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# Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation

Inter-agency Practice Guidance



Nottinghamshire  
**SAFEGUARDING**  
**CHILDREN** Board



NOTTINGHAM CITY  
**Safeguarding**  
**Children** BOARD

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## INTRODUCTION

This practice guidance has been developed by a multiagency group on behalf of the Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Boards. The guidance reflects the findings of relevant serious case reviews conducted in the region. It builds on the strengths of their previous sexual exploitation practice guidance documents, which it supersedes:

- Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation: Practice Guidance for all Agencies (Nottingham City)
- Tip of the Iceberg (Nottinghamshire Child Exploitation Guidance and Information Pack)

The purpose of this practice guidance is to assist practitioners in identifying those children and young people vulnerable to the risks associated with sexual exploitation. It includes guidance to assess and support children, young people and their families, multi-agency action to disrupt activity and to prosecute offenders.

Sexual exploitation is not limited to a particular geographical area. Even where there is not apparent, clear evidence of child sexual exploitation, this practice guidance should be considered as relevant and used to aid awareness raising and planning in relation to preventative education for children and young people and amongst practitioners.

The practice guidance reflects the principles set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 and in the supplementary guidance 'Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (DCFS 2009)'. Both of these documents are available on the Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Boards' websites.

This practice guidance should be read in conjunction with Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board's Inter-agency Safeguarding Procedures 2010 and other relevant practice guidance. Of particular relevance is

- Safeguarding Children from Abroad Practice guidance. This contains a section covering trafficked children
- Joint Protocol for Children who Run Away and go Missing from Home, Care or Education Practice guidance. Research indicates that 90% of children who have been groomed for sexual exploitation go missing at some point (Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation – DfE 2009)
- Self Harm Practice Guidance
- E-Safety Practice Guidance
- The section of the Interagency Safeguarding Children Procedures that covers Concerns of Harm arising from Sexual Activity of Young People under the age of 18 years. This is contained in Chapter 6

These are available on the boards' WebPages

[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nscb](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nscb)

or

[www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=591](http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=591)

## DEFINITIONS

In Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City we have adopted the definition of sexual exploitation set out in government guidance which states.

**“Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) 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 sexual 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 other economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person’s limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.”**

Extracted from “Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation” published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009)

Child sexual exploitation (CSE), for the purpose of this practice guidance, includes:

- abuse through exchange of sexual activity for some form of payment
- abuse through the production of indecent images and/or any other indecent material involving children whether photographs, films or other technologies
- abuse through grooming whether via direct contact or the use of technologies such as mobile phones and the internet
- abuse through trafficking for sexual purposes

This guidance applies to male and female children up to the age of 18 years irrespective of whether they are living independently, at home, with carers, or in local authority care.

## KEY PRINCIPLES

Work to tackle sexual exploitation needs to be grounded in important principles which will go on to inform effective inter-agency practice in this area. Whilst working together in practice can be complex, it is essential to maintain positive inter-agency communication and develop a network of support around the child, young person and their family.

The key principles that apply to work with this particularly vulnerable group are;

### **A shared responsibility**

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the context of sexual exploitation, like safeguarding more generally, depends on effective joint working between agencies and practitioners that work with children and young people. The involvement of different roles, experience and perspectives is essential if children and young people are to be effectively supported and action taken against perpetrators of sexual exploitation. All agencies should be alert to the risks and able to take action, working jointly where an issue is identified.

### **An integrated approach to early intervention**

Effectively safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people harmed through sexual exploitation requires professional to intervene early, i.e. as soon as young people become involved in potentially risky activities, e.g. associating with much older people and not their peers, beginning to go missing in circumstances where they are vulnerable to being taken advantage of. It is important that in such circumstances their needs are assessed and met within the context of the wider range of support and services which are available to protect and support children and families.

Action to tackle sexual exploitation should be pro-active, focusing on prevention, early identification and intervention as well as disrupting the activity and prosecution of perpetrators.

### **A child centred approach**

All action to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people who are, or at risk of, being sexually exploited should be child-centred and focussed on their individual needs. This means engaging with families throughout the process of intervention and ensuring that the particular sensitive needs and sensitivities of girls and boys, children with disabilities, children where English is a second language, children from minority and ethnic communities, is considered and reflected in the provision of services.

Many sexually exploited children have difficulty distinguishing between their own choices around sex and the sexual activities they are coerced into. This potential confusion needs to be handled with care and sensitivity.

