

# Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation: Practice Guidance

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# Introduction

Child sexual exploitation [CSE] is child sexual abuse and child protection procedures should be followed when there are concerns that a child is at risk of CSE or is already the victim of CSE.

This procedural guidance summarises the responsibility of professionals and volunteers to intervene effectively to prevent the sexual exploitation of children. For many, this will mean being alert to the ways in which young people can become vulnerable to CSE, the indicators that they are being drawn into exploitative situations and knowing how to report these concerns. For others, who have more specific safeguarding responsibilities, it will involve complex work to support victims and disrupt and prosecute perpetrators. For everyone, it will involve questioning attitudes and beliefs that may get in the way of recognising that children are being sexually exploited and providing the consistent, determined non-judgemental support they and their families need.<sup>1</sup>

This guidance eliminates the need for Multi-Agency Planning Meetings [MAP] as referred to in the Metropolitan Police Service [MPS] Operating Protocol and in previous versions of chapters on child sexual exploitation in Part B, Practice Guidance, in the London Child Protection Procedures. Instead, this guidance recommends that Part A of the London Child Protection Procedures is followed in relation to all cases of child sexual exploitation. Children at risk of sexual exploitation should be referred to children's social care and the normal processes of checks and information gathering, assessment, strategy discussions and review processes should be followed in line with the risk level identified – see the Thresholds document in the London Child Protection Procedures [ available at: [http://www.londoncp.co.uk/files/revise\\_d\\_guidance\\_thresholds.pdf](http://www.londoncp.co.uk/files/revise_d_guidance_thresholds.pdf) ] for examples of the indicators of need which would require an early help response or a response under section 17 or section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

It is important to emphasise that this guidance suggests that cases should not be held outside of children's social care unless they do not meet the threshold for a response under section 17 [child in need] or section 47 [child protection] of the Children Act 1989. It may be appropriate to discuss some individual cases at strategic meetings such as the Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation [MASE] meetings but these meetings shouldn't 'hold' the cases - they should continue to be managed by children's social care.

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<sup>1</sup> This procedure should be read in conjunction with:

- The London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2013), in particular [section 11. Safeguarding sexually active children](#), [section 10. Safeguarding trafficked and exploited children](#), [section 4. Children missing from care, home or education](#) and [13. Safeguarding Children affected by Gang Activity / Serious Youth Violence](#).
- The London Child Sexual Exploitation Operating Protocol 2nd Edition March 2015. Available at: <http://content.met.police.uk/Article/The-London-Child-Sexual-Exploitation-Operating-Protocol-March-2015/1400022286691/tellsomebody>

Local authorities might find it appropriate to use child in need processes to protect children at risk of child sexual exploitation where there are no or very limited concerns relating to the family home and use child protection procedures where there are safeguarding concerns relating to the family - all such decisions should be recorded and the rationale explained. However, it should be noted that there is nothing in law that restricts the use of child protection procedures to cases where the risks are intra-familial.

Children's social care should have a system in place to flag cases where there is a risk of sexual exploitation – any such system should enable cases to be flagged where risk is identified and to have the flag removed when that risk is no longer current. This will enable an assessment of the extent of CSE in each local authority and across London.

The Editorial Board of the London Child Protection Procedures developed this guidance in order to avoid a parallel safeguarding process being developed for children at risk of sexual exploitation. The existing safeguarding procedures are robust and have a high level of accountability – it was decided that it is neither practical nor desirable to try and duplicate this system for different forms of risk.

## Definition

It is important to emphasise that child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. The definition of child sexual abuse in Working Together 2015,<sup>2</sup> the government's statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, is as follows:

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

This guidance also uses the nationally agreed Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) definition of child sexual exploitation - this underpins the Metropolitan Police Service's *Pan-London Child Sexual Exploitation Operating Protocol* (MPS, 2015). Available at: <http://content.met.police.uk/Article/The-London-Child-Sexual-Exploitation-Operating-Protocol-March-2015/1400022286691/tellsomebody>

- Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where the young person (or third person/s) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes,

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[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/419595/Working\\_Together\\_to\\_Safeguard\\_Children.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419595/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf)

affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities.

- Child sexual exploitation (CSE) can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post images on the internet / mobile phones without immediate payment or gain.
- Violence, coercion and intimidation are common. Involvement in exploitative relationships is characterised by the child's or young person's limited availability of choice as a result of their social, economic or emotional vulnerability.
- A common feature of CSE is that the child or young person does not recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and does not see themselves as a victim of exploitation.

## Grooming

Sexual exploitation is commonly characterised by the grooming of young people. This process is carried out by perpetrators to gain their trust. Perpetrators often target children who are already vulnerable – who may have troubled family histories and/or be bullied outside of the home and socially isolated. Once the young people are thought to be sufficiently emotionally involved, violence and intimidation is often used to ensure compliance. In addition, perpetrators may give drugs and alcohol to victims and encourage addiction in order to ensure they become dependent on them for the supply of these substances.

The Oxfordshire SCR found that:

*The girls were... groomed in a variety of ways such as being given gifts or simply by being shown the care and attention that they craved. The attention lavished on the girls at the outset was of course entirely insincere as it was merely a device to exploit their vulnerability. Having secured their confidence the men would ply the girls with alcohol and introduce them to drugs such as cannabis, cocaine, 'crack' and sometimes heroin. The girls became addicted to certain of the drugs and felt unable to live without them. This made them even more dependent on the men. Sometimes the men would also exercise extreme physical and sexual violence on the girls and threaten them that should they ever seek to free themselves from the grasp of the group they and/or their families would suffer serious harm.*

In such ways men exercised control over the girls who they knew were unlikely to ever be able to extract themselves from the exploitation let alone complain about it and if they were to complain, it is unlikely they would be believed in view of what others would perceive as their delinquent conduct.<sup>3</sup>

This is reflected in what the victims in Oxfordshire said about how the abuse started:

- *It was a bit exciting.*

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<sup>3</sup> Serious Case Review into Child Sexual Exploitation in Oxfordshire (March 2015) The Available at: <http://www.oscb.org.uk/case-reviews/>

- *They gave us more than my Mum could.*
- *Dad was violent to me. I thought it was normal.*
- *My poor early life made me vulnerable.*
- *School was bad for me – I was made fun of as a foster child. So I bunked off.*
- *Suddenly the guys were bringing me stuff. They said how lovely I was.*
- *They made me trust them for months, and I was their friend. I was flattered.*
- *I believed they were my friends, nothing was more important.*
- *When the grooming started they were so kind and nice. They were a lot older. It was flattering. It was attractive – then things started to change. I was already into drugs.*

However, this changes:

- *The next thing it isn't nice anymore... they gave us weed and drink to make us feel better.*
- *They took us to a field where there were other men who had come to have sex with us. I tried not to do it. There were five of them.*
- *They threatened to blow up my house with my Mum in it.*
- *I was expected to do things – if I didn't they said they would come to my house and burn me alive. I had a baby brother.*
- *Now I feel I was raped – I didn't have any choice.*
- *I wouldn't ever have said no – they'd have beaten the shit out of me.*
- *I wouldn't have done this if I was sober. That's why the men gave us so much to drink.*
- *When we were at the flats I knew I was there to have sex with whichever men were brought there.*
- *He urinated on me*
- *It wasn't until the trial that I realised the organised nature of the abuse.*

# Key Principles of Intervention

*Child sexual exploitation is happening everywhere - If it isn't actively sought it will not be uncovered. This requires different skills – police officers to act more like social workers, social workers to act more like detectives. Local politicians and Police and Crime Commissioners to be questioning of children's services and police about missing children and ensuring that robust processes are in place locally.<sup>4</sup>*

