

The following signs and behaviour are generally seen in children who are already being sexually exploited

- missing from home or care;
- physical injuries;
- drug or alcohol misuse;
- involvement in offending;
- repeat sexually-transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations;
- absent from school;
- change in physical appearance;
- evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites;
- estranged from their family;
- receipt of gifts from unknown sources;
- recruiting others into exploitative situations;
- poor mental health;
- self-harm;
- thoughts of or attempts at suicide.

Previous convictions of the child/young witness



58. Some victims of child sexual abuse may have previous convictions which, on the face of it, may cast doubt upon their reliability as a witness of truth. Robust enquiries should be made of the police about the circumstances of the offending before coming to any conclusion about the truthfulness or otherwise of the witness testimony.
59. Prosecutors are encouraged to look beyond the previous offending by the victim and consider the drivers and circumstances of the offending behaviour. Victims may sometimes commit what is called 'survival crime', i.e. committing crime to find safety or committing crime to ensure justice. An example of this is damaging property belonging to the offender or an associate. Offending might also be a reaction to the abuse which a child or young person is suffering, i.e. externally expressing their internal trauma. The victim may also have committed an offence whilst under the influence of the abuser and this may be used by the abuser as a means of controlling the victim and deterring them from making a complaint about the abuse they are experiencing.
60. Full details of a victim's previous convictions will be required from the police including: