Child Exploitation & Extra-Familial Risk

Practice Guidance for Children's Services Staff

May 2022 V3.

Contents

1. Introduction

This guidance is intended to support Children's Service staff, who are working with children who have suffered significant harm or are at risk of suffering significant harm, through Child Exploitation (CE).

It sets out the definition of CE and describes risk indicators and contexts in which CE takes place.

It includes advice to help Children's Service workers assess and support children, young people, and their families and assist them in the planning for and preventative education of children and young people.

2. Definition of Child Exploitation (CE)

Child exploitation is a form of child 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 18 into harmful acts or behaviours (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 exploited even if the activity or behaviours of the child or young person appear consensual or if there has been no physical contact including exploitation which is sexual, financial, criminal or involves trafficking or modern-day slavery.

Child exploitation is an umbrella term for the abuse and crimes against children. This can take the following forms:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Child Criminal Exploitation, including County Lines type activity
- Peer on Peer Abuse
- Online grooming and abuse including Cat Fishing
- Radicalisation
- Modern Slavery and Trafficking for the purpose of Child Exploitation

2.1.   Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

The definition of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) used by the Department for Education (Working Together 2017):

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 by the use of technology.

2.2.   Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE):

'Child Criminal Exploitation is common in county lines and 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. 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.'

([Home office, September 2018 Criminal exploitation of children and Vulnerable adults: County lines Guidance](#))

2.3.   County lines:

The UK Government defines county lines as:

'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". They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.' ([Home office, September 2018 Criminal exploitation of children and Vulnerable adults: County lines Guidance](#))

2.4.   Peer on Peer abuse:

Children can abuse other children. This is generally referred to as peer-on-peer abuse and can take many forms. This can include (but is not limited to) bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting and initiating/hazing type violence and rituals.

Understanding the power dynamic that can exist between children and young people is very important in helping to identify and respond to peer-on-peer abuse – there will be a power imbalance and this may be due to age or status – social or economic – and the perpetrator in one situation may be the powerless victim in another so it is essential to try to understand the perpetrator and what is driving their behaviour before taking sanctions. (Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2019)

2.5.   Online Grooming and abuse:

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet, facilitated through technology like computers, tablets, mobile phones and other internet-enabled devices. Perpetrators may use online platforms to build a trusting relationship with the child in order to abuse them.

(Department for Education, 2018; Department of Health, 2017; Scottish Government, 2014; Welsh Assembly Government, 2018).

2.6.   Radicalisation:

Children can be exposed to different views and receive information from various sources. Some of these views may be considered radical or extreme.

Radicalisation is the process through which a person comes to support or be involved in extremist ideologies. It can result in a person becoming drawn into terrorism and is in itself a form of harm.

2.7.   Modern Slavery and Trafficking

Slavery is an umbrella term for activities involved when one person obtains or holds another person in compelled service, such as:

- forcing a person to work through mental or physical threat
- being owned or controlled by an 'employer', usually through mental or physical abuse or the threat of abuse
- being dehumanised, treated as a commodity, or bought and sold as 'property'
- being physically constrained or having restrictions placed on his/her freedom

The following definitions are encompassed within the term 'modern slavery' for the purposes of the Modern Slavery Act 2015:

- 'slavery' is where ownership is exercised over a person
- 'servitude' involves the obligation to provide services imposed by coercion
- 'forced or compulsory labour' involves work or service extracted from any person under the menace of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself voluntarily
- 'human trafficking' concerns arranging or facilitating the travel of another with a view to exploiting them.

The Centre for Social Justice (2013) expand the term 'modern slavery' to include a number of other perpetrator behaviours:

Human Trafficking:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons.

- By means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion,
- By means of abduction, of fraud, of deception,
- By means of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability
- By means of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits

All being perpetrator behaviours which are undertaken to achieve the objective of a person having control over another person.

Note especially - where a child is involved, the above means are irrelevant and an adult with care of the child cannot consent to the child being treated in this manner. For example – in a cuckooing situation.

Trafficking is most likely to be for the purpose of exploitation, which includes (but is not exhaustively):

- Prostitution (Adults only)
- Sexual exploitation
- Forced labour
- Slavery (or similar)
- Servitude etc.
- Removal of organs

Slavery:

The status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised.
(Article 4 ECHR: Siladin v France (ECHR, 2005).

Servitude:

An obligation upon one or more persons to provide services to another person or group imposed using coercion, again linked with the concept of 'slavery'.
(Siladin v France, ECHR (2005).

