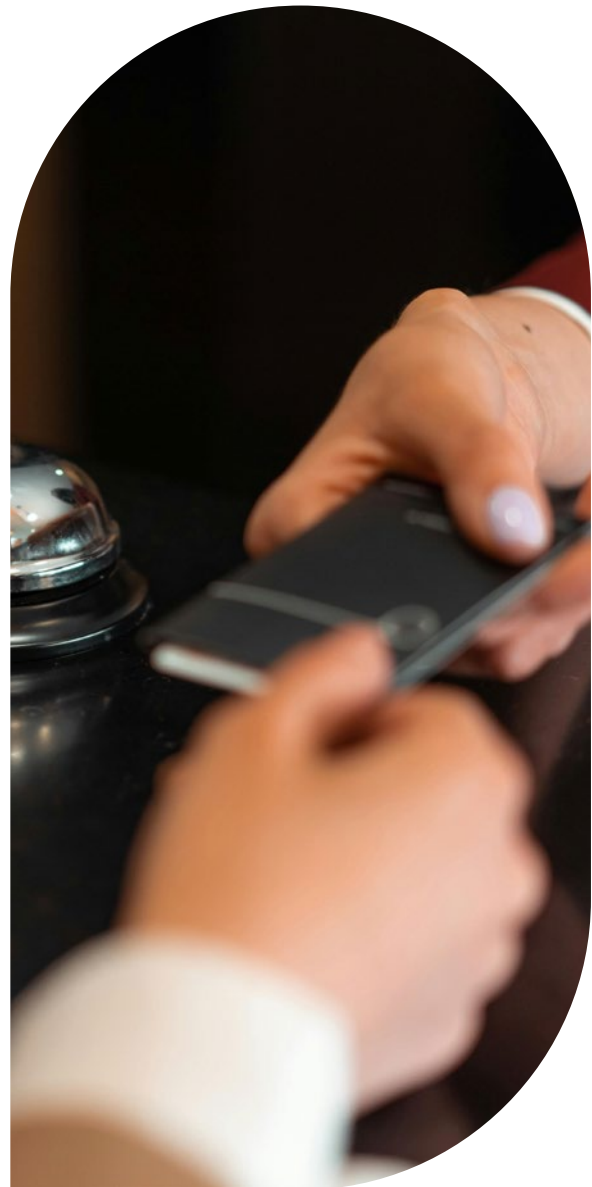
Call the NSPCC on **0808 800 5000**.

The [NSPCC helpline](#) is staffed by trained professionals who can provide expert advice and support if you're concerned about a child.



What information you should provide to the police

- ☑ What is the current location of vulnerable child and person of concern, including the full address of your premises and details of where they are within the hotel.
- ☑ A concise description of the vulnerable child and person of concern, including approximate age, perceived ethnicity, height, build, hair colour and description of clothing.
- ☑ Names and DOBs of those involved if they are known either from the booking or from communication with the individuals.
- ☑ Details of any vehicles linked to those involved, including make, model, colour and vehicle registration number and any distinguishing features (stickers or other modifications).
- ☑ Details of your specific causes for concern for the child and the behaviour of the adult.
- ☑ Details of any parts of the hotel which may contain evidence, for example rooms which the individuals have had access to. This will help the police provide you with evidence preservation advice.
- ☑ Details of who attending officers should ask for on arrival at the hotel and where they should enter the premises – you may ask officers to attend a service entrance to avoid alerting potential perpetrators and to limit the impact on other guests, although this may not always be possible for operational reasons.





How to deter exploiters from using your hotel

There are many actions and procedures that hotel staff can implement to make it less likely that perpetrators will use your premises for exploitation. These include:

- ☑ A member of staff conducting check-ins to ensure all guests who present at reception match with those on the booking, or maintaining a visible presence in areas containing self-check-in kiosks.
- ☑ Checking Photo ID.
- ☑ Ensuring that bookings are only made using a card in the name of one of the guests.
- ☑ Ensuring you have clear CCTV operating in all main public areas of the hotel including, reception areas, lift lobbies and any bar/restaurant areas.
- ☑ Ensuring access to all main parts of the hotel requires a room key or card.
- ☑ Ensuring that all rooms are visited regularly by housekeeping.
- ☑ ID checking guests who order alcohol to their room.
- ☑ Refusing to allow visitors to enter a guest's room unless they can provide details of the guest including name and surname.
- ☑ Ensuring that staff have received [training](#) around child sexual exploitation and feel confident speaking knowing how to report their concerns.

The above list is not exhaustive, and with any form of crime, perpetrators will adapt their actions, so we encourage you to remain vigilant and to regularly seek up to date information and guidance.



Contact us

For advice around improving children's safety in your hotel, please contact the Prevention Team:

✉ prevention@childrenssociety.org.uk

🖱 www.childrenssociety.org.uk


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