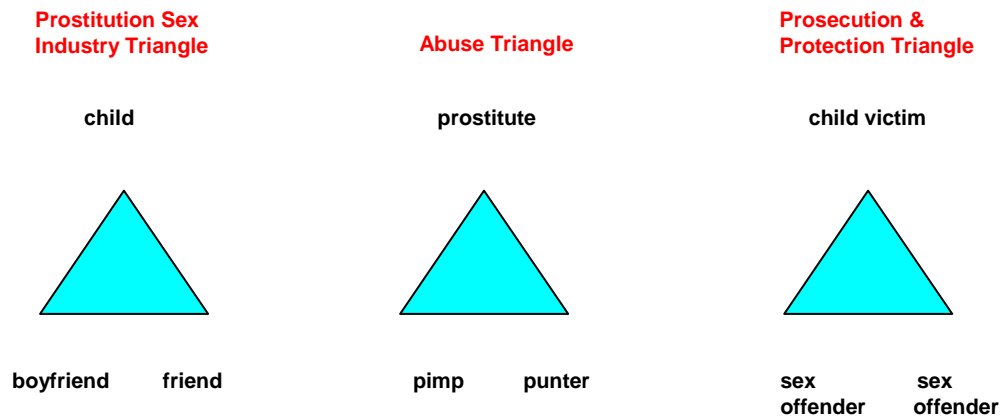
## Parenting, family life and services

Parenting can be challenging and parents themselves sometimes require support. Asking for help should be seen as a sign of responsibility rather than as a failure. A child or young person suffering harm as a result of sexual exploitation by someone outside the family is not necessarily indicative of the parents' failure to meet the needs of their child.

## Responsibility for criminal acts

Children who are sexually exploited are victims of child sexual abuse. Children and young people who are sexually exploited have been abused and are suffering significant harm. They are therefore not to be regarded as having bad or criminal behaviour; they are victims of sexual abuse. The responsibility for the sexual exploitation of children and young people lies with the abuser: the person who pays for sex, the person who grooms the child and/or organises the exploitation. The focus of Police investigations and of prosecutions should therefore be on those persons who coerce, exploit and abuse children and young people.

Children do not make informed choices to enter or remain in sexual exploitation. Rather, they do so from coercion, enticement, manipulation or desperation. Barnardo's <sup>1</sup>suggest that the old informal but frequently used terms of pimp, punter and prostitute should be replaced to indicate our change in approach by the terms victims of abuse, coercers and the sex offenders who abuse them. This makes clear that the activities are harmful and abusive and is described pictorially below.



By recognising that young people under the age of 18 years are not able to consent, or be "active agents" working in the sex industry the terminology of "prostitute" and "prostitution" in relation to children and young people is not appropriate as this implies a degree of legality, choice and consent. Whilst children and young people may describe themselves as a friend or boyfriend/girlfriend within these relationships, it is important practitioners are clear in their terminology and support children to understand sexual exploitation.

<sup>1</sup> Who's Daughter Next? Children Abused Through Prostitution. Barnado's, London 1996

## IDENTIFICATION, RISK-VULNERABILITY FACTORS

### Identification

Anyone who has regular contact with children and young people is in a good position to notice subtle changes in behaviour or physical signs that indicate they may be involved in a sexually exploitative situation. However parents and carers, teachers, social workers, youth offending services staff, school nurses, looked after children's nurses, sexual health practitioners and youth workers are particularly well placed to identify this risk.

There may be a grooming process in place, which could include initially giving gifts to entice young people before moving onto the process of taking control and isolating young people from other networks for example controlling the use of phones or supplying phones in order to keep a check on young people. Use of substances, alcohol and drugs are a common feature of grooming. Substance use not only creates a level of dependence but can also enmesh the young person in illegal activities which they may fear being in trouble over, thus increasing their reluctance to tell others what is happening to them.

In the early stages of sexual exploitation young people often believe that they are making free choices. Some may reject offers of support and then, as the abuse increases in severity they may feel unable or unwilling to talk about what is happening. This can lead to young people being perceived as rebellious or "streetwise". Such perceptions hinder workers ability to properly assess the meaning of this distressed behaviour. A level of resilience is perceived which in fact leaves young people very vulnerable

It is important to be aware of the dangers of parents/ carers and professionals as well as family members being 'groomed', not for the same sexual reasons but groomed into not asking questions, into acquiescence or compliance.