This was the finding of Oxfordshire County Council following their investigation into child sexual exploitation. This investigation uncovered the horrific, organised sexual exploitation of children which had been ongoing over a number of years. A number of perpetrators were successfully prosecuted but the serious case review that followed found that opportunities to stop the exploitation had been repeatedly missed:

*The fact that scores of professionals from numerous disciplines, and tens of organisations or departments, took a long time to recognise CSE, used language that appeared at least in part to blame victims and see them as adults, and had a view that little could be done in the face of 'no cooperation' demonstrates that the failures were common to organisational systems.*

## Focus on the perpetrators

*What victims of CSE say about how professionals responded to perpetrators*

- *I was found in the presence of the men constantly. Why were they not pulled in?*
- *Police... didn't find me except once... I didn't hide – I told people where I was They could have followed us.*
- *The Police never asked me why – they just took me home.*
- *They left you in a house...and didn't even ask my age.*
- *I was put in a secure unit because I kept going missing – I thought I was being punished. They did nothing to the men that made me go missing.*
- *Staff would see you get picked up by adult males in cars so they knew what you were doing.*
- *They didn't stop to think 'why?'*

The focus of work to prevent child sexual exploitation should be on identifying, disrupting and prosecuting the perpetrators<sup>5</sup>. The emphasis should not be on victims to change their behaviour or move schools or home in order to stop the abuse. Perpetrators should

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<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/news/2015/CSEActions.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Please note that where the perpetrators are also children it might be appropriate to consider alternatives to prosecution.



be actively pursued by all available means, regardless of the degree of victim cooperation

### *The importance of pro-active investigation and evidence gathering*

Young people who are being exploited may not co-operate with attempts by professionals to stop the abuse for a number of reasons including:

- The difficulty they have in understanding the abusive nature of their involvement with the perpetrators.
- Threats of extreme violence. Perpetrators may threaten victims to stop them disclosing what is happening to them. These threats can also be made against friends and family. Victims have talked about the extreme danger they faced and what happened when action was taken without sufficient planning for their safety:
  - ... *She did speak to the police. It meant I was whacked around the head with a crowbar.*
  - *I said, 'I will get burned alive'. She said come round for a coffee.*
  - *I made a complaint about a man who trafficked me from a children's home. He was arrested, released and trafficked me again.*

*[Taken from Oxfordshire SCR]*

### *Where the perpetrators are also children: Intervening with peer groups and in the community*

Where the perpetrator/s are also children, consideration should be given at the Strategy discussion/meeting, Review Meetings and/or MASE meetings as to the most effective and appropriate disruption and prevention tactics.

Also, please refer to Part B3, Chapter 14, Children Harming Others. Available at: [http://www.londoncp.co.uk/chapters/ch\\_harm\\_others.html](http://www.londoncp.co.uk/chapters/ch_harm_others.html)

When young people display harmful sexual behaviour is it important to consider whether the response should be to address these issues through the criminal justice system or to address welfare issues or a combination of the two. Research into harmful sexual behaviour demonstrates that some young people have histories of victimisation which has informed their own abuse of others. Young people who sexually harm their peers may also be coerced in a gang context, they may have experienced bullying themselves or their behaviour may be being influenced by others who are leading the abusive behaviour.

In order to disrupt this type of behaviour a number of issues should be taken into consideration:

- Is the young person being abusive on their own? If a group is involved a peer group intervention using similar techniques as currently used in restorative justice maybe appropriate. It will also be important to identify the leader/s and to work with bystanders.

Consideration also needs to be given to the different ways in which the exploitation occurs and the different locations that may be used. For example, exploitation may well

take place on buses and in unmonitored and poorly monitored spaces at school and in local neighbourhoods. Interventions should reflect this and may involve improving lighting and the monitoring of these locations – for example, community safety officers might increase patrols in these areas. Also, bus companies may need to raise staff awareness to ensure they know how to identify potentially vulnerable children and how they should report their concerns appropriately.

It is also important that the potential vulnerability of child perpetrators is assessed and where appropriate support is provided. Recent research has found that half of 11-17 year olds known to Youth Offending Services have themselves been the victim of abuse, violence, crime or other traumatic experiences and most of these have emotional and mental health needs that are linked to these experiences.

### *The role of local authority trading standards, environmental health and licensing teams*

It is important that the range of local authority services involved in licencing and inspecting houses of multiple occupation, fast food premises, nightclubs, pubs, parks and other venues which may be used as venues for the exploitation of children, work in conjunction with the police to disrupt and prosecute offenders and those who facilitate their offending behaviour.

## Working with victims

### *Prejudices and misunderstandings*

Enquiries into the sexual exploitation of children have repeatedly highlighted that the children who are sexually exploited are often misunderstood to be consenting to their abuse, and where it is recognised that they are being exploited, the children are often believed to have brought it on themselves. These misunderstandings and prejudices have led to the failure to effectively safeguard children who have gone on to suffer appalling abuse over extended periods of time.

It is therefore very important that professionals and volunteers think about and challenge any preconceptions and prejudices they may hold relating to gender, sexuality and sexual behaviour particularly as they relate to children and young people. Common misconceptions include:

- Girls who wear clothing that is perceived as ‘modest’ and/or religiously observant clothing will not be victims of sexual exploitation
- Boys always want to have sex.
- That the children/young people being exploited are ‘streetwise’ and in control of what is happening to them.

### *The importance of language*

Victims of CSE talk about being blamed, not being believed and professionals not caring. The Serious Case Review in Oxfordshire emphasises the importance of the language used to talk about the victims and how this language located responsibility for the abuse with the victims.

*The language used demonstrated the lack of full understanding of CSE at the time. It described the girls getting themselves 'into trouble'. Other examples... included "[The missing person] is believed to be prostituting herself... to pay for drugs', 'putting themselves at risk' "She is a streetwise girl who is wilful..." "She associates with adults who have warnings for firearms and drugs. It is possible she is prostituting herself" "... Deliberately puts herself as risk as she goes off with older men that are strangers". The girls saw staff as critical of them and (while all the girls spoken to acknowledged how 'difficult' they were) felt staff were not able to make a real human connection with them.*

### *Never giving up on a child*

The provision of consistent, non-judgemental support will give more confidence to victims to disclose and give evidence. Victims talk about the importance of having a professional who listened and showed that they cared.

### Disclosure

It is important for professionals to be aware that children might disclose indirectly – it is quite common for children to say that the abuse is happening to a friend or someone they know when in fact it is they themselves who are being abused.

### Relocation

Whilst victims may sometimes need help to move out of a school or neighbourhood because the risks are too great for them to remain, all other alternatives should be explored and, where possible, plans to reintegrate them back into their homes and communities should be made.

Too often victims have been expected/required to leave their neighbourhoods and support networks in order to stop the abuse – this has left 'victim vacuums' -in the places where they have been moved from with other young people being targeted by perpetrators. It has also left already vulnerable young people more at risk as a result of being moved away from their familiar world. It can also give the implicit message to the victim and those around them that it is their fault.

### *Offending behaviour*

In some cases victims of CSE will be involved in offending behaviour or drawn into this behaviour by the perpetrators. They might become involved in theft, the sale and distribution of drugs or in grooming other young people for exploitation. In these cases, the response to their offending should be proportionate. It should recognise the exploitative context in which the offending is taking place, including that intimidation and/or threats of violence may well be occurring. The response should also consider the vulnerability of the young person and whether fears of being prosecuted for offending behaviour may get in the way of a young person disclosing the exploitation they are experiencing.

