Northamptonshire
Safegarding Children Parnership

Child Exploitation Strategy

Contents

Introduction

Northamptonshire Safeguarding Partnership have agreed a definition of Child Exploitation that can be easily understood and used by professional's and members of the public.

Definition:

Child Exploitation is a form of child abuse which occurs when someone takes advantage of a child for their own or others profit or gain. It can take different forms. This includes:

Child criminal exploitation – when a child is coerced, manipulated or pressured to take part in criminal activity
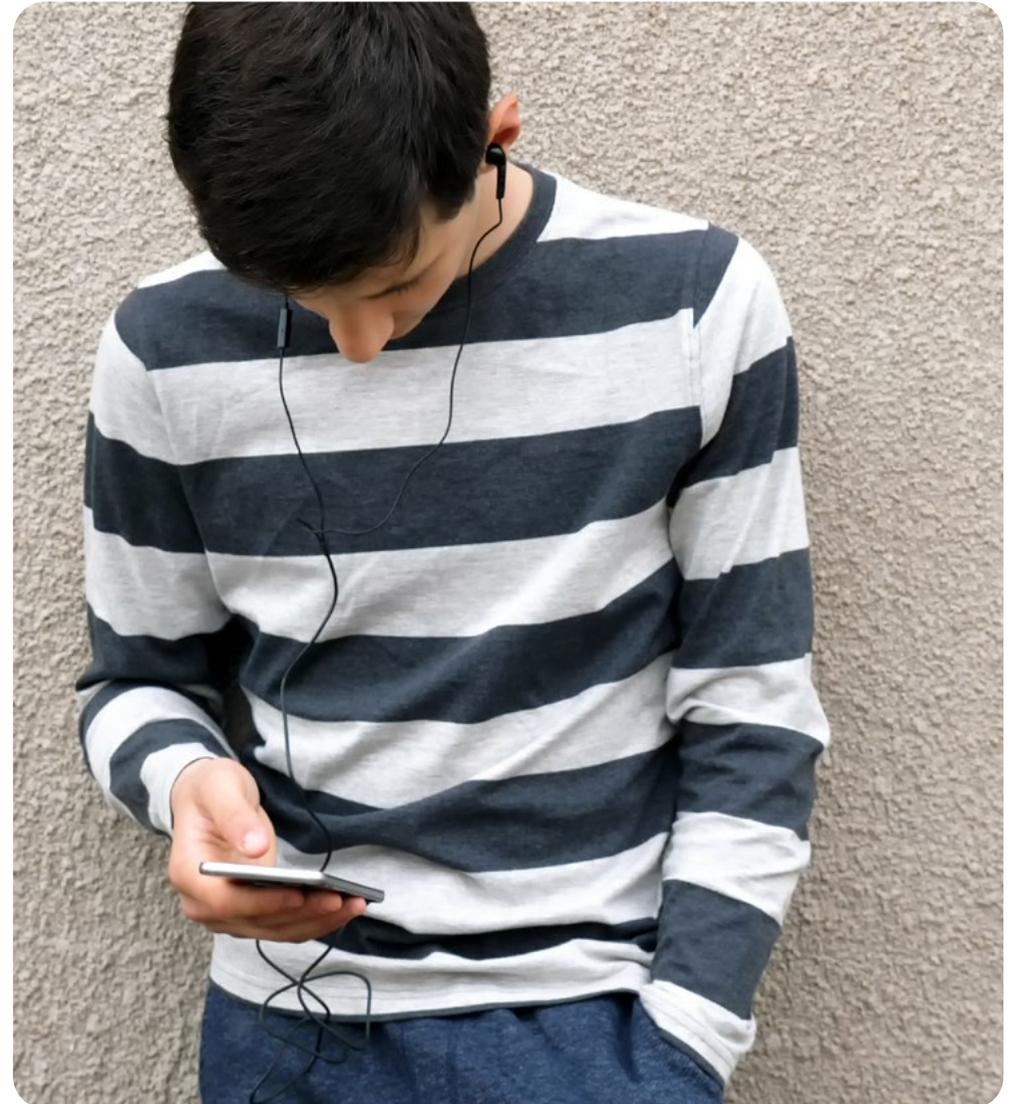
Child sexual exploitation – a type of sexual abuse where a child is coerced, manipulated or pressured into sexual activity

Exploitation can be hard for a child to recognise and they may not understand that they are being coerced/groomed.

Children that come to notice must be treated as children, whatever the circumstances they find themselves in.

Safeguarding children from exploitation and violence is 'everyone's business.' We need to draw upon and share intelligence and information from these children, their peers, their communities and from the wide range of professionals that support them or come into contact with them, in order to manage risk.

Tackling child exploitation is a complex task that requires a proactive, multi-agency, holistic approach. Understanding exploitation drivers, themes, risks, and venues of concern will provide key prevention

Introduction (cont)

opportunities to stop children becoming victims of exploitation.

The management, disruption and prosecution of perpetrators is a key success driver in tackling exploitation. Perpetrators of child exploitation will groom and/or manipulate children so that they are unaware they are being exploited. They may also use violence and coercion through deception, fear, and provocation. It is vital that professionals work collaboratively to safeguard children and collectively deploy tactics to disrupt perpetrators and the drivers of exploitation.