Forced Labour:

All work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered them self voluntarily.
(Centre for Social Justice definition)

3.   National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for Modern Slavery

Modern slavery, including child trafficking, ***is child abuse***. When an agency comes into contact with a child or young person who may have been exploited or trafficked, Local Authority Children's Services and the Police should be notified immediately.
Under the 2005 Act, a 'Competent Authority' has a duty to notify / refer to the National Crime Agency when it is believed that a child (or adult) is being trafficked or used as a modern slave.   The NRM is the mechanism for this to happen and acts as a <u>crime report requiring investigation by the local policing area.</u>

An NRM referral should be completed even if a child is saying that they are consenting to their exploitation. Consent to the referral is not required, however it is best practice to discuss the process with the child and where appropriate family / carers including that the child may be required to provide an ABE interview.

NRM referral forms can be found on the Government Website Here :

A referral into the NRM does not replace or supersede established child protection processes, which should continue in tandem. A Strategy Discussion, Risk Panel Meeting (YOS) or similar at the early help stage should take place ahead of the decision to submit an NRM referral, to ensure that the referral is as robust as possible.

Further explanation emphasizing the issue of consent and exchange is detailed within work by Research in Practice (2019)

Category of exploitation	Power	Exchange	Consent	Definition
Child sexual exploitation	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.	Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2018a) Child sexual exploitation: Definition and guide for practitioners (Department for Education, 2017)
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 activity...	...(a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/ or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the 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.	Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2018a) Serious Violence Strategy (HM Government, 2018b)

Category of exploitation	Power	Exchange	Consent	Definition
Human trafficking and modern slavery	(a) "Trafficking of persons" shall mean 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 of a position of vulnerability or of 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 exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.	(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in sub-paragraph (a) of this Article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in sub-paragraph (a) have been used (c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking of persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in sub-paragraph (a) of this Article; (d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.	Palermo Protocol (UN, 2000) Modern Slavery Act 2015 Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked (Department for Education and Home Office, 2011)

Table 1: Comparison of exploitation definitions

Good Practice

The risk factors set out in section 5 are those identified from research as being associated with CE. When these are present and your hypothesis is that the child is at risk of CE, do not forget that there may be alternative explanations or additional vulnerabilities e.g., a new mobile phone could have been a swap with a friend or equally could have been provided for drug dealing by a perpetrator.

Children with Disabilities are firstly children but with additional vulnerabilities which may make identification of CE or disclosure of CE especially challenging. Workers must be open to the idea that disability does not prevent exploitation.

4. Identifying and assessing Child Exploitation (CE)

4.1. The tools for assessing Risk and Vulnerabilities

- The Child Exploitation screening tool (found on LCS/EHM forms tab and on SSCB website for other professionals).
- Resources and useful weblinks for working with parents and carers and young people (found on SSCB website and within the CE service directory).

The Child Exploitation screening tool should be completed prior to adding a child exploitation banner, this supports your professional judgement and help in the completion of the Child & Family Assessment or Early Help Assessment and devising the child's safety plan.

4.2. The Context of Exploitation – Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach that has been developed by Carlene Firmin at the University of Bedfordshire since 2015 to inform policy and practice approaches to safeguarding adolescents.

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families and is critical to assessment of and intervention in exploitative situations.

It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.

Therefore, Children's Services practitioners need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts. (Contextual Safeguarding Network, 2019)

4.3. Transitional safeguarding from adolescents to adulthood

When a young person reaches the age of 18 years old, there are some Children's Services that are currently no longer be available to them. It is essential that we support a 'healthy' transition to adult services for that young person as we recognise that becoming 18 years old does not mean they will not be exposed to further harm.

"We know that the experience of adversity in childhood can make some adolescents particularly vulnerable to harm and that the effects of such harm can persist into adulthood. This means that there will likely be a proportion of adolescents who either need to transition directly into receiving support from Adults' Services, or who are more likely to require them later in life. Research shows that unresolved trauma can increase risks later in adulthood, and we know that not responding to harms in early adulthood can

mean that people have more difficult and painful lives and may need more expensive support later.
(Dez Holmes the Director of Research in Practice.)

Children's Service workers should ensure that appropriate and timely referrals are made to adult services such as Adult Social Care, Leaving Care services and adult mental health or criminal justice services to ensure that the young adult continues to receive the necessary level of intervention to support their needs.

4.4.   Policy Implications

Within Working Together 2018, reference is made to Contextual Safeguarding. This places a duty on Local Authorities to not only consider the risks to young people within their families, but in their own contexts too. Their contexts can be identified as the home, school, neighbourhood, peer group and online activity.

Assessments of children in such cases should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life and are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. Children who may be alleged perpetrators should also be assessed to understand the impact of contextual issues on their safety and welfare.

Interventions should focus on addressing these wider environmental factors, which are likely to be a threat to the safety and welfare of several different children who may or may not be known to local authority Children's Services.

Assessments of children in such cases should consider the individual needs and vulnerabilities of each child. They should look at the parental capacity to support the child, including helping the parents and carers to understand any risks and support them to keep children safe and assess and reduce where possible potential risk to child.