Support: Victims should be offered practical and therapeutic support. This support should be made available to victims over an extended period of time as they may take months or years to feel ready to take up offers of help.

## Working with parents/carers

When working with parents or carers it is important to make every effort to involve them as protective and supportive factors in the child/children's lives even where there may have been or still are concerns about their parenting.

It is important to emphasise that professionals should not assume that Child in Need [CIN] and Child Protection [CP] processes are punitive to parents. They are a mechanism by which professionals share their concerns regarding a child with parents and, wherever possible, a plan is developed in partnership with the parents in order to try and keep that child safe.

Where parents are or can be a protective factor it is important that:

- They are supported.
- They are included in the assessment of the risk to their child and incorporated into the plans made to protect them.
- They are kept informed about progress or lack of progress in relation to protecting their child.
- If their child is missing, they are kept informed of efforts to find them and immediately informed when their child is found.
- That their concerns are listened and responded to.
- That their knowledge and understanding of their child informs the assessment and planning.

## Factors Which Increase Risk

### Young people with vulnerabilities

Sexual exploitation is characterised by the following:

- A power imbalance - those exploiting the child/young person have a level of power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources.
- Limited availability of choice - the child/young person has a limited availability of choice with regard to their participation in exploitative situations (limited choice may also be a result of their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability).

Sexually exploited children come from a range of backgrounds and may have no additional risk factors or vulnerabilities, therefore, professionals should always keep an open mind to the possibility that a child may be at risk of exploitation. However, children can be at increased risk of sexual exploitation if they have any additional vulnerabilities, as perpetrators may target them and try to exploit these vulnerabilities. The following are examples of factors that can make a young person more vulnerable to exploitation:

- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, parental criminality).

- A history of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, physical and emotional abuse and neglect).
- Learning disabilities.
- Bereavement or loss.
- Being lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer.
- Boys and girls whose gender identity differs from the sex they were given at birth<sup>6</sup> or who question their gender identity [someone who is or feels they may be trans or trans-gender<sup>7</sup>].
- Having temporary leave to remain or being in the UK illegally.
- There are indications that the child has been trafficked into the UK<sup>8</sup>.
- Homelessness, including living in a hostel, bed and breakfast accommodation or a foyer.
- Being a young carer.
- Living in residential care.
- Lacking friends from the same age group.
- Having low self-esteem or self-confidence.

## Risks associated with public spaces in local neighbourhoods, schools and peer groups:

Asides from the reported targeting of some residential children's homes, sexual exploitation rarely occurs within the homes that young people live. Serious case reviews, case file reviews and local problem profiles have identified sexual exploitation occurring in local parks, shopping centres, hotels, transport hubs, schools and alternative education provision and other spaces which young people socialise<sup>9</sup>.

As well as exploitation occurring in these environments, young people who are already being sexually exploited may also recruit individuals with whom they socialise. These young people may have no additional vulnerabilities, hence, regardless of the individual vulnerabilities outlined above young people may also be at additional risk because of the

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<sup>6</sup> Transgender is a term used to describe people whose gender identity differs from the sex the doctor marked on their birth certificate. Gender identity is a person's internal, personal sense of being a man or a woman (or someone outside of that gender binary). For transgender people, the sex they were assigned at birth and their own internal gender identity do not match  
[<http://www.glaad.org/transgender> ]

<sup>7</sup> See Stonewall for further information <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

<sup>8</sup> For further advice go to: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/services-for-children-and-families/child-trafficking-advice-centre-ctac/>

<sup>9</sup> See the following briefing for further information: <http://www.msunderstood.org.uk/assets/templates/msunderstood/style/documents/M SUPB01.pdf>

neighbourhood they live in and the other young people with whom they spend time. For example:

- Living in a neighbourhood affected by gangs.
- Gang association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships.
- Attending school with young people who are sexually exploited.
- Friends with young people who are sexually exploited.

## Age: 16 and 17 year olds

It is important to emphasise that because a child is 16 or 17 and can legally consent to sex, it does not make them less vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

A child who is being exploited has not consented to sex regardless of their age. Hence the law regarding the age when a child or young person can consent to sex is only relevant when considering the offences with which a perpetrator may be charged.

## Risks relating to gender and sexuality

Young people who do not conform to their family or community's expectations of gender and sexual identity and/or behaviour are more likely to feel isolated and unable to disclose sexual exploitation if they experience it. They might fear:

- Being judged and labelled.
  - These fears are likely to be different for boys and girls. Girls are more likely to fear being judged as sexually available whilst boys may fear their masculinity and sexuality being questioned if they refuse sex.
- Being forced into marriage.
- Violence from family/community members who feel they have brought shame onto the group.

In addition, perpetrators may target young people who they know come from families and/or communities with strongly held and negative views of sex outside of marriage and of same sex relationships as this leaves those young people particularly vulnerable to self-blaming and blackmail.

Young people particularly at risk include the following:

- Boys and girls whose gender identity differs from the sex they were given at birth<sup>10</sup> or who question their gender identity.
- Boys who have sex with boys or are believed to be attracted to boys.
- Girls who are sexually active or are believed to be sexually active. Girls are particularly likely to experience strong familial and social pressure to not have

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<sup>10</sup> Transgender is a term used to describe people whose gender identity differs from the sex the doctor marked on their birth certificate. Gender identity is a person's internal, personal sense of being a man or a woman (or someone outside of that gender binary). For transgender people, the sex they were assigned at birth and their own internal gender identity do not match [<http://www.glaad.org/transgender> ]

- sex outside of marriage or a long term relationship and/or not to give any appearance that they are sexually active.
- Young people who do not conform to gender norms.
  - Young people who are believed to be, or are having, inter-racial/religious relationships and these relationships are disapproved of by their family/community.

## Young people who go missing or are not where they are expected to be

Going missing or being absent from home or school has been consistently identified as a key vulnerability in relation to CSE and one of the main indicators that a child is already being exploited. Of course, there are many reasons why a child may not be where they are supposed to be, but consideration should always be given to whether they might be at risk of sexual exploitation or are being exploited.

Current research findings estimate that approximately 25 per cent of children and young people that go missing are at risk of serious harm and there are particular concerns about the links between children running away and the risks of sexual exploitation. For example, according to recent studies, looked after children (LAC) missing from their placements are vulnerable to sexual and other exploitation, especially children in residential care<sup>11</sup>.

Young people may go missing for quite short periods of time. They may be absent from school for part of the school day or not be where their carers expect them to be for 2 or 3 hours. It is important to be alert to shorter periods of time when children are absent as this can also indicate that a child is being groomed for exploitation or is already being exploited. Children may give no explanation for their absence or their explanation may not be plausible or consistent particularly when they are absent on a number of occasions.

Of course, young people also go missing for longer periods of time, sometimes overnight and sometimes for days on end and the risks increase that they are vulnerable to exploitation or are being exploited when there are extended and/or repeated missing incidents.

For further information see the London Child Protection Procedures: Part B3; Chapter 3, Children Missing from Care, Home & Education  
[http://www.londoncp.co.uk/chapters/ch\\_miss\\_care\\_home\\_sch.html](http://www.londoncp.co.uk/chapters/ch_miss_care_home_sch.html)

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<sup>11</sup> The Ofsted report 'Missing Children' published in February 2013; the Joint All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) Inquiry on Children Who Go Missing from Care 2012 and the accelerated report of the OCC's ongoing inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups.

