

Child Exploitation Policy

Contents

Scope of the policy.....	1
Introduction	1
Definitions.....	2
Vulnerability Factors	3
Impact of exploitation.....	5
Principles of working.....	5
Contextual Safeguarding.....	7
Professional Curiosity	7
Child Exploitation Procedures.....	7
Child Exploitation Training	7

Scope of the policy

This chapter outlines the policy for supporting children or young people where it is suspected that they may be at risk of, or suffering harm through, exploitation. This includes criminal exploitation, sexual exploitations, trafficked children or those in modern slavery situations. The policy includes definitions, legislation, risk indicators and information about the impact exploitation may have on a child or young person who has been exploited.

Introduction

Exploitation of children is a geographically widespread form of child abuse. It is the act of using a child for profit, labour, sexual gratification or some other personal or financial advantage. Child exploitation results in cruel or harmful treatment of the child, as the activities they may be forced to take part in can cause emotional, physical, and social problems.

Exploitation:

- Can affect any child or young person under the age of 18 years. In relation to sexual exploitation, 16 and 17 year olds who can legally consent to sex can be impacted.
- Can still be exploitation even if the activity appears consensual;
- Can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and is often accompanied by violence or threats of violence;
- Can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, of any gender, and young people or adults; and
- Is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the exploitation. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources;
- Can occur within the context of teenage relationship abuse.

September 2023 V1

- Can take place in person and via technology, or a combination of both;
- Doesn't stop when a child turns 18;
- Can be intra- and extra-familiar.

This policy is important for the safeguarding of children and families across Lincolnshire, or those using services in the area. It should be read by all practitioners and managers working with children or young people. The aim of this policy is to assist practitioners across all agencies to develop a robust understanding of child exploitation.

Types of exploitation include:

- Sexual Exploitation
- Criminal Exploitation
- Modern Slavery
- Children and Young People who are Trafficked

It is recognised in Lincolnshire that children who are exploited are extremely vulnerable and exposed to significant risk. Lincolnshire's response to child exploitation focuses on effective information sharing, joint assessments of need, joint planning, professional trust within a multi-agency network and effective disruption to aid prevention of exploitation.

Definitions

Child Sexual Exploitation is defined¹ as '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 or young person 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.'

Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse, The REIGN Collective, challenges the concept of there being an exchange as it suggests that there is agreement to the abuse as they receive something in return. Perpratators use their power and any form of trickery possible to ensure the victim acts as the perpratators wishes. This power and trickery may involve giving the victim items such as food, money, accommodation, drugs etc. but may also involve controlling elements of their lives such as accessing the bathroom or seeing family or friends. By using this trickery, the victims are forced into being sexually abused by violence, coercion or intimidation.

To see Lincolnshire response to Child Sexual Abuse and for resources to support professionals, please visit: [Child Sexual Abuse Response](#)

While there is no statutory definition of **Child Criminal Exploitation**, the Children's Society offers the following definition: (When) a person or persons manipulate, deceive, coerce or control the person to undertake activity which constitutes a criminal offence where the person is under the age of

¹ DfE (2017) Child Sexual Exploitation Definition and a Guide for Practitioners, Local Leaders and Decision Makers Working to Protect Children from Child Sexual Exploitation. Accessed from: [Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612222/Child_sexual_exploitation_definition_and_guide_for_practitioners_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

September 2023 V1

eighteen. This could include county lines and other drug related offences, financial fraud or stealing. As with other types of exploitation, criminal exploitation can occur through the use of technology.

Modern Slavery is defined as encompassing human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. In human trafficking cases, exploitation can take many forms, including: sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude, forced criminality and removal of organs. Some people may not be victims of human trafficking but still victims of modern slavery if they have been subject to slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour.²

The definition of **trafficking** contained in the 'Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children' (ratified by the UK in 2006) is as follows:

"Trafficking of persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of person, by means of the threat of or use

- *Of force or other forms of coercion;*
- *Of abduction;*
- *Of fraud;*
- *Of deception;*
- *Of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability; or*
- *Of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.*

Any child transported for exploitative reasons is considered to be a trafficking victim. This is partly because it is not considered possible for children in this situation to give informed consent. It is unlikely that a child will understand what is happening when they are a victim of trafficking. They should also be aware that the parents may be complicit in the exploitation or the parents themselves may be a victim of trafficking. It should be stressed that trafficking is not just related to children moving across international borders but also between and within counties.