There are direct work tools that can support your work with young people and their families. These can be found on the Contextual Safeguarding Implementation Toolkit (link below). This enables a worker to ensure that they have a good understanding of the child's identity.

The recommended tools include: 'All around me' and 'Safety Mapping'.

The Contextual Safeguarding Network provide regular updates and guidance for professionals working in exploitation. Please sign into the website access resources here.

Further support around risk and safety in a child's contexts can be obtained by contacting the Lead Social Worker for Exploitation who can support a worker in understanding the theory and method, but also develop and implement interventions outside of the family home in the school, neighbourhood, peer group and online.

💡 **Bear in mind it is both boys and girls who can be exploited in a wide range of ways. Research evidence suggests 1 in 3 victims of CSE are male.   Girls may be used in drug dealing as they may be regarded as being less visible to criminal justice agencies.**

4.5.   So, what are you worried about?

Sometimes it is difficult to differentiate between ordinary teenage behaviour and the behaviours we observe when a young person is being exploited .Some of the signs of grooming for, or involvement in, child exploitation is set out below in section 3.6, together with additional vulnerabilities.
Those with regular contact with the child/young person are in a good position to notice the subtle changes in behaviour or physical signs. This is likely to include the carers, you and other professionals.

Examples include:

- Giving gifts to entice young people, before taking control and isolating young people from other networks, such as controlling the use of phones or supplying phones, to keep a check on young people.
- Giving the young person substances, alcohol, and drugs, which not only creates a level of dependence but can also enmesh the young person in illegal activities, creating a reluctance to tell others what is happening.
- Providing significant financial support to create a position where day-to-day life seems unattractive and unexciting when set against the rewards and exhilaration that the money can bring.
- Offering payment to a young person for their 'help' such as in moving drugs, money, or other goods between areas, for which the young person may receive some form of gratification, which could be substances, money, or attention

In the early stages of child exploitation, children and young people often believe that they are making free choices. Some may reject offers of support and then, as the abuse

increases in severity, they may feel unable or unwilling to talk about what is happening through fear of rejection, or fear of harm or other reasons. This can lead to young people being perceived as rebellious or "streetwise".

Such perceptions hinder a worker's ability to properly assess the meaning of this distressed behaviour. A level of resistance or indeed resilience may be perceived which in fact leaves young people increasingly vulnerable and isolated.

Remember parents/carers, family members and professionals might be 'groomed', not as direct victims, but into not asking questions, into acquiescence or compliance or to access a child or secondary children in a network.

Remember CE may not just be happening to the child you are working with so we must consider other children and young people that could be at risk. Sharing information assists in identifying key locations, significant people, and associations.

5.   Risk Indicators and Vulnerability Factors

You will see, very quickly, that some of the indicators can be contradictory or even indicative of just growing up e.g., wearing more/less make-up, becoming withdrawn/more socially outgoing. So, there is no easy-to-identify victim of CE. However, set out below are some of the factors you may want to ask your 'curious questions' about.
The vulnerabilities increase the risk of CE but are not confirming indictors that CE is present.

Within the family / home and relationships

- Change in behaviour - being more secretive / withdrawn / isolated from peers or not mixing with usual friends
- Increasingly disruptive, hostile or physically aggressive at home or school Inc. use of sexualised language
- Associating / 'relationship' with significantly older men or women who encourage emotional dependence, loyalty and isolation from safe relationships (record details of adults i.e. occupation/ description)
- Physical or emotional abuse by a boyfriend / girlfriend or controlling adult including use of manipulation, violence and/or threats
- Associating with other exploited children
- Multiple callers (unknown adults/older young people) - (record description/names etc.)
- Estranged from family
- Regularly coming home late or going missing from home, care or education for any period of time (whether reported or not)
- Returning home after long intervals appearing well cared for
- Reports of weapons use or weapons especially ballistics being found / spoken about

Health and Mental Health

- Change in physical appearance (new clothes, more/less make-up, weight gain/loss)
- Increased health / sexual health related problems
- Marks or scars or physical injuries on the body or face which they try to conceal
- Expressions of despair (Inc. depression, mental ill health, self-harm, suicide thoughts/ attempts, overdose, eating disorder)
- Branding (i.e. of gang logos)
- Repeat/unplanned pregnancy or pregnancies (including ending in termination/ miscarriage(s))
- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and/or repeat tests particularly with negative results
- Girls stock piling sanitary products as not being used or boys and girls being found with significant amounts of contraception

Appearance and possessions

- Unexplained amounts of money, mobiles, credit, expensive clothing, jewellery or other items/gifts
- Overt sexualised dress
- Having multiple mobile phones, sim cards or use of a phone that causes concern – multiple callers or more texts/pings than usual
- Possession of hotel keys/cards or keys to unknown premises

