

# Swindon Local Safeguarding Children Board

## Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation

### Professional's Handbook



1. Introduction	3
2. What is Child Exploitation and abuse?	4
3. Models of Sexual Exploitation	5
4. Case Studies	8
5. Signs and Indicators	14
6. Push and Pull Factors	15
7. Trafficking	18
8. Language and Labelling	19
9. Sexual Offences and Underage Sexual Activity	21
10. Professional roles and responsibilities	25
11. The roles and responsibilities of named lead professionals	35
12. A multi-agency responsibility - What to do if you think a child may be at risk of child sexual exploitation	36
13. The role of multi-agency partners in challenging exploitation	37
14. Missing Children	38
15. Strategic approach to tackling sexual exploitation	39
16. CSE Screening Tool	41
17. Information Sharing	42
18. Resources	43

# 1. Introduction

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is an issue that affects girls and boys from all parts of the community. It is a form of child abuse and has a major long lasting impact on the lives of children and their families. This Handbook is designed to support all professionals in their work with children involved in, or at risk of, child sexual exploitation.

Swindon Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has a clear role in setting out the expectations of all agencies in relation to identifying and responding to children who are vulnerable to and at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as responding when there are children being sexually exploited. All agencies have a role in identifying and safeguarding children at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Swindon LSCB CSE & Missing sub group was originally established in 2008 to look at the issues of children who are at risk of sexual exploitation and also children who run away from home or care. The group monitors the progress of Swindon LSCB's CSE & Missing action plan and has developed a Terms of Reference which outline the function of the Swindon Multi Agency Risk Panel (MARP) and roles and responsibilities in relation to managing high risk behaviour, including sexual exploitation.

This handbook is part of the Swindon Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) approach to tackling child sexual exploitation which includes our Strategy and Action Plan and a policies and procedures. Our strategy has three strands- Prevent, Protect, Pursue all of which play an important role in addressing this issue.

Prevention is very important, as children's wellbeing is best safeguarded by preventing them from becoming victims. Chelsea's Choice is a powerful drama that has been performed to many pupils in Swindon schools. Further details about the drama and the production company is available later in this handbook.

The LSCB has developed, within its multi-agency training programme, two courses that address CSE. The first is an awareness raising course for all staff who come into contact with children during the course of their work. There is also a course for staff who have regular and specific roles with children and who will be involved in referring and working with children at risk or in need. More information about these courses and booking is via the Swindon LSCB website [www.swindonlscb.org.uk](http://www.swindonlscb.org.uk)



## 2. What is Child Sexual Exploitation and abuse?

The sexual exploitation of children has been identified throughout the UK, in both rural and urban areas, and in all parts of the world. Sexual exploitation affects boys as well as girls under the age of 18. The abuser could be male or female. It is a form of sexual abuse and can have a serious impact on every aspect of the lives of children involved and their families.

The sexual exploitation of children is defined by the Department of Health as:

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

- Child Sexual Exploitation 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.
- In all cases, those exploiting the child/ young person have power over them by virtue of their age/ gender/ intellect/ physical strength and/or economic or other resources.

**Child Sexual exploitation can take many different forms including:**

- 1) Sexually exploitative relationships with older adults
- 2) Sexually exploitative relationships with peers
- 3) Sexual exploitation through technology including grooming through social media and the taking and circulation of sexually explicit images of the child
- 4) Exploitation by family members, including being 'sold for sex'
- 5) Exploitation by members of a gang

# 3. Models of Sexual Exploitation

Research undertaken by Barnardo's *'Puppet on a String the Urgent Need to Cut Children Free from Child Sexual Exploitation'* has suggested that child sexual exploitation can be classified into different models:

## 1. Inappropriate relationships and/or boyfriend

Usually involves one abuser who has inappropriate power – physical, emotional or financial or control over a child. The child may believe they have a genuine friendship or loving relationship with their abuser. Sometimes this is a **'boyfriend'** relationship where the abuser grooms the victim by striking up a seemingly normal relationship with them, giving them gifts and meeting in cafes/fast food outlets or shopping centres. A seemingly consensual sexual relationship develops but later becomes abusive.

## 2. Online

The abuser grooms the victim by striking up a relationship with them on line. The abuser may pose as a child of a similar age or as an adult. Sometime the abuser persuades a victim to give them details of other children. The abuser may ask the child to talk to them via web cam and progress to getting them to pose or send images of themselves in underwear which may progress to naked or semi-naked images. These images will be stored and are likely to be shared with other child abusers. They may start to pressure the child to meet them and from this point the grooming may be similar to the boyfriend model.

## 3. Organised exploitation and trafficking

Victims are trafficked through criminal networks – often between towns and cities – and forced or coerced into sex with multiple men including groups of men. They may also be used to recruit new victims. This serious organised activity can involve the buying and selling of children.

## 4. Gangs

### Sexual exploitation is used in gangs to:

- exert power and control over members
- initiate young people into the gang
- exchange sexual activity for status or protection
- entrap rival gang members by exploiting girls and young women
- inflict sexual assault as a weapon in conflict.

Girls and young women are frequently forced into sexual activity by gang members. Research found girls considered to be engaging in casual sex were seen as forfeiting their right to refuse sex. The majority of sexual exploitation within gangs is committed by teenage boys and men in their twenties (Berelowitz et al, 2012).

Awareness is developing locally that these are not pure models and children may be abused in more than one way simultaneously or move between the models for example begin in the ***'boyfriend model'*** which may become a route into ***'organised exploitation and trafficking'***.

Whatever their experience of child sexual exploitation it is important to be aware that children are **not making a free and informed choice** to participate in the sexual activity. Child sexual exploitation is a form of child abuse and children under the age of 18 cannot consent to their own abuse. Whilst children may feel that they have been in control and consented to the sexual activity, it must be recognised that victim's low awareness levels are often a result of the sophisticated grooming that a perpetrator(s) of sexual exploitation will use.

In addition to grooming, coercion and manipulation, children often make constrained choices against a background of vulnerability and because of their age, and unmet needs or vulnerability they are unable to give informed consent.

**Children under the age of 16 cannot legally consent to sexual activity. Sexual intercourse with children under the age of 13 is statutory rape.**

Whilst a child aged 16-17 can consent to "healthy and safe" sexual activity, a child of this age cannot consent to being sexual exploited. As documented in the Children Act and Sexual Offences Act, sexual exploitation is a form of child abuse up to the age of 18.

Child sexual exploitation is a hidden crime. Young people often trust their abuser and don't understand that they're being abused. They may depend on their abuser or be too scared to tell anyone what's happening. The perpetrator always holds some kind of power over the victim, increasing the dependence of the victim as the exploitative relationship develops. Often illegal drugs and alcohol are used as part of creating dependence and reducing the child's awareness of the abuse.

Child sexual exploitation doesn't always involve physical contact and can happen online. Technology can play a part in sexual abuse, for example, through its use to record abuse and share it with other like-minded individuals or as a medium to access children in order to groom them.

**When sexual exploitation happens online, young people may be persuaded, or forced, to:**

- send or post sexually explicit images of themselves
- take part in sexual activities via a webcam or smartphone
- have sexual conversations by text or online.

Abusers may threaten to send images, video or copies of conversations to the young person's friends and family unless they take part in other sexual activity. Images or videos may continue to be shared long after the sexual abuse has stopped.

Sexual exploitation has strong links with other forms of crime, for example, domestic abuse, online and offline grooming, the distribution of abusive images of children and child trafficking.

The perpetrators of sexual exploitation are often well organised and use sophisticated tactics. They are known to target areas where children gather without much adult supervision, e.g. parks or shopping centres or sites on the Internet.



## 4. Child sexual exploitation: myth vs reality

Recent media attention on specific cases of CSE has led to sector wide concerns that stereotypes and myths about this crime could lead to a narrow focus on one particular form of CSE. The danger of this is that attention can be diverted from crimes which do not appear to match that model, with the risk of victims not receiving the help they need. There are many myths surrounding CSE and the examples used here are taken from the interim report of the Office of the Children's Commissioner's (OCC) Inquiry into CSE in Gangs and Groups.

