

Child Sexual Exploitation

Information for people working at licensed premises



What are your responsibilities working in the licensed trade?

Under the Licensing Act 2003, premises license holders and designated premises supervisors have a legal responsibility to make sure that children and young people are protected from harm at their premises. The guidance issued under Section 182 of the Licensing Act¹ requires that children must be protected from 'physical, psychological and moral harm' so premises allowing persons under the age of 18 are expected to have systems in place to safeguard children and young people.

One of the risks at licensed premises is that of sexual exploitation. To minimize the risk to children and young people, premises need to have preventative systems in place. There may also be a financial and reputational risk, particularly if legal action is taken against the premise, which can result in the suspension or revocation of the license. So it is important that the risk of child sexual exploitation is managed at your premise – to protect children and young people from harm – and to protect your business.

What is child sexual exploitation?

An extract from the government definition² of child sexual exploitation says **'Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing and / or another or others performing on them, sexual activities'**.

How might this involve licensed premises?

Licensed premises are places where people usually go to socialise, have a drink, relax and enjoy themselves and as such they provide an ideal environment for the grooming and sexual exploitation of children and young people. As part of the grooming process adults may meet young people or take them to licensed premises, to develop a relationship of trust and make them feel special by giving them 'treats' such as meals or alcohol or by involving them in adult parties.

¹ Amended Guidance issued under Section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003, April 2012: Section 2.41

A premise could be misused for this kind of activity by the people who are socialising or working there. For example:

- Adult venues (such as night clubs / sexual entertainment venues) may attract groomers if the premise is frequented by children or young people.
- Where underage drinking takes place, children and young people are at risk as their judgement is impaired.
- Premises providing goods or services that can be offered to children as gifts in exchange for sexual favours (for example, free food, drinks or cigarettes; free transport; free access to a venue in exchange for sexual favours) present risk if a groomer is employed there (or works voluntarily) and has regular or private contact with children.
- Children and young people are vulnerable in areas of premises that are not supervised or security checked (for example toilets, beer gardens, play zones).
- Risk may be present at premises where information technology equipment is used (for example, internet access, mobile phones) as social media can be used to groom vulnerable young people; cameras may be used to record or distribute indecent images of children.
- Premises providing facilities for private parties, private dancing / entertainment booths or overnight accommodation, may be vulnerable to the risk of child sexual exploitation.

Risk management and due diligence

Under the Licensing Act 2003, the 'due diligence' defence can be used to protect your business, if you can demonstrate that all reasonable steps have been taken to manage risk. Here are some suggested safeguarding measures to help evidence 'due diligence' and keep children safe:

- Undertake a written children and young people's risk assessment and use it to inform your operating policy and staff training.
- Staff should be trained to recognise indicators of sexual exploitation and know how to report concerns.

- Staff should be trained to operate an age verification scheme, know what types of identification are acceptable and to recognise signs of proxy purchases of alcohol.
- Staff training records should be maintained.
- Activity at the premises should be monitored (for example using CCTV or by regular patrols. Patrol records should be maintained.)
- Suspicious activity should be reported to the police (including details such as vehicle registration numbers, description of individuals) and should be recorded in your incident log.
- If you or your staff are in a situation involving the supervision of a vulnerable young person at your premise, it is important to follow a consistent and auditable protocol.
- If you have a delivery service (for example hot food) enforce a Code of Conduct to promote good safeguarding when deliveries are made to unaccompanied children.

What to do if you have concerns about child sexual exploitation

- If you have concerns or just wish to provide information, contact Crimestoppers **0800 555 111**
- or report online at <https://secure.crimestoppers-uk.org/ams.form.anonymous.asp>

Remember

'SAY SOMETHING IF YOU SEE SOMETHING'

under the Licensing Act 2003 your premises license may be at risk if you do not take action to protect children

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