

Recognise. Respond. Refer. Re-engage.

Content warning: This document covers topics including online child sexual exploitation, self-harm and suicide, which may be distressing to readers.

Sadistic Online Exploitation (SOE) is the deliberate and malicious use of the internet to harm, manipulate or exert control over others for personal pleasure, gratification, a sense of power, ideological beliefs or to corrupt victims and inflict ongoing harm.

The offending involves forms of psychological, emotional or physical abuse through digital means.

Step 1

RECOGNISE

Children and young people with existing vulnerabilities affecting their mental health, cognitive abilities or social and emotional wellbeing are more at risk of SOE.

Females aged between 10 – 18, and those identifying as LGBTQIA+ are disproportionately affected.



Warning signs

- Signs of self-harm including cuts, carvings of symbols (cut signs) on skin, bite marks and burns
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits and excessive tiredness
- Sudden withdrawal from family, friends, or usual activities
- Changes in mood like heightened anxiety, nervousness and low self esteem
- Secretive online behaviour or extended periods of use with online devices
- Use of extreme language, cruel humour, symbols and rejection of previously held morals
- Writing in blood or what appears to be blood (blood signing)
- Taking part in online humiliation, dangerous stunts or harmful sexual behaviours
- Openly talking about death, not being wanted
- Suicide attempts

Step 2

RESPOND

If you suspect a child or young person may be impacted by SOE:



- Stay calm, listen and avoid judgement. Respond with care and patience
- Acknowledge their feelings and explain that some people use fear, shame and confusion to try to influence others
- Rely on your mandatory reporting process' like organisation or department based in-app tools, and report to the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE) website at www.accce.gov.au
- Offer guidance on how to record evidence safely (screenshots, dates/times, usernames)
- Provide a safe and supportive environment so they can seek help

Step 3

REFER

Education and healthcare play a critical role in connecting children and young people to support and reporting pathways.



Reporting Pathways

- If in immediate danger, call 000
- Report suspected SOE activity to:
 - ACCCE (www.accce.gov.au/report)
 - Follow relevant school or organisational mandatory reporting processes
 - Use in-platform reporting tools (social media / gaming apps)

Support Services

For a list of specialised support services, visit www.accce.gov.au/help-and-support/who-can-help

- **Headspace**
1800 650 890 | www.headspace.org.au
- **Kids Helpline**
1800 55 1800 | www.kidshelpline.com.au
- **Lifeline**
13 11 14 | www.lifeline.org.au
- **QLife**
1800 184 527 | www.qlife.org.au

Step 4

RE-ENGAGE

Re-engagement is a powerful protective factor for children and young impacted by SOE as it reduces isolation and the influence of harmful online connections.



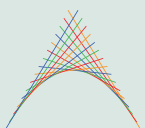
Manipulation and exploitative types of harm frequently use secrecy, threats and fear strategies to isolate, control and prevent disclosure. Encouraging children and young people to speak up, reconnect and break the silence empowers them, while disrupting coercive control and fear strategies.

Rebuilding safe links with family, friends, school, hobbies and community groups gives consistent adult and peer support and creates safe structures. This helps children and young people build protective behaviours, confidence, identity, a sense of purpose and protects their wellbeing.

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For more information visit

www.accce.gov.au/help-support/sadistic-online-exploitation



Australian
Centre to Counter
Child Exploitation



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