

Child Sexual Exploitation Policy

“Child sexual exploitation is a crime with devastating and long lasting consequences for its victims and their families. Childhoods and family life can be ruined and this is compounded when victims, or those at risk of abuse, do not receive appropriate, immediate and on-going support. The first response to children, and support for them to access help, must be the best it can be from social workers, police, health practitioners and others who work with children and their families. In Putting Children First (July 2016) the Government set out its ambitions to support vulnerable children to lead safe and positive lives, to become successful adults and to have the kind of happy childhood that we want for all our children. We want children and families to have confidence in turning to practitioners for help and protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation. This help and protection should be provided in a timely, enduring and flexible manner, and be the best it can possibly be. This requires children, parents and carers affected by child sexual exploitation to feel part of the solution and confident they will be believed. Practitioners should work together to reduce the immediate risk of harm to children and collaborate to develop long term strategies to improve children’s life chances. This applies as much to child sexual exploitation as to other forms of abuse or neglect. The hidden nature of child sexual exploitation and the complexities involved means professional curiosity, and always being alert to the issue, is vital.”

Child sexual exploitation

Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation

February 2017

What is child sexual exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). The definition of child sexual exploitation is as follows

“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 also occur through the use of technology.”

Like all forms of child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation:

- can affect any child or young person under the age of 18 years, including 16 and 17 year olds who can legally consent to have sex;
- can still be abuse even if the sexual activity appears consensual;
- can include both contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity;
- can take place in person or via technology, or a combination of both;
- can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence;
- may occur without the child or young person's immediate knowledge (through others copying videos or images they have created and posting on social media, for example);
- can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults. The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse; and
- is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the abuse. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

Online sexual exploitation includes:

- Befriending through online chat rooms/message services.
- Online grooming techniques, eg stalking, identity pretence, false promises (meeting celebrities, tickets, gifts, etc).
- Asking children to take and share incident images of themselves.
- Leverage for further demands, eg threat to show other people recorded sexual acts by child/young person.
- Arranging offline meetings for the purpose of sexually abusing the child.
- Contact from perpetrators in other countries and abused online.
- Speed of grooming can be very quick, leaving very little thinking time.
- The restrained influencing of a child over several months has been largely replaced by rapid escalation to threats, intimidation and coercion.

Governors and staff are committed and trained to deal effectively with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). We will ensure that:

- We identify and make known to staff and pupils a designated lead person for CSE who is fully trained and updated regularly.
- The designated lead person for CSE and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (if they are different people) work closely together.
- All staff are made aware of and understand CSE indicators and referral pathways.
- Students are taught about CSE and how to protect themselves and each other.
- Students are taught about healthy (including sexual) relationships, peer pressure, bullying, e-safety, gang activity, etc. and how these topics relate to CSE.

- Students know who to go to for help and support and to report CSE concerns to in school and out of school.
- Relevant staff work in partnership with other agencies.
- Procedures are in place to continually gather, record and share CSE information with the South Tyneside Sexual Exploitation Service as soon as possible including ongoing data on students running away or going missing episodes.
- We consider effective ways of raising awareness of CSE with parents/carers.

Who is vulnerable to child sexual exploitation?

Any child, in any community

Age: Children aged 12-15 years of age are most at risk of child sexual exploitation although victims as young as 8 have been identified, particularly in relation to online concerns. Equally, those aged 16 or above can also experience child sexual exploitation, and it is important that such abuse is not overlooked due to assumed capacity to consent. Account should be taken of heightened risks amongst this age group, particularly those without adequate economic or systemic support.

Gender: All genders are at risk. Child sexual exploitation may be most frequently observed amongst young females, boys are also at risk. Staff should be alert to the fact that boys may be less likely than females to disclose experiences of child sexual exploitation and less likely to have these identified by others.

Ethnicity: Child sexual exploitation affects all ethnic groups.

What to look out for:

Vulnerabilities	Warning signs
<p>All children and young people, including those from supportive families, can be vulnerable to sexual exploitation. However, some children and young people are known to be at a greater risk.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a chaotic home/family life. • Have a history of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of “honour” based violence, physical and emotional abuse or neglect). • Have experienced bereavement/loss. • Are associated with gangs through relatives/peers or are living in a gang neighbourhood. • Have friendships with children/young people who are being sexually exploited. • Have learning difficulties. 	<p>Children and young people who are being sexually exploited may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going missing from home or care. • Absent from school. • Increasing their use of social media, dating sites, image sharing apps, etc. • Involved in risky online relationships including new contacts with people out of the area. • Sharing inappropriate/indecent online images with peers or with people only met online. • Becoming isolated/estranged from family and friends. • Meeting people befriended online. • Involving in offending behaviour. • Misusing drugs/alcohol.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live in residential care or hostel/bed and breakfast accommodation. • Have low self esteem/confidence. • Are young carers (have caring responsibilities for parents/family members with mental or physical health problems or who are misusing substances). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiencing sexual cyber bullying. • Changing their physical appearance. • Experiencing repeated sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations. • In poor mental health and or self harming, having thoughts of or attempting suicide. • Receiving money and gifts from unknown sources.
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Risk assessment and consent

In assessing whether a child or young person is a victim of sexual exploitation, or at risk of becoming a victim, careful consideration should be given to the issue of consent. It is important to bear in mind that:

- A child under the age of 13 is not legally capable of consenting to sex (it is statutory rape) or any other sexual type of sexual touching.
- Sexual activity with a child under 16 is also an offence.
- It is an offence for a person to have a sexual relationship with a 16 or 17 year old if they hold a position of trust or authority in relation to them.
- Where sexual activity with a 16 or 17 year old does not result in an offence being committed it may still result in harm or the likelihood of harm being suffered.
- Non consensual sex is rape whatever the age of the victim.
- If the victim is incapacitated through drink or drugs or the victim or his or her family has been subject to violence or the threat of it, they cannot be considered to have given true consent and therefore offenses may have been committed.

CSE is potentially a child protection issue for all children under the age of 18 and not just those in a specific age group.

What to do next:

Any member of staff who suspects or receives information that a child or young person may be involved in CSE (including suspicion that they are being groomed online) should refer their concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy who will refer the matter to Children’s Services and South Tyneside Sexual Exploitation Service for an initial referral and assessment.

If there are concerns about the involvement of a person who:

- Works with children;
- Is in a position of trust

The school will inform the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) immediately and follow advice given.

Where appropriate, the child or young person's wishes and feelings, as well as those of their parents/carers should be sought and taken into consideration when deciding how to proceed. However, this may not always be in the child's best interest and may put them at further risk of harm.

Some children and young people may have been trafficked and been support to access services.

Advice and support:

South Tyneside Safeguarding Children Board

www.stscg.org.uk

Referral and assessment unit 0191 4564473

UK Human Trafficking Centre

Email UKHTC@nca.x.gsi.gov.uk

Tel 0844 778 2406

REACH (Rape, Examination, Advice & Counselling

Tel 0191 212 1551

NSPCC

Definitions, statistics, facts and resources about CSE

Barnardos

Spot the signs – advice for parents, professionals and young people on the signs of sexual exploitation and how to keep safe.

Policy approved by Governors:

March 2023

Date of next review by Governors:

February 2024