**Myth #1:** Exploitation falls into a few '*models*' of CSE

**Reality:** The grooming and sexual exploitation of young people can take many different forms. CSE can be carried out by individuals (lone perpetrators), by street gangs or by groups. It can be motivated by money i.e. commercial sexual exploitation, which involves the exchange of a child (for sexual purposes) for the financial gain of the perpetrator or for non-commercial reasons such as sexual gratification or a belief in entitlement to sex. It can occur in a wide range of settings, but the common theme in all cases is the imbalance of power control exerted on young people.

### Sophie's story

Sophie's mum, Linda, has been known to a local violence against women service for a number of years because of the violence she has experienced from multiple partners. Sophie is a white British young woman and she was 13 years old when Linda met Ray. Ray, who was also white British, moved in with Linda and was violent towards both her and her children. Ray began to invite his friends around to the house. They, in turn, were abusive to Linda and her children. Following this, Ray offered Sophie as a sexual commodity to his friends on a regular basis, and threatened Linda and Sophie with violence if Sophie did not comply.

### Teegan's story

Teegan, a white British young woman, was sexually exploited from the age of 12 years old. From the age of 13 Teegan was taken by a man to a variety of 'parties' across England that she reports were in nice houses. In these houses Teegan would be raped by several men, who were paying to use her. The operation involved men working the streets to pick up vulnerable girls, forming 'relationships' with them by grooming them and then passing them on to the men who controlled the business. If Teegan ever refused to comply, she would be beaten and her family threatened. Following the abuse, Teegan took several overdoses, was placed in secure accommodation. Teegan described the abuse that she experienced as serious and organised, and was unwilling to make a formal complaint for fear of repercussions from those involved in the operation.

### Emily's story

Before Emily became a looked after child, she lived in a very large family and had experienced sexual and emotional abuse. At 14 years old Emily was regularly contacting older men via Facebook and having sex with them in exchange for tobacco, cannabis and sim cards for her phone. Emily had received threats of sexual violence if she did not comply with the demands of one male but denied this despite evidence of threats being found on her phone. On one occasion she was beaten up by a man who locked her in a garage overnight. She managed to escape but would not disclose any information to the police. Emily was unable to talk in depth about these sexual encounters or the impact upon her emotionally and described her way of coping as ***'trying not to think about it'***.

**Myth #2:** It only happens in certain ethnic/cultural communities

**Reality:** Both perpetrators and victims are known to come from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Site visits carried out by the OCC inquiry identified perpetrators and victims of CSE from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. A thematic assessment by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre identified that ***“Research tells us that the majority of known perpetrators in the UK of this crime are lone white males”***.

### Sahida's story

Sahida, a 17-year-old British Pakistani young woman, made an allegation of sexual abuse against a family member. As a result she was threatened with a forced marriage. Sahida's family claim they want to remove her from the country to curb her ***‘wild behaviour’***. Following these threats Sahida began spending time with older males, described by professionals as ***‘Asian’***, and was moved to multiple locations by them. Sahida is now pregnant as a result of the sexual exploitation she has experienced. Family members have physically assaulted Sahida as a punishment for the pregnancy.

**Myth #3:** It only happens to girls and young women

**Reality:** Boys and young men are also targeted as victims of CSE by perpetrators. However, they may be less likely to disclose offences or seek support, often due to stigma, prejudice or embarrassment or the fear that they will not be believed. They may feel that they are able to protect themselves, but in cases of CSE physical stature is irrelevant due to the coercion and manipulation used.

### Randall's story

Randall is a 15 year old boy, of mixed ethnic heritage, and described by professionals as ***‘exploring his sexuality’***. He is said to be unaware of safe routes to meeting other gay young people. Professionals report Randall has been seen hanging around at bus stops. He has disclosed to professionals that he has been targeted by groups of men who are grooming him to exchange sex for alcohol, cigarettes and acceptance. Randall has had some involvement with the youth offending service following arrest for shoplifting. Professionals are working with Randall to try to keep him away from areas of risk, but they are aware he continues to go missing and are unable to account for his whereabouts on all occasions.

**Myth #4:** It is only perpetrated by men

**Reality:** There is evidence that women can be perpetrators of this crime too. They may use different grooming methods but are known to target both boys and girls. In relation to group and gang related CSE, the OCC inquiry found that where women or girls were identified as perpetrators, their role was primarily, though not exclusively, to procure victims.

Women and girls who were identified as perpetrators during the inquiry's site visits tended to be young, had histories of being sexually exploited themselves and of abusing others in tandem with the group or gang that had previously sexually exploited them. Women and girls directly involved in sexually exploiting children were either in relationships with men who were perpetrators or related to, or friends with, men and boys who were abusers.

**Myth #5:** It is adults abusing children

**Reality:** Peer-on-peer child sexual exploitation happens too and this can take various different forms. For example, young people are sometimes used to **'recruit'** others, by inviting them to locations for parties where they will then be introduced to adults or forced to perform sexual acts on adults. Technology can also play a significant role, with young people known to use mobile technology as a way of distributing images of abuse.

### Rebecca's story

Rebecca is a 15-year-old black British girl, and has reported she was forced by a group of girls to have sex with a boy in the girls' toilets at their school; otherwise they would beat her up. The group of perpetrators were made up of three 14-year-old girls and one 14-year-old boy, all of whom were black British. One of the girls is described as the **'instigator'** of the assault. Another girl filmed the assault on her mobile phone. The assault took place as part of a pattern of ongoing bullying of Rebecca. She was raped by the 14-year-old boy. She had never had sex before this assault.

**Myth #6:** It only happens in large towns and cities

**Reality:** Evidence shows that CSE can and does happen in all parts of the country. CSE is not restricted to urban areas such as large towns and cities but does in fact happen in rural areas such as villages and coastal areas. High profile police operations in areas as diverse as Rochdale, Cornwall and Oxfordshire are clear examples of this. Young people can also be transported between towns, cities, villages etc., for the purpose of being sexually exploited and this is known as trafficking within the UK (an offence punishable by up to 14 years imprisonment).

**Myth #7:** Children are either victims or perpetrators

**Reality:** The OCC inquiry found that around 6 per cent per cent of victims reported in their call for evidence were also identified as perpetrators. It is important to keep in mind that, although children may appear to be willing accomplices in the abuse of other children, this should be seen in the context of the controls exerted by the perpetrator.

### Mitchell's story

Mitchell is a white British 17 year old boy, and has been known to the youth offending service for several years. From the age of 12 Mitchell was seen spending time with white British men, some of whom were believed to be sexually exploiting young women in the local area. Some of these older males bought Mitchell trainers, taught him how to comb his hair in particular ways and how to speak to girls. The older men also introduced Mitchell to some of the girls that they were sexually exploiting. At one point, he was found locked in a garage where one of the older males had brought young female victims of abuse. Mitchell gradually became involved in the sexual exploitation of young women in the local area, and would pass them onto his older peers.

**Myth #8:** It only happens to children in care

**Reality:** The majority of victims of CSE are living at home. However, looked after children account for a disproportionate number of victims and can be particularly vulnerable. An estimated 20-25 per cent per cent of victims are looked after, compared with 1 per cent per cent of the child population being in care. This does, however, leave around 80 per cent per cent of victims who are not in the care system.

**Myth #9:** Parents should know what is happening and should be able to stop it

**Reality:** Parents may be unlikely to be able to identify what is happening: they may suspect that something is not right but may not be in a position to stop it due to the control, threats or fear of the perpetrators. There can be risks to parents when seeking to protect their children and they can need support as well as their children. In some cases, there can be an overlap with abuse within the family and this could be a reason why parents do not intervene.

