

NOT IN OUR COMMUNITY

Protecting us and our friends against
sexual exploitation.

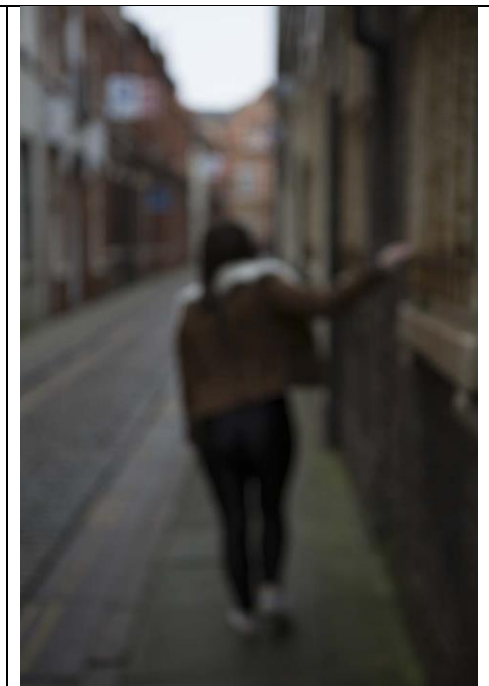
Ella's Story

It's not okay for someone to manipulate you into doing sexual things for their own or someone else's benefit. If you're under 18, this is called child sexual exploitation and it is against the law.

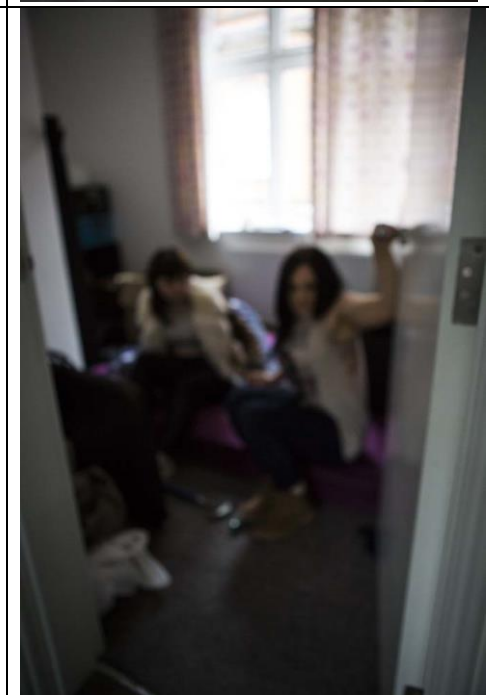
Grooming takes many forms and many abusers will gain the trust of their victims over time.

Do not ignore the warning signs if you or a friend are at risk of sexual exploitation. See <http://notinourcommunity.org/get-help/> to understand the options for help.

1. 13-year-old Ella returned to this house at 3am... still wearing her girlish pyjamas. Her eyes rolling back in her head, she was drunk and drugged, and wild with fear and self-loathing. She got into bed with her mother, just as she had as a small child, saying over and over again "I'm a horrible, disgusting girl. You're not going to love me anymore".



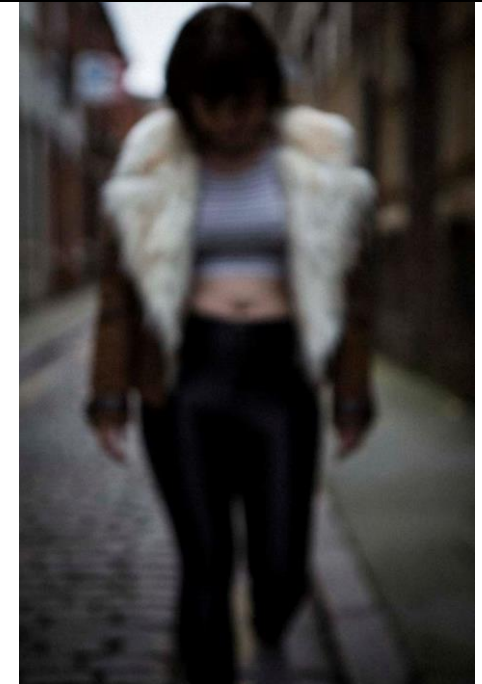
2. When Alice invites me in to her house it is clearly a place where her two children are fiercely loved. They are held in a net of middle-class aspiration and worry. Worry doesn't now articulate Alice's feelings for Ella – Grief comes closer. Child sexual exploitation isn't 'out there', it is here.



3. We didn't have any understanding that it can happen to any child from any background. People want to be able to blame bad parenting, but I have done everything possible to try to keep Ella safe. I feel angry because there is a lot of shame attached to this.



