

CHILD EXPLOITATION & CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION POLICY & PROCEDURE



1. INTRODUCTION

Statutory Guidance: Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation DCSF 2009. Under the Guidance local authorities, Local Safeguarding Children Boards, the police and other relevant agencies are required to follow the Guidance and have a policy and procedure in place for dealing with cases of exploitation.

This policy and procedure is based on the Guidance and applies to all young people under the age of 18 years. It should never be assumed that 16 and 17 year olds are not at risk.

The Agency also follows the London Child Protection Procedures 4th Edition. Section 5.43 of the Procedures deal with sexual exploitation of children.

Although the Statutory Guidance relates to sexual exploitation of children and young people, it is important to remember that exploitation can take other forms. These can include working as domestic servants, working in so called “sweat shops”, being forced to beg or steal, acting as a drugs runner. Sexual exploitation may also be taking place alongside these other forms of exploitation. Children subject to exploitation are victims of physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse and need to be treated sensitively and protected from further harm. The focus must always be on the child and where possible aimed at preventing exploitation.

In all cases, the person or person exploiting the child/young person will have some level of power over them. Violence or the threat of violence, coercion and intimidation are common and may also include threats against someone the child cares about, to ensure compliance by the child.

In most cases the Fostering Service will be aware when children are placed that the child has been exploited, as this will be the main reason or one of the reasons for the child being in care. There will be occasions however when children are received into care for another reason and the exploitation may only come to light following their placement, or during placement. The internet has opened up the possibility of any child becoming exploited online at any time and social workers and foster carers need to be aware of a child’s internet use and any changes in the child’s behaviour.

2. SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Sexual exploitation is generally defined as relationships where the child/young person receives a ‘reward’ (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts,

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money) or punishment for performing sexual acts. This can include being groomed and being persuaded to send sexual images of themselves, via the internet.

Sexual exploitation is known to exist in both urban and rural areas and affects boys and young men as well as girls and young women. Some children are particularly vulnerable, for example children with special needs, children in the care system, care leavers and unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Exploitation is not however limited to these groups and with the significant increase in the use of social media, any child or young person is potentially at risk.

Girls in particular are frequently coerced into sexual exploitation by an older man, posing as and viewed by them as their boyfriend. The girl becomes physically and emotionally dependent on him, which may be reinforced by the use of drugs and alcohol. Over time this can lead to access to friends and family being curtailed and the child becomes alienated from people and agencies that may be able to identify and interrupt the abuse.

Some Identified Risk Indicators

This list is not exhaustive and some of these indicators could apply for other reasons.

Health: Physical symptoms such as bruising, chronic fatigue, recurring or multiple sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy or seeking a termination of pregnancy, evidence of drug, alcohol or substance abuse, sexually risky behaviour.

Education: Truancy, deterioration of school work, disengagement with education.

Emotional and Behavioural Development: Volatile behaviour, extreme array of mood swings, aggressive language, sexualised language, sexually inappropriate behaviour, secretive behaviour, petty crime.

Identity: Low self esteem and image, self-harm, eating disorder, promiscuity, entering or leaving vehicles driven by an unknown adult.

Family and Social Relationships: hostility/physical aggression towards parents, family members, foster carers, teachers or other children, uninvolved in age appropriate activities, sexual/unexplained relationships with older adults, returning late or staying out over night with no plausible explanation, going missing, returning after having been missing and appearing well cared for with no known 'home' base, i.e have not been staying with friends or family, going missing and being found in an area where the child has no known links. Seen in areas known to be used for sexual exploitation; associating with other young people who are known to be at risk of exploitation.

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Social Presentation: Change in appearance, going out in clothing that is inappropriate for their age, wearing an unusual amount of clothing when going out.

Parental Capacity: Family history of parental abuse or neglect.

Family and Environmental Factors: Family history of domestic violence, homelessness, drug/alcohol abuse, mental ill health.

Income: Unexplained large amounts of money, new clothes or other possessions and social activities without plausible explanation of how these are funded, new/additional mobile phones, number of SIM cards.

Social Integration: Seen in high risk areas or at addresses of concern, associating with older adults, seen at adult venues.

If more than one of the above indicators are present, sexual exploitation of the child or young person must be considered as one of possible causes.

3. OTHER FORMS OF EXPLOITATION

Children and young people are subject to exploitation in a variety of different ways. Children can be used as domestic servants and become virtual prisoners within the houses they work. The same applies to children working in sweatshops, who are made to work long hours, receive little or no payment and are often forced to sleep at their place of work. Young children are often forced to beg, as it is perceived by the adults controlling them that the public are more likely to give money to children. Others may be forced to steal by their parents or other adults, because if they are under the age of 10 years they cannot be prosecuted. Some young unaccompanied asylum seekers will be forced to work to repay the people who illegally brought them to the U.K. in the first place

All of these children will generally be poorly cared for and suffer physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Even when removed from these situations they will be forced to return or continue to be used whilst in the care system. Many of the risk indicators identified for sexual exploitation will also apply to other forms of exploitation.

The Role of the Agency and Foster Carers

Where a child who has or is believed to have been exploited, is placed with a foster carer, a risk assessment needs to be carried out identifying potential risks to the child and/or the foster family. The foster carers must be given a copy of the risk assessment and the Placement Plan must clearly identify what the foster carer should do if they suspect that the child continues to be at risk. If the child has been the subject of a Section 47 enquiry, there may have been a Multi-agency planning (MAP) meeting. MAP meetings aim to develop a

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plan to enable the child/young person to protect themselves, to recognise and avoid risky behaviours and people and to engage in positive activities and relationships. The plan should also cover risks to other children in the family. If a MAP plan is in place, foster carers should also be given a copy of this and advised of their role in the implementation of the plan.

The Registered Manager will be the Agency's lead officer in all matters relation to child sexual exploitation and child protection.

All incidents of concern must be dealt with in accordance with the agency's normal child protection procedures. Staff and foster carers should also refer to the Agency's policies on Safe Care and Safety on the Internet. Where it is considered that there is clear evidence that a child/young person is at risk of immediate harm, foster carers should contact the police and then inform the Agency. Foster carers must record and report any concerns to their supervising social worker and/or the child's social worker. If the foster carer or the supervising social worker feels that their concerns are not being taken seriously by the placing authority, they should discuss the matter with the Registered Manager. The Registered Manager should then have a discussion with the manager of the child's social worker or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for the placing authority and/or the area authority. The Agency and foster carers will work in accordance with the local authority protocols currently in place and the Agency should request a copy of these where a case of sexual exploitation has been identified.

The Agency will provide annually, training on Child sexual abuse and exploitation, to both staff and foster carers. The training will include awareness of exploitation, how to identify the warning signs, recording and retention of information and evidence gathering. Staff and foster carers will also be made aware of current policies and procedures. New foster carers will be provided with training on child sexual abuse and exploitation as part of the Skills to Foster course.