### Risk vulnerability factors to sexual exploitation

Any child or young person may be at risk of sexual exploitation, regardless of their family background or other circumstances. This includes boys and young men as well as girls and young women. However young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation are often at risk because they have significant unmet emotional needs. This may be a result of the fact that earlier life experiences of abuse and neglect were not effectively addressed. Children and young people who have experience of one or more of the following are particularly vulnerable:

- runaway and missing children
- those children with special needs
- those in or leaving residential and foster care

- migrant children
- children disengaged from education
- those involved in gangs
- domestic violence within the family
- bullying in or out of school
- family involvement in sexual exploitation
- parents with their own high level of vulnerabilities (drug/alcohol/mental health problems)
- homeless after rejection by family

Appendix 1 contains a detailed list of factors that may indicate that a child or young person is being sexually exploited. The indicators list is not exhaustive, the presence of any of the considerations and indicators should not be taken as proof that a child or young person is or is likely to be engaged in sexual exploitation but should be used to assist the process of identification and assessment, inform whether a child is suffering or likely to suffer harm and plan appropriate support and intervention.

## UNDERTAKING ASSESSMENTS

Comprehensive inter-agency assessments that are conducted at an early stage are essential in the support and protection of children and young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, sexually exploited. The immediate presenting problems need to be considered in the context of the care that the young person is receiving at that time taking into account the family history, the child's background and any previous harm or neglect experienced.

The potential for poor outcomes increases significantly when intervention does not take place at an early stage to address early signs of concern

Staff/volunteers from all agencies must be sensitive to the possibility that a child may be being sexually exploited and aware of the potential indicators of such abuse. In circumstances where the information available already suggests that a child or children may be at risk of significant harm this should be referred to Children's Social Care. In other circumstances the Common Assessment Framework will be the most appropriate tool to identify needs and support for the child/young person.

In making the decision about what process to follow agencies should follow the Interagency Safeguarding Children Procedures and the following guidance

Pathway to Provision (County)

[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/home/learningandwork/childrenstrust/pathwaytoprovision.htm](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/home/learningandwork/childrenstrust/pathwaytoprovision.htm)

The Family Support Strategy and Pathway (Nottingham City)

[www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/ics/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=27612&p=0](http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/ics/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=27612&p=0)

The information set out below is provided to assist those undertaking assessments in such circumstances

### **Factors to consider as part of assessment that may indicate risks**

- Views and observations of all practitioners involved
- Child's history and care received by family, carers
- How the young person presents and describes themselves, what they say, don't say.
- Changes/ developments in family relationships or ability of home environment?
- Has the young person/child acquired money, clothes, jewellery or goods that you are unsure about e.g. mobile phones?
- Is there reference to the child/young person being shown or involved in pornographic material/ indecent images?
- Have they started to go missing from home or school?

- Any observed changes of behaviour, friends, patterns, or changes in the relationships of the child/young person with those they are usually more close to
- Any observed concerns about places where the young person is going and if so what are these?
- Have they begun relationships with older men/women?
- Are they losing contact with friends of their own age?
- Has anyone noted unexplained injuries or had concerns about the possibility that the child/young person may have been physically assaulted or threatened by an adult?
- Has anyone had other concerns about the child young person's health, possible substance use, signs of self harm, STDs, pregnancy?

This is not an exhaustive list and the presence of these concerns may indicate other forms of abuse, but it should help consideration of possibility of sexual exploitation.

Research undertaken by the Children's Society highlights that young people between the ages of 11 and 17 are less likely to receive a protective response from services than younger children, often because children in the older age range are perceived to be more resilient. (Safeguarding Young People: Responding to young people aged 11 to 17 who are maltreated – the Children's Society 2011). It is important that carers and those working with young people notice and respond to indicators that they are, or may be at risk of, being harmed. Such indicators may include information which suggests the young person is being supplied with substances or alcohol. It may include the fact that the young person has money or belongings that they would not be expected have. It may also include physical injuries, some of which may appear to be superficial. In such circumstances it is important to ensure that this information is taken seriously, recorded and where appropriate reported to the police and children's social care.

### **Talking to the young person**

Young people in situations where they are at risk of sexual exploitation may have become involved in behaviours that get them into trouble with adults, often at the instigation of potential abusers. This can create fear and guilt in the child or young person and lead to them being distanced from their parents / carers and practitioners working with them.

Building relationships in such circumstances may take time and will require a relentless commitment on behalf of the adult. It is vital to establish who else is working with a child/young person in such circumstances and those leading assessments should ensure that all agencies are contacted. This includes voluntary sector organisations, which can be critically important in providing services to young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

All interventions should be aimed at building trust with the young person to enable them to move back into a safer orbit. They may well not agree and may take a lot of convincing especially where they are receiving material benefits such as phones, clothes or substances or apparent attention and 'love' after previous history of maltreatment or rejection. Positive work needs to begin with how the young person is and what they want, along with assessing their safety and needs. Sometimes immediate needs for practical things are the starting point and good use of young people's resources can form the basis of building up a rapport.

