

## SEXUAL EXPLOITATION June 2010

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The sexual exploitation of children and young people has been identified throughout the UK, in both rural and urban areas, and in all parts of the world. It affects boys and young men as well as girls and young women. It robs children of their childhood and can have a serious long-term impact on every aspect of their lives, health and education. It damages the lives of families and carers and can lead to family break-ups. Sexual exploitation of children and young people is completely unacceptable and we are determined to do all we can to help eradicate it.
- 1.2 Children who are sexually exploited are the victims of sexual abuse and should be safeguarded from further harm. Sexually exploited children should not be regarded as criminals and the primary law enforcement response must be directed at perpetrators who groom children for sexual exploitation.
- 1.3 Sexual exploitation of children is child sexual abuse and often also involves physical and emotional abuse. Neglect may also be a significant feature of the care of the child.
- 1.4 This form of abuse involves the exchange of sexual activities by children for commodities such as money, drink, drugs, shelter, protection, accommodation etc. It may be perpetrated by an adult – male or female, and or other young people through violence or threats of violence. It may include prostitution, pornography and abusive images (see also BSCB Internet Abuse Procedures and Young People Who Abuse Others).

### 2. Legal Position – Child Focused Approach

- 2.1 Action should be focused on the child's needs, including consideration of children with particular needs or sensitivities, and that children and young people do not always acknowledge what may be an exploitative and/or abusive situation.
- 2.2 The Sexual Offences Act 2003 introduced a number of new offences to deal with those who abuse and exploit children in this way. The offences protect children up to the age of 18 and can attract tough penalties. They include:
  - Paying for the sexual services of a child
  - Causing or inciting child prostitution
  - Arranging or facilitating child prostitution
  - Controlling a child prostitute
  - Controlling a child prostitute involved in pornography
  - Arrange or facilitate a child prostitute in pornography
  - Causing or inciting prostitution for gain

2.3 These are not the only charges that may be brought against those who use or abuse children through sexual exploitation. Abusers and coercers often physically and emotionally

abuse these children, and may effectively imprison them. If a child is a victim of serious offences, the most serious charge that the evidence will support should always be used.

#### 2.4 Other legislation that may be used against perpetrators

The Child Abduction Act 1984

The Children Act 1989

The Children Leaving Care Act 2000

The Adoption and Children Act 2002

Education Act 2002

Homelessness Act 2002

The Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc) Act 2004

The Children Act 2004

The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004

2.5 The police Child Abuse Investigation Unit, as a function of its expertise in working with children, has an important contribution to this multi-agency work, even where police responsibility lies elsewhere. A variety of police departments may be involved.

2.6 Girls and boys under the age of 16 cannot lawfully (though may in practice) consent to sexual intercourse. Anyone engaging in sexual activity (as defined in the Sexual offences Act 2003) with a child under the age of 16 is committing an offence.

2.7 It is also an offence for anyone to have sexual intercourse with a child aged over the age of 16 and under the age of 18, where the adult is in a position of Trust.

2.8 Children under 13 years of age are presumed to be incapable of consent to sexual activity and specific offences, including rape, exist for the child victims under this age.

(See also BSCB procedures for Sexually Active Children)

### 3. Prevention

3.1 By prevention we mean reducing the risk that children and young people will become victims of sexual exploitation by:

- reducing their vulnerability
- improving their resilience
- disrupting and preventing the activities of perpetrators
- reducing tolerance of exploitative behaviour
- prosecuting abusers.

3.2 All agencies should establish whether those who are known to pay for sex with children are themselves parents or carers of children. If this is the case an assessment of the needs of those children should be considered, including whether they are at risk of, or are suffering, significant harm.

### 4. Recognition

4.1 Parents, carers (including foster carers and staff in children's homes), teachers and youth workers must be alert to the following behaviours that may indicate a child's involvement (or 'grooming' for involvement), but are **not** conclusive signs in themselves:

Health:

- Physical symptoms (bruising suggestive of either physical or sexual assault)

- Chronic fatigue
- Recurring or multiple sexually transmitted infections
- Pregnancy and/or seeking an abortion
- Evidence of drug, alcohol or substance misuse
- Sexually risky behaviour

#### Education:

- Truancy/disengagement with education or considerable change in performance at school

#### Emotional and Behavioural Development:

- Volatile behaviour exhibiting extreme array of mood swings or use of abusive language
- Getting involved in petty crime such as shoplifting, stealing
- Secretive behaviour
- Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults

#### Identity:

- Low self-image, low self-esteem, self-harming behaviour, e.g. cutting, overdosing, eating disorder, promiscuity

