



**reconstruct**

**Children at Risk of  
Child Sexual  
Exploitation Policy  
(CSE)**

## Children at Risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

### Introduction

Important Note: This policy and guidance document forms part of the company's overall Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, Procedure and Guidance and as such, is to be used in conjunction with our Safeguarding Policy and Procedure and other information and guidance referred to within that document.

### Context of the Document

The company works with many Local Authorities, all of whom have their own policy and procedures with regards to CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation); however, there are many commonalities between them. In specific circumstances with specific children, we will ensure we follow the procedures of the relevant responsible and home authority.

### Introduction to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

*"This country has to wake up to the fact that children are being sexually abused in far greater numbers than was ever imagined. It could be going on in every type of community and in every part of the country".*

Tim Loughton (former Children's Minister)

Child Sexual Exploitation has been described as the biggest public health risk to our children and young people today. Although Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is not new, recent high-profile cases in the media, and subsequent investigations and reports have begun to ensure that we are all becoming more aware of this form of sexual abuse of children and young people.

There have been many shocking accounts and stories in news bulletins and documentaries in recent years. One of the most frightening aspects that has become apparent is that all children and young people are potentially vulnerable to being exploited in this way.

Although all children and young people are potentially at risk of CSE, it is known that looked after children are disproportionately represented as victims of Child Sexual Exploitation. Although the majority of victims live with their own families, it is estimated that 20-25% are looked after children, compared with 1% of the child population as a whole. It will of course be the case that a number of looked after children are now being looked after because they have been sexually exploited.

The company, as an organisation that works with young people who are looked after, recognises its responsibilities in tackling Child Sexual Exploitation. This document outlines how The company fulfils these responsibilities.

## Principles

- All young people have an absolute right to a childhood free from abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- All young people have the right to a life free from trafficking, and protection from this is paramount.
- All young people have an equal right to protection from abuse, neglect or exploitation and a responsibility not to abuse or exploit others.
- All staff have a responsibility to be aware of the issues of child exploitation and a duty to report and refer any concerns.
- Young people are best kept safe when professionals work effectively together and share responsibility for protective action (see Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015).
- Where there are concerns about a young person's safety, unconditional confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and should not be offered.
- Staff should be proactive and take positive steps to inform young people of their rights to safety and protection from exploitation and the options available to express their fears or concerns.
- When young people make allegations of abuse, neglect or exploitation, they should always be listened to, have their concerns taken seriously and, where appropriate, thoroughly investigated.
- All children involved in sexual exploitation are being sexually, physically and emotionally harmed, both in the short term and long term.
- Children and young people do not make informed choices but are coerced, enticed, manipulated or are desperate because they see no alternative.
- All staff charged with the responsibility of safeguarding children have a right to training and appropriate levels of supervision and support.

## What is Child Sexual Exploitation?

The sexual exploitation of children is sexual abuse; albeit a particular form of abuse which, in some of its forms, has previously been referred to as "child prostitution". The company vehemently opposes this term being used to describe children who are being sexually exploited and will actively challenge its use.

Statutory Guidance defines Child Sexual Exploitation as:

*"Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.*

*The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child Sexual Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can occur through the use of technology".*

This definition was updated in 2017 after a nationwide consultation.

Although Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse, recent enquiries have demonstrated that often young people who are being exploited sexually are perceived to have made a "lifestyle choice". Many people, including professionals involved, have deemed that the

children and young people have consented to, and are choosing to be involved in an exploitative relationship.

In 2017, the Working Together Guidance was updated to reflect the new CSE definition stated above. The link to the updated guidance is below. The Department of Education (DfE) has also issued a new guide for practitioners around CSE.

The new guidance is available via the DfE website:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/591903/CSE\\_Guidance\\_Core\\_Document\\_13.02.2017.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/591903/CSE_Guidance_Core_Document_13.02.2017.pdf)

The supporting annexes can be accessed via:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/591905/CSE\\_Guidance\\_Annexes\\_13.02.2017.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/591905/CSE_Guidance_Annexes_13.02.2017.pdf)

### **Young People Are Not Able to Consent to Their Own Abuse**

The fact that a young person is 16 or 17 years old and has reached the legal age of being able to consent to sex is not a sign that they are no longer at risk, or able to be a victim, of Child Sexual Exploitation. These young people are still children and as such, can still be victims of CSE. They have a right to support and protection from harm. We all have a responsibility to understand the dynamics of sexual abuse and children do not and cannot make a “lifestyle choice” that involves their consent to their own abuse and exploitation.