**Myth #10:** Disabled children cannot be exploited

**Reality:** Young people with learning disabilities are vulnerable to CSE due to factors that include overprotection, social isolation and society refusing to view them as sexual beings. Lack of awareness of the sexual exploitation of young people with learning disabilities among professionals also contributes to their vulnerability. Young people with learning disabilities can face a number of challenges to disclosing CSE, including the negative responses of professionals

### Tom's Story

Tom, aged 15, was sexually exploited by an older male who groomed him via Facebook. The older male told Tom that he loved him and wanted to be his boyfriend. He also told him that he was 18, when he was actually 37. Tom said that, because of his autism, he found it particularly challenging to understand why someone would lie to him and say something they did not mean. Tom said he did not tell his social worker, or any other professionals, that he was having a sexual relationship with an older male because no one asked him. When asked whether he would have told his social worker if she had asked him, Tom said he did not know because his older boyfriend had told him that he must not tell anyone about their relationship as Tom would get into trouble.

## 5. Signs and Indicators

The following list of indicators is not exhaustive or definitive but it does highlight common signs which can assist professionals in identifying children who may be victims of sexual exploitation.

### Signs include\*:

- being involved in abusive relationships, intimidated and fearful of certain people or situations
- sexual activity (under 16s)- inappropriate sexual or sexualised behaviour, sexually risky behaviour, 'swapping' sex, repeat sexually transmitted infections in girls, repeat pregnancy, abortions, miscarriage
- hanging out with groups of older people, or antisocial groups, or with other vulnerable peers
- receiving unexplained gifts or gifts from unknown sources, having unaffordable new things (clothes, mobile) or expensive habits (alcohol, drugs)
- having multiple mobile phones and worrying about losing contact via mobile
- going to hotels or other unusual locations to meet friends
- seen at known places of concern such as hotels or known brothels
- moving around the country, appearing in new towns or cities, not knowing where they are
- getting in/out of different cars driven by unknown adults
- having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- contact with known perpetrators
- associating with other children involved in sexual exploitation
- recruiting other children to exploitative situations
- truancy, exclusion, disengagement with school, opting out of education altogether
- unexplained changes in behaviour or personality (chaotic, aggressive, sexual) mood swings, volatile behaviour, emotional distress
- self-harming, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, overdosing, eating disorders
- drug or alcohol misuse
- Police involvement, Police records
- involved in gangs, gang fights, gang membership
- injuries from physical assault, physical restraint, sexual assault.

\*These signs have been drawn from a range of research (Barnardo's, 2011; CEOP, 2011; Berelowitz et al, 2012) and from the NSPCC

## 6. Push and Pull Factors

There are a number of factors that may make a child more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse due to their individual family or personal circumstances - these are called push and pull factors - that may either push or pull a child into situations where they are vulnerable to, or at risk of being sexually exploited. Abusive adults will look out for these push factors when selecting a child to target.

### Push

#### **These include:**

- Children who have been the victim of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and emotional abuse
- Children from households where domestic violence and abuse has been a feature
- Children of parents with a high level of vulnerabilities (e.g. drug and/or alcohol abuse, mental illness, learning disability, their own history of an abusive childhood)
- Family breakdown / disrupted family life / problematic parenting
- Insecure immigration status
- Children who have physical or learning impairments
- Children with emotional difficulties; low self-esteem; estranged family relationships

Abusers will spend time getting to know their victims and look for indicators of vulnerability even via social networking sites, through chat lines etc.

## Push

**There are also indicators that a child is at risk of or particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse:**

- Going missing – the most immediate indicator of vulnerability to sexual exploitation
- Disengagement from education
- Drug and/or alcohol dependency
- Physical symptoms e.g. sexually transmitted infections, miscarriage, abortion, bruising or marks indicating physical or sexual assault
- Children who have not received appropriate levels of attention from concerned adults
- Associating with older men or other 'risky' adults
- Accounts of social activities with no plausible explanation of the source of the money to fund these activities
- New possessions, acquisition of money, expensive clothes, drugs or other possessions without plausible explanation about their source
- Being alienated from family or community
- Being in care and having placement breakdown
- Associating with other children who are known to be victims of exploitation
- Some kinds of offending behaviour

## Pull

**The grooming techniques used to gain the child's attention, admiration and affection often taps into insecurities or a desire for acceptance and status by the child. These can be referred to as 'Pull' factors and include:**

- Being liked by someone older;
- Being liked/fancied enough that a stranger asks for their mobile number;
- Meeting someone who thinks they are special on the internet;
- Receiving alcohol, drugs, money or gifts;
- Getting a buzz and the excitement of risk taking/forbidden behaviour;
- Being offered somewhere to stay where there are no rules/boundaries;
- Being taken along to adult entertainment venues, red light or gay cruising areas (public sex environments);
- Being given lifts, taken to new places, and having adventures with casual acquaintances.



# 7. Trafficking

## Children who are abused through child sexual exploitation may also be trafficked.

There are three different types of trafficking of children for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Firstly, there is trafficking from abroad into the United Kingdom. The second category is internal trafficking, where children are moved from one place to another in the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation. This may be from one street to a neighbouring street, from one area of a town or city to another area, or across county borders.

It is not the distance that is relevant in the definition of internal trafficking, but the movement of a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The third is being trafficked out of the UK to other countries and brought back again.

It is probably helpful for professionals to think of trafficking as moving children around for the

purpose of them being abused. An example would be a child from Oxford being taken to London by their abusers or associates of the abusers and then being abused by other adults in London. Children being moved from street to street by their abusers are another form of trafficking within the UK.

Trafficking children, including for the purpose of sexual exploitation is a criminal offence and concerns that a child may be being trafficked should always be reported to the Police.

Professionals will need to collect as much data as possible which includes anything you hear the child say, or hear other children say about them, dates and times when you know or suspect they have been trafficked and any information about the people they were with and vehicles used to transport them. This should be recorded carefully and passed to the Police for investigation.

### Trudy's Story

Trudy is 13 years old. She met a group of older men through her boyfriend who is also 15 years old. Her boyfriend started taking her to a house in her home town where she was forced to have sex with two older men. About a month later one of the men took her to Birmingham where she was taken to a hotel and forced to have sex with another man. Trudy was trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation which is a criminal offence.

For more information, please visit the online multi-agency procedures for safeguarding Children who may have been trafficked. **You can access the South West Child Protection Procedures pages directly by following this link:** [www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/swindon/p\\_trafficked\\_ch.html](http://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/swindon/p_trafficked_ch.html)

## 8. Language and Labelling

Throughout this document the term **‘child’** will be used to describe any child aged 0 – 18 years. Whilst it is acknowledged that teenagers would wish to be referred to as **‘young people’** the term ‘child’ in this context helps professionals stay focused on the fact that they are children being abused and not young adults making positive choices.

- a. The way we use language influences our thinking. Recent Serious Case Reviews in other areas have highlighted this as a significant issue which contributed to systemic failure to protect.
- b. Read the following two recordings about a child and reflect on the immediate perception you have of their situation.

### a. Sally

Sally is 14 years old and has been living at Care View for 3 months. She is a streetwise young woman who from day one has been a persistent absconder. She chooses to associate with older friends in the town centre where she drinks alcohol and uses drugs. She refuses to engage with staff and take guidance believing, as always, that she knows best. Sally is known to be sexually active and is promiscuous. She says she has had sex with 7 different partners in the past month. She has already been treated for Chlamydia but she doesn’t seem to care about the impact on her health. We think she is prostituting herself to get money for drugs and new clothes and she is certainly materialistic. Sally is a negative influence on the other young people and often involves younger residents in her inappropriate activities.

### b. Sally

Sally is 14 years old and has been living at Care View for 3 months. From day one we have been concerned about her going missing and she is thought to be a very vulnerable child. Sally is known to be spending time with older men in the town centre and is drinking alcohol and using drugs. This increases her vulnerability. Staff are working hard to engage Sally but at the moment she cannot accept our help and support. Sally is sexually active and we believe she is having sex with a number of older men. Sally has been treated for Chlamydia and we are concerned about her sexual health and well-being. Sally often has money and new clothes which she cannot explain and we feel that she is at risk of, or already being abused through child sexual exploitation. Sally often takes younger residents off with her and we are worried that she is being coerced into introducing other children to the abusers.

