

Child Sexual Exploitation

Fact Sheet 3 – The indicators

Initial stages and agreeing a strategy

Where CSE concerns are identified, Police and Social Worker leads should identify themselves quickly to each other. Some basic questions:

- What information do both parties have on the child?
- What is known about the circumstances?
- Is the picture complete or is more information needed? Is the child previously known to services and if so why?
- Are there any care orders in place or is the child already on a protection plan?
- Are there any Non-Government Organisations (NGO) already working with the child or family and are they aware of the CSE risks?
- Are there any other people relevant to the child that need to be told?
- What level of CSE are you dealing with?
- What are the immediate safeguarding concerns?

Police CSE lead and Social Worker should complete and agree an initial risk assessment.

Other agencies – Education, Health Professionals, Care Providers and any relevant NGO's should be made aware of the potential risks or presences of CSE. If a child is currently under a referral to the Youth Offending Team (YOT) then the YOT worker should be identified and be told.

Call an early strategy/multi-agency professionals meeting with all relevant parties. This should include a representative of the police missing person unit if the child is regularly going missing, the foster carer, any Key Worker, a representative from the care home (if child in residential placement), where relevant the GP and a representative from any involved NGO. If the young person is a looked after child (LAC) then consider a review of the care plan.

Intelligence and Information – Firstly, you need to know what we are dealing with. Gathering and developing an accurate intelligence profile on the child and circumstances, will allow you to create a proportionate, timely and relevant risk assessment. You need to cast your net wide when sourcing your information. Building intelligence is like building a jigsaw; information often thought to be small and unimportant is often the piece that makes your picture complete. Information should be shared and sought with/from other professionals (health, education, CAMHS etc.) so they are fully sighted and don't hold back information which they see as insignificant. A piece of information they perceive as irrelevant, may in fact be extremely important to the bigger picture. Below are just a few ways of sourcing your information:

- obtain a full history on the child. We all have different systems but there are protocols in place for information sharing. What can you tell each other? We often see on research profiles that only contain a 5-year check. This isn't enough. Go back as far back as identifying whether the child

had any pre-birth notifications, so you know the environment the child has come from

- where possible, talk to the young person themselves, explaining your concerns and pointing out the risks. Disclosure from a child will be rare but coming across as non-judgemental might just get some half-truths from them
- talk to parents or carers. Highlight your concerns and establish whether they have their own concerns or information that is relevant. A lot of your information you get will come from the carer/parent so ensure you tell them what to look out for (see Carer information below)
- where possible talk to their siblings, friends or associates. If the child has withdrawn from contact with friends then they will soon tell you that their friend doesn't hang out with them anymore, is moody, always high and has this "boyfriend who gives her 'stuff'
- talk to the school. Is there a change in concentration/behaviour? Does he/she still hang around with the same friends or has this changed. Have teachers picked up on any playground or classmate gossip?
- have you identified the child's friends and known associates? Have any of them been victims of CSE or have links to CSE or gangs?
- is the child linked to or been located at an address or a place you might deem as a CSE hotspot?
- what information is available from the child's phones? GPS technology on most modern smart phones will record a location where a photograph was taken or may contain searched locations in Map apps; or may contain historic search information in web browsers. There are also apps that allow you to track a phone to within a few metres of the current location
- Consideration should be given to looking at obtaining historical phone data. Even data that is potentially several weeks old may tell you the general area a child has been, who they have been calling and who has been calling them.
- know the lingo - there are literally hundreds of text and chat acronyms being used by young people. Deciphering these as an adult is a nightmare. Get yourself a list and keep it updated. Research what you don't know or ask another young person what it means. Same goes for street slang – know your stuff. Lists are available on the web or contact us using our contact page and we will be happy to send you one
- what information is available from social media sites – Facebook is a bit old hat for young people and many just use instant messaging services. However, you still need to check the various social media sites and be alert to the fact that the child may have advertised themselves on a dating websites.
- travel cards – most big cities and areas offer free travel for children. In London, young people can travel using the Oyster card. This needs to be registered with Transport for London who in certain circumstances will provide police with the 'touch in/out' data for that card so that a child's journey and destination can be identified. Where the parent/carer/corporate parent have bought the card, we encourage them to register the card online and that way they can check the history of movement themselves online. We even often carers a crib sheet on how to register the card. What's the system in your area and can you do the same?