One of the frightening aspects of the dynamics of Child Sexual Exploitation is that the perpetrators will use the common and natural vulnerabilities of teenagers in order to groom and then entice them into exploitative relationships and situations.

The sexual exploitation of children and young people is always child abuse. It can however take a number of forms which include the following:

- Situations where children and young people are exploited by family members.
- The involvement of children and young people in sexually exploitative relationships with adults or peers.
- The informal exchange of sex for favours, money, drugs, accommodation or other commodities.
- More ‘formal’ forms of sexual exploitation.
- Organised abuse.
- Trafficking or Modern Slavery.

### **Trafficking and Modern Slavery**

The term ‘trafficking’ or ‘modern slavery’ is usually associated with the trafficking of adults into the country to be forced to work, either as sex workers or in some other form of unregulated labour. There have been many examples in the news of people having been forced into domestic servitude. However, what we have learnt recently about Child Sexual Exploitation is that many children and young people who are being exploited are also being trafficked.

Children (under 18) are considered to be victims of trafficking, regardless or not of whether they have been coerced, deceived or paid to secure their compliance. They need only to have been

recruited, transported, received or harboured for the purposes of exploitation. These are young people who are living within the UK but are being trafficked from one geographical area to another for the purposes of sexual exploitation. This may be between towns and cities and it may be that the perpetrator/s are physically and forcibly moving them, but it may also be from the location where the child usually lives to a location within the same town/city/village. It may also be that there are no visible signs of the child being forced to go from one area to another for the purposes of exploitation. As stated previously, this scenario has led others to believe that the child is consenting in their own exploitation.

There is no globally agreed definition of modern slavery, but it comes in many forms, such as:

- Sexual Exploitation – This includes, but is not limited to, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, forced prostitution and abuse of children for the production of child abuse images/videos. 42% of all reported trafficking victims in the UK are victims of sexual exploitation.
- Domestic Servitude – Being forced to work in often private households with little or no pay. This could be doing long hours and involve doing household chores or childcare. 24% of domestic servitude victims in the UK are children.
- Criminal Exploitation – Forcing a person to commit crimes such as pickpocketing, shoplifting, cannabis cultivation, financial crimes such as benefit fraud, and other activities which mean financial gain for the exploiter. In cannabis cultivation for example, 81% of victims are children.
- Other areas could include forced begging, forced marriage, illegal adoption and illegal organ donation.

The majority of modern slavery victims are reported to be in the 16-17 year-old age range, however, children are often found with no legitimate identification documents, therefore making it difficult to prove their age.

Modern slavery is an international crime which affects an estimated 29.8 million people across the globe. It is not confined to any particular age, gender or ethnicity and happens in many countries across the world, including the UK. For more information on modern slavery please go to [www.modernslavery.co.uk](http://www.modernslavery.co.uk).

Please refer to the overall Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy, Procedure and Guidance and follow the reporting procedures if you have any concerns about a child being involved in trafficking/modern slavery.

Please [click here](#) for statutory guidance on safeguarding children who may have been trafficked.

### **Gangs and Groups**

Professionals working with children and young people need to be aware of the context of sexual exploitation within the gangs and groups arena. In some areas, to be a member of the gang may not only seem attractive to a young person, it is essential. Being a member of a gang may provide a young person with a feeling of not only belonging, status and respect but also protection.

Recent research has identified that within many gangs, sexual violence (usually but not exclusively towards female members) is the norm. Sexual exploitation may occur for example as part of the initiation process or it may also be used in return for protection. One of the most disturbing aspects is that members (or perceived enemies) of a gang may be raped (single/multiple perpetrator) as a punishment or as a weapon in conflict.

### **Child Sexual Exploitation Grooming Models (from PACE – Parents Against Child Exploitation)**

Perpetrators 'groom' a child for sexual exploitation in a process designed to break down the child's defences and existing relationships with family and friends to establish control.

Grooming is like a process of recruitment and the victims are introduced into a lifestyle which they are made to believe is normal, but which is actually abusive. This may take place online or offline and could include violence, lies, blackmail or threats. Once groomed, the child is expected to participate in sexual activities, often in exchange for something such as alcohol, gifts, money, affection, drugs or a place to stay.

There are different models of grooming; children might experience exploitation at parties, by groups of older men or (less often) women, as part of a gang or even by friends their own age.

The following guide aims to help parents identify the particular model of grooming used on their child. However, every situation is different, and your child may have been groomed for sexual exploitation through a variety of tactics.

**Peer on Peer Exploitation** – Children are sexually exploited by peers who are known to them at school, in the neighbourhood or through mutual friends.

