



PRESS RELEASE

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Training in the Prevention and Detection of the Sexual Exploitation of Children

The Child Protection Committee and Designate Safeguarding Officers from different Government Departments and other relevant agencies will take part in Training in the Prevention and Detection of the Sexual Exploitation of Children on the 16 and 17 April respectively. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) 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 in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. In CSE, the victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual, and what makes this of concern is that it does not always involve physical contact. CSE can also occur through the use of technology and the internet without the child's immediate recognition; for instance, being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet or on their mobile phones without any immediate payment or gain.

CSE is a complex form of abuse and research has found that it can be difficult for those working with children to identify and assess. The indicators for CSE could be confused with what is considered typical adolescent behaviours and it requires knowledge, skills, expertise and an assessment. The investigation analyses the risk factors and personal circumstances of individual children to ensure these signs and symptoms are interpreted correctly and appropriate support is given by all those with safeguarding duties.

The Child Protection Committee has already begun working on this area of concern and one of its sub-committees led by Royal Gibraltar Police has been delivering presentations and raising awareness via the "Don't Click...Think" campaign highlighting the dangers of sexting. The Chair of the Child Protection Committee, Natalie Tavares, stated that "the safety of children and young people is a priority for this Committee and training in Child Sexual Exploitation will provide further information on this area of concern, enabling the Committee to continue developing its safeguarding strategies, and provide practitioners with the tools to assess, identify and support those at risk".

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The training will be delivered by Julie Dugdale, a leading expert in this field and senior consultant at Barnardo's, child protection and safeguarding agency in UK.

The Acting Chief Minister, the Hon Neil F. Costa MP, stressed that Child Sexual Exploitation is a grave safeguarding issue and he fully supports the Child Protection Committee in the work they are undertaking. He stated: "Professionals working with children and young persons need to be equipped with the knowledge, skills and tools to identify any areas of concern and to continue to keep them safe and free from harm. I look forward to opening this training session and to continuing the very important work in this complex and delicate area with the Child Protection Committee."