# Indicators that a child/young person may already be being exploited

The following signs and behaviour are seen in children who are already being sexually exploited:

- Missing from home or care.
- Absent from school for whole or part days.
- Sexually-transmitted infection/s.
- Injuries caused by sexual activity.
- Pregnancy and termination/s.
- Recruiting others into exploitative situations.
- Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites.
- Involvement in offending.
- Receipt of gifts and money from unknown sources.
- Physical injuries.
- Drug or alcohol misuse.
- Change in physical appearance – *for example, the SCR review into CSE in Oxfordshire reported young people 'looking gaunt'<sup>12</sup>.*
- Estranged from their family.
- Poor mental health.
- Self-harm.
- Thoughts of or attempts at suicide.

*[Based on: 'I thought I was the only one. The only one in the world'. The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation In Gangs and Groups (OCC, November 2012)].*

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<sup>12</sup> Serious Case Review into Child Sexual Exploitation in Oxfordshire: from the experiences of Children A, B, C, D, E, and F



# Roles and Responsibilities for all Professionals and Volunteers

The sexual exploitation of children is child abuse and professionals and volunteers working with children and young people should follow their agency, and local area policies and procedure for the safeguarding of children when they have concerns that a child or young person is at risk of, or is being, exploited.

Key staff include those working in sexual health services, as girls who are being exploited may seek help for sexually transmitted disease and/or unwanted pregnancies.

## Training and awareness

It is the responsibility of all professionals and volunteers working with children and young people:

- To be aware of the risk factors and indicators for CSE and to be alert to the possibility that a child they are in contact with may be being sexually exploited.
- To understand their organisations policies and procedures regarding CSE and to ensure they follow them where they think that a child may be at risk of or being exploited.
- To know who their organisation's designated safeguarding children professional is and how and when to contact them for advice.
- Be sufficiently knowledgeable and competent to contact local LA children's social care or the police about their concerns directly and to complete the appropriate referral form.

## Clarifying the cause for concern: Information gathering and monitoring

Professionals/volunteers may have concerns that a young person is at risk of sexual exploitation, but the concerns may be non-specific and could have arisen for a number of different reasons. These concerns might arise because something unusual happens or the young person's behaviour changes.

For example:

- A young person who has not previously been seen with expensive belongings, starts to be seen with expensive clothes and/or phone etc. and there is no immediate explanation.
- A young person truant from school on 2 or 3 occasions.
- A young person's appearance and personal hygiene deteriorates.
- A young person's behaviour and/or mood deteriorates and there is no obvious explanation.

*For further examples see Tier 2 [Children with additional needs that can be met through the provision of 'early help'] in the 'The Thresholds of Need'<sup>13</sup>.*

In these circumstances, the professional/volunteer should:

- Keep an open mind – there may be a number of different reasons for these changes.
- Discuss their concerns with their designated safeguarding professional lead, who will be able to offer advice and suggestions for further action and also decide whether a referral to LA children's social care is required.
- Gather information – often it is only when otherwise small pieces of information are shared that it is possible to see whether they add up to a serious concern. Alternatively, sharing information can allay fears by providing a reassuring explanation. Depending on the remit of the organisation and the role of the professional/volunteers, it may be appropriate to:
  - Share concerns with other professionals who know the young person and ask if they have also noticed that something is amiss.
  - Talk to the young person themselves, explaining the concerns and ask what the cause maybe.  
*It is important not to ask leading questions, to be non-judgemental and not make assumptions about what is happening.*
  - Talk to siblings, friends and classmates, asking them if there is anything going on.  
*It is important to maintain confidentiality and be mindful of the potential impact of talking about the situation with other young people.*
  - Talk to parents and carers.  
*It is important to share concerns with parents and carers whilst also being mindful of the potential impact on the young person and their relationship with their parents/carers.*

Where, the concerns continue but remain low level and non-specific, the professional/volunteer should, in conjunction with the designated safeguarding lead:

- Agree to continue to monitor the situation [including where applicable, monitoring e-safety issues] with a view to either deciding that the concerns are unfounded or that a referral to LA children's social care is required.
- Refer to 'early help' services, such as youth clubs, in-house support services, parenting support and 'diversionary activities' such as sports clubs etc.

Where the concerns escalate and there is a concern that the child is a child in need a referral should be made to LA children's social care. See threshold document<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> [http://www.londoncp.co.uk/files/revised\\_guidance\\_thresholds.pdf](http://www.londoncp.co.uk/files/revised_guidance_thresholds.pdf)

## Responding to concerns: When to make referrals to local authority children's social care and/or the police

Please refer to the Thresholds of Need in the London Child Protection Procedures for examples of indicators of need which require a referral to local authority children's social care<sup>15</sup>.

A young person should be referred to LA children's social where there are a cluster of vulnerabilities that may indicate the young person is being sexually exploited or there are one or two indicators which, on their own, escalate concerns. Unless there is evidence of risk of significant harm, the young person will be assessed as a child in need.

Examples of clusters of concerns that would require a referral to LA children's social care include:

- A young person who has a pre-existing vulnerability [see section above] has been absent within the school day on 2 or 3 occasions, has a boyfriend/girlfriend who is 2 - 3 years older than them and it is rumoured that explicit images of them have been shared with others.

See also Factors which increase risk

Examples of specific risks relating to sexual exploitation that on their own would require a referral to LA children's social care include:

- A young person has one or more sexually transmitted infection.
- A young person has repeat missing episodes or one off instances which cause a high level of concern

See also Indicators that a child/young person may already be being exploited

If the child/young person is at immediate risk of harm, the matter should be reported to the police straight away. A referral should also be made to the local authority children's services.

*Referrals to LA children's social care should be made in accordance with **section 2. Referral and assessment** in the London Child Protection Procedures (London Board, 2013).*

### *Mapping the Metropolitan Police Service 'Categories 1- 3'*

The Metropolitan Police Service [MPS] has 3 categories of CSE<sup>16</sup>. Below is a table which maps these 3 categories against the 'Thresholds of Need' in the London Child Protection Procedures. It is important to be aware that referrals to local authority children's social care should be made for children and young people in all 3 police categories.

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.londoncp.co.uk/files/revised\\_guidance\\_thresholds.pdf](http://www.londoncp.co.uk/files/revised_guidance_thresholds.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Metropolitan Police Service's *Pan-London Child Sexual Exploitation Operating Protocol* (MPS, 2015). Available at: <http://content.met.police.uk/Article/The-London-Child-Sexual-Exploitation-Operating-Protocol-March-2015/1400022286691/tellsomebody>

## Mapping the Metropolitan Police Service 'Categories 1- 3' to the 'Thresholds of Need' in the London Child Protection Procedures

| <b>Tier 1</b> Children with no additional needs whose health and developmental needs can be met by universal services. | <b>Tier 2</b> Children with additional needs that can be met through the provision of 'early help' - a referral to children's social care is NOT required. | <b>Tier 3</b> Children with complex multiple needs who need statutory and specialist services. A referral to children's social care is required.  | <b>Tier 4</b> Children in acute need. Require immediate referral to children's social care and/or the police.   |
|--|--|---|---|
| /  | /  | <p><b>Police Category 1:</b> A vulnerable child or young person, where there are concerns they are being targeted and groomed and where any of the CSE warning signs have been identified. However, at this stage there is no evidence of any offences.</p> | <p><b>Police Category 2:</b> Evidence a child or young person is being targeted for opportunistic abuse through the exchange of sex for drugs, perceived affection, sense of belonging, accommodation (overnight stays), money and goods etc. This will also include a child or young person being sexually exploited through the use of technology and without the child or young person receiving any reward. I.e: the exchange of indecent images on-line. The likelihood of coercions and control is significant.</p> |
| /  | /  | /   | <p><b>Police Category 3:</b> A child or young person whose sexual exploitation is habitual, self-denied and where coercion/ control is implicit. This is often carried out by multiple perpetrators.</p>  |

# Local Authority Children's Social Care

## Introduction

LA children's social care hold the lead responsibility for responding to children abused through or at risk of sexual exploitation. The police hold the lead responsibility for the disruption and prosecution of perpetrators. The work to support children and young people at risk of or experiencing CSE should be carried out in conjunction with the work to disrupt and/or prosecute perpetrators.