A **child** is defined according to the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

Vulnerability Factors

Victims of exploitation may not always be recognised by those who come into contact with them. They may be unwilling to come forward to agencies, not seeing themselves as victims or fearing further reprisals from their abusers.

Circumstances that may make a child or young person more vulnerable to exploitation include:

- Economic difficulties;
- Having experienced neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse;
- Limited opportunities at home;
- Educational issues such as being excluded or attending a Pupil Referral Unit;

² [Modern Slavery: statutory guidance for England and Wales \(under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015\) and non-statutory guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

September 2023 V1

- Lack of a stable/safe home such as domestic abuse, substance misuse or mental health issues;
- Social difficulties;
- Homelessness or housing issues;
- Connections with those already exposed to exploitation;
- Having an illness, health condition or a physical or learning difficulty;
- Mental ill health issues;
- Substance misuse issues;
- Being in care;
- Being in a caring role such as young carers, young parents etc;
- Experiencing transitions or change;
- Where a child is considered to be missing.
- Research shows that children with additional needs such as special educational or learning needs, physical disabilities or emotional health needs are particularly vulnerable to being exploited. Any communication difficulties can make it harder for a child to disclose abuse and they may have few opportunities to disclose³.

As well as the above, children and young people may be more vulnerable to being trafficked due to the following circumstances:

- Poor and displaced families may hand over care of their children to traffickers who promise to provide them with a source of income, education or skills training, but ultimately exploit them;
- Wanting to help their families back at home or seeking better futures;
- Limited social contact with family and friends;
- Not being registered with a GP or school;
- Lack of personal items;
- Escaping familial situations of harm and abuse, homelessness or being orphaned;
- A lack of equal opportunities, discrimination or marginalisation and social customs such as children being expected to respect and follow the adult in charge. Faith abuse and other specific practices may be used to control the child. A demand for cheap or free labour or a workforce who can be easily controlled and forced into criminal activity;
- Unaccompanied, internally displaced children;
- Some children may say they are unaccompanied when claiming asylum - the trafficker may have told the child that in doing so they will be granted permission to stay in the UK and be entitled to claim welfare benefits;
- Former victims of modern slavery or trafficking;
- Trafficked children have an increased risk of going missing from care in the UK, this may be due to the level of threat from the traffickers, level of control and grooming;
- War in home country.

It is important to note that the trafficking of children can occur within the UK as well outside of the country. Children may be trafficked through a different county or even city.

³ NSPCC. (2022). Safeguarding d/Deaf and Disabled Children and Young People. Accessed: [Safeguarding d/Deaf and disabled children | NSPCC Learning](#)

Impact of exploitation

Child exploitation is child abuse. All exploited children are at risk of physical harm, neglect, emotional harm as well as extreme forms of violence due to the high levels of violence, intimidation and grooming associated with exploitation. They may also exhibit other harmful symptoms, for example, depression, suicide attempts, self-mutilation, withdrawal and other disorders. They may also misuse drugs or alcohol.

Exploited children may be exposed to extremely dangerous situations particularly if they are required to set up or be part of a new drug market or expand an existing one. Other dealers in the area may target these children to prevent them taking over their 'patch'. Some children may be forced to carry the drugs in harmful ways that are abusive and could result in their death. For example, forced or coerced internal concealment is commonly used, which is when children can be forced by an adult or a peer to insert and carry drugs in their rectum or vagina.

Children may be required to carry or conceal weapons putting them at risk of physical violence and intimidation. They may also be traumatised by witnessing violence perpetrated against others. In some instances sexual violence may be used as a form of control or punishment.

