

# Lead Officers Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation



## Role Guidance and Information

**Child Sexual Exploitation**

*The more you know the more you see*

## What is a Child Sexual Exploitation?

“Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where the young person (or third person/s) receives ‘something’ (e.g. alcohol, food, accommodation, drug, 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.”

Violence, coercion and intimidation are common. Involvement in exploitative relationships is characterised by the child’s or young person’s limited availability of choice as a result of their social, economic or emotional vulnerability.

**“Children who are sexually exploited are the victims of sexual abuse and should be safeguarded from further harm. Sexually exploited children should not be regarded as criminals and the primary law enforcement response must be directed at perpetrators who groom children for sexual exploitation.”**

Baroness Morgan of Drefelin

Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (2009)

A common feature of CSE is that the child or young person does not recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and does not see themselves as a victim of exploitation.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) maintains a very high national profile and remains a key priority area for the Wirral Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB). Partnership work to tackle CSE is led through the CSE strategic group and all organisations have a role to play in ensuring children and young people are protected from CSE.

The Jay report into CSE in Rotherham highlighted that ‘collective failures’ of managers and professionals in partner agencies including Social Care and the Police to acknowledge and respond to the extent of CSE contributed to 16 years of abuse of children and young people.

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## Groups at Increased Risk from CSE

- There is a recognised link that children who go missing (particularly from care), and children associated with gangs, are more vulnerable to being sexually exploited.
- Children who are already deemed vulnerable, particularly those looked after by the local authority, are at a disproportionate risk of being sexually exploited.

Looked After Children are primarily the responsibility of the local authority where they are ordinarily resident (home authority). If, as may often be the case, they are placed outside of the home authority area they then become the responsibility of the host authority for many services, e.g. education and health.

Nevertheless, they always remain the primary responsibility of their home authority. The home authority has the continued responsibility to provide a social work service to the child and to independently review those care arrangements. The role of the Independent Reviewing Officer is central in such cases with a duty to scrutinise the child's / young person's care plan and make sure there is a thorough risk assessment with appropriate links to local support agencies.

The allocated social worker should establish the name and contact details for the CSE lead in the host authority so that it can be

included in the care plan for help and assistance as appropriate.

- In some cases children may be drawn into sexual exploitation by peers who are already involved. Girls in particular can be coerced into sexual exploitation by an older man, who poses as, and who they view as, their boyfriend.
- Children who have suffered a bereavement or some other form of trauma may also be vulnerable and at an increased risk of being sexually exploited.

“Trafficking in Persons” of children and young people under 18 is defined as that which:

*‘The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, or a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs’.*

*(Article 3 UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organisational Crime.*

This is also commonly referred to as ‘the Palermo Protocol’).

## Signs and Indicators of Abuse

- Disabled children - as their disability increases they could become more vulnerable, and children with learning difficulties should also be seen as vulnerable.
- Children with low self-esteem as they are more vulnerable to being targeted by exploiters.
- There is an overlap between the definitions of CSE and domestic abuse, particularly in relation to peer abuse and lone perpetrator models.
- Children aged 16 - 18 years are particularly vulnerable to both CSE and being caught up in relationships where abuse may occur.

Careful consideration should be given to which framework would offer the most appropriate response to the victim. For example, it may be better for a young person to be referred to a specialist domestic abuse service, but it is important that children and young people are assessed within a child protection filter in the first instance.

### **Warning signs and vulnerabilities checklist identified by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) report on CSE . The following are typical vulnerabilities in children prior to abuse:**

- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, parental criminality);
- History of abuse (including family related child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of honour based violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect);
- Recent bereavement or loss;
- Gang-association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships (in cases of gang-associated CSE only);
- Attending school with children and young people who are already sexually exploited;
- Learning disabilities;
- Unsure about their sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families;
- Friends with young people who are sexually exploited;
- Homeless;
- Lacking friends from the same age group;
- Living in a gang neighbourhood;
- Living in residential care;
- Living in hostel or bed and breakfast accommodation
- Low self-esteem or self-confidence;
- Young carer.