Behaviour and experiences

- Concealed / concerning use of the internet including web-cam, online gaming (via X-box, PlayStation), chat rooms etc.
- Exclusion from school or unexplained absences from, or not engaged in school/ college/ training/ work
- Failing to respond to attempts to keep in touch by workers/carer or recent disengagement
- Reports of being taken to hotels, nightclubs, takeaways or out of area by unknown adults
- Sexualised risk-taking, including on internet or mobile phone, such as sexting (sending explicit messages or photos to adults or peers)
- Young gay/bisexual exploring sexuality in an unsupported way
- Association with gangs or constrained by 'rules of a gang'
- Increasing use of drugs or alcohol or misuse of drugs or alcohol
- Fear of victimisation from other gangs due to gang affiliation or rivalry
- Inability to negotiate exit from a gang due to fear/dependency
- Displaying signs of harassment/unwanted attention
- Fear of gang leaders
- Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites
- Involved in criminal offending activity (i.e. ASB/criminal damage/theft)
- Unusual association with groups of adults

Incidents

- Entering/leaving vehicles/cars with unknown adults
- Child meeting different adults and exchanging or 'selling' sexual activity
- Frequenting areas known for on/off street sex work
- Receiving rewards of money or goods for introducing peers to CE adult perpetrators.
- Disclosure of sexual/physical assault followed by withdrawal of allegation
- Knowledge of towns or cities with which they have no previous connection
- Being taken to clubs or hotels and engaging in exploitative activity
- Abduction or forced imprisonment
- Association with taxi firms/takeaway owners (night-time economy)
- Being taken to brothels/ massage parlours
- Seen in CE hotspots (certain flats, recruiting areas, cars or houses)
- Repeated arrests out of home area for criminal activity, however low level

Other risk considerations

- Migrant/refugee/Asylum Seeker/Trafficked status
- Known to Children's Social Care/CP Plan/LAC, now or previously
- Physical/Learning Disabilities / communication disorders
- Involvement with the Youth / Criminal Justice system
- Is the child receiving support or services from any other Agency, such as drug & alcohol or mental health services?
- Has child exploitation previously been identified as a specific issue for this child?
- Neglect by Parent/Carer/Family member
- History of / current family domestic abuse (including risk of forced marriage/risk of honour based violence/familial child sexual abuse)
- Physical / emotional/ sexual abuse by Parent/ Carer/ Family member
- History of / current substance misuse in family
- Poverty or Deprivation
- Family history of exploitation or involvement in the sex trade
- Unsuitable or inappropriate accommodation (Inc. street homeless, staying with inappropriate adults/hostel/B&B)
- Family history of mental health difficulties impacting parenting
- Breakdown of family relationships
- Family bereavement
- Low self-esteem or history of being bullied or of bullying
- Lack of positive relationship with a protective/ nurturing adult
- Recent bereavement or loss of any kind

- Young carer responsibilities
- Disconnecting from support networks i.e. family/friends
- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household
- Unsure about their sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families/friends
- Living in a gang neighbourhood (postcode gangs)
- Gang association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships
- Ethnicity (bullying or gang ethnicity)

Whilst all the above are increased risk factors, their presence in a child or young person's life is not evidence that CE is actually taking place or that pre- exploitative 'grooming' is ongoing so any worker involved with a child they have CE concerns about must ask themselves some additional questions:

- Are there any other possible explanations of observed behaviours other than CE?
- Are there any significant power imbalances within relationships in which the young person may be involved e.g. significant age difference?
- What might be the psychological impact of child exploitation on the young person?
- Does the young person have any understanding of the risks in their situation?
- Do they have any insight into what Child Exploitation is?
- Is the position in which the child is and the risk factors present being normalised by them?

5.1.   Grey areas and other issues to consider

Child exploitation is by its very nature a hidden abuse where perpetrators have huge financial and potentially also sexual investment in continuing their activities undetected. A worker involved with a child must 'go the extra mile' in their consideration of what that child's day to day life experiences may be and so must consider the following to best inform their assessment and resultant actions:

- What are the gaps in our current information?
- What do we need to know to enable us to reduce the vulnerabilities, or to be less worried about the risk to the child or young person?
- Do we understand the push/pull factors that encourage young people to continue with these risky behaviours?
- Who else has information that could assist?
- Do we need to contact other agencies including neighbouring authorities?

- Have we considered who else may be at risk? Siblings, extended family members?
- Consider the risks and dangers associated to areas/contexts in the community, where the child may spend time.

5.2. The Level of Harm - Child Exploitation Banners

Once you are worried that a child may be at risk of or has been / is a current victim of CE you must consider the level of risk or harm. In Somerset, we have defined 3 levels of risk and harm along with a Topaz cohort banner and each requires a proportionate response.