Children who are exploited may go missing from home or from care. Children who are missing from home or care may be at risk of suffering significant harm as a consequence of their basic need for food, safety and shelter and/or from the people with whom they may come into contact with. Additional vulnerability due to their age, level of understanding or the significance and seriousness of the circumstances that led to the missing episode may also be present. Having no means of support or legitimate can lead to the child being involved in high risk activities.

Young people who are sexually exploited may experience health deterioration as a result of sexual activity. It can put the young person at increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), of unplanned pregnancy and abortion, as well as long term sexual and reproductive health problems.

There are long terms risks associated with being exploited such as a lack of education and impacted social development. There may be ongoing isolation from support networks and families.

Children being exploited may be groomed into engaging in exploitative behaviours themselves, leading to the child being identified as a perpetrator. This could mean criminal justice consequences for the child, despite being a victim themselves.

Principles of working

The Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) support programme⁴ have provided multi-agency Practice Principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm. These principles are designed to support effective partnership working across different local contexts; providing a common language and framework to better respond to child exploitation and extra-familial harm and are as follows:

⁴ Tackling Child Exploitation (2023) [Multi-agency Practice Principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm \(researchinpractice.org.uk\)](https://researchinpractice.org.uk)



Children who have been exploited may find it difficult to talk about their experiences, tell anyone what has happened to them or identify themselves as victims. Being exploited can impact a child or young person’s emotional, physical and overall psychological development. As part of any work with the child or young person, professionals will need to be empathetic and professionally curious to explore the child or young person’s situation fully and enable the risks to be identified, understood and appropriately responded to.

Professionals must ensure that the support and intervention offered takes into consideration the short and long term needs of the child or young person to enable them to break away and keep them safe from their abusers in addition to helping them heal from the trauma of their experiences.

Professionals need to be informed and competent in matters relating to exploitation such as signs of vulnerability, indicators of exploitation and an understanding of procedures to follow.

Some agencies within Lincolnshire work to engage in disruption tactics and targeting perpetrators, working towards preventative measures for exploitation. As part of Operation Insignia, professionals can report concerns around a person or a place for the police to consider. Professionals should be aware of contextual safeguarding, where it is recognised that the public and social contexts can have

September 2023 V1

an impact on a child's life, and, that this impact can be positive or negative. Understanding the environments that children access can allow professionals to understand the risks that the child may encounter.

When speaking to the young person on any other occasion it is important that they are supported as a victim – they should never be made to feel as though it is their fault. It is imperative that appropriate terminology is used when discussing young people who have been exploited or are at risk of exploitation. Language implying that the child or young person is responsible in any way for abuse and crime that they are subjected to, must be avoided to ensure we safeguard them appropriately. It is also important to recognise that a child cannot consent to their own exploitation.⁵

Contextual Safeguarding

Lincolnshire have adopted the Contextual Safeguarding Approach to exploitation, where we aim to understand and respond to young people's actual experiences of harm. This approach was developed by Durham University and is built on three core ideas:

1. That it is possible to change contexts in which harm can occur;
2. That inequality is both the cause and the consequence of contextual harm as not everyone experiences a context in the same way;
3. That harm occurs in an interaction between individual choice and structural/environmental constraints.⁶

The Lincolnshire Children Safeguarding Partnership (LSCP) is committed to using a Contextualised Safeguarding Model in response to Child Exploitation. Working with victims alone is not effective in reducing exploitation. By agencies working together to disrupt exploitation, the safety and wellbeing of all young people within Lincolnshire is improved.

Professional Curiosity

Professional curiosity is key in relation to child exploitation concerns. Professional curiosity allows professionals to explore the young person's situation fully to enable risk to be identified, understood and responded to appropriately.

Child Exploitation Procedures

Please visit the Resources section of the Manual to find out more: [Local Resources](#)

Child Exploitation Training

For more information on our training response or to access Lincolnshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership's training, please visit: <https://www.lincolnshirescp.org.uk/>

⁵ [Child Exploitation Appropriate Language Guide 2022.pdf \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](#)

⁶ Contextual Safeguarding. Accessed: [cs-briefing-2020-final.pdf \(contextualsafeguarding.org.uk\)](#)