- c. There are some labels which in the past have been used to describe children and their behaviour and which lead to inaccurate assumptions which in turn can help to minimise the risks and reality of their situation. Professionals should avoid using such terms in their recordings and conversations and should be mindful of when they enter their thinking and challenge them.

**d. These include:**

**Child prostitution:** because this term implies that the child is choosing to sell themselves for sex when we know that is not the reality of their situation.

**Street wise:** because this term implies that the child is able to understand the dangers they face and protect themselves whilst missing from home or care when we know the reality of their situation is that they are vulnerable and exposed to situations they cannot control.

**Choosing to.....:** because in situations of child sexual exploitation the child is not making free choices and we know that they are subject to coercion, bribery, violence and threats in order to enforce compliance. Children cannot **'choose'** to be abused.

**Consensual sex:** because it is unlawful for a child under 16 to have sex and they cannot legally consent and also because consent implies an understanding of the situation, the risks and an aspect of free choice when we know in CSE the child is not in a position to make such choices.

**Boyfriend:** because in a CSE situation the child is not in a relationship of equals in which they can make free and developmentally appropriate choices about the extent of their sexual activity.

# 9. Sex Offences and Underage Sexual Activity

## 9.1 Definitions

**For the purpose of this guidance the key age groups identified are:**

- Children under 13
- Children aged 13-15 years old
- Children over the age of consent (16) and up to the age of 18

Young people over the age of consent and up to 18 years may still suffer sexual harm through exploitation by predatory adults or through a sexual partner who is abusing a Position of Trust.

Any young person between the age of 16 and 18 who is engaging in sexual activity with a person in a position of trust (i.e. teacher, foster carer or similar) is being sexually exploited and such cases must be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer.

## 9.2 Sexual Offences Under 13's

A child under 13 is not legally capable of consenting to sexual activity. Any offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 involving a child under 13 is very serious and should be taken to indicate that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

Cases involving children aged under 13 should always be discussed with a nominated child protection lead in the organisation. Under the Sexual Offences Act, penetrative sex with a child under 13 is classed as rape. Where the allegation concerns penetrative sex, or other intimate sexual activity occurs, there would always be reasonable cause to suspect that a child, whether a girl or boy, is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

There should be a presumption that the case will be reported to FCP/MASH. A Strategy Discussion should be held that will involve children's social care, Police and relevant agencies, to discuss appropriate next steps with the professional. All cases involving under 13s should be fully documented including detailed reasons where a

decision is taken not to share information. These decisions are exceptional and only made with the documented approval of a senior manager.

### 13-15 year olds

Sexual activity with a child under 16 is also an offence. Where it is consensual it may be less serious than if the child were under 13 years, but may nevertheless, have serious consequences for the welfare of the child. Consideration should be given in every case of sexual activity involving a child aged 13-15 as to whether there should be a discussion with other agencies and whether a referral should be made to FCP/MASH. This should always be the case where there is a considerable age difference (i.e. 13 + 17; 15 + 21).

The professional should make this assessment using the assessment criteria below. Within this age range, the younger the child, the stronger the presumption must be that sexual activity will be a matter of concern. However, concerns of a similar extent are warranted for older children who are known to have had sexual activity with significantly older adults (i.e. 17 + 33). Cases of concern should be discussed with the nominated child protection lead and/or the professional's line manager and subsequently with other agencies if required. Where confidentiality needs to be preserved, a discussion can still take place as long as it does not identify the child (directly or indirectly).

Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that

significant harm to a child has occurred or might occur, there should be a presumption that the case is reported to FCP/MASH and a Strategy Discussion should be held to discuss appropriate next steps. Again, all cases should be carefully documented including where a decision is taken not to share information.

## 9.3 Assessment criteria

The considerations in the following checklist should be taken into account when assessing the extent to which a child (or other children) is suffering or is likely to suffer, significant harm and therefore whether a referral to FCP/MASH should be made. A CSE screening tool can be found at

<https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/swindonlscb/downloads/file/40/exploitationinitialscreeningtooljune2017>

- The age of the child. Sexual activity at a young age is a very strong indicator that there are risks to the welfare of the child (whether boy or girl) and, possibly, others;
- Behaviour of the child i.e. withdrawn/anxious;
- The level of maturity and understanding of the child i.e. whether the child is competent to understand and consent to the sexual activity they are involved in;
- What is known about the child's living circumstances or background;
- Familial child sex offences

- Age imbalance, in particular where there is a significant age difference;
- Overt aggression or power imbalance, in cases where there is abuse of a Position of Trust a referral will always be made;
- Coercion or bribery including the use of sex for favours i.e. exchanging sex for clothes, CDs, trainers, alcohol, cigarettes etc.- This could also manifest itself in a child having large amounts of money, jewellery or other valuables that cannot be accounted for.
- The misuse or giving of substances as a disinhibitor;
- Whether the child's own behaviour, because of the misuse of substances, places him/her at risk of harm resulting in an inability to make an informed choice about any activity;
- Whether any attempts to secure secrecy have been made by the sexual partner beyond what would be considered usual in a teenage relationship;
- Whether the child denies, minimises or accepts concerns;
- Whether the methods used are consistent with grooming and/or an accompanying adult gives professional cause for concern;
- Whether the sexual partner/s is known by one of the agencies.

## 9.4 Disabled children

Children with learning disabilities are more vulnerable to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) than other children, facing additional barriers to their protection and to receiving support. (Barnardo's 2015).

Disabled children are more likely to be abused than non-disabled children and they are especially at risk when they are living away from home. They may be particularly vulnerable to coercion. Due to physical dependency and intimate care needs; or because a learning disability or a communication difficulty means that it is not easy for them to communicate their wishes to another person. This increases the risk that a sexual relationship may not be consensual. In assessing whether a relationship presents a risk of harm to a disabled child or young person, professionals need to consider the indicators described in this practice guidance.

## 9.5 Referral Process

### Children under 13 years of age

**The Sexual Offences Act 2003 states that a child under the age of 13 cannot consent in law to sexual activity. Therefore where it is known that a child under 13 is engaging in sexual activity, a serious criminal offence has been committed.**

In all cases where the sexually active child is under the age of 13, a referral to children's social care must be made and they will hold a Strategy Discussion with the Police and/or other agencies. In order for this to be meaningful, the child will need to be identified, as will the 'alleged perpetrator' if details are known.

### Children aged 13 and up to 18 years of age

If one or more of the factors identified in the assessment criteria applies, then a referral must be made to children's social care and a Strategy Discussion should take place to decide on further action and enquiries.

## 9.6 Abuse of a Position of Trust

In all cases where it appears that there is an abuse of Position of Trust, a referral must be made either to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Where there is concern that the child is at immediate risk then a referral to the Police or children's social care should be made in the first instance.

NB where the alleged perpetrator of sexual abuse is a person who works with children or an approved foster carer for a Looked After Child, the case must always be subject to joint consultation with/or referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer:

[https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/10/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/2](https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers_and_volunteers/10/workers_and_volunteers/2)

If having analysed the information it is considered that one or more factors in the checklist apply and, in your professional judgement (and in consultation with your agencies designated lead for safeguarding), a decision has been taken not to refer to FCP/MASH or the Police, a clear record of the decision, the reasons for the decision, and the accountable decision-makers must be made, and the record signed and dated.

An example of when a decision not to share information may apply would be where the two children concerned are both over 13 years old, are close in age, (for instance 15 and 16 years old) and are in a consensual relationship. It should never, however, be assumed that children cannot be abused by other children.

## 9.7 Recording and decision-making

All agencies must ensure that decisions are recorded, signed and dated and identify the accountable decision-makers.

# 10. Roles and Responsibilities

## 10.1 Professionals Working in Health Services

### 10.1.1 Government Guidance on children involved in child sexual exploitation says:

**‘Because of the universal nature of most health provision, health professionals may often be the first to be aware that a child may be involved, or be at risk of becoming involved, in sexual exploitation. Children involved in sexual exploitation are likely to need a range of health services, including advice and counselling for harm minimisation, health promotion and advice on sexually transmitted diseases, contraception and HIV’**

**10.1.2** Health professionals working in universal and specialist settings should be alert and competent to identify and act upon concerns that a child may be at risk of, or experiencing abuse through child sexual exploitation.