Along with establishing the level of risk or harm, we ask Children's service workers to identity what type of exploitation is presenting. For example, Child Sexual exploitation, Child Criminal exploitation, or both Sexual and Criminal exploitation.
Before a banner is added to LCS or EHM Childrens service workers should complete the CE initial screening tool, and a CE tracking form. The CE tracking form will ask for the manager (following discussion with the lead worker) to identify which banner should be added, please see below.

- ○ CE: RISK AWARE Sexual
- ○ CE: RISK AWARE Criminal
- ○ CE: RISK AWARE Sexual & Criminal
- ○ CE: HARM Sexual
- ○ CE: HARM Criminal
- ○ CE: HARM Sexual & Criminal
- ○ CE: PURSUE Sexual
- ○ CE: PURSUE Criminal
- ○ CE: PURSUE Sexual & Criminal
- ○ TOPAZ Cohort

We know that there are other elements of exploitation, therefore the CE tracking form will capture this.

A Child Exploitation banner should be removed if the young person reaches 18 years old, or if you are ending involvement. This does not mean that the young person is not vulnerable to exploitation, but when they reach the age of 18 years old, they are not considered a child. It is essential we continue to safeguard any vulnerable young people.

CE RISK AWARE

There are predisposing vulnerabilities towards CE. There may not be any Police evidence of active exploitation, however there are identified risks that suggest an increased vulnerability to exploitation, such as change in behaviour/appearance, change in engagement with education, or in peer group, increased phone/internet usage, missing episodes (please see extensive list of indicators within this guidance).

CE HARM

CE harm indicates we are starting to observe significant harm due to exploitation. You have identified increased risk via the screening tool and analysis tool that make you concerned that there is a perpetrator or organised crime group that has exploited the child.

CE PURSUE

The child will be experiencing significant harm. The child is experiencing exploitation and there is evidence of coercion / exchange which could include one or more types of exploitation. The perpetrator does not have to be known but there will be sound evidence and professional judgement that the child is being groomed/ exploited. The child may experience frequent missing episodes, or their whereabouts is often unknown. The child may be known to have spent time in other towns our counties where they do not reside, which will also suggest a concern regarding how their travel is being facilitated.

At this point the child is suffering significant harm please consider whether a strategy meeting is required and please consider whether the child is being trafficked or a victim of modern slavery, if so, please complete the NRM.

TOPAZ Cohort

In Somerset, we work alongside partners within the Avon and Somerset Police led Operation Topaz. Operation Topaz is an Avon and Somerset Police led but partner supported operation to target and disrupt the activities of a high-risk cohort of sexually motivated adult perpetrators and (September 2021 onwards) criminally motivated perpetrators. Alongside this Topaz works to support identified child victims in a move out of exploitation and where possible towards disclosures against the perpetrators.

The cohort of perpetrators and victims is designed by the police based upon data analysis with the top targets discussed and action planned each month. Any worker involved with a Topaz child will be asked for regular updates and intelligence sharing and may be asked to work alongside a Topaz officer or victim engagement officer on specific tasks. Monthly Topaz minutes will be added to the child's file by the CE leads under a restricted case note. It is only in the instance that Operation Topaz is supporting the child that you add a Topaz banner, rather than adding a Topaz banner because you have submitted intel.

5.3.   What to do Next

This section addresses what you need to do if you think there is a risk of CE. It covers:

- Process
- Recording
- Communication and Planning

It is important that your response is proportionate.

5.4.   Process

There is no CE process separate from safeguarding and child protection procedures.

The first step is to decide if the threshold is met for a Strategy Discussion and s.47 investigation under the [Somerset Safeguarding Children Board Procedures Manual - Child Protection Enquiries](). This is where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm. A s.47 investigation will allow you to share and receive information with partner agencies.

During the investigation, you will need to consider how supportive the parents are if there is a risk of child exploitation.

Remember - usually a child protection plan is to work with the parents, who are the likely cause of the harm to the child, but with CE parents are much more likely to be supportive of your work, so a multi-agency Child in Need Plan may be sufficient and appropriate as a proportionate response.

Also consider whether parents / carers have themselves been groomed into acquiescence or non-disclosure of CE happening to their child.

6.   Recording Risk of Child Exploitation

There are 7 key records:

- CE screening tool.
- The plan to work with/reduce risk.
- Child Exploitation Tracking Form.
- Child/Young Person Missing Risk Assessment and Prevention Plan (where relevant) and Missing Person Trigger plan.
- The child's CE banner
- The case summary
- The C&F Assessment, Early Help assessment or YOS Plan

6.1.   The CE Screening Tool

The Child Exploitation Screening Tool is there to help practitioners identify the right support to help safeguard children and young people against exploitation. Information about how to complete it, and the next steps, are included within the tool.

