



Tackling Child Exploitation

Lincolnshire Multi-Agency Guidance

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1.0 Introduction

This guidance sets out the practice and procedure for safeguarding and protecting children and young people from sexual and criminal exploitation. It explains the arrangements in place to target, disrupt, and prosecute those who perpetrate these forms of abuse. It is designed to assist practitioners in preventing CE, and in protecting children and young people who are at risk.

2.0 Child Sexual Exploitation

Child Exploitation (CE) 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 or criminal activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of sexual abuse.

The key factor that distinguishes cases of exploitation from other forms of abuse or harm is *the presence of some form of exchange* for the victim and/or perpetrator or facilitator.

The full statutory definition of child sexual exploitation and further guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-sexual-exploitation-definition-and-guide-for-practitioners>

3.0 Child Criminal Exploitation

While there is currently no legal definition of child criminal exploitation, it is widely accepted to occur when 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.

Child criminal exploitation is an emerging issue affecting communities across the UK. The most common form of criminal exploitation is County Lines; when gangs and organised criminal networks export 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.

Further information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines>

4.0 Completing the Multi-Agency CE Screening Tool

You should complete a Multi-Agency CE Screening Tool if you are worried that a child may be involved in, or at increased risk of entering, an exploitative relationship or situation.

The tool prompts you to consider whether the child or young person presents with any of the indicators commonly associated with child sexual or criminal exploitation.

You are then asked to reflect on how the child's exposure to exploitation relates to the other contexts in which they spend their time, such as their family, peer group, school, and neighbourhood.

It is always good practice to complete the screening tool with the child unless it would be unsafe to do so.

While carrying out your screening it is important to remember that while a child may exhibit a number of vulnerabilities, exploitation and abuse only occurs because there is someone who is willing to take advantage of that vulnerability and/or because there are inadequate protective structures (around the child and their family) in place to mediate against this.

Once you have completed your screening you will need to use your professional judgement to assign a level of risk; this will help to determine what you should do next.

5.0 Next Steps

This section contains guidance on meeting needs through existing work, completing a Partnership Information Report (Operation Insignia Form), and making a referral to MACE.

5.1 Existing case work/interventions

If you have identified vulnerabilities that could potentially increase the risks faced by the child, but you have found no evidence that they are currently being targeted for exploitation, you should first consider how to address their needs through early help or existing casework/interventions with the child, family, peer-group or school setting.

Even if you do not believe the child to be currently at risk of exploitation, you should keep a copy of the completed tool on the case file/record. It is good practice to regularly review the tool in case of escalating risk.

Completion of a screening tool does not constitute a referral to the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Meeting (MACE).

5.2 The Partnership Information Report – Operation Insignia

If you have decided that the child is not currently at risk of exploitation but during the screening you have identified a concerning a location or a suspected perpetrator who may pose a risk to other children, then you should complete the Partnership Information Report – Operation Insignia online form at:

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/safeguarding/lscp/8?documentId=258&categoryId=20076>

The Partnership Information Report (Operation Insignia) offers a multi- agency system of sharing information with Lincolnshire Police to help support vulnerable children and adults.

This form is to be used when you have information regarding a person at risk that will help form a picture around their situation, or will allow for police to take further action in investigating an issue. This can include information that is indicating child exploitation (criminal and sexual), human trafficking or modern slavery.

What to collect?

Information on vulnerability including:

- Sightings of individuals (children and adults, victims or offenders) with other high risk individuals.
- Places and premises visited by those at risk – especially those locations which are thought to be linked to criminality or arouse your suspicion due to the number of vulnerable people visiting or other persons associated to it.
- Vehicles that appear suspicious which children hang around or get into.
- Telephone numbers used by high risk individuals – victims or offenders.
- Disclosures from vulnerable persons.

If you feel the information is important enough to share with someone, please complete and submit a Partnership Information Report (Op Insignia).

Evidence of Child Trafficking

If a child or young person has been transported or moved for the purposes of exploitation then they should be treated as a victim of human trafficking. This includes children who are moved/transported directly by their exploiter, or indirectly by the exploiter arranging and/or facilitating the movement of the child – for example by paying for their travel costs. This includes travel/movement within the UK, regardless of distance travelled.

A child does not have to have been forced or deceived to be a victim. This is partly because it is not possible for children in this situation to give informed consent.

Where a child is identified as a victim of human trafficking they must be referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Child victims do not have to consent to be referred into the NRM. The NRM is a framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and trafficking and ensuring they receive the appropriate support.

Only designated 'first responder' organisations can refer into the NRM. This includes the police and local authorities. Professionals from other organisations should make a referral to Children's Services in the first instance.

If a child is considered a victim of modern day slavery or human trafficking 'first responders' must also notify the Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTG) service. The ICTG is an independent source of advice for child victims. In the East Midlands Region Barnardo's fulfils the ICTG role. To make a referral, call the Barnardo's National Counter Trafficking Service 24/7 support line on 0800 043 4303.

Full guidance on recognising trafficking victims, the role of the NRM, and referring a trafficked child to Children's Services can be found at:

https://lincolnshirescb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_sg_child_traff.html?zoom_highlight=trafficking

5.3 Making a MACE Referral

The Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Meeting (MACE) meets weekly. By drawing together information from different partner agencies MACE will explore what additional options are available and whether enforcement action can be taken to tackle and/or reduce the risks the child is exposed to in the community. **It is not the role of MACE to case manage.**

You should make a referral to MACE if:

- the child has links to a known or suspected perpetrator of either sexual or criminal exploitation;
- there is a significant risk of exploitation to the child from an unknown perpetrator;

If it is decided to share this information at MACE you will be required to inform the child and family/carers.