It is essential to consider the need for a communication assessment and interpreters for the first language to facilitate the development of relationships and not only for formal 'interviews'. Where young people have learning disabilities it is important to be clear how the disability affects their understanding of relationships and choice making, and perceptions of what risk is and what danger is. Care must be taken to use interpreters through the recognised schemes.

### **Assessing the role of the carer/parents**

It is very important to ensure that a thorough assessment of the care the child receives at home and the relationships between the child and their carers is carried out, bringing together a full history of the involvement of all agencies (including adult services) and the views of family members. It is important to look at the whole family system, not the young person in isolation.

Whilst many family members may be concerned and wish to have help in resolving the situation and protecting the young person, family conflict or abuse may have created extra pressure on the young person. In other cases family members may be involved either actively knowing what was happening and failing to protect, e.g. failing to report a young person as missing?

### **A Model of Understanding**

The diagram below is based on the model designed by the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People (NWG 2008). The NWG have produced the Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment (SERA) which should be used in conjunction with the indicators as defined in the domains of the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need 2000.

The sexual exploitation intervention model has been developed to help all agencies assess whether a child for whom they have a concern is at low risk, medium risk or high risk of harm through sexual exploitation and to support them in determining the correct level of intervention required. The indicators of risk of harm are grouped into the following categories:

- **Low Risk:** a vulnerable child who is at risk of being targeted and groomed for sexual exploitation;
- **Medium Risk:** a child who is targeted for opportunistic abuse through the exchange of sex for drugs, accommodation (over night stays) and goods, etc. The likelihood of coercion and control is significant; and
- **High Risk:** a child whose sexual exploitation is habitual, often self defined and where coercion / control is implicit.

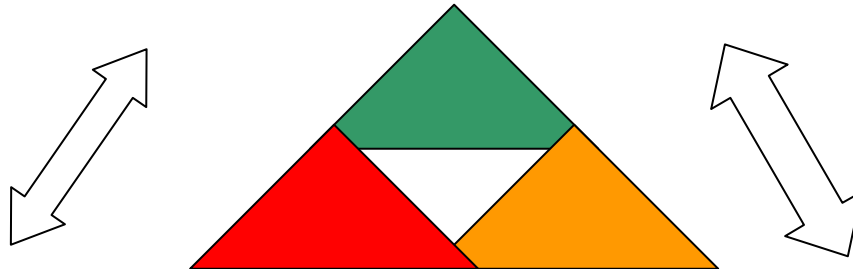
The SERA tool provides a model that can be used by practitioners working with children to come to a judgement about the level of risk of harm to a child. This may include deciding that the available information is not enough to form a sound judgement about the risk level in which case it is important to identify what further information is required, agreeing who will be responsible for clarifying this and within

what timescale. It is important to note that whereas this tool provides a useful framework for assessment, this does not take away the need for practitioners to exercise professional judgement in determining the need to take action including considering initiating a CAF or making a referral to Children’s Social Care. These decisions should not be made exclusively on the basis of the tool where this does not match the worker’s judgement.

Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse and as with all forms of sexual abuse it can often be difficult for professionals to recognise and for young people to feel safe enough to disclose. A lack of a disclosure or other such evidence, e.g. physical symptoms are simply factors which should be taken into account in broader assessment. Professionals need to recognise that retractions may simply reflect a fear of the consequences of disclosure. They should not be the only factors that inform decision making. Put simply a lack of evidence does not mean that there is no risk.

Further information about the SERA model, and the National Working Group, can be found at [www.nationalworkinggroup.org](http://www.nationalworkinggroup.org)

**Lower risk:** Smaller no. of risk signals Sexualised risk taking behaviour, beginning to truant from school, occasionally going missing, going to known places of concern, getting into cars, showing signs of gifts or access to resources, early signs of problem drug or alcohol use. Such children are best dealt with through early intervention process, e.g. CAF, Joint Access Team (County) family community teams (City) Consideration should be given to whether young people in these circumstances will be the subject of Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Strategy meetings



**High risk:** Entrenched in one, or a number of, abusive relationships, contact with known perpetrators, going missing and running from home, problem alcohol or drug use, experience of violence, intimidation and fear. Young people in these circumstances will be the subject of Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Strategy meetings

**Medium risk:** Regularly going missing, “swapping sex” and talking about swapping, truanting regularly from school, going to known places of concern “hot spots”, involved with other vulnerable peers, experiencing violence, intimidation and fear, developing problem drug or alcohol use. A core assessment, led by children’s social care, should be undertaken in such circumstances. Young people in these circumstances will be the subject of Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Strategy meetings

**Illustration of Sexual Exploitation Intervention Diagram** (Adapted from the SERA model developed by the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Young People (2008))

## WORKING WITH INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

By the point in a child or young person's life where they are significantly at risk of or are already being abused through sexual exploitation, they are subject to a complex pattern of life experiences which impact negatively on each dimension of their life. Because of this they can present to agencies such as the Police as 'streetwise' or as 'problematic' rather than in need of support. Intervention, support and action should be based upon the child or young person's needs and be delivered by a trusted worker in conjunction with a protective network of appropriate agencies.