The following strategic priorities will provide the focus for further development of our safeguarding arrangements and responses to child exploitation:

1. **Knowing the problem**

   a. To ensure that all practitioners, parents/carers, local businesses, young people, and residents understand the challenges faced by young people from exploitation, the vulnerability factors, signs and symptoms and what to do if they are worried about a young person.
   Impact Statement: practitioners, parents/carers, young people, local businesses, and residents can identify adolescent vulnerability, know who to contact and what will be done in response

   b. To develop systems to ensure that leaders understand the intelligence picture and are able to use this to target interventions to make young people safer

   Impact statement: Stronger intelligence gathering and sharing

on individuals, spaces and places engages a tactical response from the partnership to make young people safer

2. **Prevention and early Intervention**

   To ensure a focus on early intervention to prevent vulnerability escalating

   Impact statement: Young people who are vulnerable to exploitation will be identified early and supported by their families/carers, professionals and communities to prevent and build resilience to exploitation.

3. **Protection and support**

   The strengthening, embedding and development of approaches to extra-familial harm across the partnership.

   Impact statement: A systemwide approach will be created that reduces risk and improves outcomes for children and young people

4. **Disruption and Prosecution**

   Ensuring a clear focus on the use of a range of disruption techniques to build the trust and confidence of victims, including developing location -based interventions.

   Impact statement: Public confidence will increase with communities and individuals empowered to report the signs of exploitation knowing that robust and effective action will follow.

Introduction (cont)

Operationally, each form of exploitation will be categorised by its own definition however there are clear and sometimes multiple overlaps between different forms of exploitation and the associated risks. Risk is not siloed, and our response must consider the multiple domains of risk children experience when exposed to exploitation. Children can be, or be perceived to be, both victim and offender, harmed or harmer and our collaborative response must be able to manage both aspects together at the same time whilst safeguarding the child.

This document sets out the Northamptonshire operating protocol for safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children from exploitation. 'The welfare of the child is paramount'.

This document is designed to complement and not replace Northamptonshire Child Protection Procedures (proceduresonline.com) and other statutory guidance. It outlines how, through our partnerships, we assess, challenge, and provide an enhanced, effective service to take a preventative approach by reducing vulnerabilities and increasing resilience in our children, families and communities.

This strategy has been agreed by the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Board. The strategy sets out the priorities and agrees an approach that enhances a county-wide approach to the issue of child exploitation. The Partnership Board have a Child Exploitation Subgroup where exploitation work is prioritised and coordinated through the Child Exploitation Delivery Plan. Progress against the delivery plan will be reviewed quarterly at the CE Subgroup Group and reported to the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Board.

This protocol is non-statutory and has been produced to help practitioners, local leaders and decision makers who work with children and families to identify children vulnerable to exploitation and take appropriate action in response.

Similar disruption techniques can be used in relation to all forms of exploitation although there are circumstances that can demand different approaches. Factors such as the age of victims, the context in which offences occur and the risk they pose can influence which approach to adopt. These may require a range of different tools, deployed tactically by different agencies working collaboratively. While some children are at greater risk of exploitation, all children, including those with no apparent vulnerabilities, can be exposed to exploitation and other forms of extra-familial harm.

This protocol provides direction in relation to operational responses to exploitation. It should be viewed alongside the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Partnerships Procedures Manual and related policies which include guidance on multiagency approaches to protecting children from harm and abuse, including various forms of exploitation.

Northamptonshire Vision, Aims and Principles in Tackling Child Exploitation

Vision:

Our vision is simple: to ensure that agencies (including adult services) understand their roles and responsibilities; to secure a coordinated, effective response to safeguard children and young people from harm as a result of all forms of exploitation; and to have a clear focus on the prevention of harm through identification, disruption, and prosecution of offenders

Contextual Safeguarding is a conceptual framework (Firmin and Knowles, 2020) which recognises that children and young people can be at risk of exploitation and abuse by adults and peers outside of their family networks. This risk is typically greater as a child enters adolescence and independently navigates a range of extra familial contexts and develops influential peer relationships. The framework advocates that assessment of extra-familial risk is key to safeguard children and young people from exploitation.

Aims:

Seeing the child first – not the behaviour; to consider the child within, but also beyond their home environment.

- Treat children as a child first.
- Identify children at risk of harm or that are being exploited.
- Identify and take action against perpetrators.
- Ensure a consistent contextual safeguarding response so children receive the best outcomes.
- Ensure the safeguarding and welfare of children who are, or may be, at risk from exploitation with a collaborative approach.
- Raise awareness, identify, and implement intervention opportunities to prevent child exploitation.

Principles:

The principles underpinning a multi-agency response to the exploitation of children include the following:

- Child exploitation is a form of child abuse.
- Child exploitation can lead to children being exposed to or subjected to serious youth violence.
- Exploited children should be treated primarily as victims of abuse, even where offences have been committed which may need investigating.
- Children may be victims as well as perpetrators.
- It is vital that language is used which adequately describes the children's experience and does not place any blame on them.

Types of Exploitation

Often a child may demonstrate warning indicators for multiple types of exploitation and there may be a number of crossovers.

Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/ or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology (Department for Education, 2017)

Child criminal exploitation

Child criminal exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child under the age of 18 to undertake criminal acts. 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. (HM Government, 2018) Criminal exploitation of children is much broader than just county lines and includes, for instance, children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft. Child criminal exploitation also includes forms of economic exploitation. For example, where a child is paid to transfer money in and out of their own bank account to assist with money laundering. Where a child is exploited to commit any criminal offence, this can constitute child criminal exploitation.