**10.1.4** Any health professional should carefully record and monitor information on children at risk and details of possible perpetrators and locations where exploitation may have taken place. To identify at an early stage any pattern of concern including for example, whether more than one child may be at risk in an area or community or where

more than one perpetrator may be active. They should report any such concerns as soon as possible.

**10.1.5** All health professionals should ensure they have access to and understand how to use the CSE screening tool (part of this handbook) and should complete a screening for any child about whom they have emerging concerns. Where this confirms there are concerns about a child a referral should be made to the FCP/MASH. The completed screening tool should be sent with the referral. If there are concerns about risk of possible CSE but not serious enough to warrant immediate referral, consideration should be given about referring to sexual health outreach nurses, Youth Engagement workers or other relevant agencies.

**10.1.6** Health professionals should provide, or continue to provide health education, screening, sexual health services, advice and support as necessary to all young people including Fraser competent under 16 year olds.

**10.1.7** The health professional should check the child's records for any other health professional involvement and should ensure they have an overview of all health involvement prior to attending any Strategy Discussion .

**10.1.8** The health professional should attend any Strategy Discussion , CSE multi agency planning meeting or initial child protection conference relating to the child, providing written reports where requested.

## **10.2 Professionals working in Leaving Care Services**

**10.2.1** Leaving care Personal Advisors will often develop strong relationships with children leaving care and into their early adulthood. It is likely that some children will make disclosures to leaving care professionals and this is often triggered by other events in the child's life such as being further abused, entering into a new relationship or having a child. Where a child does disclose, the professional should listen carefully and note what the child is saying. They should take care not to **'lead the child'** or ask too many probing questions. It is important that the child is able to talk freely but also that they do not feel **'they have told the story in detail once'** and so feel unable to make a formal statement which would be needed for a successful prosecution.

**10.2.2** If a young adult 18+ discloses the leaving care Personal Advisor should seek the child's agreement to contact the Police and should offer to support them through an interview with the Police. If a child makes a disclosure this would be reported to the case holding social worker or a Manager where consideration would then be given to the need for a strategy meeting to be called.

**10.2.3** The leaving care professional should, in the first instance, contact their own organisation's lead professional for advice and to ensure that one person in the organisation has an overview of the concerns. The Personal Advisor, would then provide support on the direction of the social worker or Manager.

**10.2.4** The named lead professional should carefully record and monitor information in order to identify at an early stage any pattern of concern including, for example, whether more than one child may be at risk in an area or community or where more than one perpetrator may be active. They should report any such concerns as soon as possible.

**10.2.5** Leaving care Personal Advisors should ensure they have access to and understand how to use the CSE screening tool (part of this Toolkit) and should complete a screening for any child about whom they have emerging concerns, whether or not there has been a disclosure. Where this confirms there are concerns about a child who is under the age of 18 a referral should be made to the FCP/MASH. The completed screening tool should be sent to, and concerns raised with, the allocated Social Worker.

**10.2.6** The leaving care Personal Advisor should continue to provide services to the child and should support them to attend health services as needed.

**10.2.7** The leaving care Personal Advisor should check the child's records for any other professional involvement and should ensure they have an overview of all their services involvement prior to attending any Strategy Discussion .

**10.2.8** The leaving care professional should attend any Strategy Discussion , CSE multi-agency planning meeting or initial child protection conference relating to the child, providing written reports where requested.

## **10.3 The Police**

**10.3.1** The Police are likely to be an agency which picks up concerns about a child who may be involved in, or at risk of child sexual exploitation. This may be through their work on the streets, through intelligence or through information from other criminal investigations. Reports of missing persons should also alert Police officers to the possibility of child sexual exploitation. All Police officers, including PCSO's, should be alert and competent to identify and act upon concerns that a child may be at risk of, or experiencing abuse through child sexual exploitation.

**10.3.2** The Police officer should in the first instance contact their own organisation's lead professional for advice and to ensure that one person in the organisation has an overview of the concerns.

**10.3.3** Officers or staff with concerns that a child may be subject to Child Sexual Exploitation must complete and submit a PPD1 for the attention of the MASH.

**10.3.6** The Police have additional responsibilities and powers and where they discover a child who is being, or is at risk of child sexual exploitation, they must take immediate steps to remove them from harm, using their powers of Police Protection if necessary and they should also secure any evidence.

**10.3.7** One priority for the Police is to protect children through the investigation and prosecution of offenders and this must be done in accordance with Swindon's principles of ensuring multi-agency cooperation. This includes discussion at a strategy meeting to agree and plan the investigation.

**10.3.8** All interviews with the child will be carried out in accordance with the Achieving Best Evidence Interview. It must be recognised that children will often struggle to disclose what has happened to them due to fear and intimidation, embarrassment or a belief that their abusers are their friends. Children will often need time and patience in order to achieve a full evidential disclosure.

**10.3.9** Where a child refuses or is unable to make a disclosure, the Police must continue to investigate the concerns and should continue to work with the child and their family and/or professional support.

**10.3.10** Where a child has made a disclosure the Police have a duty to provide information and support to the child throughout the investigation and this responsibility should be allocated to a named officer. It is best practice to record the way in which the child will be supported and to give the child a copy of this so they know what to expect. Should a case proceed

to trial this support will need to continue in line with the Crown Prosecution Service requirements.

**10.3.11** The Police should check the child's records for any other professional involvement and should ensure they have an overview of all their services involvement prior to attending any Strategy Discussion .

**10.3.12** The Police should attend any strategy discussion, CSE multi-agency planning meeting or initial child protection conference relating to the child, providing written reports where requested.

## **10.4 Probation**

**10.4.1** The Probation Service are likely to be an agency which picks up concerns about a child who might be involved or is at risk of child sexual exploitation. Although not working directly with children under the age of 18, probation workers will have contact with people who are close to such children – parents, older siblings, friends. Probation workers will also be working directly with perpetrators of child sexual exploitation, some of whom will be convicted of such offences but some of whom might yet not be recognised as perpetrators. Perhaps most importantly, probation workers will be working with offenders who have been victims (or are still being victimised)

of such abuse, which will almost certainly have a significant effect on that person's ability to engage with their service.

**10.4.2** All probation workers (including Victims Liaison Officers) will have basic child protection training to enable them to identify and act upon concerns that a child might be at risk of or is experiencing child sexual exploitation. Probation staff who work on a one-to-one basis with offenders will have specialist child protection training, relevant to their role.

**10.4.3** The probation worker should in the first instance discuss their concerns with their line manager. They may subsequently also discuss the concern with the senior probation officer lead, who will act as the lead professional for child sexual exploitation to ensure appropriate oversight of the matter.

**10.4.4** The probation worker who raises the concern should record and monitor information in a confidential manner, making a note of the date, to which manager they raised the matter and the date and outcome of any subsequent referrals. Serious further offence reviews have highlighted the need to monitor referrals to other agencies and to record the outcome of that referral.

**10.4.5** Probation officers and probation services officers (the two main practitioner grades of probation worker) will be able to access training material to assist their practice with working with offenders who have been victims of child sexual exploitation. They will have access to the screening tool which they will complete for any child they have concerns about CSE.

**10.4.6** If indicated by the screening tool, the probation worker will make a referral to FCP/MASH. The completed screening tool should be sent with the referral. All child protection referrals are to have line management oversight which in turn is monitored and recorded by the director's.

**10.4.7** If the child is linked to an offender who is a current probation case, the probation worker will participate in case conferences and multi-agency meetings as appropriate.

**10.4.8** Practitioners will ensure that risk management plans (including community order requirements and licence conditions) include sufficient measures to address CSE concerns.

**10.4.9** A probation officer or senior probation officer will be nominated to attend strategy meetings on a regular basis, to aid information-sharing and networking.