Working with children and young people for whom sexual exploitation is an issue requires a holistic approach through investment of time and resources in long term intervention. Establishing a positive trusting relationship with such vulnerable children and young people takes time. A relationship needs to be developed which offers something tangible to the child or young person. At the same time it is important to acknowledge that workers are not providing a friendship and that there are inescapable power differentials.

Working with children and young people who are exposed to risk situations and experiences of sexual exploitation requires an approach that is non-judgemental and where staff are 'unshockable'. There is a need to be consistently honest and to listen to and respect the views of children and young people:

- intervention should begin with relationship building, and assessment of risks and vulnerabilities with the child or young person
- honest discussions and inclusion in assessment and planning processes will assist the child or young person in feeling included, and create a sense of ownership and connection with the plan
- the plan should address each of the identified areas of risk

Workers need to be realistic about expectations and to understand that this is long term, intensive work, where progress will go backwards as well as forwards.

Children's Social Care and the Police have primary responsibility for taking immediate action to protect children considered at risk of significant harm. As indicated above where an agency has significant concern that a child or young person is being, or is at risk of becoming, sexually exploited these concerns should be discussed with Children's Social Care.

### **Children's Social Care.**

Children's Social Care has the responsibility to confirm in writing to the referring agency that the referral has been received and to inform them of action being taken about the referral. Where the threshold for Children's Social Care input is not met the guidance set out in the Pathway to Provision (County) Family Support Strategy and Pathway (City) should be followed

When a referral about a young person involved in sexual exploitation is received by children's social care, the allocated social worker and their team manager should take a decision within one working day to initiate one of the following actions in line NCSCB/NSCB Inter-agency Safeguarding Procedures 2010:-

- Emergency action to protect the child in discussion with the police
- Following a brief Initial Assessment, a strategy discussion with the police and other involved agencies to decide on and plan Section 47 enquiries

## **Police**

The primary role for the Police is always the protection of life and property and the investigation and prosecution of offenders. The Police should always seek to disrupt activity which may result in crime taking place; they should then seek to prosecute offenders responsible for crimes which have occurred. This role should be undertaken in accordance with the principle of multi agency co operation to protect children.

## **Strategy meeting**

Where it is decided that immediate emergency action is not required, a strategy meeting will be convened. The meeting should be held as soon as possible after the referral and will be chaired by a Child Protection Coordinator (County) or Independent Reviewing Officer (City). Consideration should be given to inviting the young person and their family to the meeting. If the young person wishes to be present for some of the meeting then this can be a positive strategy for engaging with them

Child sexual exploitation strategy meeting will consider:

- 1) The needs of the young person and what arrangements may be necessary for his or her own safety.
- 2) Whether to undertake section 47 enquiries
- 3) Whether emergency action is required to protect the young person
- 4) Who will have responsibility to contact, as appropriate, the young person and their parents/carers?
- 5) How to co-ordinate the arrangements for the young person's safety with any criminal investigation.
- 6) How arrangements for continuing protection and diversion will be taken forward.
- 7) The need for a multi-agency core assessment and roles of each agency within this.
- 8) How to involve the young person in this process if the young person is not at the meeting.
- 9) How to involve the young person's family in the process if they are not at the meeting.
- 10) To identify whether there are any other young people potentially at risk and whether there is any information known about the alleged abuser.

The strategy meeting will result in one of the following outcomes:

- Enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 or emergency action, in which case a Child Protection Conference or a Looked After Child Placement Planning Meeting (sometimes referred to as a 72 hour review) will be the appropriate planning forum or
- A Children in Need Plan. If the young person and their family have not been involved in the strategy meeting, a further meeting will need to be held to involve them in the planning.
- Initiation of a CAF
- No further action

All attendees at the multi-agency strategy meeting should sign up to the agreed plan. The multi-agency 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 placed on the child's file.

Unless no further action is agreed, or enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 are initiated, 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.

## WORKING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES

### Trafficked Children

Where children and young people have arrived in the UK as unaccompanied minors and especially if they have been smuggled or trafficked they are particularly vulnerable to being exploited and controlled. The NSCB/NCSCB Safeguarding Children from Abroad Practice Guidance contains further information regarding this area of practice.