The completion of a screening tool and/or a referral to MACE does not replace your statutory safeguarding duties under *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*.

If you believe the child to be at immediate risk of exploitation, safeguarding action should be taken. Refer directly to the Social Care Customer Service Centre on 01522 782111. If there are immediate risks to the child/young person's safety then report this without delay to the Police.

For emergencies use 999. For urgent/immediate reporting please use 101.

6.0 Disrupting Perpetrators of Abuse

The UK Home Office has produced a toolkit setting out ways in which the police and other safeguarding professionals can disrupt the sexual and criminal exploitation of children and young people, break the cycle of abuse, and send a signal to perpetrators about the consequences of their actions.

The toolkit is primarily aimed at frontline staff working to safeguard children and young people under the age of 18 from sexual and criminal exploitation. This includes law enforcement, social care, housing, education, the voluntary sector and related partner organisations.

The toolkit is intended to help all safeguarding partners to understand and access existing legislative opportunities at their disposal and to target specific risks, ranging from warning notices to offence charges and care orders.

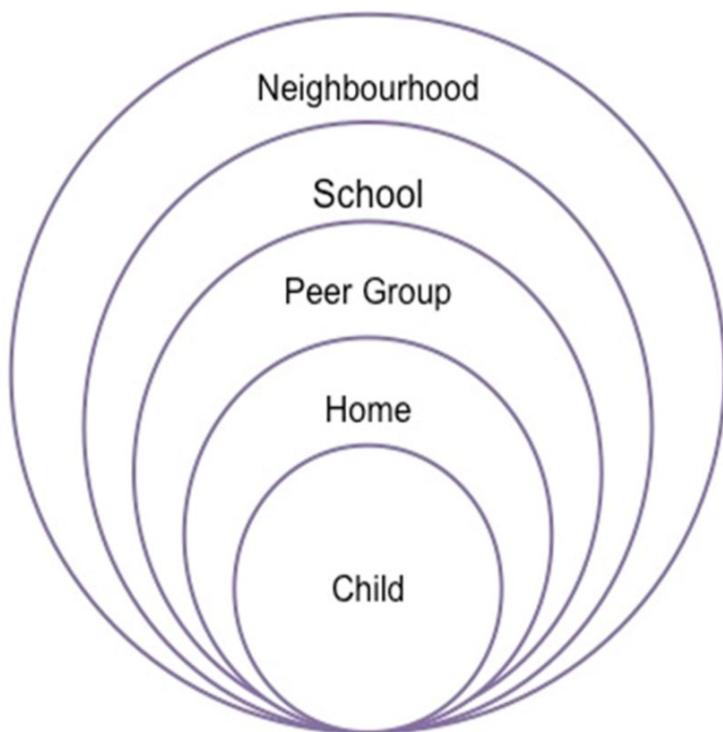
While criminal prosecution of child abuse perpetrators may represent the most desired outcome of law enforcement activity, it is not appropriate to leave the protection of vulnerable children and young people to the criminal justice process alone. The use of existing legislative powers, such as orders and injunctions, are an essential part of the safeguarding process and often critical to any future actions.

A copy of the toolkit can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-exploitation-disruption-toolkit>

7.0 General Principles for Working

7.1 Contextual Safeguarding

When children experience harm and abuse beyond the home, parents and carers, as well as professionals, can struggle to intervene; in neighbourhoods, schools, and online, children can form relationships that feature violence and abuse. In recognition of this the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership has adopted a contextual safeguarding approach; offering a way to move beyond the focus on the individual child by assessing and intervening in the peer, school and neighbourhood contexts, in which children spend their time.



Contexts of Adolescent Safety and Vulnerability (Carlene Firmin 2013)

The Contextual Safeguarding Network offers a range of specialist resources for working with individuals and peer groups as well as tools for completing school and neighbourhood assessments. All the resources and tools have been developed by local authorities and tested in the field.

Further information about the contextual safeguarding approach can be found at:

www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk

7.2 Appropriate Language Guidance

It is important that you use the appropriate terminology when discussing children and young people who have been exploited, or are at risk of exploitation. Language implying that the child or young person is complicit in any way, or to blame for the crimes that have happened or may happen to them, must be avoided. Language should reflect the presence of coercion and the lack of control young people have in abusive or exploitative situations, and must recognise the severity of the impact exploitation has on the child or young person.

The appropriate language guidance document can be found at:

<https://www.csepoliceandprevention.org.uk/sites/default/files/Guidance%20App%20Language%20Toolkit.pdf>

7.3 Using CE resources with Children and Young People

It has become common practice to use a range of different written and visual resources as a way of raising awareness of sexual and criminal exploitation with children and young people.

Types of CSE Resources include:

Work books, Case Studies, video clips

It has recently been noted that many resources are not appropriate for use with children who either are being (or have been) groomed and/or sexually or criminally exploited. It is argued that films and resources that depict children being harmed and abused, can re-traumatise victims and teach them that they were to blame for what happened.

With this in mind the LSCP recommends that you adhere to the following principles when using resources with children and young people.

- Make sure that any resources used are appropriate to the child or young person's emotional needs and experience;
- Familiarise yourself with the young child or young person's reality and environment, before using resources;
- Avoid materials, particularly films, which use harrowing examples and depictions to shock young people. These types of resources frame the violence/abuse as something that the child could have avoided if they had changed their behaviour;

- Avoid resources that erase the actions of the offender/perpetrator or teach children that the decisions they made led to them being abused.