

Not all sexually abused and exploited children are groomed

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Credit: Cardiff University

Not all children who are sexually exploited are groomed, and the increasing tendency to link exploitation with grooming means some cases are being missed, a Cardiff University academic argues in a new book.

In an important publication, Dr Sophie Hallett, of the University's School of Social Sciences sheds new light on the reasons that child [sexual exploitation](#) takes place, including weaknesses in the welfare system, and the issues [children](#) and [young people](#) are facing.

Dr Hallett said: "The increasing tendency within practice research, government and media reports to equate the problem of child sexual exploitation to that of [grooming](#) is so much so that one could be forgiven for thinking that sexual exploitation is grooming.

"While instances such as Coronation Street's recent child grooming storyline are to be applauded for bringing some of the issues to light, the fact is that not all children who are exploited are groomed."

Exchange, abuse and young people

In her new book, *Making sense of child sexual exploitation: Exchange, abuse and young people*, Dr Hallett puts forward the rarely heard voices of children and young people who have experienced child sexual exploitation and the professionals who have worked with them.

She examines the way that child sexual exploitation is framed in today's society and the implications that has for responses to the issue.

"Abuse and child sexual exploitation are always the responsibility of the perpetrator," said Dr Hallett.

"They can exchange sex when they feel it is expected. They can be aware of their exploitation. They can, and do, within constrained and severely limited choices, exchange sex to meet needs.

"Our social care systems can also contribute to a child's vulnerability to sexual [exploitation](#). It can be very difficult for professionals to provide the sorts of care, attention and affection that children and young people need. Lack of a stable home environment, not being properly heard or listened to, the absence of positive touch, and lack of a stable consistent adult, amongst many other factors, create unmet practical and emotional needs that, in the absence of help or recognition, a [child](#) or young person

can attempt to fulfil in dangerous and damaging ways. An irony is that for some young people taken into the care system for their own safeguarding, it can be anything but safe, as we know from recent high profile court cases. As one of the young people featured in the book says:

"it doesn't just happen, it happens because either things just aren't addressed, people are less able to fend for themselves and they don't get the help they need, for whatever reason, and are put into difficult positions, and sometimes it does take them there and if, people were there to help them in the first place then they wouldn't, then this wouldn't happen."

"In order to better protect children, we need to be aware of all of these issues, not just grooming," Dr Hallett added.

More information: Making sense of child sexual exploitation: Exchange, abuse and young people. [policypress.co.uk/making-sense ...-sexual-exploitation](https://policypress.co.uk/making-sense...-sexual-exploitation)

Provided by Cardiff University

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