## 10.6 Schools and Colleges

- 10.6.1** Staff in schools and colleges have a key role to play in preventing children being abused through CSE. Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) can help to raise awareness of the risk and issues relating to grooming and CSE, can help children make safe choices and can help children who have been exposed to CSE to talk about their experiences and move onto recovery.
- 10.6.2** Attending school is one of the key safeguarding factors in a child's life. Being in a safe and supportive environment during the school day, having access to caring professional staff, experiencing success, accessing a good PHSE curriculum and having access to friends and age appropriate out-of-school activities are all critical for the well-being of any child, and more so for those abused through CSE.
- 10.6.3** Children abused through CSE may already have troubled backgrounds and may act out their distress in school. These children are frequently subject to additional support in school and are likely to challenge staff through their behaviour and through attendance issues.
- 10.6.4** Schools should do everything in their power to keep these children in school and where exclusion is a risk for a child of secondary school age, the screening

tool should be completed

[https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/10/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/2](https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers_and_volunteers/10/workers_and_volunteers/2)

and an appropriate referral to children's social care made at the earliest stage. Children thought to be at risk of CSE should not be excluded from school without careful consideration of the implications for their safety.

- 10.6.5** Staff in schools and colleges are uniquely placed to identify, at an early stage, children at risk of CSE. Staff should be competent to identify and act upon concerns that a child is at risk of or experiencing CSE. Any concerns should be notified immediately to the named lead professional for CSE in school or college.
- 10.6.6** The designated safeguarding lead should carefully record and monitor information in order to identify at an early stage any pattern of concern including for example whether more than one child may be at risk in an area or community or where more than one perpetrator may be active. They should report any such concerns as soon as possible.
- 10.6.7** All professionals should ensure they have access to and understand how to use the CSE screening tool

[https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/10/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/2](https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers_and_volunteers/10/workers_and_volunteers/2)

and should complete a screening for any child about whom they have emerging concerns.

**10.6.8** Where this confirms there are concerns about a child a referral should be made to Family Contact Point. The completed screening tool should be sent with the referral.

**10.6.9** The school or college professional (or the named lead professional) should check the child's records for any other concerns and should ensure they have an overview of all issues prior to attending any Strategy Discussion .

**10.6.10** The school or college professional (or the named lead professional) should attend any Strategy Discussion , CSE multi-agency planning meeting or initial child protection conference relating to the child, providing written reports where requested.

## **10.7 Children's Social Care**

**10.7.1** Children's social care have the lead responsibility for responding to children at risk of, sexual exploitation and should act in accordance with their responsibilities under the Children Act 1989.

**10.7.2** Following a referral, all Local Authorities have a duty, under Section 17 and S47 of the Children Act 1989, to ensure that the needs of all children who are involved in, or are at risk of, being sexually exploited are assessed and that appropriate multi-agency engagement and appropriate interventions are undertaken.

**10.7.3** All new referrals to the Family Contact Point (MASH) Team should include the use of the screening tool, where it is thought that CSE is an issue. Practitioners should ensure that for cases already open to Children's Social Care teams, the screening tool is completed where CSE is a concern.

**10.7.4** The Family Contact Point (MASH) Team should offer referrers appropriate consultation and advice in relation to CSE issues.

## **10.8 Early Help Services**

**10.8.1** The Early Help service is made up from eight distinct professional areas; Health Visiting, School Nursing, Targeted Mental Health, Education Psychology, Education Welfare, Youth Engagement, Families First (linked to troubled families) and the Family Nurse Partnership. The services provided in are broad and diverse endeavouring to provide a range of universal and targeted support to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes. Targeting families following assessment with a range of needs related to reducing health inequalities, improving readiness for school as well as attendance, behaviour and achievement, building resilience and emotional well-being and improving parent's and carer's confidence and skills to keep their children thriving, ready to achieve and happy. More intensive support is offered where necessary to reduce the number of families in

urgent crises, preventing the escalation to more costly services, in support of child protection plans and helping families to stay below SEN thresholds for statutory involvement.

[https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/10/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/2](https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers_and_volunteers/10/workers_and_volunteers/2)

**10.8.2** Staff should be alert and competent to identify and act upon concerns that a child is vulnerable to, at risk of, or experiencing abuse through sexual exploitation. Staff should be familiar with, and able to use the screening tool [www.swindonlscb.org.uk/wav/Pages/CSE.aspx](http://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/wav/Pages/CSE.aspx) and should know when and how to make a referral should they be concerned about a child.

**10.8.3** Where this confirms there are concerns about a child, a referral should be made to the FCP/MASH. The completed screening tool should be sent with the referral.

**10.8.4** Staff should check the child's records for any other concerns and should ensure they have an overview of all issues prior to attending any Strategy Discussion .

**10.8.5** Staff should attend any strategy discussion, CSE multi-agency planning meeting or initial child protection conference relating to the child, providing written reports where requested.

**10.8.6** Early Help services have a key role to play in educating children to stay safe and preventing risk of CSE through awareness-raising and keep safe work.

## 10.9 Youth Offending Team (YOT)

**10.9.1** The YOT is likely to be a service that has contact with children, often presenting with a number of complex difficulties which makes them vulnerable across a range of areas in their lives. This could include child sexual exploitation as well as criminal exploitation.

**10.9.2** All children seen by the service have come into contact with either the Police, CSPs, or criminal courts as a result of their offending or anti-social behaviour; the role of the YOT is to focus upon preventing offending and re-offending by children and young people, protecting the public from further criminal activity, whilst also taking account of duties in respect of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

**10.9.3** The YOT is a multi-agency service that includes in its core make up representatives from partner agencies such as the Police, Education and Health Workers, probation and Youth Offending professionals. In addition, there are specialists in Restorative Justice, Victim relationships, parenting and substance misuse workers as part of the team. Each child is assessed as a core part of the service delivered and these risk and vulnerability assessments are regularly reviewed and updated.

**10.9.4** National and local evidence informs us that children missing from home, absconding from school, having poor attainment, family breakdown or loss of secure and stable accommodation leads to increased likelihood of criminal activity (not withstanding an increased vulnerability to adverse peer or adult influence which can compromise the child's well-being). Increased alienation from positive experience or opportunity through criminal sanction can also increase a child's vulnerability to become engaged in circumstances or behaviours where they are at risk.

**10.9.5** The YOT is linked with a wide range of agencies involved with both child welfare and public protection/safety; these include Community Safety Partnerships, Police, Social Care, community sector organisations as well as Education establishments. It must be recognised that for those children for whom no other agency remains involved the YOT may provide the only statutory contact for a child.

**10.9.6** YOT workers should be alert to the signs of concern regarding CSE and complete a screening tool whether or not there has been a disclosure. Concerns should be referred to FCP/MASH.

**10.9.7** YOT workers (where relevant) should attend any Strategy Discussion , CSE multi-agency planning meeting or initial child protection conference relating to the child, providing written reports where requested.

**10.9.8** Named lead professional in the YOT and other relevant staff should carefully monitor information in order to identify at an early stage any pattern of concern. Should YOT workers become concerned that a child they are dealing with may be involved in the exploitation of children, they should share their concerns at the earliest opportunity with the Police.

**10.9.9** YOT workers should ensure they have access to and understand how to use the CSE screening tool [www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/10/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/2](https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers_and_volunteers/10/workers_and_volunteers/2) and should complete a screening for any child about whom they have emerging concerns.

[https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/10/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/2](https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers_and_volunteers/10/workers_and_volunteers/2)

## **10.10 Other Services including; leisure and culture, adult social care, licencing, street scene, parks etc.**

**10.10.1** Staff working in a range of other services have a role to play in protecting children from abuse through child sexual exploitation. Primarily this will be in noticing signs that children may be at risk, information gathering and sharing and referrals to children's social care.

**10.10.2** Staff working in adult social care should be aware of the issue of CSE and alert to signs that it may be happening. Concerns may be noted relating to the children of adult service users, children seen at addresses or adult service users, including multiple occupancy premises or children in public places.