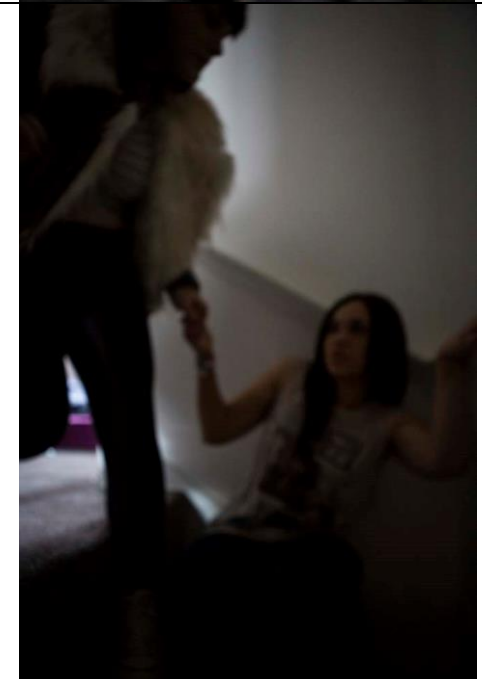
4. Ella always found it hard to control her emotions or make friends. Her mental health was under specialist NHS care from the age of three, and she had diagnosis when she was eight: attention deficit hyperactive disorder, attachment disorder and possible personality disorder.



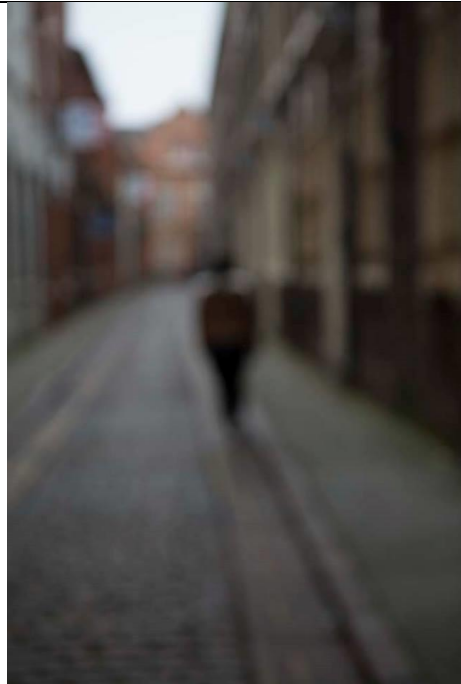
5. With the help of therapy, medication and a supportive local state primary, Ella thrived. On good days she was charismatic and exceptionally academic... on bad days she was too disruptive to be in class and, even at ten, had tantrums "that you would expect of a two year old".



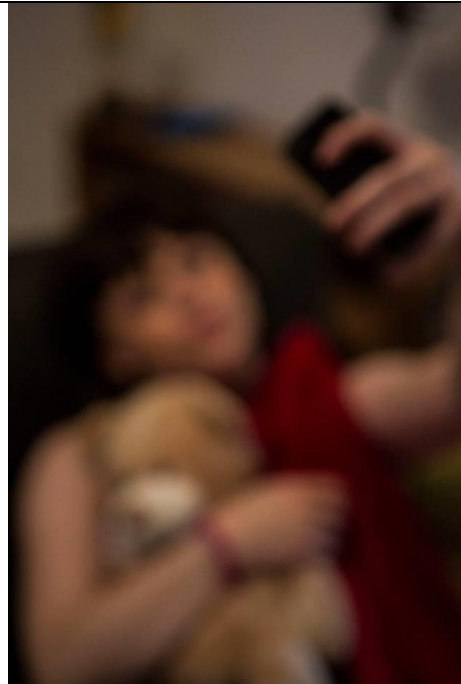
6. The pressure of adolescence pushed Ella over the edge. Alice and her husband resolved that in the meantime, while they sought a specialist school, Ella would be kept on lock-down in the house. They knew she was vulnerable. Alice was always at home... [and] accompanied Ella everywhere.



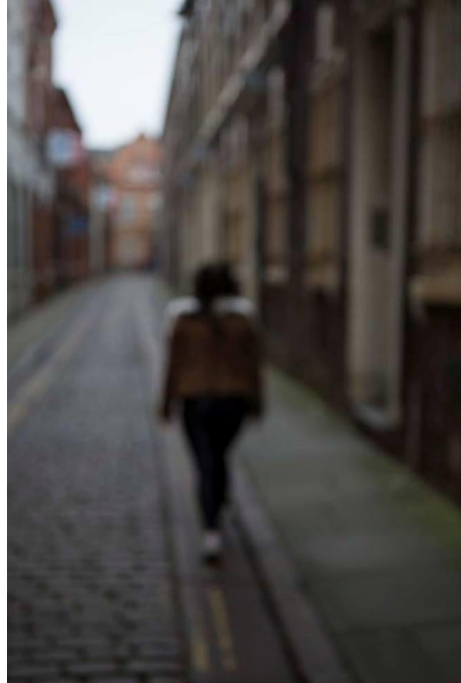
7. The strain on family life was almost intolerable, but despite their vigilance, Ella was able to go missing. She began to lie to them or be openly defiant, kicking her way past them out of the door. The police were involved on every occasion.



