**Child Exploitation Practitioner Guidance **

***Definition of Child Criminal Exploitation***

*Child Criminal Exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal or sexual activity. This will be carried out in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and /or for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator, and/ or through violence or threat of violence.*

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

*Criminal exploitation of children is broader than county lines and includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft.*

*Please consider that children and young people can be exploited by other young people as well as adults.*

**All children can be exploited but the following are additional vulnerability factors:**

* Being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories)
* Having prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse
* Lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past (domestic violence or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example)
* Having mental health or substance misuse issues;
* Having a physical or learning disability
* Being excluded from mainstream education, attending a Pupil Referral Unit.
* Social isolation or social difficulties
* Economic vulnerability
* Homelessness or insecure accommodation status

Criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact as it can also occur through the use of technology and can include CSE, modern slavery, human trafficking, violence, radicalisation and extremism and exploitation through County Lines activity and Cuckooing’.

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas (within the UK), using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. Urban gangs establish a base in the market location, often by taking over the homes of local vulnerable adults by force and/or coercion, in a practice referred to as ‘cuckooing’.

Child trafficking and modern slavery involves the recruitment, movement or transportation of children from, to and within the UK who are then exploited, forced to work or sold. Children are trafficked for sexual exploitation, benefit fraud, forced marriage, domestic servitude such as cleaning, childcare, cooking, forced labour in factories or agriculture, criminal activity such as pickpocketing, begging, transporting drugs, working on cannabis farms, selling pirated DVDs and bag theft.

Criminal exploitation of children is complex and covers many areas of child abuse. The following links will take you to further information and guidance.

[Child Exploitation](https://bournemouth-poole-lscb.org.uk/child-exploitation/child-exploitation-2/)

[PREVENT – Supporting Children and Young People Vulnerable to Violent Extremism](https://bournemouth-poole-lscb.org.uk/child-exploitation/supporting-children-and-young-people-vulnerable-to-violent-extremism/)

[Child Victims of Trafficking and Modern Slavery](https://bournemouth-poole-lscb.org.uk/child-exploitation/child-victims-of-trafficking-and-modern-slavery/)

[County Lines](https://bournemouth-poole-lscb.org.uk/events-and-campaigns/county-lines/)

**Assessing Risk of Child Criminal Exploitation**

All practitioners working with children and families can and should complete child criminal exploitation risk assessments where there is reason to believe a child or young person might be at risk of criminal exploitation. The Child Exploitation Screening Tool will help you decide whether you should complete a full risk assessment.

Having completed the Screening, and/or where you are concerned that the child or young person is, or group of young people are being, or is at risk of being criminally exploited, you should complete the full risk assessment. However, before you do so, it would be helpful to speak to other professionals involved to check whether there is already a live risk assessment in place.

**Completing the assessment**

The Child Exploitation Risk Assessment document should be used to assess levels of risk for all exploitation of children and young people including:

* Child Sexual Exploitation
* County Lines (any other exploitation that involves the use and movement of illegal substances)
* Modern Slavery
* Trafficking
* Radicalisation

It is important that the risk assessment is completed as fully as possible and that you are clear about the validity of the information being used as far as possible. Some information about the child or young person may be highly concerning and immediately indicate a risk of significant harm (the blue shaded risk factors in the Risk Assessment document). Where this is the case, please continue to complete the assessment as fully as possible as a full understanding of all the risks will help when planning how to reduce them. Children and young people can be exploited in different ways at the same time and by more than one person.

**Scoring**

The CE Scoring is a guide for professionals who are assessing the level of risk of exploitation posed to an individual child. The chart is designed so that there is no rigid score for each risk level, understanding that risk can be influenced by a myriad of different factors. The intention of the grading chart is to allow professionals the discretion to move within risk levels after considering all the available information.

The chart should only be used upon completion of the CE Risk Matrix. Once complete professionals should plot the number of questions answered positively against their total score to give the initial indication of risk. The risk level is achieved using a combination of their final score alongside the volume of risk and vulnerability indicators. However, the most important indicator of risk is the combination of all the information, the views of the child and their family and the professional judgement of the assessing practitioner and other professionals working with them.