Timelines & Information for Missing Children

If the child is going missing on a regularly basis, then review the missing episodes. We love a timeline! We often sit in missing strategy meetings where a professional will comment "we don't know where he is going or who he sees". Ok so the child might not want to tell anyone but there is a wealth of information that a missing episode can give you:

- what are the times they go and come back? Look at them altogether to determine a pattern

- did they make any comments about where they were going or who they were meeting?
- what were they wearing and carrying when they went out? What were they wearing when they came back? If they have changed clothing, did they take a bag with them, or have they sourced the clothing elsewhere?
- what state were they in when they returned - dirty, drunk, high, angry, volatile?
- were they collected by anyone? Do they leave with, or meet anyone outside?
- what did they say when they came back?
- police are required in all missing children cases to carry out a Prevention Interview (formerly known as a safe & well check). This is a face to face check with the young person. What was said?
- social care are required to carry out an independent Return Home Interview (RHI). Again, what did they say and does it tally with what they told the police?
- if found by police or located somewhere, look at how they may have got there. Does it tally with their travel card movements? What are the nearest public transport facilities? Are there any, if not they may have travelled by car
- in any form of disclosure, always record locations mentioned or names (usually nicknames or first names)
- did they return in a taxi? If so what was the firm. Police can pay the firm a visit and ask to see the booking details which is often a mobile phone and the point of collection. Kids will often give the point of collection details as the house next door to the one they were in so any intelligence research should concentrate on the surrounding houses
- the 'egg and bacon' chat – we often find when visiting care homes that a great deal of information is recorded in their incident log that never makes its way to the social worker or police. Little gems of information that may just fill in the intelligence gap. Asking a returning missing child at 3am where they have been is not going to get the best response. Often, we find that useful information comes from what we call the 'egg & bacon' chat. This is when a child has woken up, is hungry and feels chatty whilst cooking or having their lunch/breakfast. Often this takes the form of bragging to other children about the nightclub they went to, the 'boys' they met, or boastful comments to the carer to get a reaction such as suggestion they took some drugs. It doesn't matter how it comes out, encourage or eavesdrop on the conversation, record it and add it to the other information in your timeline.

It's all about the bigger picture. All this information can add up to a timeline and pattern of behaviour.

Missing and the 'false clock'

Going missing or being absent is significant factor in relation to CSE. Unfortunately, we see many professionals from various agencies place a great deal of reliance on how long a child has been missing to justify a lack of action around risk. We see regularly comments like: *"he is a regular missing child and normally returns a few hours later"*; or *"she usually turns up late for her curfew"*; or *"we have no specific concerns as he normally returns the next morning"*. We find that these comments about 'timings' are often used to justify not taking action. This is a dangerous practice and whilst we are not suggesting the length of time isn't important, it shouldn't be used to infer that the child isn't in danger because "they always turn up". They may not!

Some children go absent for quite short periods of time whilst others have lengthy spells of missing. The girl who has been missing from a care home for 48 hours, who went to a rave and who is now staying with a friend may not be in any danger at all. The child that tells the care home she is popping out for 15 minutes to go to the local shop but who is actually meeting her significantly older boyfriend, maybe in grave danger. A lot can happen in 15 minutes! Our message will always be – make the risk assessment specific to circumstances and individual child. It shouldn't be a 'one size fits all' approach.