County lines

County lines is a specific model of child criminal exploitation. The national definition of county lines: 'A term used to describe gangs or organised criminal groups involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more areas using dedicated mobile phone lines. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and will often use coercion, intimidation, violence and weapons.' The groups often use local residential premises, often owned by a vulnerable person, as a base for their activities. This is often taken over by force or coercion, and in some instances, victims have left their homes in fear of violence. Empty or commercial premises can also be used. Perpetrators employ various tactics to evade detection, including rotating group members between locations so they are not identified by law enforcement or competitors. Perpetrators will also use vulnerable adults, both male and female and children to transport drugs in the belief that they are less likely to be stopped and searched. Children may be coerced into concealing and carrying drugs in internal body cavities, such as the vagina or rectum. Young people may refer to this as 'plugging', 'stuffing' or 'banking'. Evidence of exploitation through the county lines model will often become apparent to professionals when children are located after missing episodes outside the Northamptonshire area, where there is no apparent reason for the child being in the location where they have been found. Involvement with in-force drugs supply is almost identical in nature to county lines style exploitation. The risks presented to the children involved in this type of exploitative behaviour are just as severe as those involved in county lines. Particular attention must be paid to drug debts as seizing drugs or money will often perpetuate the cycle of criminality as children are further forced to 'work off' the debt (known as debt bondage). Groups may also seek to entrap children by staging false robberies (known as 'taxing') to then entrap the child.

Types of Exploitation (cont)

Gangs and Organised Crime Groups

The term 'gang' is often open to interpretation depending on what areas of business you work in. Often associated with an image of a group of young people or adults who are 'up to no good' or committing crime. Gangs can be highly organised and sophisticated in exploitation as seen within trafficking, modern slavery, and county lines. It is therefore usually more appropriate to use the term Organised Crime Group (OCG) in these contexts rather than 'gang'. The government paper Safeguarding children and young people who may be affected by gang activity (2010) distinguishes between peer groups, street gangs and organised criminal gangs.

Peer group – A relatively small and transient social grouping which may or may not describe themselves as a gang depending on the context.

Street gang – Groups of young people and adults who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity.

Organised Criminal Gangs – A group of individuals for whom involvement in crime is for personal gain (financial or otherwise). For most, crime is their 'occupation'. It's not illegal for a young person to be in a gang – there are different types of 'gang' and not every 'gang' is criminal or dangerous. However, gang membership can be linked to illegal activity, particularly organised crime involving child trafficking, county lines and serious youth violence. A child might be lured into an OCG or gang with the promise of status, wealth, belonging or protection. Other pull factors that might create barriers to engagement may include:

- peer pressure and wanting to fit in
- gangs using grooming, coercion, and control to manipulate and force

Types of Exploitation (cont)

them to do so
- where they live
- the need to feel respected and important
- the need to make money or are promised rewards
- wanting to gain status and feel powerful
- exclusion from school or family breakdown

Child trafficking

It's defined as recruiting, moving, receiving, and harbouring children for the purpose of exploitation, distance travelled is immaterial and it can include all of the types of exploitation outlined in this document.

Child trafficking is a form of modern slavery. Children can be trafficked both within the UK and into the UK from overseas. International child trafficking can be incorrectly labelled as child smuggling. Professionals are encouraged to be professionally curious in order to identify the trafficking risk indicators and implement a collaborative safeguarding response to the child. Responding to the vulnerability is a key factor.

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Exploiters of victims from outside the UK may act as or influence interpreters therefore, it's important the child is spoken to independently. Utilising accredited independent translators from the outset is key to capturing the best evidence and providing the most effective immediate support to the child. Investigations should be

subject to a Section 47 joint investigation. A full risk assessment must be undertaken by all professionals before ensuring the child is placed with a suitable adult.

Children can also be trafficked from one part of the UK to another as evidenced in county lines. Child Trafficking varies from spontaneous networking between groups of offenders, to more sophisticated organised crime where young people are effectively 'sold'. Children can be trafficked for criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, financial exploitation, domestic servitude, and organ harvesting. All trafficking can occur across and within Local Authority (LA) boundaries, regions and across international borders. Child trafficking is child abuse and serious organised crime, with a range of legislation available for prosecution and disruption.

Online child exploitation

This generation has grown up in a digital world which has improved people's lives in many ways, such as giving us multiple methods to communicate and share information. It is a constantly changing and dynamic world that is now an essential part of a child's life. However, these freedoms also create new risks – according to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), a significant number of child exploitation offences take place online. These offences include deceiving children into producing indecent images of themselves and engaging in sexual chat online or sexual activity over a webcam. 2020 has also seen a significant increase of online grooming for child criminal exploitation including county lines. Children at risk of online harm may not have any previous vulnerabilities. The first parents may know that their child has been a victim of criminal exploitation is when the police contact the family. Children often do not see the dangers of sharing

Types of Exploitation (cont)

intimate images of themselves to strangers. The internet creates a false feeling of security and diminishes inhibitions that would exist offline. The anonymous nature of the internet allows perpetrators to adopt false personas and build trust via online conversations. Children may be naïve to the loss of control of uploaded images, falsely believing the properties of social media applications will protect them. This leads to risks of blackmail and coercion against the child. These factors can lead to any of the following risks:

- Online grooming and child abuse – sometimes leading to in-person abuse and child trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation
- Access to age-inappropriate content
- Financial exploitation, where young people's bank accounts are used by exploiters to launder the proceeds from criminal activities
- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Personal information being obtained by perpetrator
- Talking to strangers or people who misrepresent themselves

Peer-on-peer exploitation

Children can be exploited by children of a similar age as well as adults. Research is increasingly demonstrating that a significant number of exploited children have been abused by their peers. Children can be exploited by their peers in a number of ways.