#### Family and Social Relationships:

- Hostility in relationship with parents/carers and other family members
- Physical aggression towards parents, siblings, pets, teachers or peers
- Placement breakdown
- Reports from reliable sources (e.g. parents/carers, friends or other professionals in contact with the child or young person) suggesting the likelihood of involvement in sexual exploitation.
- Detachment from age-appropriate activities
- Associating with other young people who are known to be sexually exploited
- Young person known to be sexually active
- Sexual relationship with a significantly older person
- Unexplained relationships with older adults
- Possible inappropriate use of the Internet and forming relationships, particularly with adults, via the Internet.
- Phone calls, text messages or letters from unknown adults
- Adults or older youths loitering outside the child's usual place of residence
- Persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation
- Returning after having been missing, looking well cared for in spite of having no known home base
- Missing for long periods, with no known home base
- Going missing and being found in areas where the child or young person has no known links

#### Social Presentation:

- Change in appearance
- Leaving home/care setting in clothing unusual for the individual child (inappropriate for age, borrowing clothing from older young people)

#### Parental Capacity

- Ensuring Safety:
- History of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse or neglect

#### Family History and Functioning:

- history of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse; neglect; domestic violence;
- parental difficulties

#### Housing

- Pattern of street homelessness
- Having keys to premises other than those known about

#### Income

- Possession of large amounts of money with no plausible explanation
- Acquisition of expensive clothes, mobile phones or other possessions without plausible explanation
- Accounts of social activities with no plausible explanation of the source
- of necessary funding

#### Family's Social Integration

- Reports that the child has been seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation

4.2 Sexual exploitation services report that as many as a third of their referrals relate to boys and young men. However, it can be more difficult to detect when boys and young men are at risk of sexual exploitation or are being sexually exploited, as they are generally less willing to disclose this type of information. They may also find it harder to disclose that they are being abused by other men because of issues about sexual identity. It is important that professionals who are assessing young men do not become distracted when exploring their sexual identity and fail to notice that they may be, or are at risk, of being sexually exploited. The following are possible signs which may indicate boys and young men are being sexually exploited.

#### Health:

- Physical symptoms – sexually transmitted infections, bruising or other marks on body suggestive of physical or sexual abuse
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Self-harming or eating disorders

#### Education:

- Truancing from school, deterioration of schoolwork or part-time timetable

#### Emotional and Behavioural Development

- Secretive
- Young offender behaviour or anti-social behaviour
- Secretive about Internet use or using adult networking sites
- Sexualised language
- Aggressive or violent
- Sexually offending behaviour

#### Family and Social Relationships:

- Associating with other children at risk of sexual exploitation
- Missing from home or staying out late
- Getting into cars of unknown people
- Contact with unknown adults outside of normal social group via face to face meetings,
- Internet, text messaging or phone calls

#### Identity:

- Low self-esteem, poor self-image or lack of confidence

#### Social Presentation:

- Wearing an unusual amount of clothing

#### Income:

- Social activities with no explanation of how funded
- Possession of abnormal amounts of money, gifts, new mobile phones, credit on mobile phones, number of SIM cards

#### Family's Social Integration:

- Frequenting known high-risk areas or going to addresses of concern
- Seen at public toilets known for cottaging or adult venues (pubs and clubs)

### **5. Response**

5.1 Parents should be encouraged/supported to discuss their concerns with Children's Social Care or the CAIU.

5.2 Those working with children may have developed a trusting relationship with the child and be concerned that a referral to Children's Social Care will result in the child withdrawing from support services e.g. contraception, counselling or substance misuse treatment. All professionals and volunteers should consult their designated or named person for child protection, who should ensure a referral is made to Children's Social Care wherever there is a risk of child sexual exploitation.

### **6. Referral**

6.1 Whenever there is a suspicion that a child is involved in prostitution or commercial sexual exploitation a referral must be made to Children's Social Care of the CAIU.

6.2 The professional identifying concerns should seek consent from the child or her/his parent unless this may:

- Place the child at risk of further significant harm e.g. alienate her/hi from intervention or services
- Jeopardise a criminal investigation by alerting the alleged offender

6.3 When making a referral as much information as possible about the young person and about their location should be provided. Even where the young person's name is not known, providing any details may help her/him to be identified. Such information may include the following:

- Name or nickname
- Description of young person, including possible age
- Description and/or names of peer associates
- Description and/or names of adult associates who may be involved in the abuse/exploitation of the young person
- School
- Any other agency that may already be involved with the young person
- Address or location where observed and any other relevant information e.g. regular 'hangouts'

- If the young person has been observed entering a car, a description of the car and registration number would assist in locating the young person and their pimps/abusers.

