



Fast food restaurants and takeaways

Child Exploitation is a serious crime. It takes place when others take advantage of the power imbalance between themselves and children and then force, trick, or coerce them into criminal activity on their behalf.

Fast food restaurants can be used by exploiters to build relationships with children by offering them 'treats' such as meals, drinks, or ice creams. This is carried out in order to manipulate and groom children, eventually coercing them into acts of exploitation.

Exploitation can also take place in the restaurant itself, such as children being made to hold and sell drugs while there.

We know that exploitation affects children from all walks of life, including girls, boys, LGBT+ children, children with disabilities and special educational needs, children from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities and, increasingly, younger children. It is a form of abuse that has a serious impact on children, their families and our communities.

People who exploit children also come from all walks of life and backgrounds. Exploiters can perpetrate this type of abuse alone, with others, online, offline and through complex organised crime networks.

Children are never responsible for the exploitation which they experience. In all matters, they should be treated as children, as victims of abuse and be given help and protection to keep them safe so that they can recover from their experiences. Exploitation is a complex form of abuse which can be hard to spot or identify. We know that many children show no external signs of abuse through their behaviour, and very often do not tell anyone about the abuse they are experiencing. They also may not, at first, realise that what is happening to them is wrong.

Fast food restaurants

As a staff member, you have the power to help prevent child exploitation at your business premises or workplace and have a vital role in identifying signs that exploitation may be taking place.





Look closer for a child:



Who appears to be controlled or directed by another person.

Who is with an adult or an older child who appears to be befriending them and/or buying them food and drinks.

Who is being targeted by an adult or an older child seen in the restaurant on a regular basis.

Who appears uncomfortable with an adult or older child they are in the restaurant with.

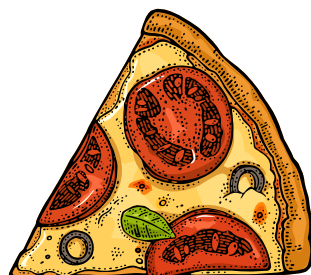
Who is followed to the toilets and is spending an unusual amount of time there.

Who is in possession of more than one mobile phone and/or carrying lots of cash.

Who appears anxious, frightened, angry, showing signs of neglect, or displaying other behaviours that make you worried.

Who is under 18 years old and being bought alcoholic drinks by an adult or older child who frequent the restaurant on a regular basis.

Who has spent a long period of time in the restaurant and met multiple people there over time.



If something doesn't feel right, don't wait, report it.

Call the police on 999 in an emergency if the crime is happening right now, the suspect is still at the scene, or anyone is seriously injured or in immediate danger.

Call the police on 101 in a non-emergency to share information, suspicions or details that can wait a day or two. Instead of phoning 101, you can report to the police on their webpages by using an online form. This can be found here: [Report a crime | Thames Valley Police](#)

Call Crimestoppers if you would prefer to make an anonymous report and it is a non-emergency. They can be contacted on 0800 555 111 or you can report on their webpages by using an online form. This can be found here: [Giving information anonymously | Crimestoppers \(crimestoppers-uk.org\)](#)

Call the NSPCC if you would like to speak to a trained professional who can provide expert advice and support if you are concerned about a child. They can be contacted on 0808 800 5000 or you can e-mail them at help@NSPCC.org.uk.

Free online training for anyone is available on the Children's Society webpages under Programme of Learning: [#LookCloser To Spot Exploitation | The Children's Society \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](#)

Scroll up 2 pages for the training dates and times.