In some cases, children who have been exploited themselves by adults or peers, will recruit other children to be abused. In other instances, sexual bullying in schools and other social settings can result in the exploitation of children by their peers. Exploitation also occurs within and between street gangs where sex can be used in a number of ways

including control, retribution, safety, and protection.

For 16-and-17-year-olds who are in abusive relationships, what may appear to be a case of domestic abuse may also involve criminal or sexual exploitation. In all cases of peer-on-peer exploitation a power imbalance will still drive the relationship, but this inequality will not necessarily be the result of an age gap between the abuser and the abused.

Forced labour

Refers to the exploitation of children through any form of work that deprives children of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular education and is mentally or physically and morally harmful.

Examples could include:

- Car Wash
- Cannabis factories
- Forced begging

Child Exploitation in Northamptonshire

All County partners have a clear, stated desire to maximise all opportunities to share, combine, and analyse data, both as part of statutory requirements, but also where there are ANY lawful, legal, proportional (under the principles of GDPR) opportunities to share in the interests of Safeguarding, or Preventing and Intervening in all types of child exploitation.

We will create a Multi-agency collective view in Northamptonshire which will ensure that we are co-ordinated across all partners, and maximise the opportunities to Prevent, Intervene and Safeguard all that we identify who are being exploited, or who are in danger of being exploited, by any type of exploitation.

Northamptonshire will build a data performance Scorecard that will help inform the County Strategic Priorities, the Commissioning, and the Operational Activity for all our Partners, as well as a framework for evidencing outcomes, achieving accountability and value for money in the activity we undertake and deliver for the people in our County. We will blend and analyse any data available to us that will support this aim, providing it is ethical and supported by an appropriate sharing agreement. We will prioritise the building of sharing agreements for information that will best suit this objective.

We will utilise all available data as partners to blend and diagnose for the purposes of:

- Safeguarding where appropriate
- Intervene to deflect from present and future harm
- Identify at the earliest moment, the opportunity to give early help
- Prevent crime and harm from happening
- Identify a tactical plan and a lead professional
- To identify gaps in services or process issues
- To create leverage through transparency of the issue at hand to encourage activity or commissioning
- To inform the Executive and create accountability at every level
- To understand the true picture from which strategy and activity can be derived

Working Together to Prepare, Prevent, Protect and Pursue

Nothing is more important than children's welfare. Children who need help and protection deserve high quality and effective support as soon as a need is identified.

Children may be vulnerable to exploitation from within their family and from individuals they come across in their day-to-day lives. These threats can take a variety of different forms, including sexual, physical and emotional abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour; exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups; trafficking; online abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation. Whatever the form of abuse or neglect, practitioners should put the needs of children first when determining what action to take.

Under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and Under section 10 of the same Act, the local authority is under a duty to make arrangements to promote co-operation between itself and organisations and agencies to improve the wellbeing of local children. This co-operation should exist and be effective at all levels of an organisation, from strategic level through to operational delivery.

In order to address collaborative working arrangements to tackle child exploitation Northamptonshire Children Safeguarding Partnership have adopted the "Four P Plan" which focuses on very clear priority areas, these are the Prepare, Prevent, Protect, Pursue, framework. This provides the partnership with a simple structure for oversight of progress and delivery based on those same priorities.

Working Together to Prepare, Prevent, Protect and Pursue (cont)

The 'Four P Plan':

1. Prepare

The Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership recognises that in order to be properly prepared to tackle the different forms of exploitation within the county we must have robust and effective mechanisms to understand the profile of the challenges and risks being faced by local children and young people. This is also important in evaluating the impact of our collective efforts to keep children and young people safe from the various forms of exploitation. Develop the partnership's understanding of the prevalence of different forms of exploitation to inform the multi-agency response to children and young people at risk.

2. Prevent

The safety of children and young people is at the centre of our Partnership work. We will promote that safety by increasing the awareness and understanding of children, young people, professionals and the public of the risks and threats that exist in our communities. This will support them in taking early "preventative" action to reduce the risk of harm, identifying when a child or young person is at risk of or being harmed.

3. Protect

Northamptonshire Children Safeguarding Partnership is committed to recognising and responding to children and young people who are vulnerable to, and victims of exploitation in any of its forms. Our primary goal is to ensure that partner agencies work together to provide support to exploited children, so they are helped, protected and listened to and that perpetrators are held to account for their actions.

4. Pursue

The Partnership will ensure it maintains focus on the targeting and pursuit of offenders to bring them to justice. Our primary goal is to manage the threat and risk posed by perpetrators and to secure justice for, and on behalf of, exploited children.