6.4 Where it is apparent that a child is being immediately abused, exploited or subjected to violence or coercion by pimps or 'clients', a referral should be made immediately to the police.

## **7. Child Protection Enquiries – Threshold for s.47 Enquiry**

7.1 The **minimum** threshold for child protection enquiries is:

- An immediate risk of significant harm
- Concern that prostitution/sexual exploitation is being actively encouraged or facilitated by a parent/carer
- Concern that prostitution/sexual exploitation is facilitated by the parent/carer failing to protect the child
- Concern that a related or unrelated adult, in a position of trust or responsibility to the child, is organising or encouraging sexual exploitation
- Concern about coercion by peers

7.2 As with all referrals child protection procedures should be initiated at any point that it is recognised that the threshold has been met and a strategy discussion held.

## **8. Child Protection Strategy Discussion**

8.1 Where the threshold for child protection enquiries is met, a strategy discussion must be held (wherever possible a strategy meeting).

8.2 An appropriate Children's Social Care Manager should chair the meeting. Attendance at the meeting should include:

- The referrer, if a professional
- CAIU and any other relevant police units
- The community paediatrician (check local arrangement)
- Lead/designated/named child protection officers from Education and Health
- Social worker/duty officer
- Children's Social Care Manager
- Other professionals where relevant e.g. school nurse, key residential worker/manager, YOS worker. Connexions personal adviser, voluntary agency worker, sexual health services, housing.

8.3 In planning any intervention the strategy meeting must:

- Treat the child primarily as a victim of abuse and consider the need for immediate protection
- Identify the strategies required to help the child escape exploitation
- Consider the police role to investigate and prosecute those who coerce, exploit and abuse children
- Plan to assess the specific risks and needs of any children in contact with those who abuse children.

## **9. Child Protection Enquiry – Threshold not Reached**

9.1 Where the threshold for child protection enquiries has not been met an initial assessment must be completed within 7 working days of the referral.

9.2 It will be helpful to hold a multi-agency planning meeting, including the referrer (where appropriate) and all professionals relevant to the child and family, including the police.

## **10. Multi-Agency Meetings**

10.1 Wherever possible, the chair and professional attendance should be the same as for a strategy meeting (see above).

10.2 Following careful consideration of the implications for the safety of the child, wherever possible, the parent/s and child should be invited to the meeting.

10.3 Where risks to more than one child need to be considered in the meeting and these children are not related, parental attendance may need to be restricted. The meeting must however, consider when and how all parents will be informed and consulted.

10.4 The meeting should be sensitive to the views of young people who may be seeking a confidential service e.g. sexual health.

10.5 The purpose of the meeting is to:

- Share and clarify information
- Establish the exact nature of the concerns
- Establish risks for any other children
- Consider if a s.47 enquiry is required
- Consider the likelihood of prosecution of relevant adults
- Agree on action and make recommendations to address the concerns, provide a support plan for child and parents

10.6 The following issues must be considered:

- The needs of the young person and what arrangements may be necessary for his/her safety.
- Who will have responsibility to contact, as appropriate, the young person and their parents/carers?
- How to co-ordinate the arrangements for the young person's safety with any criminal investigation.
- How arrangements for continuing protection and diversion will be taken forward.
- The need for a multi-agency core assessment and roles of each agency within this.
- If appropriate, how to involve the young person in this process.
- Other young people potentially at risk.
- Any information known about the alleged abuser.

10.7 Consideration should be given to the use of a family group conference to devise and review the support plan. Unless no further action is agreed or child protection procedures are invoked, review meetings should be held at least every 3 months.

## **11. Involvement of groups children**

11.1 Where there is knowledge or suspicion that children are involved together or being controlled by the same person there will need to be:

- Consideration of the need for the applicability of complex abuse procedures

- Efforts made to ensure that strategy meetings and/or multi-agency planning meetings on different children result in consistent plans
- Involvement of a consistent chair for the meetings.

11.2 There may be occasions when a child or young person who has been sexually exploited may then go on to exploit others or groom them for the perpetrator.

## **12. Looked After Children Involved in Sexual Exploitation**

12.1 When a referral is received regarding a Looked After Child, the social worker must immediately inform their line manager. The Children's Social Care Divisional Director must also be notified.

12.2 The multi-agency planning meeting or s.47 strategy discussion must consider the additional factors:

- Risks to other children in placement
- Whether the child should remain in placement
- The feasibility of controlling the child's movements and the likely effects of doing so

12.3 Meetings must consider and record the appropriateness and method of informing the child's parent/s. If a child is 'accommodated' parent/s must be informed of all significant matters. If a child is subject to a Care Order, generally parent/s should be informed and the rationale for any decision not to inform them should be recorded on file.

