



## **Children's Safeguarding and Social Work**

Child exploitation policy and  
procedures

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## 1 Child exploitation policy overview

Camden aims to tackle the exploitation of children as part of the council's Youth Safety Taskforce and the Vulnerable Adolescents strategy. It is acknowledged that often, children may be vulnerable to risks that arise within their community or peer group rather than from their home environment; this is known as extra-familial harm.

Adolescents are more vulnerable to extra-familial harm and forms of exploitation as they become more independent and enjoy more freedom and as peer influence increases and family influence declines. This occurs against a backdrop of physical, emotional and cognitive changes present during adolescence that results in young people pursuing risky behaviours.

Camden's strategy aims to support individual children and target their exploiters with a view to safeguarding children and disrupting all forms of child exploitation in Camden. The Multi-agency Child Exploitation group (MACE) will be the key mechanism for implementing this strategy and individual cases may be referred to the MACE as part of this policy (see section 11).

## 2 Purpose and scope

This guidance has been written to help workers in Youth Offending Services, Early Help services and CSSW to identify whether a child is being exploited, the type of exploitation and to help them assess the child's needs and work with them to reduce risk, safeguard their welfare and help them be safe from exploitation

## 3 Child exploitation, trafficking and modern slavery

Child exploitation describes a situation where an exploiter (who could be an adult or a peer) takes advantage of the child for their own personal or financial gain or gratification. It is based on a power imbalance in the relationship between the child and their exploiter and enables the exploiter is able to control the movement and behaviour of the child.

Exploiters may "groom" victims first in order to gain influence over the child, but in general, children are controlled through manipulation, duress, force, or fear, making exit from the exploitation very difficult. The key element is that the child cannot give consent to their exploitation and will not be acting as a free agent.

Child exploitation can be a form of modern slavery, a criminal offence where a person is held in slavery or servitude or required to carry out forced or compulsory labour, and who may be trafficked in order to facilitate the exploitation.

The key element of exploitation is lack of real choice. Although the child may appear to have acted consensually, their decision is not an informed choice as a result of fear of threats or duress. The law makes it clear that children under the age of 18 cannot give informed consent to their exploitation and may be considered at risk of harm.

The main forms of exploitation in Camden are child sexual exploitation (CSE) and child criminal exploitation (CCE). Further details on both forms can be found in appendix 1.

Staff should also be aware that being missing from home or education is a risk factor that is strongly associated with child exploitation.

- Missing from home or care protocol  
[..\Missing children\CSCP missing protocol 2020.doc](#)
- Children missing from education  
[..\Missing children\Children missing from education policy.docx](#)

## 4 Identification and risk assessment

### 4.1 Carrying out a risk assessment

- Risk assessment tools for CSE and CCE are both available on MOSAIC and should be used to establish the perceived level of involvement in exploitation and the corresponding risk of harm to the child (see section 5).
- A risk assessment should only be carried out where there are concerns that the child may be being sexually or criminally exploited.
- Each tool can also help workers to gather information about the child's associates who may also be experiencing exploitation as well as any information on adult perpetrators, locations where children are groomed and methods of grooming used by perpetrators. This information can provide evidence that can be passed to the MACE group and subsequently used to disrupt child exploitation activity in the borough.
- Each tool contains a series of statements that give an indication of a child's level of involvement in that form of exploitation, and each statement carries a score that when combined gives a picture of the level of risk the child faces and the best response to help keep them safe.
- Workers should go through the risk assessment tool with the child and their family to get as much information as possible to make a judgement on

whether the child is vulnerable to, being groomed for or already at risk due to involvement in CCE or CSE.

- Where possible, risk assessments should be carried out in partnership with parents and any key professional working with the child, particularly in new cases where not enough may be known about the child to answer all the questions.
- **Review CCE or CSE risk assessments** should be carried out at 6 monthly intervals, prior to case review meetings, to determine whether risk has reduced or increased.
- Following completion, all completed CCE and CSE risk assessments that result in an amber or red rating and a form 87a (available on MOSAIC) must be sent to the CAIT police at the following email address SCD5Mailbox-.CamdenCJIT@met.pnn.police.uk.cjism.net

### 4.2 New cases

Where any agency working with a child believes there is evidence of CCE or CSE, a risk assessment should be carried out to establish the level of risk and the most appropriate response.