### Missing Children

Patterns of young people going missing often start on a small scale. Staying out 'with friends', being in late to the point where the adults may have lost track of where they are and who their friends are. The NSCB/NCSCB Missing Children Practice Guidance sets out in detail measures that should be taken when children go missing. A key element underpinning this practice guidance is the robust exercise of parental responsibility, by either parents and/or children's social care for looked after children, when young people start to go missing.

### Children in the care of local authorities

When a referral indicating possible sexual exploitation is received regarding a child in care, the allocated social worker must inform their team manager. As with children who are not in local authority care a strategy meeting will be convened. The strategy meeting should also consider the following factors:

- The risk to the child
- The risks to other children in the placement;
- Whether the child should remain in their present placement; and
- The feasibility of controlling the child's movements, and the likely effects of doing so.

Where the child is Looked After there should always be immediate discussion between the Social Care Team Manager and the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) about the need to bring forward the LAC Review and if so whether to combine it with the Strategy Meeting. When making this decision it should be recognised that sometimes a multi-agency strategy meeting will include professionals who would not ordinarily come to LAC reviews and who, given the venue for such reviews it would not be appropriate to invite. Also the issues considered at a strategy meeting, such as police investigations, details of third parties and details of other young people who may be involved may mean that the young person and/or family members cannot be present for whole of a meeting. Where LAC reviews are not combined with multi-agency strategy meetings the IRO should always be invited to the Multi-agency Strategy Meeting if it is the view of the Social Care Team Manager, IRO and the chair

of the Multi-agency Strategy Meeting that they are to be separate. In the City the presumption will be that in most cases it would be helpful for the IRO who chairs the LAC to also chair the Multi-agency Strategy Meeting. In the County this will be agreed between the Child Protection Coordinator and IRO

The strategy meeting should consider 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 child's social worker and the carer/s should put in place a written strategy which balances the need for assertive action and the need to not unduly increase the likelihood of the child running away in response to the action being taken, and possibly placing themselves at even greater risk. 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.

Where the placement is in another local authority, or children from other local authorities are involved, that local authority's child protection manager (or equivalent) must be contacted, to discuss which local authority is to take overall responsibility for convening the strategy meeting and co-ordinating the response. The other agency partners working with the child should be informed of the worker in charge of the case.

#### 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, including consideration of the use of or complex abuse and/or children who sexually harm .procedures both of which are contained within the NSCB/NCSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures

#### **Leaving care / aftercare**

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).

## DEALING WITH PERPETRATORS AND COERCERS

Identifying, disrupting and prosecuting perpetrators is a key part of the work to safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation. The police and criminal justice agencies are the leads for this aspect of work; however the support of other partners is vital. Identifying and prosecuting perpetrators should be a key consideration for all agencies working to address issues of sexual exploitation. All information gathered by agencies should be clearly recorded in order that it can be shared with relevant agencies and retained as potential evidence.

Locally it has been agreed that where the concerns are sufficiently well evidenced that there is an identified perpetrator(s)/ coercer(s), even if the identity of the child or young person is not known, the threshold for a referral to Children's Social Care should be considered to be have been met and a multi-agency strategy meeting should be held.

Whilst it is recognised that prosecutions in this area are difficult this should not inhibit workers from taking a positive approach to identifying offenders. Robust action should be taken at every occasion to disrupt the activities of these abusers in their contact with children. This action may take the form of visits to serve letters warning of possible criminal action re harbouring, abduction offences. Offenders should also be informed that the local authority and/or the police intend to seek civil control orders as a means of controlling their behaviour via Sexual Prevention Orders, Risk of Sexual harm Orders and Antisocial Behaviour Orders.

**Parents and carers should be encouraged and supported in identifying perpetrators and collecting information and preserving any potential evidence, as well as supporting their children to exit the exploitative relationship and with any criminal process of which they may be subject.**

Indicators that may raise suspicions regarding possible perpetrators behaviour include:

- Someone who has numbers of children visiting their household regularly and appear to be using it as an open house or drop-in.
- Someone who is giving children treats, money or favours outside of the child's usual family or environment where this is not thought appropriate.
- Someone who appears to harbour children truanting from school or missing from home or who has taken a child into their home as a lodger or 'boyfriend/girlfriend'
- Someone who has or is suspected of having a relationship or a series of relationships with children
- Someone older collecting the child whom education staff or other staff observe as new in the child's life and need to check out who they are and consider their relationship to the child.

## Child perpetrators

In cases where it is identified that a person coercing the young person is under 18 years of age then consideration will need to be given to holding two separate meetings because planning for the perpetrator/coercer would fall into the guidance for working with children who sexually harm and an AIM (Assessment, Intervention and Moving On model see NCSCB/NSCB Practice Guidance for ‘children who sexually harm’) assessment would be required.