The Carer

The parent/carer should be provided with advice regarding CSE warning signs and what they can do to minimise risk. We advocate that this is done in person preferably as a joint police/social worker visit so the carer/parent knows that they are fully supported. However, if this isn't possible you can have a 15-minute phone conversation that goes like this:

- “keep a discreet record of associations and people visiting the child, obtaining as much information as possible about friends, ‘boyfriends’ and associates. Listen out for and record any names, nick names, areas, places and addresses that are mentioned”
- “log registration numbers of vehicles used to collect the young person. Where you can't get a registration, a make, model, colour and anything distinctive is better than nothing”
- “note whether the child is returning with unaccounted goods and what they are”
- “where possible take a peek at the young person's mobile phone and attempt to obtain details of names, phone numbers and messages in and out”
- “ensure mobile phones are subject to a contract and not “Pay as You Go”. This way if you or social care are the bill payer you can obtain itemised statements. It's also easier for the police to obtain the records of a pay monthly phone”
- check the young person's room ,bins etc for receipts of goods which may identify train tickets, receipts which will aid to identify the places that the child has been frequenting. Bank card details may also identify potential perpetrators”
- “ensure you know the current social media sites the child is using and where possible try to obtain user names and password”
- “this is a difficult one but dependent on the circumstances, consider removing mobile phones from the young person at night to prevent calls, texts and internet use, maybe on the pretext of charging the battery. If you can do this, then it is always worthwhile monitoring any incoming contact throughout this period and making a note of numbers and names on the caller display”
- “restrict phone credit on pay as you go phones, or preferably use a contract phone and restrict the data/text limits. Turn the wi-fi off at night to prevent unsupervised use in the child or young person's bedroom”
- “ensure you have a current digitalised photograph of the child available in case they go missing. If the child changes their appearance regularly (red hair, extensions etc.) then you should always try to get a new photo. Everyone loves their photo being taken particularly if you take it on the pretence of telling them they look good. They don't need to know you might give it to the police at some stage”
- “ensure that when the child does leave the home that you make a note of what they were wearing, what they took with them and what they are wearing/carrying when they come back in. Identify whether it differs. This is particularly important if they have been missing for a significant period”
- “ you should consider the use of safety plans and have discussions with the child around the use of safe words when making contact on the phone with you. Tell them to make sure they identify

road names if they are going to a party or an address they have never been to before” . Please note that carers will need help with safety plans.

- “make sure that you always keep your mobile phone charged and on , so the young person can get hold of you”

Basic Proactive Steps

- police can place an information marker on the Police National Computer (PNC) indicating that a child is vulnerable to CSE. Although the PNC is mostly used for recording criminal convictions or impending prosecutions, a PNC marker in these circumstances DOES NOT indicate a child has done anything wrong. It is purely a marker that the child may be at risk and it will allow a police officer coming into contact with the child to consider appropriate safeguarding action. The lead police officer should ensure this is done immediately whilst Social Workers should ensure that their police colleagues have completed this task. A separate marker can be placed against the record of a suspected perpetrator identifying whether they pose a risk of CSE to a child.
- police are also able in certain circumstances to place an information marker on a child's address. If any calls are received from or related to this address, a marker enables police to identify there is a risk and generally respond more rapidly.
- in extreme cases consideration should be given to removing the child's mobile phone/SIM cards. However, a balance needs to be struck between exposing the child to calls from potential perpetrators and removing their ability to communicate and call for help if in trouble or missing.
- a photograph of the child should be obtained quickly. This photograph is important and leads should agree how and when this should be used. Should it be used for a media appeal if a child goes missing and if so at what stage? Who should it be shown to - local businesses, hotels etc.
- is there a forensic strategy in place around the child/victim? DNA can identify perpetrators and may in some cases lead to victimless prosecutions. Consideration needs to be given as to when you might seize underwear or clothing, e.g. following a missing episode where there is information to suspect that the child has had contact with a perpetrator. Phones and tablets may hold intelligence and evidence on perpetrators and locations. A word on consent – ideally seizing any property should be carried out with the consent of the victim or other person responsible for the property. However, where a young person refuses to give consent, is uncooperative or does not wish to engage, this does not prevent you from seizing property in order to safeguard them. Record your rationale which should include: level of risk to that child, circumstances, why seizing the property is necessary, what you hope to achieve by doing so and how it will help safeguard.