**10.10.3** Staff working in leisure services, libraries, cultural services, parks and street scene may be amongst the first to pick up signs that a child/children may be at risk. They should be alert to the signs of CSE and should record any concerns and pass this on to the Police. Where they see evidence that a child may have been harmed or is at risk of harm they should also make a referral to children's social care.

## 10.11 Housing

**10.11.1** The Swindon Inter-agency Information Sharing Protocol exists to ensure information is shared for the purpose of safeguarding children. This includes safeguarding any child placed in private housing through sharing of information regarding any landlord .

**10.11.2** Staff working in these services would not normally be expected to complete the CSE Screening Tool

[https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/10/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/2](https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers_and_volunteers/10/workers_and_volunteers/2)

but may do so if they feel confident and know the child well enough.

**10.11.3** Staff working in these other services may also have a role to play in disruption activity through their visible presence in areas identified as hot spots.

# 11. The Roles and Responsibilities of Named Lead Professionals

**11.1** Each agency should identify a named lead professional for safeguarding. In some agencies this will also be the named or designated professional for safeguarding or child protection.

**11.2 Their responsibilities include:**

- Providing advice on the identification and referral of children at risk of or experiencing abuse through CSE
- Acting as the single source of information gathering for their agency and monitoring information for any patterns or trends
- Liaising with the Police and social care including attending team meetings where intelligence is shared
- Determining how their agency can contribute to risk reduction and safeguarding plans for individual children
- Determining how their agency can contribute to awareness raising, prevention and disruption work
- Ensuring an agency representative attends CSE meetings where appropriate
- Identifying all staff within their agency who should undertake CSE training and monitor that training is being undertaken and is impacting on practice
- Providing reports to the LSCB about the nature and prevalence of CSE and their agency's response

# 12. A multi- agency responsibility – what to do if you think a child may be at risk of child sexual exploitation

**12.1** Providing an appropriate response to CSE requires the combined efforts and skills of a protective network for children and depends heavily on a multi-agency response. Tackling child sexual exploitation means managing high levels of risk – including professional risk and this is best managed through shared responsibility with each agency playing its part and supporting the others. No professional should feel they are alone in tackling CSE.

**12.2** Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children depends on effective joint working between different agencies and professionals that work with children. Their full involvement is vital if children are to be effectively supported and action is to be taken against perpetrators of sexual exploitation. All agencies should be alert to the risks of sexual exploitation and be able to take action and work together when an issue is identified.

**12.3** In relation to confidentiality, where there are concerns that a child is subject to sexual exploitation, all agencies have a

responsibility to report their concerns and share information. The need for a child to be safeguarded overrides their right to confidentiality. Data protection should not prevent the sharing of information but ensures that personal information is shared appropriately. It is never acceptable for an individual or agency to decide not to share information when there are concerns about the safety of a child.

## **12.4 This joint working is underpinned by:**

- A strong commitment from leaders and senior managers
- The Swindon LSCB CSE Strategy and Action Plan
- A shared understanding of the problem of sexual exploitation
- Effective coordination by the LSCB
- Clear policies, procedures and practice guidance (including this toolkit)
- An agreed Information Sharing Protocol
- Staff training and development

# 13. The role of multi-agency partners in challenging sexual exploitation

## 13.1 Multi-Agency Risk Panel

CSE takes place in local communities and information known to partners could be used to highlight the threat and establish risk. It is anticipated that an improved intelligence picture will enable effective action in a greater number of cases of child sexual exploitation, thereby reducing the harm which would otherwise be caused to the young victims and their families.

Specialist multi-agency partners will conduct meetings/discussion to share relevant intelligence and information and co-ordinate responses. This will result in greater ability to disrupt and prosecute perpetrators and provide early intervention to reduce harm and promote wellbeing.

a. This full range of responses and the multi-agency meeting/discussion will provide a range of support for children, families and others, raising awareness and disrupting activity for the purpose of protecting and safeguarding children. This improved intelligence picture will inform partners of the extent of the risk posed by perpetrators.

b. The organisations will work together to keep children safe from harm. These organisations will be drawn from the statutory, voluntary, community and faith sectors and their work will follow recognised principles of effective practice to safeguard and protect the welfare of children.

c. The multi-agency risk panel will have the potential to call upon the diverse skills and experience available from amongst its members. In conjunction with sharing information to increase the understanding of the risks posed by CSE they will bring together a range of specialist knowledge and partnership agreement to ensure that each organisation plays its role to address the needs of children considered to be at high risk.

*The Terms of Reference for the Multi-Agency Risk Panel can be found at <http://swindonlscb->*

[https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/10/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/4](https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers_and_volunteers/10/workers_and_volunteers/4)

# 14. Missing Children

Those children regularly missing and absent will be reviewed monthly at Multi Agency Risk Panel (MARP).

## 14.1 Return interviews

These interviews are usually best carried out by a person who is independent of the child's placement and who will follow up any actions or safeguarding issues that emerge. An interview must always take place for children who have been missing from care. Many children who go missing need to build up trust with somebody before they will discuss in depth the reasons why they decided to run away. It is especially important that an Independent Return Interview takes place when a child:

- Has been missing for over 24 hours
- Has engaged (or is believed to have engaged) in criminal activities during their absence
- \*Has been hurt or harmed whilst they have been missing (or this is believed to have been the case)
- Has known mental health issues or learning disabilities
- Is at known risk of sexual exploitation

- \*Has contact with persons posing a risk to children
- There are other identifiable risk factors.

\*However the decisions to request/conduct a return home interview should form part of the Strategy Discussion which must take place.

The Return Interview should take place as soon as possible after the child has been located or returned to their placement and within 72 hours. It is the responsibility of the child's Social Worker/Family Contact Point/MASH to ensure that the Return Interview happens. Completed Return Interview Forms should be sent via secure email to MASH Wiltshire Police [mash@wiltshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:mash@wiltshire.pnn.police.uk)

Further information about procedures for missing children including return interviews is outlined in the Pan Wiltshire Children Missing from Home & Care Protocol.

# 15. Strategic Approach to Tackling Sexual Exploitation

Swindon's approach to tackling child sexual exploitation has three strands, Prevent, Protect, Pursue

## 1. Prevent

- To provide education and awareness raising – This needs to be targeted at professionals working with children and young people, volunteers, young people, parents and carers and hospital staff, and include clear policies and processes for referring concerns
- To support the children's workforce in Swindon to be able to appropriately recognise, assess, and appropriately support children at risk of child sexual exploitation
- To provide intelligence on perpetrators and locations and apply pro-active problem solving to address the risks associated with victims, perpetrators and locations and ensure the safeguarding and welfare of children who are or may be at risk from sexual exploitation
- Developing local profiles of CSE
- To identify gaps in service and provide solutions

## 2. Protect

- To ensure that multi-agency procedures and other documents for CSE, are effective, widely disseminated and understood
- To make best use of safeguarding provisions to reduce the risk of harm to children and in line with Swindon Safeguarding Children procedures, and ensure that Child Protection Conferences are held to reduce such risk where appropriate
- To provide awareness raising and preventative education for children who are or may be sexually exploited and parents and carers
- To provide timely and effective interventions and action plans for children and families to safeguard those vulnerable to sexual exploitation
- To continue to provide a debrief service for those children who return from being missing from their home
- To bring to the attention of the Missing Persons co-ordinators and partner agencies all children identified as being at risk of or being involved in CSE activity

- Concerns around Child Sexual Exploitation should be referred appropriately to Police and where relevant to children's social care in accordance with child abuse procedures. A Referral to the Swindon Multi Agency Risk Panel may provide additional support to compliment action by the lead referring agency to reduce the risk of harm and pursue the offender.