**Exploitation Through Befriending and Grooming** – Children are befriended directly by the perpetrator (in person or online) or through other children and young people. This process may begin with a child being targeted and befriended by another child usually known to them as an equal, i.e. a classmate, a friend of a sibling or a neighbour. This introductory young person later introduces the child to either one or more older (usually) men, who they may describe as an older sibling or cousin. The older man/men offer the child attention in the form of gifts, flashy cars, cigarettes, alcohol and drugs. To the child, it is new and exciting. The older man/men treat the child as an adult and deliberately portray their parents as unreasonable and overly strict, should they seek to intervene.

**The 'Boyfriend'/Pimp Model** – Perpetrators target children posing as 'boyfriends', showering the child with attention and gifts to cause infatuation. They initiate a sexual relationship with the child, which the child is expected to return as 'proof' of their love or as a way of returning the initial attention and gifts. The child is effectively told that they owe the perpetrators money for cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, car rides etc. and that sexual activities are one way of paying it back.

**The 'Party' Model** – Parties are organised by groups of (usually) men to lure young people. Young people are offered drinks, drugs and car rides, often for free. They are introduced to an exciting environment and a culture where sexual promiscuity and violence is normalised. Parties are held at various locations and children are persuaded, sometimes financially, to bring their peers along. Children are also encouraged to associate with others via Facebook, SnapChat, Instagram, Tik Tok etc. The parties may be held some distance from the child's home, enabling the perpetrators to force the child to have sex in return for a lift home. Drugs and alcohol are

used to suppress the children's resistance. Images may be taken of them without their clothes for purpose of future blackmail.

### **Who is Vulnerable to Child Sexual Exploitation?**

As stated above, one of the most frightening aspects of Child Sexual Exploitation is that all young people are vulnerable to being exploited in this way. The perpetrators of Child Sexual Exploitation are able to target teenagers in particular, purely by virtue of them being teenagers; the normal developmental process of a young person going through adolescence does give the perpetrator many opportunities to groom and exploit such a young person. For example, as we know from our own children's adolescence, teenagers do:

- Experiment and take risks.
- Perceive risks differently to adults.
- Reject authority and control.
- Ignore good advice.
- Tend to be vulnerable to flattery and naïve.
- Fail to recognise risk or feel that they are invincible.
- Tend to be secretive.
- Tend to be in conflict with adults in their lives who have their best interests at heart.

All of the above "normal" characteristics of most teenagers can provide perpetrators of Child Sexual Exploitation with plenty of opportunity to groom and manipulate young people. However, although all of our young people are at risk to being sexually exploited, there are some groups that are particularly vulnerable. In particular, looked after children are not only more vulnerable to being victims of CSE but they are more likely to be targeted as a result of their vulnerability. Young people leaving care are particularly at risk due to their significant change in circumstances and the inherent vulnerabilities in this. This is particularly the case for those young people who may have alienated adults around them prior to leaving care.

Although the majority of victims of Child Sexual Exploitation are girls and young women, boys and young men are also targeted by perpetrators of sexual exploitation. Recent research carried out by Safe and Sound Derby has identified the following:

- Girls are targeted from age 10 to 11.
- Boys are targeted from age 8.
- 25-30% of their referrals are for boys.
- Looked after children and those with non-statemented learning difficulties are overrepresented in the referrals.

### **Boys and Young Men**

Sexual exploitation of boys and young men can be overlooked due to gender stereotypes and a lack of understanding of the need to apply CSE indicators strictly regardless of gender. This will require all those who work with boys and young men to focus on ensuring that this group of young people are not overlooked. This requires skilful interventions as boys and young men are unlikely to volunteer to share information or make disclosures about CSE abuse. There is a lack of focus on resources for young men and boys and this will continue to be an area that requires attention to ensure the safeguarding of boys and young men.

There is also a need for professionals to revisit their own understanding of gender stereotypes and ensure that certain behaviours are not overlooked due to them being typical “male” or “laddish” behaviours.

### **Vulnerability Indicators**

Below is a list of circumstances that may make a young person more vulnerable to Child Sexual Exploitation:

- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues and parental criminality).
- A history of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of honourbased violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect).
- A recent bereavement or loss.
- Gang association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships (in cases of gang associated CSE only).
- Attending school with young people who are sexually exploited.
- Having learning disabilities.
- Being unsure about their sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families.
- Being friends with young people who are sexually exploited.
- Being homeless.
- Lacking friends from the same age group.
- Living in a gang neighbourhood.
- Living in residential care.
- Living in a hostel, bed and breakfast accommodation or a foyer.
- Having low self-esteem or self-confidence.
- Being a young carer.