12.4 There may be strategies, in the support/care plan for extreme situations or necessitated by emergencies, that have implications for restriction of liberty or confiscation of property. These must have the written agreement of the appropriate manager and legal advisor.

12.5 The support plan will form part of the care plan for the child and pathway plan in the case of care leavers.

12.6 Decisions about the placement of young people who are looked after by the LA should take account of the young person's individual needs and circumstances. In some cases, it may be that placement in a secure children's home is an appropriate option and the criteria for placing a child or young person who is looked after by a LA in secure accommodation are set out in section 25 of the Children Act 1989.

- Young people who are being sexually exploited will need good quality placements with carers who have experience of building trusting relationships and skills at containing young people. These placements do not have to be secure. Placing a child or young person in secure accommodation should only be considered in extreme circumstances, when they are at grave risk of significant harm.

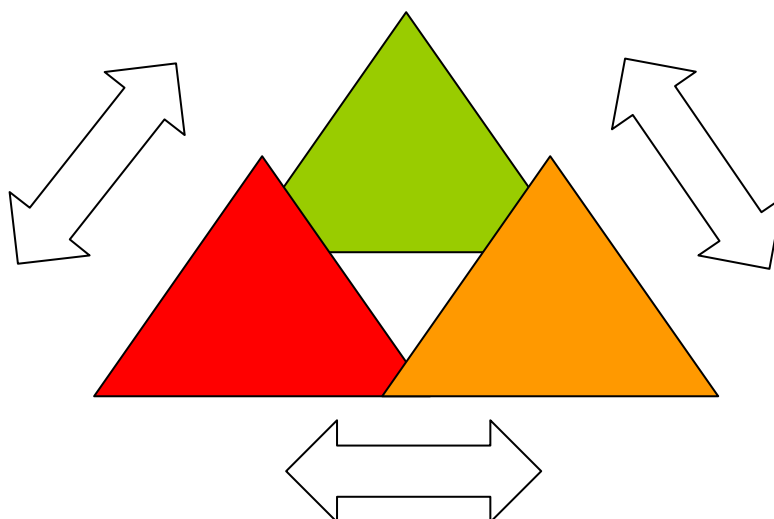
### WEB LINKS

- DoH (2000) Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution  
[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_4006037](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4006037)
- Bucks YOS( 2006) Sexual Health and Personnel Relationships – Framework Policy
- R U Safe  
<http://www.barnardos.org.uk/rusafebucks.htm>
- Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (June 2009)  
<http://publications.everychildmatters.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00651-2009>

(Adapted from the SERA Model developed by The National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People, 2008 from Pearce et al 2002)

**Description of young person with identified risk factors in Level 1**

Smaller number of risk factors identified or movement from Levels 2 or 3. For example: sexualised risk taking behaviour, beginning to truant from school, occasionally going missing, going to known places of concern, getting into cars, showing signs of gifts or access to resources, early signs of problem alcohol and drug use.



**Description of young person with identified risk factors in Level 3**

Multiple risk factors. For example: entrenched in one of more abusive relationships, contact with know perpetrators, going missing and running away from home, problem alcohol and drug use, experience of violence, intimidation and fear.

**Description of young person with identified risk factors in Level 2**

Fewer risk factors or signals (or reduction from Level 3). For example: regularly going missing, 'swapping sex' and talking about swapping, truanting regularly from school, going to known places of concern 'Hot Spots', involved with other vulnerable peers, experiencing violence, intimidation and fear, developing problem alcohol and drug use.

The diagram above illustrates the types and levels of risk factors which may be identified during an assessment. It also shows how young people can fluctuate between the different levels within the diagram. Their movement from one level to the next is not necessarily progressive: i.e. a young person deemed to be in Level 1 – the lowest level – may suddenly reveal circumstances and behaviours that might place them within the highest level – 3. However, it is important to recognise that even where the most worrying types of risk factors i.e. Level 3, have been identified, specialist services working with children and young people are able to engage and support them.

Level 1: Where the green triangle overlaps with Level 2, children and young people may have similar needs and risk factors to those in Level 2 and be moving into that level. Conversely the arrow indicates they can also be in transition from Level 2 to 1.

Level 2: Where the amber triangle overlaps with Level 3, children and young people may have similar needs and risk factors to those characteristic of Level 3 and be moving into

Level 3. Conversely the arrow indicates some young people can also be in transition from Level 3 to 2.

Level 3: Where the red triangle overlaps with Level 2, the young people may move back from Level 3 to 2. Within the diagram, the overlap between the triangles representing Levels 3 and 1 indicates that in a limited number of cases radical intervention may result in young people moving immediately and successfully to Level 1.