

# CHILD FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION

## A guide for parents, carers and professionals

### What is it?

Child financial exploitation is where a child is groomed into helping criminals launder money or commit fraud. Most children are financially exploited without understanding what is going on or realising they are committing an offence.

It can happen to a child who is also being exploited in other ways so it is often overlooked, rather than being seen as a distinct form of exploitation in itself with far-reaching consequences for the child.



### Who are 'money mules'?

Children who are financially exploited are often referred to as 'money mules' by the media. This is a degrading term which minimises the harm and downplays the fact they have been exploited.

### How does it happen?

As with other forms of exploitation, no case looks the same, but typically exploiters groom children by advertising 'money-making' opportunities on social media to children, which look convincing and authentic, but are financially exploitative and illegal. They may also groom children via gaming platforms with compliments, gifts, gaming credits and skins. Children who are already experiencing sexual or criminal exploitation are often also being financially exploited.

Some common signs that a child is being financially exploited:

- Large amounts of money coming into and out of their bank or Paypal accounts with small sums left in the account as a payment to them.
- They are using their social media accounts to advertise products or money-making opportunities.
- They have new or expensive items, or more money than expected, although they can also be rewarded with things like gaming credits that are not visible.

### What are the consequences?

Whilst it may appear risk-free, there can be serious consequences for the child, including having their bank account suspended for years, or even criminal prosecution. As with all forms of child exploitation, it is the child who bears the risk and suffers the consequences.

## What can I do to stop it?

### *I am a professional:*

- Financial education is a vital prevention tool for children and young people. Make sure a child knows they should never share personal information such as account details, National Insurance number or account PIN with other people.
- Frontline workers should be trained to spot the signs of financial exploitation to better identify and support young victims.

### *I am a parent/carer:*

- Parents/carers should ensure they check their children's bank accounts regularly. Some accounts allow alerts to be sent to a parent/carer's phone to enable them to monitor account activity.
- Talk to your children about the importance of speaking to a trusted adult before accepting money from anyone. It is not normal to be given large sums of money or earn money for doing very little. Help a child to see that these offers are clearly suspicious.

## How can I report it?

If you become aware of a child who is being financially exploited, you should report it to:

- the Police,
- the bank, and
- [Action Fraud](#) at the earliest opportunity.

## What support is available?

For further support, signposting or referrals to specialist support, you can contact your local victim's service.



**CALL IT WHAT IT IS: CHILD FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION.  
THIS HELPS OTHERS TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE CHILD HAS BEEN  
DECEIVED AND COERCED.  
EXPLOITATION IS CHILD ABUSE.**