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

- Missing from home or care;
- Physical injuries;
- Drug or alcohol misuse;
- Involvement in offending;
- Repeat sexually-transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations;
- Absent from school;
- Change in physical appearance;
- Evidence of sexual bullying and /or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites;
- Estranged from their family;
- Receipt of gifts from unknown sources;
- Recruiting others into exploitative situations;
- Poor mental health;
- Self-harm;
- Thoughts of or attempts at suicide.

Evidence highlighted in the interim report of the OCC showed that any child displaying several vulnerabilities from the above lists should be considered to be at high risk of sexual exploitation.

Professionals should immediately start an investigation to determine the risk, along with preventative and protective action as required. However, it is important to note that children and young people without pre-

existing vulnerabilities can still be sexually exploited. Therefore, any child or young person showing risk indicators in the second list, but none of the vulnerabilities in the first, should also be considered as a potential victim, with appropriate assessment and action put in place as required.

## Practice Guidance and Tools

To support practitioners with identifying and reporting Child Sexual Exploitation the WSCB has published a **CSE Practice Guidance** document which includes further information about identifying the signs, models of CSE and the referral pathway.

A series of tools, referral and assessment forms are also available to practitioners:

- CSE Screening Tool
- CSE1 Referral Form
- CSE2 Risk Assessment Form

All the tools can be accessed here:

<https://www.wirral safeguarding.co.uk/professionals/child-sexual-exploitation/>

## Signs and Indicators

- S**exual Health and Behaviour: evidence of sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and termination; inappropriate sexualised behaviour.
- A**bsent from school or repeatedly running away: evidence of truancy or periods of being missing from home or care.
- F**amily related abuse and/or problems at home: family related sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, as well as risk of forced marriage or honour-based violence; domestic violence; substance misuse; parental mental health concerns; parental criminality; experience of homelessness; living in a care home or temporary accommodation.
- E**motional and physical condition: thoughts of, or attempted, suicide or self-harming; low self-esteem or self confidence; problems relating to sexual orientation; learning difficulties or poor mental health; unexplained injuries or changes in physical appearance identified.
- G**angs, older age groups and involvement in crime: direct involvement with gang members or living in a gang-affected community; involvement with older individuals or lacking friends from the same age group; contact with other individuals who are sexually exploited.
- U**se of technology and sexual bullying: evidence of 'sexting', sexualised communication online or problematic use of the internet and social networking sites.
- A**lcohol and drug misuse: problematic substance use.
- R**eceipt of unexplained gifts or money: unexplained finances, including phone credit, clothes and money.
- D**istrust of authority figures: resistance to communicating with parents, carers, teachers, social services, health, police and others.

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# The Role of the Lead Officer Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation

In line with the responsibilities of a safeguarding lead, the lead officers tackling Child Sexual Exploitation will:

- give advice and support to colleagues on the steps to take when they are concerned about a child at risk of, or experiencing, CSE;
- provide appropriate signposting to the right service;
- provide relevant information;
- ensure their own agency is picking up themes in relation to CSE activity;
- ensure their own agency is addressing any issues related to internal policies and procedures that are causing blockages
- Attend MACSE as required
- Participate in audits and multi-agency activities through the WSCB to test and improve CSE processes

**A lead officer for tackling CSE is not:**

- responsible for the case management of other people's work;
- an expert, but someone with heightened awareness, or who will know who else to ask for further advice.

## Useful References and links:

<https://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/professionals/child-sexual-exploitation/>

On this website practitioners can find:

- CSE Practice Guidance
- CSE Screening Tool and Referral Form
- CSE Protocol—detailing function and operation of the Multi-agency CSE (MACSE) meetings
- CSE Strategy
- Latest publications and reports
- How to report a child at risk

<https://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/courses/>

Details of Child Sexual Exploitation multi-agency Training and how to book

<http://www.listentomystory.co.uk/>

Pan Merseyside LSCB website dedicated to raising awareness and providing information about CSE to children and young people, parents and carers and practitioners

<http://www.catch-22.org.uk/programmes-services/wirral-missing-home-child-sexual-exploitation/>

Website of Catch22 who are the commissioned service responsible for the missing from home and CSE service in Wirral

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