Please note that MPS categories 1-3 map to 'Tiers 3 and 4' of the London Thresholds document and cases that meet these criteria will be either children in need or subject to child protection plans. See the table above: Mapping the Metropolitan Police Service [MPS] 'Categories 1-3' to the Thresholds of Need' in the London CP Procedures:

Assessment of, and planning for young people at risk of, or being sexually exploited, needs to be flexible and take account of each child's individuality, the uniqueness of his / her circumstances and the changes that may occur for him / her over time. Child sexual exploitation is dynamic; the young person's circumstances can change and on occasions deteriorate very rapidly. All professionals should be aware that assessments need to be continual and display vigilance.

See also **11.3. Assessment, in the London Procedure for Safeguarding sexually active children** for guidance in assessing whether a relationship presents a risk of harm to a child.

## Responding to contacts and referrals

When an individual or agency contacts children's social care regarding a child or young person they might not have the knowledge or expertise to identify the risk factors for sexual exploitation. Hence, children's social care should assess whether sexual exploitation is a risk for any child or young person even where it isn't raised by the person making contact.

In addition, where an individual or agency contacts LA children's social care regarding a child or young person who they identify as being at risk of, or as being, sexually exploited, LA children's social care should assess whether the information supplied indicates a risk of sexual exploitation. Where the information supplied clearly doesn't indicate risk factors, the person or agency who made contact should be informed of this and why. If no further information of risk is supplied and there are no other concerns for the child or young person, no further action will be taken.

Where sexual exploitation is identified as a potential risk, LA children's social care will carry out an assessment under section 17 of the CA 1989 to identify the child's level of risk and need for service provision and will advise the referrer of the outcome of this assessment:

- The assessment may identify the child to be at risk of significant harm and in need of protection. This may necessitate a child protection enquiry under section 47 of the Children Act 1989; or
- The assessment may indicate that the child is in need and that services are needed prevent impairment to their health and development
- Where no concerns are identified, there will be no further action by CSC but the child may require early help or universal services. In these cases, LA children's social care will advise the referrer verbally and in writing as to why the agency is to take this position.

### *Trafficked children*

Human trafficking is the movement of a person from one place to another into conditions of exploitation, using deception, coercion, the abuse of power or the abuse of someone's vulnerability. It is possible to be a victim of trafficking even if your consent has been given to being moved. Although human trafficking often involves an international cross-border element, it is also possible to be a victim of human trafficking within your own country<sup>17</sup>.

Where there are a concerns a child or young person may have been trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation – both within the United Kingdom or across international borders – a referral form<sup>18</sup> should be completed and sent to the United Kingdom Human trafficking Centre [UKHTC] via e-mail at [UKHTC@nca.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:UKHTC@nca.x.gsi.gov.uk) or by fax to 0870 496 5534. Once a referral has been made, trained decision makers will assess and make a decision on whether an individual is a victim of trafficking or modern slavery [this process is referred to as the National referral Mechanism or NRM].

For further information see the advice available at the National Crime Agency website: <http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/about-us/what-we-do/specialist-capabilities/uk-human-trafficking-centre/national-referral-mechanism>

There is also guidance for working with and interviewing children who may have been trafficked available at: <http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/about-us/what-we-do/specialist-capabilities/uk-human-trafficking-centre/best-practice-guide>

## Taking action when a young person is at risk of CSE

In cases where an LA children's social care assessment confirms that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, they must convene a strategy discussion meeting in order to determine whether child protection enquiries should be made in line with **section 3. Child Protection s47 Enquiries.**

<sup>17</sup> Available at : <http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/crime-threats/human-trafficking>

<sup>18</sup> available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-trafficking-victims-referral-and-assessment-forms>

Multi-agency checks should be carried out in order that information held by different agencies can inform the Strategy Discussion/Meeting.

Whenever possible, the LA children's social care lead for safeguarding sexually exploited children, should have input into the strategy discussion/meeting but action should not be delayed if s/he is not available. Other invitees should include the relevant police, teacher, health professional and any other significant involved professional

See [Appendix 1](#): Guidance for Strategy Discussions/Meetings and [Appendix 2](#): Agenda for Initial Strategy Discussion/Meeting.

There are three possible outcomes of the Strategy Discussion/Meeting:

- Where it is likely that a child is at risk of significant harm, child protection procedures under Section 47 will commence. See Part A of the London Child Protection Procedures<sup>19</sup>.
- If the threshold is not met for child protection procedures but s/he meets the threshold for services as a 'child in need', an assessment should take place and where appropriate a child in need plan will be put in place.
- Where the 'child in need' threshold isn't met, then a lead professional will be identified and an early help plan will be put in place.

The meeting should also decide if the organised and complex abuse procedures [Chapter 8, Part A of the London CP Procedures] should be invoked. These procedures apply where there are multiple victims and/or perpetrators.

Child protection procedures may be more useful when the parents are thought to be neglectful or collusive with the sexual exploitation, but the reason for the decision should always be recorded. Where it is decided that a child is at risk of sexual exploitation (suffering significant harm) but child protection procedures are not necessary this decision and the reason should be recorded on the child's file.

Where a child protection enquiry is not needed an assessment should take place under section 17 Children Act (if this has not already happened) and the child should be made subject of a child in need plan. See [Appendix 1](#): Guidance for Strategy Discussions for guidance regarding what should be included in the plan. All CIN plans should be reviewed at, at least 3 monthly intervals, until they are no longer needed.

Whenever possible, the child and their parent/carer should be invited to CIN meetings. However, family attendance must be carefully assessed and only agreed if attendance will not compromise the child's safety or the progress of the investigation. The final decision should be taken by the child protection or team manager. This decision should be clearly recorded on the child's case file.

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<sup>19</sup> [http://www.londoncp.co.uk/chapters/A\\_contents.html](http://www.londoncp.co.uk/chapters/A_contents.html)

## Taking action when the child at risk is in the care of local authorities

When a referral is received regarding a child in care, the allocated social worker must inform their team manager and a Strategy meeting should be convened. In addition to the key professionals identified in [Appendix 1: Guidance for Strategy Discussions](#), consideration should be given to inviting the fostering link worker, residential manager and Independent Reviewing Officer [IRO].

The child's IRO will always be informed of new information and changes to placement and care plans.

The strategy meeting should consider:

- Whether the child should remain in their placement
- Risks to other children in the placement
- The appropriateness and method of informing the child's parents. If children are accommodated, parent/s must be informed of all significant matters. When a child is subject to a care order, generally their parent/s should be informed of such a significant matter. A decision not to inform the parent/s should be recorded on file.
- The need for assertive action to be balanced against the need to not unduly increase the likelihood of the child running away in response to the action being taken.
- Any consideration of restriction of liberty or confiscation of property needs to be agreed by the team or service manager responsible for the child's case.
- The need for active work to be undertaken with the child to address issues of their self-esteem, relationships, sexuality, sexual relationships and health.
- If the child is in a residential unit or a foster care placement, the staff or foster carers should be asked to take positive action to clarify and record suspicions. This could include monitoring any suspicious activity in the vicinity of the home and informing the police and recording and passing on to the police information about adults causing concern such as details of appearance, cars etc.
- Whether there are patterns to the young person going missing. For example, are they missing for short periods of time during the school day or do they go missing over weekends?
- Monitoring callers to the home, or adults collecting children by car and whether visitors who are causing concern should be turned away and, if yes, how the young person should be informed of this and supported to deal with it.
- What efforts should be made to dissuade the child from leaving – this could include talking to them and involving them in alternative activities including escorting them to these activities where necessary.