Working Together to Prepare, Prevent, Protect, and Pursue

Preventing child exploitation is everyone's business. The police, children services, health, schools, youth justice, charities, parents, and the wider community have a key role to play. Child exploitation can be stopped. To prevent Child Exploitation and keep children safe it's paramount all professionals:

Working Together to Prepare, Prevent, Protect and Pursue (cont)

- Keep all forms of child exploitation on the agenda,
- Raise awareness of signs and indicators of child exploitation, and advice about how to respond including safeguarding, NRM and disruption,
- Give children a voice to speak out, and be heard,
- Intervene at the earliest opportunity to safeguard the child,
- Identify the key moments in a child's journey to engage and capture the evidence of exploitation and offer consistent and persistent support to the child.
- Ensure timely, relevant and good quality NRMs are submitted where any indicators of trafficking are identified
- Ensure all children have a robust understanding of healthy and safe relationships, and
- Make sure everyone knows how to identify signs of exploitation, raise the alarm and is aware of the relevant support offer

Our Extra-familial harm / child exploitation action plan will focus on these key deliverables.

Working Together – Indicators of Exploitation.

Anyone who comes into regular contact with a child is in a good position to notice changes in behaviour and/or physical signs, which may be an indication that the child or young person is experiencing exploitation and harm.

The fact that a young person is 16 or 17 years old should not alter how a practitioner/agency responds to a concern which relates to child exploitation.

Below are some indicators linked to child exploitation, they include factors that may heighten vulnerability e.g. SEN. The indicators do not create an exhaustive list, and each is not in itself proof that a child is at risk of exploitation or is being exploited. Concern should increase with the number of indicators present, although one single indicator alone may in itself be significant. Practitioners should use their judgment and knowledge of a child /young person and their circumstances when assessing vulnerability

Family and social relationships – hostility /aggression in relationship with parents, carers and/or other family members, or peers; association with adults or other children /young people who are assessed to be at risk of exploitation /known to be exploited; unexplained relationships with unknown adults, reduced contact with family/friends which is of concern, spends time at addresses and places not known to parent/ carer, goes or is taken to places they have no known connections with. Gang association. New friendship groups.

Health – evidence of drug, alcohol, or substance misuse; self-harm, eating disorders; Late presentation or unexplained injuries or illnesses/ suspicion of assault; physical injuries, such as bruising, knife inflicted and/or sexual violence injuries. Low self-esteem, expressions around invincibility or not caring about what happens to them, neglect of medical conditions, low mood, sexually transmitted infections.

Education – disengagement with education, employment, or training; considerable change in performance and/or behaviour, poor attendance; not in mainstream education, excluded, whereabouts unknown during school /college/work hours.

Behavioural – bullying/threatening behaviour, aggression, anti-social behaviour; offending behaviour; secretive, mood swings, social isolation, detachment from age-appropriate activities /friendship groups, rapid behaviour changes.

Social presentation – change in appearance /clothing, new tattoos, branding.

Family and environmental factors – family history of parental neglect or abuse, mental health, domestic abuse, gang association/ neighbourhood, offending, bereavement, parental separation, poverty and deprivation. Scared of reprisal or violence.

Income – possession of unexplained money and/or items such as clothing, mobile phones, credit on mobile phones; sim cards; accounts of social activities including parties, and travel with no plausible explanation of the source of funding.

Being located in, or believed to be frequenting a place of exploitation or a place where the child has no clear reason for being.

Missing is a key indicator of child exploitation. Missing is defined by the College of Policing

Working Together to Prepare, Prevent, Protect and Pursue (cont)

> " Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located and their well-being or otherwise confirmed. "

It is Northamptonshire Police policy that no child under the age of 18 years can be risk assessed lower than MEDIUM risk. This is in recognition that children and young people are some of the most vulnerable members of society with a heightened risk of being exploited.

When considering child exploitation indicators, practitioners should take into account that these do not necessarily mean that a child is being exploited.

It is crucial to recognise that a child with vulnerability factors does not automatically indicate that they are at risk of exploitation. The exploitation of a child occurs because a facilitator or abuser recognises, targets, responds, and takes advantage of a child's vulnerability, and that this is often enabled by an absence of protective structures around the child, their family, social relationships and/or social spaces.

Early Identification of indicators which may increase the risk of a child being targeted and groomed, and early help is essential to ensure that all support for the young person and family is co-ordinated with all relevant agencies and family members to prevent the likelihood of further harm. The Early Help Assessment (EHA) and Team around the Family (TAF) approach should be used at the earliest opportunity. The EHA assessment undertaken in relation to child exploitation should reflect the individual circumstances and characteristics of the child within their family, peer, and community context. All assessments should include an analysis of parental capacity to meet the needs and reduce the vulnerability of the child or young person, whether they arise from issues within the family or from the child or young person's wider social relationships and/or community context. It should be recognised that a safe, loving and protective family may not be enough to protect young people from harm outside the home. The wishes and feelings of the child or young person and their parents or carers should be obtained when deciding how to proceed.

Where there are significant concerns and evidence of a child being exploited practitioners should discuss this with a manager and/or the designated professional for safeguarding and a decision made as to whether a referral to Northamptonshire MASH is required.

Working Together - Understanding the Impact of Child Exploitation

The impact of child exploitation on the young people affected is huge.

For example, exploited young people are at increased risk of rape, sexual assault, physical violence, sexually transmitted infections, trafficking, and pressure to use drugs and alcohol.