Disrupting Perpetrators

- has the suspected perpetrator got a marker on the Police National Computer (PNC) indicating that they pose a risk? Consider placing an interest marker on the perpetrators address if this is a place where the child is visiting or often found.
- has the service of Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWN'S) been considered on suspected perpetrators or anyone harbouring a missing child? If served, then has everyone been made aware who needs to be?
- has the use of a Sexual Harm Prevention Order (SHPO), Sexual Risk Order (SRO), Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBO), Harassment warning notice or civil proceedings under the Children's Act been considered?

- police leads should consider circulating photos and details of potential perpetrators and their vehicles to relevant parties. This could include Care Home staff, Dedicated Ward Officers or Neighbourhood Policing Teams, Local Authority enforcement staff, CCTV operators etc.
- financial investigation – the police lead should consider discussing their case with a financial investigator. Financial records may be beneficial in recovering a child who is missing, identify transactions such as hotel bookings, hired cars etc. They may also reveal illegal monies belonging to perpetrators in relation to trafficking, drug offences or benefit fraud.
- can the perpetrator be targeted, arrested and convicted for other offences? Are they currently wanted for offences or have they breached bail or licence conditions? If a perpetrator is suspected of having recently arrived in the UK, enquiries should be made with the Border Agency to establish whether they are here illegally and any history of offending in their country of origin. The police lead should look at disrupting the CSE by targeting other areas of criminality.
- vehicles – obtaining vehicle registration details of suspected perpetrators is important. Police can access the Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system and may be able to identify a vehicle or establish where it has been e.g. where it has transported a victim from one town to another. Police can also place an interest marker on a vehicle suspected to be involved in CSE so that it flags up on the system.
- does your perpetrator meet the criteria for being referred to the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) panel. MAPPA is a process where the Police, Probation and Prison Services work together with other agencies to manage the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders living in the community in order to protect the public? If the perpetrator hasn't been involved with the Probation Service, it may still be possible for the police to refer the person as a Potentially Dangerous Person (PDP), an individual who ordinarily does not fit the MAPPA criteria but whose behaviour provides reasonable grounds for believing that there is a likelihood of them committing an offence or offences that will cause serious harm.

Locations

Identifying and dealing with locations and venues will be part of managing the risk to your child or young person. Locations where CSE occurs varies greatly and can be in either public or private places. Previous CSE cases have identified certain places of interest (hotspots) including residential children's homes, hotels, night time economy businesses, transport hubs, take-away fast food outlets etc. Developing a strategy to deal with a particular venue isn't as difficult as it may first appear, if you think 'outside the box' and get the right people to help you. All areas should have a regular CSE multi-agency meeting which has a strategic overview, including looking and target hardening local identified 'hotspots'. This strategic group should have links and access to various internal and external departments and examples include:

- utilising LA CCTV cameras
- increased high visibility police patrols
- allocating a 'neighbourhood' officer as a special point of contact for residential children's homes
- for businesses - Trading Standards Officers
- licensing departments (police and LA) for pubs, clubs and taxi firms
- park wardens and LA parking enforcement officers as extra pairs of eyes
- liaising with the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) to assist with suspected fraud
- UK Visa & Immigration (UKVI) where premises are believed to have illegal employees
- legal department where Civil Orders might assist e.g. serving a Community Impact Notice or notice of closure on a business