- Ensuring the child is aware of any legal issues, including advice that staff cannot safeguard money which is reasonably suspected to have been gained through sexual exploitation. When staff do acquire such money, they must retain it and seek legal advice;
- Whether telephone calls and online communication should be monitored and whether it is necessary to restrict the use of or confiscate a mobile phone/computer which is being used inappropriately. Reasons for any of these actions should be included in the care plan.
- If a child has left their foster home or residential unit and staff/foster carers are concerned that they are at risk of exploitation, they should inform the local police and pass on relevant information. They should also inform the child's social worker.
- The importance children returning home receiving sensitive and welcoming responses.

The care plan and placement plan should be updated with the decisions of the meeting

If the child is in foster care, the social worker and fostering link worker should meet with the foster carer to discuss the outcome of the strategy meeting and the steps to be taken by the foster carer. This needs to take place in consultation with the fostering team manager.

Whether or not the child is moved from their placement, the other children in the placement should be monitored to identify whether they are also at risk of harm from, or are in some way supporting, the sexual exploitation.

The child's behaviour and attitude may be extremely challenging, and carers and staff will require ongoing support, advice and training to manage this behaviour. Either the manager of the residential unit or the fostering link worker must ensure adequate resources are in place to meet staff needs.

### *Placements outside of borough*

It is sometimes necessary to place a young person outside of the borough. This can be because of the lack of availability of appropriate placements within the borough and also because of concern that the young person is at risk in the local area.

When a young person is placed outside of the borough, a risk assessment should be carried out and the receiving local authority notified of the move and provided with the risk assessment.

### *Involvement of groups of children in care*

Where there is knowledge or strong suspicion that children are involved in sexual exploitation together, or are being controlled by the same person, particularly when that

person is a child, there will need to be additional planning. The procedures outlined in the 'Organised and Complex Abuse' chapter<sup>20</sup> should be followed.

It will be important to ensure that there are no inconsistencies between individual children's care plans. Where the placement is in another authority, or children from other authorities are involved, that authority's child protection manager (or equivalent) must be contacted, to discuss which authority is to take overall responsibility for convening the meeting and co-ordinating the response.

### *Leaving care / aftercare*

The same procedures as above should be followed in cases where young people in the leaving care team are considered to be at medium or high risk of abuse through sexual exploitation [corresponding to Tiers 3 and 4 in the thresholds document].

The pathway plan for any young person where there are concerns about sexual exploitation should specifically identify their vulnerability to sexual exploitation, and address the factors known to impede successful recovery from sexual exploitation (e.g. homelessness, poverty, lack of educational and employment opportunities and lack of supportive social contacts).

## **The Role of the Police**

There are numerous offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, along with the Child Abduction Act 1984 that can be used against those that exploit children. See Child Sexual Exploitation Operating Protocol 2015 [Include link].

The priority for the police is the investigation and prosecution of offenders who have been involved in abusing the child through sexual exploitation. This role should be undertaken in accordance with the principle of multi-agency co-operation to safeguard children.

Police may become aware of children being involved in sexual exploitation through normal police work on the streets, in the course of other criminal investigations, through referrals from other agencies or information direct from the public.

The initial police response to the discovery of a child who is being, or is at immediate risk of being, abused through sexual exploitation, must be to remove them from the source of harm and ensure that any necessary evidence is secured. This action must be followed by referral to LA children's social care. Following this, a strategy discussion/meeting will be convened.

If there are suspicions that a child is a victim of sexual exploitation, but there is no immediate or direct evidence (Category1: Risk Assessment Framework<sup>21</sup>), the police

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<sup>20</sup> Chapter 8, Part A, London Child Protection Procedures, [http://www.londoncp.co.uk/chapters/organised\\_complex.html](http://www.londoncp.co.uk/chapters/organised_complex.html)

<sup>21</sup> Metropolitan Police Service's *Pan-London Child Sexual Exploitation Operating Protocol* (MPS, 2015). Available at: <http://content.met.police.uk/Article/The-London-Child-Sexual-Exploitation-Operating-Protocol-March-2015/1400022286691/tellsomebody>

officer noting the concern should complete a Merlin report for referral to the MASH and also complete a non-crime CSE crisis to enable an appropriate action plan to be set. If a crime has been committed, the matter will be allocated to an appropriately trained officer to investigate from either a Sapphire Unit or the MPS Sexual Exploitation Team.

If the child already has an assigned social worker, the referral will go to the social worker who will refer to the SC&O5 referral desk for creation of a crisis report.

All interviews with the child as an actual or potential victim should be conducted, as far as possible, in accordance with the best evidence interview. However, flexibility needs to be applied, as it may take a number of interviews before the child is able to make, or complete a statement.

If the child has made a statement and/or is a potential witness, witness protection and witness support should be considered as early as possible.

When made aware of cases of actual or suspected CSE, Police should follow the Pan-London Operating Protocol for dealing with such cases. This will include attendance by officers from the local Borough and the Sexual Exploitation Team at MASE and strategy discussion/meetings as required.

## **Strategic Analysis and Oversight**

All agencies are encouraged to collect information and data on work they do in relation to the following - including the outcomes of this work where possible:

- The prevention, disruption and prosecution of CSE.
- The identification of localities, peer groups, gangs etc which present an increased risk of CSE.
- The young people they work with who are at risk of or experiencing CSE.

This information should be provided to the monthly multi-agency sexual exploitation or MASE meetings [this is in addition to the normal arrangements for reporting issues and concerns as and when they arise].

## **Multi-agency sexual exploitation meetings (MASE)**

Each borough should establish a MASE meeting to specifically review all new information and intelligence which comes to light, using new cases to illustrate and review activity against previously reported information and intelligence.

These should be convened monthly, and it is recommended that they are jointly chaired by a police officer of the rank of detective inspector [or above] and a safeguarding service manager or assistant director from children's social care.

The MASE meeting will co-ordinate the tactical responses to provide a problem solving approach to those at risk, while ensuring effective links are maintained and information is shared with the operational professional network working with the young person.

Cross borough meetings for those children that are placed out of borough should also be established when required. Any intelligence should be fed through into the police and LSCB by respective SPOCs.

Named leads from each agency are expected to attend these meetings, as well as any specialist providers. Mandatory membership for the MASE meetings should include:

- Police - Borough SPOC for CSE
- Police - Sexual Exploitation Team regional CSE SPOC
- LSCB Chair, or their representative from the CSE sub-group
- LA children's social care CSE lead
- Strategic health CSE lead
- Education CSE lead
- Youth Offending Team
- Local Care Home Manager
- Any other agency, including voluntary, who are involved in working with children or young people who are, or may be at risk from child sexual exploitation.

Data should be collected on the number of:

- Referrals to LA children's social care which have been made for CSE?
- Children who have been the subject of strategy discussions because they are at risk of or experiencing CSE?
- Children who are identified as a 'child in need' and are flagged as being at risk of CSE?
- Children have been subject to child protection plans and are flagged as being at risk of CSE?