### **Indicators of Child Sexual Exploitation**

All adults working with children and young people need to know what the potential indicators of CSE are.

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.
- Repeated sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations.
- Absence from school.
- Change in physical appearance.
- Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social media.
- Estranged from their family.
- Replacing friendship group with others.
- Receipt of gifts from unknown sources.
- Recruiting others into exploitative situations.



- Poor mental health.
- Self-harm.
- Thoughts of or attempts at suicide.
- Little of no acknowledgement of the risks associated with camera phones and what can happen to images.

Evidence shows that any child displaying several vulnerabilities from the above lists should be considered to be at high risk of sexual exploitation.

Any of the above indicators that become apparent in any child or young person should be raised and logged as a safeguarding concern within the organisation, using the reporting procedures.

### **Assessing the Level of Risk**

There are a variety of Risk Assessment Toolkits available to assist those working with children and young people identify the level of risk a particular young person may be of being sexually exploited. Each local authority will use their own tool kit and these will be found in their online policies and procedures.

The toolkit and associated framework has been developed to help assess whether a child for whom there are concerns is at low risk, medium risk or high risk of harm through sexual exploitation.

Indicators of risk of harm are grouped in the following categories:

Category 1: Low Risk – A vulnerable child who is at risk of being targeted and groomed for sexual exploitation.

Category 2: Medium Risk – A child who is targeted for opportunistic abuse through the exchange of sex for drugs, accommodation (overnight stays) and goods etc. The likelihood of coercion and control is significant.

Category 3: High Risk – A child whose sexual exploitation is habitual, often self-defined and where coercion and/or control is implicit.

The toolkit/framework needs to be used flexibly to take account of each child's individuality, the uniqueness of their circumstances and the changes that may occur for them over time.

It is important that all professionals working with children and young people are aware of the use of such toolkits in assessing the risk levels with regards to CSE.

### **Use of Technology**

It cannot be underestimated the role that technology plays in CSE. We now live in a 'connected' world and it is vital that if the adults around young people are to protect and educate them, they must be aware of the various forms of technology that facilitate CSE. These include the internet, smart phones, apps such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Tumblr, chat sites, photo sharing applications, messaging applications and sexting. The above list is by no means exhaustive as new forms of communication and mobile phone applications are being designed all the time.

Whilst, as adults, we ourselves may not use these forms of communication, we must constantly raise our awareness of them in order to safeguard our young people. The NSPCC's Share Aware campaign/website is recommended to all adults whose children go online. <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware/>

The NSPCC site also provides and updates information on sites and apps that children and young people may use – <http://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

### **Reporting Procedures**

Child Sexual Exploitation is a child protection issue. As such, anybody suspecting that a child is at risk of or is a victim of Child Sexual Exploitation must follow the child protection reporting procedure. Staff, Advocates, IV's must inform the company immediately they have such a suspicion. Any member of staff must inform their Line Manager as soon as they are made aware of any such concern.

Refer to the company Safeguarding Policy and Procedure document.

#### 14. Organisational Management

The company has a Head of Safeguarding who has overall responsibility for the organisational management of safeguarding concerns and incidents. This position is a member of the senior management team of the organisation and is a key role in both the strategic and day-to-day practice of the organisation. The Compliance and Safeguarding

### **Information Sharing and Multi-Agency Intervention – What to Do**

It is important that all staff, advocates and volunteers know what to do if they feel that a child is either being sexually exploited or is at risk of being exploited.

If any member of staff feel that a child is at risk of or is being sexually exploited (see indicators/toolkit above) then they must treat this as a Child Protection matter and follow the reporting procedure (see Safeguarding Procedure). **IF IN DOUBT THE REPORTING PROCEDURE MUST BE FOLLOWED.**

The responsible Individual will ensure that all information is passed to the relevant responsible authority.

### **Awareness Raising and Training**

The company runs a programme of training and awareness-raising for staff and advocates and volunteers with regards to the risk of Child Sexual Exploitation. CSE is incorporated into the Safeguarding training and an online training in CSE which is to be undertaken part of the mandatory training. All members of staff working directly with children and young people are expected to have an understanding of the dynamics of Child Sexual Exploitation as well as the indicators. Advocates and volunteers are given information as to how they can raise awareness in their young people of CSE.

The company will also facilitate awareness-raising sessions and forums for groups of young people within the organisation. This is designed to ensure that young people are updated with the information that will equip them to protect and safeguard themselves.

## Version Control

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