Your Approach – Several large child exploitation abuse scandals have clearly highlighted that many professionals across several agencies misunderstood, and in some cases ignored the scale of the abuse within their area. Individuals failed in their safeguarding duties with the system letting the victims down, - ‘a cultural denial’. In early 2015 the then Prime Minister David Cameron’s made a speech to the media, following the Rotherham and Oxfordshire enquiries. In that speech, he said “children were ignored, sometimes even blamed, and issues were swept under the carpet”. He went on to say that ‘professionals who fail to protect children will be held properly accountable and council bosses who preside over such catastrophic failure will not see rewards for that failure’. Rather unhelpfully it was later announced that professionals who failed in their safeguarding duties could face up to 5 years’ imprisonment. It was the usual rhetoric that comes from politicians who don’t have a clue about the complexities of safeguarding the vulnerable, particularly politicians who cut funding and resources for those charged with the duty to protect. Thankfully common sense has prevailed, and this won’t now happen, but the harsh reality is, in these cases and others since, there were some systematic failings. Some of the bad practices that came out of those horrific cases were:

- a perception that the child has brought in on themselves and was therefore blamed for their circumstances
- unwillingness to believe the child
- professionals not caring
- a view that a child deliberately put themselves at risk – ‘a lifestyle choice’
- the child being seen as difficult and troublesome, particularly when engaging with professionals
- not willing to accept support
- a child seen as streetwise and able to look after themselves
- preconceptions and prejudices relating to sexuality and sexual behaviour – a child seen as ‘promiscuous’, ‘consenting’ or as ‘prostituting themselves’. It must be noted that whilst the law talks about prostitution offences relating to children, these are legal terms and children involved in prostitution are **victims of abuse**
- children found in potentially exploitative situations not being removed by police
- it doesn’t happen to boys

There must be a commitment and an investment in the child. Victims of those child abuse scandals have talked about the importance of having a professional who was non-judgmental, who listened and whom demonstrated that they cared.

Offending Behaviour

Ideally exploited children should be treated as victims of abuse, not as offenders. Recently a survivor of the Rotherham scandal courageously waved her right to anonymity and called for a Royal Pardon for those children convicted of offences whilst under the control of their exploiters. It highlights that victims of CSE may become involved or coerced into committing criminal offences such as drug supply, theft or fraud. They may also be used to recruit other young people for exploitation. Professionals should recognise and consider the exploitative background in which the offending is taking place. The response should be measured and proportionate, with the focus being on non-criminalisation of the child. Any decisions should take into account all the circumstances - the vulnerability of the child, the trauma to the child, any threats, intimidation or violence used by the perpetrator, whether

criminalising the child going to prevent disclosure? Police lead should seek early advice from the Crown Prosecution Service when deciding to bring criminal charges.

Engagement

It is likely that your young person will not recognise the coercive nature of the relationship the perpetrator(s) has formed with them, and therefore will not see themselves as being a victim of exploitation. The young person may well believe they are in a consensual loving relationship and their loyalty will be to the abuser. Fear of the perpetrator(s), shame, embarrassment, trauma are all factors that may make engagement unlikely. Many young people, particularly those in care will have a limited trust of carers and professionals. It may take many months and numerous interactions to build up sufficient rapport and trust.

It is important for professionals to be aware that a young person may not necessarily disclose indirectly. It is quite common for victims to attempt to distance themselves from their own abuse by claiming that they know someone else who is being abused and then describe what is happening to them. To enhance the possibility of engagement it is vital that your young person builds and invests in a relationship with someone they identify with and trust. The use of Non-Governmental Organisations with specialist CSE/Young People advocates should be a considered option.

Where a child does disclose whether partially or fully, it is important for professionals to realise that interviews or debrief sessions are usually too long. A period of 30 minutes is recommended as a starting point so professionals should be flexible and it may take several interviews before full disclosure is made. The time of day is also important. Are early morning interviews feasible if a child routinely doesn't get out of bed until late? Environment is also key. Studies show that 'inappropriate use of secure or restrictive environments can be detrimental'. Safe and appropriate accommodation is important. Where there is or likely to be a criminal investigation the rules around Achieving Best Evidence should be applied, with interviews being visually recorded, planned jointly between children's social care and the police, and conducted by professionals trained in child abuse. The use of appropriate adults or intermediaries should be considered

