



## Exploitation and Missing Hub (Taking a Contextual Safeguarding Approach)

Most Exploitation Screening Tools will have relevant information. If you receive an Exploitation Screening Tool with a Request for Support, please send a copy of the screening tool to the Exploitation & Missing Team enquiry box:

[MASEcentral@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk](mailto:MASEcentral@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk).

Alternatively, should staff in CASS require a discussion; they can come and discuss, the screening tool and referral with one of the Exploitation and Missing Coordinators and the Serious and Organised gang's coordinator based within the Exploitation hub. HUB staff can be located on the ground floor (zone 3), Lancaster Circus.

### Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

With 16,500 children at high risk of sexual exploitation in England, it is important you know how to protect the children by recognising the signs and symptoms of exploitation.

Child sexual exploitation is not defined in law but is a type of sexual abuse involving control of a child through force, threats or manipulation. It can happen to both boys and girls. Often, the first step is someone befriending a young person to gain their trust or have control over them. This is called grooming and can lead to children being abused and raped.

Children can be groomed online or in the real world, by a stranger or by someone they know. An abuser can be any age, even the same age as the child. It will often involve an abuser providing something to a child such as food, drugs, alcohol, gifts, or even simply affection, and victims are often tricked into thinking their abuser is a friend or even a 'boyfriend'.

Once they have the child's trust or control over them, an abuser will then move on to physically or sexually abusing a child. They may steer conversations towards sexual experiences, asking the child to send sexual photos or videos of themselves which they might use to blackmail the child. They might threaten the child saying they will hurt their family or friends if they tell anyone.

**Should you receive a request for support or are advising via a telephone call please consider the following for discussion with referrers:**

### **Child Grooming Signs**

- Being secretive about who they are talking to and where they are going
- Often returning home late or staying out all night
- Sudden changes in their appearance and wearing more revealing clothes
- Becoming involved in drugs or alcohol, particularly if you suspect they are being supplied by older men or women
- Repeated STI's and/or pregnancy
- Becoming emotionally volatile (mood swings are common in all young people, but more severe changes could indicate that something is wrong)
- Using sexual language that you wouldn't expect them to know
- Engaging less with their usual friends
- Appearing controlled by their phone
- Switching to a new screen when you come near the computer

### **Less common behaviours and indicators of exploitation could include:**

- Being associated with a gang
- Becoming estranged from family
- Regularly missing school
- Associating with older men and women, particularly if they go missing and are being defensive about where they are and what they're doing
- Possessing items such as phones or jewellery that you haven't given them but which they couldn't afford to buy themselves
- Having more than one, or a secret phone

### **You should be aware of the following signs of CSE and abuse:**

- They are regularly suffering from sexually transmitted infections
- They have unexplained physical injuries such as bruising
- Having mood swings or being emotionally volatile
- Self-harm or suicide attempts

**Many of these are common teenage behaviours however, be mindful of increased instances of changes in behaviour that may be signs of grooming**

## Criminal and Exploitation and Gang Affiliation

(Taken from the Home Office Disruption Toolkit)

CCE is not defined in law but is a term that has come to be associated with 'county lines'. The government definition of county lines is set out below together with our definition of child criminal exploitation, which is increasingly used to describe this type of exploitation where children are involved.

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.

The criminal exploitation of children is not confined to county lines but can also include other forms of criminal activity such as theft, acquisitive crime, knife crimes and other forms of criminality.

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:

- 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.
- Children and young people are targeted and groomed for criminal exploitation either in major cities and trafficked into county areas, or children in the county authority
- Boys aged 14-17 are the most often targeted, however, girls and children as young as often 10 are targeted too
- Children and young people can be shown how or made to internally insert and carry drugs in their rectum or vagina
- Children and young people can often store 'wrapped' drugs in their cheeks which then can be more easily swallowed if approached by police
- The children and young people will be sent to 'trap' houses, or 'bandos' where they will be made to sell drugs for anything from a few days to 6+ weeks. These established bases can often involve exploitation of vulnerable adults.

Criminal exploitation interlinks with a number of multiple vulnerabilities and offences including the child being exposed to and/or victim of physical and emotional violence, neglect, sexual abuse and exploitation, modern day slavery and human trafficking, domestic abuse and missing episodes.

It is important to remember that young people being exploited in this way are likely to be being trafficked as they are having their travel arranged or facilitated for the purpose them being exploited.

**Should you receive a request for support or are advising via a telephone call please consider the following for discussion with referrers:**

- Frequent missing episodes and been found out of area
- Found with large quantities of drugs or weapons
- Found with drugs inside rectum or vagina
- Unexplained amounts of money, mobiles, credit, clothing, jewellery, new hair cut or
- other items/gifts
- Returned from missing episodes with injuries, or dishevelled
- Change in behaviour; more secretive / withdrawn/isolated from peers or not mixing
- with usual friends
- Unexplained absences from, or not engaged in school/ college/ training/ work
- Increasingly disruptive, hostile or physically aggressive at home or school Including
- use of sexualised language and language in relation to drug dealing and/or violence
- Expressions around invincibility or not caring about what happens to them
- Increased interest in making money
- Increasing use of drugs or alcohol
- Fear of reprisal from 'gang' members or violence from young people or adults
- Having multiple mobile phones, sim cards or use of a phone that causes concern -
- multiple callers or more texts /pings than usual
- New peer groups and/or relationships
- Relationships with controlling /older individuals or groups
- Parental concerns
- Increase referrals to agencies for other known peers
- Multiple referrals for incidents in the same location

This is exploitation and can fall under the Modern Slavery Act's definitions of exploitation as:

- Sexual exploitation
- Securing services etc. by force, threats or deception
- Securing services etc. from children and vulnerable persons

Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child to be a victim of trafficking please advise referrers to consider:

- Reporting this to the police in order for them to investigate the offences committed (i.e Modern Slavery and trafficking offences)
- A referral should be made to Children's Social Care as trafficking and exploitation means a child could be at risk of or experienced significant harm and Child Protection processes need to be followed.
- A referral should be made to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) directly. The Police and Children's Services First Responders, who are able to make this referral; however other agencies can and should support this referral to ensure it provides a full picture of the young person's experience to help the assessment.
- Following this you should expect a strategy meeting to be convened in order assess the information known, identify gaps and to discuss a plan for the child; this should not solely focus around intervention for the child and family.

Contextual safeguarding is a key approach to understanding and responding to young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families.

<https://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/assets/documents/Contextual-Safeguarding-Briefing.pdf>