### 3. Pursue

- To take action against those intent on abusing and exploiting children in this way
- To disrupt and bring to justice the perpetrators of Child Sexual Exploitation and to ensure that children are properly safeguarded in the course of any criminal proceedings
- All Agencies should co-operate with Police investigations in relation to the detection and prosecution of crime
- Training on CSE should include sharing of intelligence/information methods and relevant criminal offences
- To recognise that CSE requires proactive investigation and should not be reliant on the child's complaint
- To understand the local, regional and national trafficking intelligence picture around gangs and offenders of CSE through engagement with all agencies
- To utilise all legislation and all opportunities to remove the threat of CSE and disrupt offending to reduce the harm. This includes criminal activity not directly related to CSE e.g. licensing legislation
- To pursue opportunities to interact with offenders in order to develop an understanding of their behaviour and motivations

# 16. CSE Screening Tool

Practitioners who are concerned that a child may be at risk from exploitation should complete the Exploitation Screening Tool. This can assist in determining the nature and level of risk and provide supporting information for any referral that may need to be made.

The screening toll can be downloaded from the LSCB Website at:

[https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/10/workers\\_and\\_volunteers/4](https://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/info/3/workers_and_volunteers/10/workers_and_volunteers/4)

# 17. Information Sharing

**17.1** Sharing information is essential to protect children from suffering harm from abuse or neglect and this includes where there are risks or concerns relating to child sexual exploitation.

**17.2** The sharing of information amongst professionals working with children and their families is essential. In many cases it is only when information from a range of sources is put together that a full picture is created where a child can be seen to be vulnerable, in need or at risk of harm. Appropriate sharing with other practitioners and agencies is essential if children and families who may be in need of support and services are to be identified at an early stage before problems become serious. Sharing can also enable information from different cases to be put together and assist the process of assessing levels of concern and any potential risks.

**17.3** In many instances a failure to pass on information, that might have prevented a child suffering harm, would be far more serious and dangerous than an incident of unjustified disclosure. It would be preferable to have to defend

a decision to share information before the Information Commissioner rather than defend a decision not to share before the coroner.

**17.4** Where there are concerns that a child may be being harmed or abused, there is no legal or ethical restriction on sharing information between child protection agencies. In most child protection investigations it would be highly unusual to request consent during the initial phase of an investigation because of the high risk of compromising the investigation. This is particularly the case when Police officers and social workers are conducting a joint investigation, including about CSE. Information should always be exchanged when such disclosure is necessary for the purposes of child protection.

# 18. Resources

The information in this section links a range of resources for professionals own learning and development and also resources for working directly with children at risk of, or being abused through child sexual exploitation. The final section is specialist organisations providing support for parents and carers. Professionals may find it helpful to consider information in all 3 sections.

This needs to be a dynamic document and as professionals identify useful resources not listed here please do send details to the LSCB ([LSCB@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:LSCB@swindon.gov.uk)) so they can be added. It would also be useful if you use any of these resources or commission bespoke single agency training if you could write just a couple of lines to let others know how useful it was and send that to the LSCB ([LSCB@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:LSCB@swindon.gov.uk))

Please note professionals should wherever possible work to the online document to ensure they do not miss any updates.

As a start point do look at Swindon LSCB Website and the multi-agency training programme as there may already be training or information available which meets your needs. For single agency training some of these resources may be worth following up.

## **1. Resources for professionals (note most of the resources for working with children would be good learning materials for professionals too).**

**CEOP:** Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre. Provides many useful resources including training programmes for professionals. There is a short video on what to look out for in relation to grooming. There are great resources for working with children too. To access training materials you have to register to use the site. It is a simple process which takes 5 minutes and is free. [www.CEOP.Police.uk](http://www.CEOP.Police.uk)

**Google Alerts:** sign up for Google Alerts and you will receive weekly or daily (you choose) emails on topics of interest which you select. Go to [www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts) to set yours up. Useful topics might be child sexual exploitation, child trafficking etc. You may need to refine your search as these generic titles will include international alerts.

**Stop It Now:** Resources and training materials. Also develop bespoke training packages including child sexual exploitation. Much of the material on the site is about sexual abuse rather than CSE. There are a couple of very useful downloadable leaflets including 'The Internet and Children – What's The Problem'. This would be really useful for schools and young people's workers and for

parents too. It covers the use of internet and technology for grooming. Access via the Lucy Faithfull Foundation link below.

**The Lucy Faithfull Foundation** is the only UK-wide child protection charity dedicated solely to reducing the risk of children being sexually abused. They work with entire families that have been affected by abuse including: adult male and female sexual abusers; young people with inappropriate sexual behaviours; victims of abuse and other family members. The LFF provide bespoke training and also specialise in work with offenders. Their focus is on sexual abuse rather than child sexual exploitation but much of their material is transferable. [www.lucyfaithfull.org](http://www.lucyfaithfull.org)

**NSPCC:** a national organisation with a wide range of information and advice on the web site. This includes ‘**Casenotes**’ – reports on key issues including links relevant to CSE such as running away and sexual abuse. There is a professional advice section which includes some good resources linked to ‘**Young People With Harmful Sexual Behaviour**’. [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

**National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children & Young People:** The National Working Group (NWG) is a charity and UK wide network of practitioners, policy makers and researchers working with children and young people who are at risk of, or who experience, sexual exploitation. Their primary aim is to offer support and advice to those working with children and young people affected by sexual exploitation. For more information about the National Working Group and child sexual exploitation, visit: [www.nationalworkinggroup.org](http://www.nationalworkinggroup.org)

## **2. Resources for working with children and young people (although they may also be useful for raising awareness in staff teams and with individual workers)**

**CEOP:** Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre. Provides many useful resources including training programmes for professionals. There are great resources for working with children and young people too. To access training materials you have to register to use the site. It is a simple process which takes 5 minutes and is free. [www.CEOP.Police.uk](http://www.CEOP.Police.uk)

**Chelsea’s Choice:** a powerful theatre production which is designed to raise awareness of grooming and child sexual exploitation amongst young people. The drama is used in group settings and is a 30 minute drama with a 30 minute follow up discussion of the issues raised. It may also be of interests to other groups. [www.alteregotheatre.co.uk](http://www.alteregotheatre.co.uk)

**My Dangerous Loverboy:** a campaign to raise awareness of internal trafficking of children for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Includes a short video which can be used with young people in 1-1 or group settings to get them thinking and talking about what is happening to them. [www.mydangerousloverboy.com](http://www.mydangerousloverboy.com)

### **The End Of My World – by Emma Jackson.**

This is a book written by a young woman who experienced abuse through child sexual exploitation. It is a powerful story of the authors experiences and would be good for professionals to read to raise their awareness and understanding of one model of abuse. It is also suitable for young people to read albeit powerful and explicit in relation to Emma's abuse. It would be a good book for professionals to read alongside a young person or group and discuss the issues raised. Professionals would need to use their discretion about the suitability of the content for work with an individual child and are advised to read it themselves to enable them to make that judgement.

### **3. Resources For Families - these are mainly support services and information**

**Life centre:** Lifecentre is a UK based charity that supports survivors of rape & sexual abuse. It offers a national helpline [www.lifecentre.uk.com](http://www.lifecentre.uk.com)

**Mosac:** MOSAC (Mothers of Sexually Abused Children) is a voluntary organisation supporting all non-abusing parents and carers whose children have been sexually abused. They provide advocacy, advice and information, befriending, counselling, play therapy and support groups following alleged child sexual abuse. Visit [www.mosac.org.uk](http://www.mosac.org.uk) for more information or call their national helpline on 0800 980 1958.

**NAPAC:** is the National Association for People Abused in Childhood. It is a registered charity

providing support and information for people abused in childhood. Visit <https://napac.org.uk>

**Survivors UK:** provides information, support and counselling for men who have been raped or sexually abused. Thousands of men contact them each year. Visit [www.survivorsuk.org](http://www.survivorsuk.org) or call their national helpline on 0845 1221201. Helpline hours: 7pm-9.30pm Mon/Tue/Thu.

**Parents Protect:** General information about protecting children from sexual abuse. Focus largely on intra familial sexual abuse but some useful information on signs of abuse and impact on the child. Parents of young children abused through child sexual exploitation may find some of this material useful. [www.parentsprotect.co.uk](http://www.parentsprotect.co.uk)



## Notes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