6.2.   The Child Exploitation Tracking form

The Child Exploitation tracking form is found within forms on LCS/EHM. The form asks you to identify which type of exploitation the child is at risk of or experiencing. Please note this form **does not** replace the CE screening tool and should only be initiated following completion of the screening tool. This form should always be completed when there is an exploitation element identified and, always updated if there is new or changing information (e.g., police report/ strategy meeting that recognises CE concerns which were not known before). Please also complete if the case is being transferred to another team

or professional. The use of the CE tracking form helps to provide a clear understanding of what types of exploitation children are experiences in Somerset. The lead worker will complete the tracking form and send to their team manager who will provide a rational for which level is identified. The form is then sent to the CE leads, who will add the CE banner.

6.3.   Child/Young Person Missing Risk Assessment and Prevention Plan

The Missing Risk Assessment Prevention Plan found in the forms tab on LCS/EHM is used when *any* child goes missing; but as child exploitation often takes place, when a young person goes missing from home or care, this record can help you formulate a plan and take you through the missing child process.
There is separate guidance available for procedures for children who are missing and for those who have returned. See: [Children Missing from Care, Home and Education](#).

6.4.   Missing Person Trigger plan

The Missing Person Trigger plan (standalone word document) is used when *any* child goes missing. This plan is a multi-agency plan and can be completed/updated by any professional. The plan includes a list of actions professionals will follow if a child goes missing, including relevant names or addresses of where the child maybe. Whoever completes the plan has a responsibility to send to the Police ([MissingPersons@avonandsomerset.police.uk)](mailto:MissingPersons@avonandsomerset.police.uk) and all other involved professionals.

Please save the plan onto documents and reference with date in the case summary.

Both a Missing Person Risk assessment and Prevention Plan and Missing Person trigger plan need to be completed if a child goes missing. These plans need to be reviewed and updated where necessary **every time** a child goes missing. If there are no changes it can just be copied forward.

6.5.   The CE Banner

The CE Banner is set up on the child's record under one of the headings in section 5.2 – CE Risk Aware Sexual/Criminal or both, CE Harm Sexual/Criminal or both, CE Pursue Sexual/Criminal, or both, plus the Topaz cohort banners.

It is your responsibility, in discussion with your supervisor, to agree the level of risk and banner.

- <u>Banners must be regularly reviewed in monthly supervision and amended / closed / removed where risks have reduced or are no longer present.</u>   This includes accurate recording of whether a child is a Topaz cohort case or not.
- <u>If a CE banner is being changed a CE tracking form should be completed before changing the banner.</u>

This helps senior managers to have oversight of this particularly vulnerable group of children and enables them to be considered at multi-agency 'tactical' level meetings, which includes Operation Topaz.

When a CE Risk Aware Sexual/Criminal or both banner is added the expectation is that, as a minimum, a triage phone call is undertaken with BASE (if there is a sexual exploitation element) or ROUTES (if there is a criminal exploitation element) to review the information known and for BASE/ROUTES to provide information, advice and guidance as necessary.

For a CE Harm Sexual/Criminal or both, banner where a sexual/criminal element is present, a triage call must be made which is likely to lead to a formal referral for consultation and service planning.

For a CE Pursue Sexual/Criminal, or both banner where a sexual/criminal element is present a formal referral must be made, which may meet the criteria for direct delivery by BASE or ROUTES or may go through the consultation route.

After Children's Services workers make an initial enquiry or attend a consultation you should record any advice or the next steps of intervention, such as consultation, or 1-2-1 involvement. The Barnardo's worker would normally send you the notes of a consultation should be recorded in a case note.

6.6.   The Case Summary

Make sure this is up to date with a summary of any CE risks and plans. It will help your colleagues, managers and EDT staff to understand your concerns and follow your plans.

6.7.   The C&F Assessment and Child's Plan

Once you have identified that CE is a risk to the child, you will need to update your Child and Family Assessment, EH or YOS assessment and the child's plan.

7.   Communication and Planning

Good communication is the key to mitigating risk and effectively safeguarding children experiencing or at risk of experiencing child exploitation.

Where there is a significant risk of harm from CE you will be working with partner agencies through the usual planning processes, which will include Operation Topaz colleagues for perpetrator disruption.

An online information sharing form for supplying intelligence related to suspected child exploitation to Avon and Somerset Police is available and can be found at **https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/forms/vul.** Intelligence can help the police to build a vital picture about exploitation, an ongoing incident, identifying victims and offenders. This contributes to helping keep potential victims safe and bringing offenders to justice. Some Police colleagues may want to contact you for further details, so it is important that you provide your correct contact details and keep any relevant information about the incident. If the child has a Topaz engagement officer, please ensure that they are regularly updated and invited to all meetings.

For further information regarding how and when to submit intel via the Topaz link please access Topaz online form, question, answers and intel grading.

Use of the police intelligence sharing form is never a replacement for following normal safeguarding processes.

