

Child Sexual Exploitation

Advice for Health
and Social Care
Professionals

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Definition

The 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 performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities.

Child sexual exploitation can occur through use of technology without the child's immediate recognition, for example the persuasion to post sexual images on the internet/

mobile phones with no 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.

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.

**(The National Working Group
for Sexually Exploited Children
and Young People, 2008)**

Purpose

Effective information sharing underpins integrated working and is vital for early intervention and safeguarding. Each partner can hold different pieces of information which need to be placed together in order to enable a thorough assessment to be made.

The sharing of information must have due consideration with the law relating to confidentiality, data protection and human rights. Having a legitimate purpose for sharing information is an important part of meeting those legal requirements.

Five key documents provide the main national framework for information sharing:

- **Data Protection Act 1998** – This act provides the main legislative framework and information sharing issues and stipulates the conditions under which information may be shared i.e. the legal justifications.

- **Human Rights Act 1998** – This act incorporates article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights which states that everyone has the right to respect for their private and family life.
- **Caldicott Guidance** – Caldicott Standards are applicable to Children's Social Care and Health. These standards have applied to NHS organisations for some time. They have more recently been extended into councils with social care responsibilities, in order to provide a framework for working within the Data Protection Act 1998 and to promote appropriate information sharing. See Implementing the Caldicott Standards into Social Care Department of Health 2002.
- **NHS Confidentiality Code of Practice** – The code was issued in July 2003 and applies to all NHS organisations. It is a guide to the practice on confidentiality, security and disclosure of personal information.

- **Crime and Disorder Act 1998** – The Act is the primary legislative tool, common to all crime reduction protocols. It does not override existing legal safeguards on personal information.

This advice covers the sharing of personal information about victims, family and perpetrators of CSE, within and between the partner organisations. It will be implemented in line with the local and national guidance and principles set out in the overarching information sharing agreement.

Information may be shared under this agreement for the following purposes:

- To facilitate best practice in order to provide a more integrated and coordinated approach to identified victims of Child Sexual Exploitation.
- To provide information, which may be anonymised if more appropriate, on areas or cohorts of concern.

- To inform multi agency actions to prevent abuse occurring, disrupt perpetrator activity and secure evidence to support prosecutions, this may involve sharing intelligence gathered through the course of routine work, for example if a cohort of young people are found to have similar sexually transmitted infections or professional's involved are concerned about relationships in an area that could be potentially coercive.
- Establish the potential involvement of partner agencies with identified victims/perpetrators.
- Sharing information with partner agencies that may be providing services to the victim, their family or perpetrator of any actions taken.
- Provide information to partners in other local authority areas so that links between potential abusers are recognised and actioned.

In adopting this partnership approach partners will work together to identify, support and safeguard children and young people who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation from those who are intent on abusing them.

The following are typical vulnerabilities:

- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, parental criminality).
- History of abuse (including familial 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 young people who are 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, bed and breakfast accommodation or a foyer.
- Low self-esteem or self-confidence.
- Young carer.

The following signs and behaviour can be 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.
- Estranged from their family.

- Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites.
- Receipt of gifts from unknown sources.
- Recruiting others into exploitative situations.
- Poor mental health, self-harm.
- Thoughts of or attempts at suicide.

Evidence shows 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 without pre-existing vulnerabilities can still be sexually exploited. Therefore, any child 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.

Useful contacts

If you have any concerns regarding possible CSE please contact the relevant telephone number below.

Barnsley

01226 438831

Bassetlaw

0300 500 8090 /

0300 456 4546 (out of hours)

Doncaster

01302 737033 / 01302 737200

Rotherham

01709 336080

Sheffield

0114 2018645