It is important to note that systems for flagging cases where risk is identified also needs to include robust processes for removing the flag when that risk is no longer current.

LA children's social care are encouraged to monitor prevalence, activity patterns and the effectiveness of interventions for children who are sexually exploited through the MASE partnership arrangements.

## Local safeguarding children boards

It is the responsibility of the Local Safeguarding Children Board to ensure that the multi-agency partnership is working effectively to prevent and prosecute CSE. Where SCBs identify concerns, they have a duty to provide challenge the multi-agency partnership in order to effect change. Local SCBs also have a responsibility to co-ordinate multi agency safeguarding training which should include training regarding CSE and to actively promote safeguarding in the wider community.

### *Working with children and young people*

It is very important that children and young people are given the information they need to understand the risks around sexual exploitation and how they can help protect themselves. This involves information about, for example, staying safe online and understanding consent.

### *Working with the public*

Work to effectively prevent and prosecute CSE requires the active involvement of everyone who lives and works in a local area. It is therefore important that publicity campaigns are developed which challenge stereotypical or prejudiced views of young people, alerts people to indicators that a child is being exploited and informs them how to report their concerns.

### *Key businesses*

Hotels, minicab firms and licenced premises need to be alerted to the risk of child sexual exploitation and asked to report incidents which raise concerns.

Concerns can include:

- When an adult take a number of different children or young people to the same hotel.
- When multiple adults take a child to a hotel room.
- When adults are in the company of children and they don't appear to be their parents – they might be too young to be the parent of the child.
- When a cab driver notices multiple children being taken to the same address.
- When a cab driver notices a young person who appears distressed and/or unkempt or bruised.

In order to address sexual exploitation when both perpetrators and victims are children, a different range of businesses will likely need to be engaged as it's less likely that hotels and mini-cabs will be used to facilitate exploitation. Key businesses include:

- Bus companies
- Leisure and parks services
- Cornor shops, fast food premises and shisha bars.

### *Operation Makesafe<sup>22</sup>*

Operation Makesafe raises awareness of child sexual exploitation within the business community including hotels, taxi companies and licensed premises. It's a campaign led by the Metropolitan Police Service in partnership with London boroughs

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<sup>22</sup> <http://content.met.police.uk/Site/tellsomebody>

*Helpline: 116 000*

There is now a national helpline for young people to use to report their concerns and seek help. The helpline was launched on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2015 by NWG Network and Missing People as part of their “Say Something” campaign to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation

*The Say Something campaign has been developed with young people and aims to safeguard vulnerable children and young people by empowering them to identify early indicators of child sexual exploitation (CSE). Say Something will also offer a free, 24-hour, anonymous phone and SMS helpline, 116 000, enabling young people to disclose information and seek support.*

# Appendix 1: Guidance for Strategy Meetings

The first Strategy Discussion meeting should always be chaired by someone within LA children's social care who has the relevant knowledge and competency and also sufficient seniority to effect change. This should be a consistent person who can develop knowledge and intelligence about patterns of CSE /emerging trends. Following meetings may, where appropriate, be chaired by a LA children's social care team manager. The Chair should always inform the lead professional that a meeting is taking place.

The purpose of the meeting is to decide if the child is at risk of significant harm and whether a section 47 enquiry should be carried out. If the child is not assessed as at risk of significant harm, the meeting should decide if the child meets the threshold for services as a child in need or whether the child should be referred to early help with an allocated lead professional developing and reviewing a support plan.

Multi-agency information checks should be undertaken in advance of the meeting

The meeting should also consider if the organised and complex abuse procedures [Chapter 8, Part A of the London CP Procedures] should be invoked. These procedures apply where there are multiple victims and/or perpetrators.

Attendance at the meeting should include:

- The referrer, if a professional;
- Lead officers from education/ school
- Health services
- Social worker
- Any other relevant person (e.g. fostering link worker, residential key worker / manager YOT worker, voluntary agency worker, GP); and
- Identified police officer from the sexual exploitation team, Borough Unit or the Missing Person Unit.

In exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the Chair, a written report may be submitted in place of attendance.

Attendance at the meeting of the child and their family should be considered unless attendance will compromise the child's safety or the progress of an investigation. The final decision should be taken by the LA children's social care child protection manager or team manager for the child's case. This decision should be clearly recorded on the child's case file.

Criteria for deciding whether or not to invite the child and their family includes:

- The child's age and level of maturity, taking into account learning difficulties;
- The child's perception and interpretation of their involvement;
- Patterns and frequency of any behaviour causing concern;
- Identity and role of adults involved;
- Age and maturity of other participants;
- Nature of sexual activity, who is controlling the sexual activity, where it is taking place;
- The actual and potential physical and emotional effects;
- Whether any physical injuries have been caused;
- Existence of substance misuse and their significance for the child's behaviour;

- Likely reaction of parents/carers;
- Likely reaction of peers; and
- Likely reaction of other agencies.

*The meeting should address the following:*

- Share and clarify information, including intelligence concerning perpetrators and locations;
- Establish exact nature of concerns;
- Establish risk for any other children, including siblings;
- Consider the likelihood of disruption or prosecution of relevant perpetrators;
- Agree on action and make recommendations to address the concern;
- Develop a plan to support and protect the child
  - Wherever possible ensure the parent/carer should be involved in developing and implementing this plan

*The meeting outcome must:*

- Make a decision on whether the child:
  - Is at risk of significant harm.
  - Meets the threshold for services as a child in need.
  - Requires early intervention.
  - There is no need to take further action at this point.
  - The level of risk<sup>23</sup> (see risk matrix)
- Allocate a lead professional where the case has been referred to early intervention.
- Set a date for a review meeting in all cases except where it has been decided that no further action is required.
- There is a possibility of disruption and/or criminal action against a perpetrator/s;
- Information should be passed onto the multi-agency sexual exploitation meeting [MASE]
- Develop a plan either CIN Plan or Early Help plan to support and safeguard the child

The meeting should be minuted, the plan must specify who is responsible for undertaking the work, and a copy of the minutes should be retained and sent to all professionals in attendance.

Unless no further action is agreed, or child protection procedures are invoked, a date for a review meeting should be agreed, to take place no later than three months after the initial meeting.

If the child's parent/carer has not been present, the meeting must consider what information to give at this point, and who should undertake this. Parents/carers should usually be notified of concerns regarding their children, and what action is being considered to address these.

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<sup>23</sup> Metropolitan Police Service's *Pan-London Child Sexual Exploitation Operating Protocol* (MPS, 2015). Available at: <http://content.met.police.uk/Article/The-London-Child-Sexual-Exploitation-Operating-Protocol-March-2015/1400022286691/tellsomebody>



# Appendix 2: Agenda for Initial Strategy Discussion/Meeting

## STRATEGY DISCUSSION Children Abused through Sexual Exploitation INITIAL AGENDA

### Guidance notes

Information given at this meeting is confidential. Matters discussed here should only be disclosed to professional colleagues with a real need to know.

This borough has an equal opportunities policy. It is important that everyone at the conference is treated with mutual respect giving due regard to race, religion, language, culture, gender, sexuality and disability. Discriminatory attitudes, opinions or language expressed at this meeting will be challenged.

All participants will be invited to contribute any information they have. Information not presented openly at the meeting cannot be considered in assessing risk. It is important that it is clear from contributions what is fact and what is opinion.