7.1.   Informing the Independent reviewing officer

If the child has a Child Protection Plan or is a Child Looked after, the allocated CPC/IRO will receive an LCS alert every time a missing episode is started for a child who goes missing.

Between reviews, the social worker must inform the IRO/CPC of significant events such as where the child is running away or missing. The IRO/CPC will determine whether an early review needs to be convened. If, following communication with the social worker, the IRO/CPC is satisfied that the arrangements in the care plan continue to meet the child's needs and that a review is not necessary, a record of this agreement and the reasons for it should be placed on the child's file.

For children who persistently run away or go missing, the IRO/CPC should be satisfied that the care plan addresses the risks to the child and minimises the likelihood of him/her running away or going missing.

The Misper worker will complete a case note to alert the social worker and CP/IRO when the return home interview is completed.

Share your risk assessment and the child's plan with relevant partners.

If the child is in care and placed in another local authority area, make sure that area is aware of the risks to the child and you are aware of the local arrangements, to help you draw up the Placement Plan for the child.

Where a child is at risk of or being exploited, the social worker or other Children's services workers contact should be increased above the statutory requirement, based upon assessed needs.

8.   What will Make Things Safer?

- Build your relationship with the child. Try to find out and understand what the push/pull factors are, e.g., if the child runs away, is it because parents need help to find positive ways of parenting; find out what the child likes about the time spent out of the home? Given them access to resources about how they can keep themselves safer (see resources in extra -familiar risk library and CE service directory).

- It is not always possible for the child's case responsible worker to establish a good relationship with the child. If you cannot do this for whatever reason, think about the other adults the child has a good relationship with or a service like BASE/ROUTES, who can provide advice and consultation on how you can best work with the child / young person (see CE Service directory for referral details).

- Build a positive relationship with the parents/carers. Provide them with information about how they can help keep their child safer (see CE Service directory) We should not assume that all families are aware of what exploitations means or involves. It is our duty to support the families understanding and ensure we are working alongside parents/carers as our safeguarding partners. Remember exploitation can be traumatic for the child's family as well.

- Consider disruption/intervention strategies – think about how to prevent further incidences occurring or risky behaviours escalating, try to make it more difficult for this to occur. You will want to work closely with Avon and Somerset Police on this.

  - S.19 Police and Criminal Evidence Act allows the police to confiscate and analyse mobile phones, this will include the area where the phone has been used, which would link the child to a location.

  - S.2 Child Abduction Act allows for issuing a Child Abduction Warning Notice to an adult who harbours a child. So, if the child is found there again, the adult is in contempt of court.

  - Ss.14-15 Sexual Offences Act make it an offence to arrange sexual acts with a child or arrange to meet a child (i.e., if the sexual offence has not yet occurred).

For useful guidance on Disruption please review the [Home office Child Exploitation Disruption toolkit](). This can provide insight into intervention but will need to be agreed and implemented by the Police.

If you believe, a child is at risk of CE you must share this information as early as possible. You may choose to seek advice from a CE champion, the BASE/ROUTES Service, consult with the CE Leads in Children's Social Care and always with your line manager.

Remember that identifying and responding to CE is the responsibility of all professional agencies so consider who has the best relationship with the child and may be best placed to gather relevant information and provide support services to the child.

9.   Somerset Meetings

9.1.   Youth Offending Service Risk and Vulnerability Panel Meetings

Somerset Youth Offending Service (YOS) works with children and young people, who have offended or are at risk of further offending, to help prevent them getting into further trouble.   They achieve this by working together with young people and their parents or carers, the victims of crime and other agencies and organizations in the local community.

The YOS hold regular Multiagency Risk Panel for children and young people open to YOS, assessed by use of the core Asset + tool as being **High** or **Very High** Risk of Serious Harm (ROSH) to others and/or where there are **High** or **Very High** Safety and Wellbeing Concerns.

The panel shares accountability for effective risk management and confirming plans to manage/reduce risk/s.

The panel is chaired by a Strategic or Operational Manager within YOS and considers children who are most at risk in the county. This may include children from other local authority areas who are placed within Somerset and working with the YOS on a caretaking basis. You may be invited to attend and contribute on a case-by-case basis as part of multiagency decision making, agree actions and share concerns and accountability. The group members will consider whether there are any additional actions or agencies which can contribute to make the child safer and support you in planning and implementing your work.

9.2.   High Risk Misper Meeting

These meetings are held weekly chaired by the lead missing co-ordinator to review and understand the level of support being offered to families and young people where a child has gone missing and indicated as High Risk due to meeting one or more of the following conditions:

- If the case is CLA, CP, OLA or CIN
- If the case is Child Exploitation
- If the National curriculum year is between 0 and 11 an attendance is below 90%
- If Elective Home Educated
- If a RHI is offered but declined

- If there have been two or more missing episodes in last 30 days

The meeting will look to explore that the appropriate level of support is being considered, map any common themes in localities and peer groups, agree actions to safeguard the child and reduce missing episodes. If you would like to discuss a child, please contact lead missing coordinator. (LXHull@somerset.gov.uk).