If having completed the Risk Assessment, you believe there is an ‘Emerging Risk’ a Lead Practitioner from the Team Around the Family should be identified and a Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Meeting arranged to consider the risks further and to formulate a risk reduction plan. Refer to the MACE Meeting Practitioner Guidance for further information.

 In cases where a moderate or significant risk is identified, the Risk Assessment should be emailed to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs:

**Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole**: MASH@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

**Dorset:** MASH@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

If you believe there is an immediate significant risk, please phone the relevant MASH Social Care Team to discuss your concerns further.

**What happens next**

Daily ‘Moderation Meetings’ will take place between a Social Care Manager, Safeguarding Health Advisor and Police Officer in the MASH to consider all Risk Assessments reaching Moderate or Significant Risk received the previous day. This meeting is intended to confirm the level of risk and ensure that immediate protective action can be taken if required. This meeting will become a Strategy Meeting where the risk level is confirmed as significant.

The assessing / referring practitioner (or their manager) will be required to participate (in person or by conference call) in the Moderation Meeting and will be contacted by the MASH with the time of the conference call details. It is important that when you send the completed Risk Assessment that you are available to attend between the times above and that you have provided up to date contact details.

If at the Moderation Discussion it is agreed that the assessment risk level should be reduced or raised, the reasons for the decision should be made clear and a record kept by each agency. Where there is disagreement about the risk level, the MASH escalation process will be followed but the higher level of risk will be temporarily agreed until the escalation has been considered and a resolution reached.

If there is not an allocated social worker already involved, a Referral will be created for all children assessed as being at moderate or significant risk, and a Social Care Child and Family Assessment commenced. Any immediate actions required to reduce risk will be agreed. If there is already an allocated social worker, a new referral is not required.

**Managing the risk**

Whatever level of risk the Risk Assessment has identified, Emerging, Moderate or Significant, the next step is to formulate a risk management and reduction plan. This should be through the convening of a Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meeting. All Partners can arrange a MACE Meeting and where the risk is Emerging, this should be managed through the Team Around the Child (TAF) process. Where the risk is assessed and moderated as Moderate or Significant, the Social Care Team will make the arrangements. It is important that all involved partners attend these meetings as each agency has a responsibility to consider their role in ensuring the **protection of the child**, the **pursuing and disruption of the exploiter** and the **wider preventative actions** that can be taken to minimise risk to the child, disrupt the perpetrator and consider actions that can be taken to **manage high risk locations**. It might be that the MACE Meeting is held alongside an existing planning meeting i.e. Core Group or CIN Meeting but it is important that the Risk Reduction Plan is considered specifically.

MACE Meetings should be convened within 15 working days of the moderation meeting and coordinated by the Lead Practitioner (TAF) where the risk is assessed as ‘Emerging’ and the Social Care Manager where the risk is assessed as moderate or significant.

At each MACE Meeting, the concerns identified in the Risk Assessment should be discussed with the child (where this is considered appropriate), the family and the other professionals in the TAF. Any changes to the Risk Assessment should be made as new or changed information comes to light. It is important to be open about the concerns but mindful not to share confidential intelligence that might interfere with any Police action planned to pursue or disrupt the perpetrator/s.

If there is new, verifiable information shared that raises the risk from Emerging to Moderate or Significant, the above process should be followed, and a Moderation Discussion should take place.

When all the information has been shared a risk reduction/disruption plan should be developed. The plan should consider:

* **What We Are Worried About**
* **What is Working Well**
* **What Needs to Happen To Keep Child/Young Person Safer**
* **Who is responsible for completing any actions?**
* **The timeframe for completing the actions** *(please wherever possible be specific – avoid the use of the word ‘ongoing’).*

The minutes of the meeting should be completed on the MACE Meeting template and distributed within 5 working days to all participants.

**Reviews**

Reviewing the Risk Assessment and the Risk Reduction Plan is as important as identifying the initial risk. Where the risk of Child Exploitation is ‘Emerging’ or ‘Reducing’, the frequency and requirement for a further MACE Meeting should be agreed at each meeting.

Where the risk is ‘Moderate’ reviews should be no less frequent than 12 weeks and for ‘Significant’, 6 weeks. These maximum timeframes are set to ensure that the plan is being progressed at pace – remember, the young person has been assessed as being at risk of criminal exploitation and this risk can escalate very quickly.

At each review, the same format as above should be followed, under the **Managing the risk** section.