8. "I would lock up her laptop, cancel her Facebook. But by now she was getting pay-as-you-go phones given to her, which we didn't know at the time because she kept them so well hidden."



9. "We were with her all the time, but if we were out, suddenly she would turn around and walk off, saying 'you can't stop me', and I couldn't hold her ... We couldn't keep Ella safe."



10. Ella began seeing a new therapist who, after the first session told Alice "I think this child is being sexually exploited"... "she was talking about red flags: Ella going missing, wearing heavy make-up, the anger, starting to lie about everything". A week later, the therapist was proved right.



11. Ella had returned in such a state, the story tumbling out as she lay in her mother's arms. "She said: 'I was collected tonight. I didn't want to go, but they were calling me and said they'd be waiting, and I'd be wasting their time, their petrol' Ella would interrupt herself all the time. 'They're coming!' she would say. She was hallucinating [about] a man trying to kill her: 'You've got to keep me safe!' "



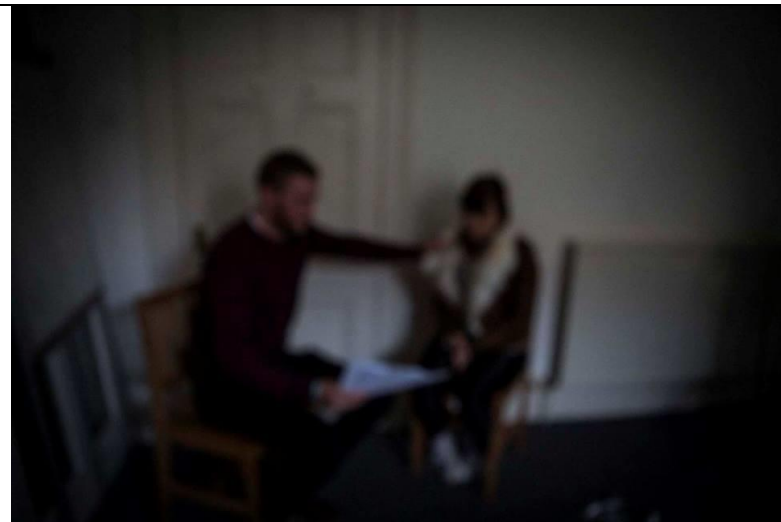
12. Ella told the police she had met this man in a shopping centre. He had impressed her with his gifts and many tales of his powerful family... Once he had her confidence he planned to gang rape her in the car. "She doesn't know where she was driven that that night from 8pm to 3am. She was locked in the car for a while when someone got in and she was told to have sex with them. I was in a state of shock" For the past few weeks Ella has been in a small therapeutic home outside London... "it's ironic that everyone thinks this only happens to girls in care, we had to fight to get our child into care because she was so distressed."



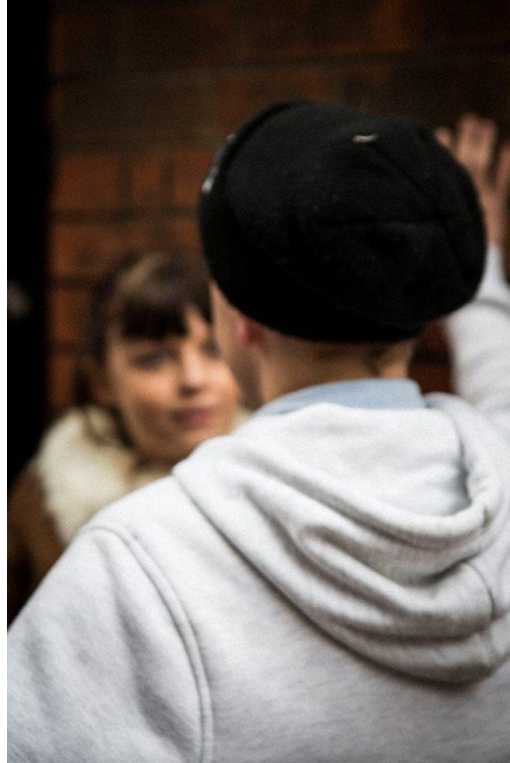
13. "The police used to come to the house and say: 'this isn't the right house'. They couldn't work out why a child like Ella would become a victim of sexual exploitation".



14. For the past few weeks Ella has been in a small therapeutic home outside London... "it's ironic that everyone thinks this only happens to girls in care, we had to fight to get our child into care because she was so distressed."



15. At the moment Ella's parents have decided she is too fragile to go to court... this is why her attackers remain unprosecuted.



"I'm a horrible, disgusting girl. You're not going to love me anymore".

Story shows how grooming can happen to anyone, even if they are in a loving home.

Credit: Helen Rumbelow. The Times. 10/09/2015

Names have been changed.

Based on a true story this is just one example of how sexual exploitation of young people can and does happen. Check out our page and www.notinourcommunity.org for more information.