Exploitation can impact on every aspect of a child/young person's life, such as:

- Physical and mental health
- Education and training
- Life chances/aspirations
- Family relationships
- Friends and social relationships
- How they view others
- Their relationships with their own children in the future

Psychological impact of child exploitation

Anxiety, depression, addiction, low self-esteem, self-harm, eating disorders, PTSD, self-image, depression, nightmares, flashbacks, attachment problems, emotional numbing/detachment, rapid behaviour changes.

Physiological impact of child exploitation

Physical injuries, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, weight loss, sickness, self-harm, general ill health, sexually transmitted infections, problems with fertility, hair loss, poor diet, addictions, change in physical appearance, impact upon parental mental health, disturbed sleep patterns.

Social impact of child exploitation

Isolation from friends and family, education, hobbies and interests, risky/dangerous situations and people, difficulty developing and maintaining relationships, avoiding certain places and people, moving areas, social isolation.

Economic impact of child exploitation

Drug/Alcohol 'debt', financial difficulty, debt bondage, stealing, unable to work, housing problems, trouble supporting children, benefit claims, difficulty accessing mainstream education.

Working Together - Our Responsibilities to Safeguard Children from Exploitation

Schools

Maintaining children in education is a critical protective factor against exploitation.

Schools can help to raise awareness, offer support, and raise aspirations regarding the prevention of exploitation.

Schools should ensure that they provide an environment where staff can recognise and appropriately respond to behaviour which is a signifier of abuse and exploitation

Schools should re-consider the use of exclusions for vulnerable children as this increases the likelihood of further exploitation, and this could be further explored in exclusion hearings.

Schools, colleges, and other educational institutes have a key role to play in raising awareness and there is a clear need for early and continuous education. Child exploitation can impact very young children and the risks are heightened due to the online world. If children are not educated about the dangers and what a healthy relationship is, then they will be left exposed to the risks of child exploitation.

Personal, social, health and economic lessons are an obvious route for educating children about the risks of child exploitation and other forms of harm and risks. School nurses, dedicated Schools Officers and Safeguarding Leads are also well equipped to deliver these sessions.

Consideration must be given to special educational needs (SEN) children and children who sit outside of the mainstream education settings. SEN children or children who sit outside of main education are at higher risk of exploitation and therefore need particular attention and a bespoke response.

Health

Health can provide key early intervention opportunities for child exploitation victims. Health services such as A&E, school nurses, GPs and sexual health clinics will encounter children demonstrating the child exploitation warning signs so it's pivotal they are aware of their statutory safeguarding responsibilities. Children may attend A&E as victims of serious youth- violence and this could be a pivotal stage in the child's journey to accepting/disclosing they are a victim of exploitation.

Health professionals are key contributors in providing the multi-agency, holistic approach to child exploitation. Health partners offer a range of services that can prevent child exploitation, provide intervention opportunities, and support victim safeguarding plans. These include:

- 0-19 services
- Primary Care
- Community Health Services
- Mental health services
- Alcohol and drug misuse services
- Sexual Health and reproductive services
- Healthy relationships and sex education to schools and colleges.

Parents

Parents play a crucial role in safeguarding and protecting their children from child exploitation. Research shows that confident, authoritative parenting which supports children to make informed decisions is a key protective factor in relation to child exploitation. They can educate their children on healthy relationships, sex and the risks associated with child exploitation.

Working Together - Our Responsibilities to Safeguard Children from Exploitation (cont)

exploitation. Parents have a responsibility to ensure their child's voice is heard and create a safe support environment where the children have the confidence to speak. Parents must not be afraid to speak out and request help from professionals when needed. All professionals must take every opportunity to support parents by ensuring:

- Child exploitation is on the agenda of parents
- Parents are aware of the associated risks linked to child exploitation; they have the information to spot the warning signs
- Parents know how to raise the alarm and where to go for help
- They are provided a tailored support to assist families in safeguarding their children, including through online exploitation.
- Tools to assist parents to identify signs of exploitation are available through NSPCC and Children's Society websites and specific interventions and supporting materials are also available through Parents Against Child Exploitation paceuk.info/for-parents/

Youth Offending Service

The Youth offending service is a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary service committed to responding effectively to exploitation of the young people we work with. Responding to exploitation is a priority in the business plan.

Northamptonshire Youth Offending service is aware that young people who have speech and language or learning difficulties, neurodiversity issues, have suffered adverse childhood experiences, or who struggle to access mainstream education are more likely to be the victim of exploitation. Therefore, any young person considered to have high vulnerability concerns are discussed in multi-agency risk safety and wellbeing meetings that occur at least once every 12 weeks. All relevant

professionals are invited to these meetings that are chaired by a manager in the service.

Our YOS practice offer is:

- All staff trained in identifying signs of exploitation, and understand the requirements of them under the Modern Slavery Act as an employee of a responsible authority in addition to local safeguarding protocols.
- All Young people open to the service have a Child Sexual Exploitation, and Gang assessment completed to assist practitioners to identify concerns and have appropriate responses to them. This process is currently under review with a holistic exploitation tool being created.
- The prevention and diversion service works with young people at the earliest possible opportunity to identify appropriate partners to assist in management of any potential exploitation and deliver intervention with the young person.
- Young people identified as at risk of, or where there are concerns that they are currently being exploited, complete interventions assisting them to identify the signs of exploitation, why is it a worry and how to manage it. Depending on the nature of the exploitation we are concerned about young people are also engaged in resilience, masculinity, health, sexual relationships, consent, and all young people explore knife crime. Intervention is developed with young people, so it is child led, and any young people with speech and language or cognitive difficulties engage in work adapted to reflect their level of understanding.
- In terms of serious youth violence and exploitation we hold quarterly information sharing meetings with relevant practitioners involved with young people of particular concern that that time, in order to target individuals and areas of concern.
- Health, education, and substance misuse services working within the YOS to enable young people instant access to support and information, improving communication and responses when exploitation concerns are raised
- Practitioners conduct regular home visits with young people in order to develop relationships with parents and carers, and monitor the home situation.
- Face to face interactions to monitor any changes in the young person's physical and emotional presentation.