1. Introduction and status of individual meeting
2. Apologies
3. Factual information / details
4. Reason for convening meeting
5. Concerns and Indicators
6. Sexual health concerns
7. Family awareness / response to risks
8. Child protection considerations
9. Perpetrators
10. Risk discussion
11. Chairs summary (including level of risk)
12. Decisions and recommendations including plan to safeguard and support the child
13. Review date

## Appendix 3: What Enquiries Tell Us

There have been a number of enquiries into child sexual abuse in recent years<sup>24</sup> all of which have identified that the extent of child sexual exploitation is far greater than previously thought and the crime is more horrific in its violence and brutality than had been previously understood.

### Prevalence

The interim report of the Children's Commissioner's enquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups identified at least 16,500 children as being at risk of child sexual exploitation across England. During one year 2,409 children were confirmed as victims of sexual exploitation in gangs and groups during the 14-month period from August 2010 to October 2011, described by the inquiry as a significant underestimate of the true numbers [*I thought I was the only one. The only one in the world*]. *The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation In Gangs and Groups (OCC, November 2012)*].

### The Response to CSE

Enquiries have also told us that the response to CSE has been inadequate. There has been a repeated failure to disrupt and prosecute the perpetrators and an inability to protect the children who have been exploited. The interim Children's Commissioner report [2012] suggests a complex, fragmented and partial picture of CSE with variable responses, leaving potentially thousands of young people unidentified and at risk.

The reasons for the ineffectiveness of the response to CSE are numerous but typically include the following:

- That young people are often targeted by perpetrators because they are already experiencing problems and may have behavioural issues – in this way when their behaviour gradually becomes more extreme it doesn't seem out of the ordinary.
- The victims can sometimes present as challenging and confrontational to professionals and hence it can hard to imagine that they are actually extremely vulnerable to the emotional manipulation and violence of the perpetrators.
- A lack of awareness of the extreme violence and sexual abuse that the victims experience. Whilst it is happening, young people often won't talk about it, so it is possible to underestimate what is happening to them.
- That the victims themselves frequently don't understand themselves as victims because they believe the perpetrators genuinely care about them and this belief can continue even when the perpetrators become violent and abusive. There are complex reasons for this including that this behaviour may have been normalised within the family home. Also, that the perpetrators are often highly skilled

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<sup>24</sup> <sup>24</sup> Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997 – 2013) Alexis Jay OBE. Available at:

[http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1407/independent\\_inquiry\\_cse\\_in\\_rotherham](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1407/independent_inquiry_cse_in_rotherham)

<sup>24</sup> Report of Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council [Feb 2015] Louise Casey. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-of-inspection-of-rotherham-metropolitan-borough-council>

manipulators used to using violence and pretended affection to exert control.

- The horror of what is happening to young people who are being sexually exploited is hard to comprehend and sometimes it may be easier to look the other way.
- Judgement and blame, particularly of girls who are sexually active. Sexist attitudes divide girls into good girls, who are sexually well behaved, and bad girls who have had sex or are believed to have had sex with more than one partner or are open about wanting to have sex. Once a girl is labelled a 'bad girl' these same sexist attitudes can assume she is willing to have sex with anyone.
- Ways of working which focus on the victims and emphasise what they have to do to keep themselves safe rather than focussing on the perpetrators or making changes to unsafe environments.
- A focus on the need for the victim to disclose what is happening rather than on using disruption tactics against the perpetrators and on pro-active investigation in order to gather evidence to build a case.

# Appendix 4: Types of Sexual Exploitation

## Boyfriend model

Here the offender befriends and grooms a young person into a 'relationship' and then coerces or forces them to have sex with friends or associates. The boyfriend may be significantly older than the victim, but not always.

## Peer on peer exploitation<sup>25</sup>

Young people can be sexually exploited by people of a similar age as well as adults. Research is increasingly demonstrating that a significant number of sexually exploited young people have been abused by their peers and a London Councils report in 2014 found that peer-on-peer exploitation was the most frequently identified form of child sexual exploitation in London. Young people can be exploited by their peers in a number of ways. In some cases young women and young men who have been exploited themselves by adults or peers, will recruit other young people to be abused. In other instances, sexual bullying in schools and other social settings can result in the sexual exploitation of young people by their peers. Sexual exploitation also occurs within and between street gangs, where sex is used in exchange for safety, protection, drugs and simply belonging. For 16 and 17 year olds who are in abusive relationships, what may appear to be a case of domestic violence may also involve sexual exploitation. In all cases of peer-on-peer exploitation, a power imbalance will still inform the relationship, but this inequality will not necessarily be the result of an age gap between the abuser and the abused<sup>26</sup>.

## Organised/networked sexual exploitation or trafficking

Young people (often connected) are passed through networks, possibly over geographical distances, between towns and cities where they may be forced/coerced into sexual activity with multiple men. Often this occurs at 'parties' and young people who are involved may recruit others into the network. Some of this activity is described as serious organised crime and can involve the organised 'buying and selling' of young people by offenders. Organised exploitation varies from spontaneous networking between groups of offenders, to more serious organised crime where young people are effectively 'sold'.

Children are known to be trafficked for sexual exploitation and this can occur across local authority boundaries and regions and across international borders.

## Inappropriate relationships

These usually involve one offender who has inappropriate power or control over a young person (physical, emotional or financial). One indicator may be a significant age gap. The young person may believe they are in a loving relationship.

## Familial

Children can be exploited by their parents and/or other family members. Parents or family members may also arrange the abuse of the child and/or control and facilitate exploitation. Where one child is being exploited, siblings or other child relatives are at increased risk of suffering exploitation.

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<sup>25</sup> Further information is available at: <http://www.msunderstood.org.uk/media-and-resources/>

<sup>26</sup> This definition is provided by the MsUnderstood Partnership

## Opportunistic

This may occur quickly and without any form of grooming. Typically older males identify vulnerable young people who may already have been groomed or sexually abused. The perpetrator will offer a young person a 'reward' or payment in exchange for sexual acts. The perpetrator is often linked with a network of abusive adults.

## On-Line

New technologies and social networking tools and platforms, chat rooms, dating sites or online gaming, present further opportunities for social interaction. They also bring new risks and increase the opportunity for offenders to target vulnerable young people. Offenders access social media platforms, for example, Facebook, Blackberry messaging (BBM) and Twitter to identify young people whom they can groom.

Where abusive images have been posted on, or shared via, the internet, there is little control over who can access them. This can lead to repeat victimisation. The NWG Network 2013 study, *If you Shine a Light You Will Probably Find It*<sup>27</sup> also identified that GPS technology available for mobile devices can be used to identify the location where a photograph was taken, which may increase the risk to the victim. The software can be downloaded freely and provides the coordinates of where the digital image was taken, to within a matter of yards.

CSE can occur through the use of technology without the child realising it. For example, a child or young person is persuaded to post images of themselves on the internet and/or mobile phones and then these images are used as a bargaining tool by the perpetrators.

Offenders may use technology to exploit children and young people in the following ways:

- Harassment and bullying through text messaging.
- Purchasing mobile phones for victims and sharing their numbers among group or gang members.
- Randomly contacting children via social networking sites.
- Using 'friends' lists on networking sites of known victims to target children and young people.
- Viewing extreme or violent pornography and discussing it during sexual assaults.
- Posting images of victims with rival gang members to invite a sexual assault as punishment.
- Filming and distributing incidents of rape and sexual violence.
- Distributing lists of children for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

The Child Exploitation On-line Protection (CEOP) Thinkuknow<sup>28</sup> website provides information for children and young people on how they can protect themselves online. Parents, carers and teachers can also use the website to understand how they can help to protect children in their care while they are using the internet.

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.nwgnetwork.org/media/pdfs/Shine-a-Light.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>