## Parents or Carer perpetrators

In cases where the assessment identifies that the child is at risk of significant harm and there are also factors in the home, affecting or causing an increase in risks outside the home, include:

- where the parent/carers has been either rejecting or maltreating the child, pushing them away;
- where the carer has been aware of the sexual exploitation and not acted to protect,
- where the parent/carers has been failing to report the child missing,
- where the parent/carers has been actually involved or aware of the exploitation, transporting the child etc,

A discussion will need to take place with the Team Manager or Children’s Service Manager and the Independent Reviewing Officer (City) or Child Protection Co-ordinator (County) about the need for an Initial Child Protection Conference or emergency protective action to tackle the need for changes in the care the child is receiving at home.

Where it becomes clear that an adult creating risk for the subject child also is involved with other children outside the family or has their own children, a referral to social care is required regarding those children.

Social Care Team Managers will need to consider with other agencies whether a separate meeting is needed on the adult who poses the risk to more than one children, with separate individual planning meetings for each child, or whether, depending on the level of risk and convictions, the Police or Probation should chair a meeting under the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements.

It is rare and clearly may not be preferable to have more than one meeting, but where there are many children involved with an adult of concern, or a group of adults working together it may be better to separate the planning so that the meetings for the children can concentrate on the individual needs of each child. Risk strategy meetings or MAPPA meetings can then focus on the adults’ patterns of activity with the various young people. The interagency discussion led by the children social care team manager is essential in working out the best way to manage these cases. The Independent Reviewing Officer or Child Protection Co-ordinator should be consulted throughout the process and kept informed.

## Appendix 1

# Factors which may indicate possible sexual exploitation

The following is a combination of considerations from the National Working Group (NWG 2008) , “Anchors in Floating Lives”, Naseema Patel & Jenny Pearce (2004), and the domains and dimensions of the Framework for the Assessment of Children and Young People in Need and their Families (2000). They are extracted from Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (DfE 2009)

### **Domain: Child or Young Person’s Developmental Needs**

#### Health:

- Physical symptoms (bruising suggestive of either physical or sexual assault)
- Chronic fatigue
- Recurring or multiple sexually transmitted infections
- Pregnancy and/or seeking a termination
- Evidence of drug, alcohol or substance misuse
- Sexually risky behaviour
- Young people who are not looking after themselves
- Self-harming or eating disorders

#### Education:

- Missing school/disengagement with education or considerable change in performance at school

#### Emotional and Behavioural Development:

- Getting involved in petty crime such as shoplifting, stealing
- Secretive behaviour
- Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults
- Secretive about Internet use or using adult networking sites. This may include young people spending increasing amounts of time on social networking sites and/or an unwillingness to share online contacts
- Marked changes in presentation
- Anti-social behaviour
- Sexualised language
- Sexually offending behaviour

#### Identity:

- Low self-image, low self-esteem, self-harming behaviour, e.g. cutting, overdosing, eating disorder, promiscuity

#### Family and Social Relationships:

- Patterns of rejection
- Possession of abnormal amounts of money, gifts, new mobile phones, credit on mobile phones, number of SIM cards
- Hostility in relationship with parents/carers and other family members
- Physical aggression towards parents, siblings, pets, teachers or peers

- Placement breakdown
- Reports from reliable sources (e.g. parents/carers, friends or other professionals in contact with the child or young person) suggesting the likelihood of involvement in sexual exploitation.
- Detachment from age-appropriate activities
- Associating with other young people who are known to be sexually exploited
- Young person known to be sexually active
- Sexual relationship with a significantly older person
- Unexplained relationships with older adults
- Possible inappropriate use of the Internet and forming relationships, particularly with adults, via the Internet.
- Phone calls, text messages or letters from unknown adults
- Adults or older young people loitering outside the child's usual place of residence
- Persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation
- Returning after having been missing, looking well cared for in spite of having no known home base
- Missing for long periods, with no known home base
- Going missing and being found in areas where the child or young person has no known links
- New contacts with people who live outside of the area
- Sharing inappropriate images

#### Social Presentation:

- Change in appearance
- Leaving home/care setting in clothing unusual for the individual child (inappropriate for age, borrowing clothing from older young people)
- Social activities/possessions with no explanation of how funded
- Appearing with clothes phones, jewellery, drugs, alcohol cigarettes, mobile phones or other gadgets with no explanation as to how these were obtained
- Low self-esteem, poor self-image or lack of confidence

#### **Domain: Parental Capacity**

##### Ensuring Safety:

- History of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse or neglect

#### **Domain: Family and Environmental Factors**

##### Family History and Functioning:

- History of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse; neglect; domestic violence; parental difficulties

##### Housing

- Pattern of street homelessness
- Having keys to premises other than those known about

##### Income

- Possession of large amounts of money with no plausible explanation

- Acquisition of expensive clothes, mobile phones or other possessions without plausible explanation
- Accounts of social activities with no plausible explanation of the source of necessary funding

#### Family's Social Integration

- Reports that the child has been seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation
- Seen at public toilets known for cottaging or adult venues (pubs and clubs)

#### Boys and Young Men

Workers should be mindful of the fact that child sexual exploitation is not limited to girls and young women. Boys and young men are also potentially vulnerable to this form of abuse.