All Children & Families Support Practitioners

A multi-agency response is essential to effectively tackle child exploitation. Organisations with specific child safeguarding responsibilities need to ensure that they enable their staff to work collaboratively and effectively share information within their organisation and with their partners. It is key that all practitioners are aware of everyone's aims that are politically important to them, mutually agree benefits and work together to safeguard children. All practitioners must be aware of:

- their local child exploitation safeguarding protocols
- their areas of responsibility and remits
- safeguarding responsibilities and local reporting routes and escalation pathways
- child exploitation indicators, associated risks, and importance of disrupting perpetrators
- the importance of professional curiosity

Working Together - Our Responsibilities to Safeguard Children from Exploitation (cont)

- the impact of trauma and associated risks
- the demographics of their borough, community complexities and ongoing challenges such as gangs and serious youth violence

Community Safety Partnership

The NNCSP is focused on identifying and understanding community safety issues and delivering outcomes that make a difference to people's safety, lives and wellbeing utilising the resources available through its partnership. A key priority is reducing criminal exploitation of children, protecting those at risk of gang violence, knife crime and from entering the criminal justice system. Other safeguarding priorities are around Prevent and reducing radicalisation through the Channel processes. There are structures in place through the Community 1, Citadel, HASBAG and Cuckooing forums and a range of community safety led initiatives that provide opportunities to develop an effective safeguarding response.

Professionals play a key role in educating the wider community in order for them to identify the warning signs, risks and know how to raise the alarm. Child exploitation awareness training is available, in relation to the warning signs for child exploitation and what actions should be taken if they are concerned about a child's safety or suspicious behaviour or activity.

Governance

The Northamptonshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership is responsible for providing the governance for our multi-agency arrangements to tackle the exploitation of children and young people in Northamptonshire.

As a Partnership we are committed to safeguarding children together. We achieve this through our longstanding ethos of scrutiny, challenge and continuous improvement which drives our activity to improve safeguarding arrangements for children and young people.

We recognise that the Northamptonshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership operates within a wider partnership framework which collectively contributes to keeping children safe. The connectivity of these various partnerships is essential to the commissioning and delivery of services to support children and young people at risk of exploitation.

The Child Exploitation Partnership Thematic subgroup will oversee the developments and implementation of the Strategy Delivery Plan.

Equality and Diversity Statement

All partners with the NCSP have a responsibility to pay due regard to the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) laid out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act says they must have due regard or think about the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't
- foster or encourage good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't

Having due regard means public authorities must consciously consider or think about the need to do the three things set out in the public sector equality duty.

Throughout the development of this strategy the aims of the PSED have been considered in relation to the nine protected characteristics. The associated action plan will demonstrate and evidence continued compliance with the duty through the impact analysis of the specific actions.

Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTG's):

The Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship (ICTG) Service is outlined within Section 48 of the Modern Slavery Act and is commissioned by the Home Office and delivered by Barnardo's in a number of sites across England and Wales, including Northamptonshire.

ICTG's provide specialist support for trafficked children and the professionals involved in their care.

Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs) provide direct support for any child who is identified as a victim of trafficking who is in the UK without someone with parental responsibility, and:

- Build trusting relationships with trafficked children to help them build a positive future
- Help children navigate criminal justice, social care, and immigration systems
- Give emotional and wellbeing support
- Support professionals working with children so that they can identify the indicators of trafficking and respond to meet their needs

ICTG Regional Practice Coordinators (RPCs) take a strategic role, working alongside professionals who are supporting children who have been trafficked, who have someone with parental responsibility in the UK. RPCs provide specialist case consultations, advice and guidance for professionals who are working directly with young people

Referrals to the ICTG service should be made when any child is identified as a potential victim of trafficking and Modern Slavery and/or is referred to the NRM.

Advice and guidance, information about the service and queries regarding possible referrals can be made by contacting ICTG Guardianship Assessment Team who provide an initial triage assessment to better understand the immediate safeguarding needs of the child and provide appropriate advice to support safeguarding, risk management and safety planning

Referrals to the ICTG Service can be submitted via the Online Referral Form or by calling ICTG Guardianship Assessment Team on: 0800 043 4303

Appendices

Appendix A: Action Plan

What we need to achieve	Action	Timescale	Partnership lead	How will we know?	Priority P area addressed	Impact
Knowing the problem	To develop systems to ensure that leaders understand the intelligence picture and are able to use this to target interventions to make young people safer				**Prepare**	Stronger intelligence gathering and sharing on individuals, spaces and places engages a tactical response from the partnership to make young people safer
Prevention and Early intervention	To ensure a focus on early intervention to prevent vulnerability escalating To ensure that all practitioners, parents/carers, local businesses, young people and residents understand the challenges faced by young people from exploitation, the vulnerability factors, signs and symptoms and what to do if they are worried about a young person.				**Prevent**	Young people who are vulnerable to exploitation will be identified early and supported by their families/carers, professionals and communities to prevent and build resilience to exploitation. Practitioners, parents/carers, young people, local businesses and residents can identify adolescent vulnerability, know who to contact and what will be done in response