9.3. CE consultations

The CE leads are available to provide Childrens workers consultations to discuss any CE cases, gain advice and guidance, explore resources and possible disruptions methods. The time can also be used to gain help with a specific piece of work such as completing National referral Mechanism, or Missing Person Trigger plan for example. Please contact the CE leads to book a consultation.

Think about language in recording. Young people should not be referred to as promiscuous, streetwise, or prostituting themselves. Neither do they 'choose to be' in a position that makes them vulnerable to CE. Please help change culture and views by challenging this language if and when you hear it. They are children being exploited by adult perpetrators.

10.   Tools and Resources

Please access the [Extra-Familial Risk Resource Library and Child Exploitation service directory.](#) to find the resources listed below:

CE targeted services within Somerset & referral details.
Resources for professionals
Domestic Abuse – Toolkit for Practitioners
Resources for Young People
Resources for Parents, Carers and Guardians
Online Video Resources

Please visit the Child Exploitation & Contextual safeguarding folder on SharePoint for direct work tool.

11.   Useful Contacts

Extra Familial Risk Contact List

12.   Quick Guide to CE

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CE RISK AWARE

A child with predisposing vulnerabilities <u>towards CE</u>, but there is no evidence of active exploitation at this point in time

If the child/young person is in receipt of services

- Discuss with your line manager or CE champion
- Fill in the CE screening tool
- Undertake CE decision making tool to aid professional curiosity and judgment
- Is any other professional working with this child/ young person? Share information and ascertain if identified risk level requires further escalation.
- If missing episodes or patterns of missing is a risk indicator discuss this in supervision and consider a missing Risk assessment and prevention plan and Missing Person Trigger plan
- Complete a safety plan and add to the child's CIN / CP or CLA plan

If the child/young person is not in receipt of services

- Refer to Effective Support Document / contact First Response for consultation if deemed appropriate
- Children and young people with additional needs and / or care leavers require special consideration up to the age of 25

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CE Harm
Evidence of grooming towards exploitation with possible exchange such as gifts, money, accommodation

If the CYP in receipt of services

- Discuss with your line manager / CE champion
- Complete the CE screening tool
- Complete CE decision making tool to aid professional curiosity / judgment
- Undertake Child exploitation analysis and decision-making tool
- Are any other professionals involved with the CYP? Share information and ascertain if requires escalation.
- If yes convene a S47 Strategy meeting, ensure Police are in attendance
- If outcome of Strategy meeting is further investigation a Police team will be assigned to case
- Ensure use of intervention / disruption strategies are discussed and identify most appropriate support for CYP and parents / carers
- Complete a Safety Plan and upload to CYP record as part of child's planning

If the child/young person is not in receipt of services

- Refer to Effective Support Document / contact First Response for consultation
- If case reaches threshold for services
- Complete CE screening tool
- Undertake CE decision making tool to aid professional curiosity / judgment
- Are any other professionals involved with the CYP? Share information and ascertain if requires escalation.
- If yes refer to Somerset Direct who will pass to First response team
- They will triage and if appropriate convene a S47 Strategy meeting ensure Police are in attendance
- If outcome of Strategy meeting is further investigation a Police team will be assigned to case
- Ensure use of intervention / disruption strategies are discussed and identify most appropriate support for CYP and parents / carers

CE PURSUE

Evidence a child is being exploited where coercion/control is implicit and there is evidence of exchange with identified perpetrators(s)

If the CYP is in receipt of services

- Discuss with your line manager / CE champion
- Complete CE assessment tool
- Undertake Decision making tool to aid professional curiosity / judgment
- Convene an urgent S47 Strategy meeting and ensure Police are in attendance
- If outcome of Strategy meeting is further investigation a Police team will be assigned to case
- Ensure use of intervention / disruption strategies are discussed and identify most appropriate support for CYP and parents / carers
- Complete Safety Plan and upload to CYP record
- If child trafficking is a concern, please refer via the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

If the CYP is not in receipt of services

- Refer to Effective Support Document / contact First Response for consultation
- If case reaches threshold for Children's Social Care complete the CE screening tool
- Are any other professionals involved with the CYP? Share information and ascertain if requires escalation.
- Refer to CSC via Somerset Direct First Response - convene a S47 Strategy meeting ensure Police are in attendance
- If outcome of Strategy meeting is further investigation a Police team will be assigned to case
- Ensure use of intervention / disruption strategies are discussed and identify most appropriate support for CYP
- If child trafficking is a concern, please refer via the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)