#### Particular groups

In addition to the above, some children and young people may be more vulnerable to sexual exploitation due to their circumstances, this could include issues relating to:

- Young people with a Learning Difficulty and/or disability Disabilities (LDD). Young people with LDD may be targeted and can be more disempowered by the lack of appropriate education and planning to support them with choices, friendships, confidence in relation to sex and sexual relationships.
- Young people who have been rejected by their families and who do not have access to other supports. Looked After young people have featured very highly in the statistics of those who are sexually exploited as indicated above
- Financial need - Many young people report becoming prostitutes in order to get money to buy things that they cannot otherwise afford (such as consumables), to fund drug habits, (both their own and other people's) and as a means of avoiding begging or other activities
- There is particular vulnerability caused by emphasis on 'entitlement' to resources for refugee and asylum seeking children, which may force young people to lie about their age to access resources and lead to exploitation by adults who may misuse children for their own profit
- Young people whose sexuality is not positively promoted may be particularly targeted by predatory males especially in parts of the country where services are limited. Where young people exploring sexuality are unsupported and lack access to information they may become more vulnerable to being targeted for abuse.
- Rejection and eviction, young people who have what are described as 'constrained choices' limited by economic necessity and/or the effects of abuse and neglect

## APPENDIX 2 Police Powers

### Child Abduction Act 1984

Police use of the Child Abduction Act 1984 is relevant in situations where a young person is visiting the home of an adult and there are concerns that they are being groomed for sexual exploitation or having sexual activity with that adult.

Section 2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984, says that any person other than a parent, lawful carer etc, commits an offence if without lawful authority, they take or detain a child under the age of 16 years so as to:

- Remove them from control of the persons having lawful control of the child
- Keep the child out of the lawful control of the person who has lawful control of the child

This is a practical option in relation to:

- Disrupting a negative relationship.
- Stopping the grooming of a child in an adult's house
- Sending a clear message to the adult that the Police are involved
- Reassuring the parents / carers of the proactive involvement of the Police

### Search of premises under Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Code B

Police search of premises is relevant in situations where a young person is visiting the home of an adult and there are concerns that they are being groomed for sexual exploitation or having sexual intercourse with that adult.

The Police may search premises with the consent of the occupier, as well as where they have legal powers to do so. Before seeking consent the officer in charge should state the purpose of the proposed search, inform the occupier that they are not obliged to consent and that anything seized may be used in evidence.

Police repeated use of search of premises can have the effect of making the child or young person an unwelcome guest in an adult's property.

This is a practical option in relation to:

- Stopping the grooming to a child in an adult's house
- Sending a clear message to the adult that the Police are involved
- Reassuring the parents / carers of the proactive involvement of the Police
- Disrupting a negative relationship.

## Sexual Offences Act 2003

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 introduced new offences to protect all children aged less than 18 years. The Act provides specific offences in respect of child sexual exploitation:

- taking, making, permitting to take, distributing, showing, possessing with intent to distribute and advertising indecent photographs or pseudo photographs of children aged 16 or 17 years of age (Section 45)
- paying for the sexual services of a child aged under 13 years – a child aged under 13 years cannot give consent (Section 47)
- paying for the sexual services of a child aged between 14 and 16 years (Section 47)
- paying for the sexual services of a child aged between 16 and 18 years (Section 47)
- causing or inciting child 'prostitution' or 'pornography' (Section 48)
- controlling a child 'prostitute' or child involved in 'pornography' (Section 49)
- arranging or facilitating child 'prostitution' or 'pornography' (Section 50)
- arranging or facilitating the arrival in the UK for the purpose of committing a relevant offence (Section 57)
- trafficking within the UK (Section 58)
- trafficking out of the UK (Section 59)

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. This work is led by the Police Sexual Exploitation Investigation Unit, who can be contacted by ringing 101 and asking for the SEIU.

Further detail re the range of options available is contained in Annex A of National guidance Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation. This document is available on the boards' WebPages

[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nscb](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nscb)

or

[www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=591](http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=591)