Appendices (cont)

What we need to achieve	Action	Timescale	Partnership lead	How will we know?	Priority P area addressed	Impact
Protection and support	The strengthening, embedding and development of approaches to extra-familial harm across the partnership.				**Protect**	A system and approach will be created that reduces risk and improves outcomes for children and young people
Disruption & Prosecution	Ensuring a clear focus on the use of a range of disruption techniques to build the trust and confidence of victims, including developing location based interventions.				**Protect**	Public confident will increase with communities and individuals empowered to report the signs of exploitation knowing that robust and effective action will follow.

Appendix B:

(Northamptonshire Children's Services Procedures Manual (proceduresonline.com)

Child-Exploitation-Guide.pdf

Appendix C: Mash Referral

How to make an online referral - Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board (northamptonshirescb.org.uk)

Appendices (cont)

Appendix D: Vulnerable Adolescent Exploitation Screening Tool

The purpose of the tool is to enable professionals to assess a child's level of risk of exploitation including in a consistent evidenced based approach manner. The screening tool can be applied to all children (male and female) under the age of 18 years and is to be used by anyone who has a concern that a child may be being exploited across the various forms of exploitation:

Details of Person completing the Screening tool			
Name		Telephone No.	
Organisation/role		e-mail address	
Line Manager:		Line Manager email:	

Personal Details of Child / Young Person			
Family Name		Address	
First Name(s)			
Middle name(s)			
Gender			
Date of Birth (dd/mm/yy)		Post code	
Services/Panels known to		School/Education setting	

Appendices (cont)

Children Service case level		Assessment Date (dd/mm/yy)	
Ethnicity		Age at time of Assessment	

Vulnerability Factors (select all appropriate options)						
Chaotic or dysfunctional family life		Lack of protective factors within family unit		Parental history of mental health difficulties/ substance misuse		History of domestic abuse in the home
Child Carer		Death, suicide, loss or illness of a significant person		Migrant, refugee or asylum seeker		Previous victim of exploitation
Low self-esteem or confidence		Child in Care or Care experienced		Mental health difficulties		Misusing drugs and/or alcohol
Homeless/sofa surfing		Questioning/exploring sexual or gender identity		Isolated from family/ peers/social networks		Special Educational Needs/ Learning difficulties/disabilities
Subject of bullying		Prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse		Economic vulnerability/ financially unsupported		

Lead Professional/Referrer's Comments (provide an explanation/further detail of all indicators ticked)

Appendices (cont)

Risk/exploitation indicators (select all appropriate options)							
Unexplained possessions such as money, phone, gifts, jewellery, drugs		Going to unsafe places i.e. houses or places linked to exploitation or risky activities		Being targeted/groomed for abuse online		Self-harm /suicide attempts/significant changes in emotional wellbeing	
Association with peers at risk of exploitation		Unexplained contact with hotels, taxi's , fast food outlets		Offending behaviour i.e. theft, violence, drug dealing		Carrying weapons	
Miscarriage, termination, STI or emergency hormonal Contraception		Increased interest in making money or need for money		Missing episodes		Entering or leaving unknown vehicles	
Found in areas with no known connection		Unexplained physical injuries/suspicion of assault		Expressing extreme views and behaviours		Gang associations	
Breakdown in relationships with family and/or peers		Suspicious bank account activity		Unhealthy or inappropriate sexual behaviour		Deterioration in school performance/ behaviours/attendance	
Relationships with controlling/older individuals or groups		Indicators of modern slavery or trafficking		Exclusion from school due to behaviour or reduced timetable/alternative provision		Change in physical appearance/dress/image	
Peer on peer abuse, including sexualised bullying		Recruiting others into exploitative situations		Associating with known perpetrators/drug dealers/ risky adults		Information that child is being exploited, including concern expressed by parents	

Drug Debt		Groomed into sexual activity including sending explicit images		Substance/alcohol abuse		Multiple mobile phones	
Found with large quantities of drugs		Excessive receipt of calls/texts /social media messages from unknown persons		Is geographical area or place - a risk factor		Is there a safe place for the young person	

Lead Professional/Referrer's Comments (provide an explanation/evidence for all indicators ticked):

Lead Professional/Referrer's Professional Judgement and Risk Assessment

Appendices (cont)

Name(s) and Signature(s) of Professional(s) making this assessment			
Name		Name	
Role		Role	
Agency		Agency	
Signature		Signature	

Vulnerable Adolescent Panel Decision & Rag Rating

Name(s) and Signature(s) of lead Decision Makers		
Name		
Role – Chair		
VAP		

Appendices (cont)

Appendix E: Child Exploitation Resources

[Child Exploitation Resources - Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board (northamptonshirescb.org.uk)](#)

References:

i. Firmin,C. and Knowles, (2020) The legal and policy framework for Contextual Safeguarding Approaches: A 2020 update

ii. DfE (2017) Child Sexual Exploitation; definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers, working to protect children from child sexual exploitation.

iii. HM Government (2018) Serious Violence Strategy.
    Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-violence-strategy

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