Following a risk assessment, children may be referred to the Child and Family contact service by agencies working with them because it is suspected the child may be being exploited.

- Cases with a **Green RAG rating** (low level risk) will be referred on to the Early Help team to identify an appropriate early help or universal service with the aim of working with the child to build their resilience and divert them from exploitation.
- Cases with an **Amber RAG rating** where the child is thought to be at moderate risk due to exploitation will be referred to the MASH for information sharing and to convene a response meeting (see section 6).
- Cases with a **Red RAG rating** where the child is thought to be at high risk due to exploitation will be referred to the MASH for information sharing and to convene a response meeting.

### **4.3 Where the child is arrested (CCE)**

Where a child is arrested and found in possession with intent to supply and there is evidence that the child is being criminally exploited, the Youth Diversion Programme (YDP) worker will visit the child at the police station and gather as much information as possible and carry out a CCE risk assessment.

- If a child is charged with an offence, the case will be dealt with by the Youth Offending Service (YOS) as a criminal justice response.
- If the child is not charged but needs an early help intervention to divert them from crime, the case will be referred to a suitable early help service which may be the Youth Early Help service (if the child is aged 13 and above) or a private and voluntary organisation, depending on their assessed needs.
- All arrests of children will be notified to the MASH via a police MERLIN. The MASH social worker will carry out a CCE risk assessment and the MASH manager will make a judgement based on the information obtained in the CCE risk assessment on the most appropriate response.
- If the CCE risk assessment has a RAG rating of Red or Amber, the case will progress to a response meeting. Cases with a Green RAG rating will be referred to the Early Help Service.
- Where there are safeguarding issues involving concerns about parental abuse or neglect, a referral will be made to CSSW for a social work service.
- Where 3 or more CCE risk assessments have been carried out in relation to a child, the case will be referred to the MASH for consideration for a statutory social work service.

### **4.4 Existing cases**

Where a social worker, YOS worker or Early Help worker suspects that a child they work with may be being exploited, the worker should carry out a CCE or CSE risk assessment as soon as concerns are raised.

Where the risk assessment scores an Amber or Red RAG rating, a response meeting should be held to determine the level of risk (see section 6).

## 5 Levels of risk and intervention

Camden's model of intervention for exploitation cases is based on RAG ratings given at the end of CCE and CSE risk assessments. These ratings will flag the risk of CCE or CSE and determine whether an exploitation response meeting is required to explore the circumstances in greater depth:

### ***For CCE cases:***

**Blue rag rating (score of under 10):** There is no evidence of CCE and no action will be taken.

**Green rag rating (score of 10-24):** These are children who are vulnerable to CCE and should be referred for/ continue to be held by universal or early help services. However, if the worker carrying out the risk assessment believes that there is a lack of information and the risk may be higher, a decision may be made to hold an exploitation response meeting (see section 6).

**Amber rag rating (score of 25-45):** These are children who are possibly being targeted or groomed for CCE and where an exploitation response meeting should be held chaired by CSSW

**Red rag rating (score of over 45):** These are children who are likely to be experiencing CCE and where an exploitation response meeting must be held chaired by CSSW.

### ***For CSE cases:***

**Blue rag rating (score of under 10):** There is no evidence of CSE and no action will be taken.

**Green rag rating (score of 10-24):** These are children who are vulnerable to CSE and should be referred for/ continue to receive universal or early help services. However, if the worker carrying out the risk assessment believes that there is a lack of information and the risk may be higher, a decision may be made to hold an exploitation response meeting (see section 6).

**Amber rag rating (score of 25-50):** These are children who are possibly being targeted or groomed for CSE and where an exploitation response meeting chaired by CSSW should be held.

**Red rag rating (score of over 50):** These are children who are likely to be experiencing CSE and where an exploitation response meeting chaired by CSSW must be held.

For some cases, workers may wish to have a discussion with the Missing and Child Exploitation Coordinator, Florence Lindsay-Walters about how to complete an 87a and decide how to progress the case. This will be an informal case discussion rather than a strategy discussion under child protection procedures

Where the CCE risk assessment score is over 45 or a CSE risk assessment score is over 50 and it is clear that there is a high level of risk, it is imperative that an exploitation response meeting takes place as a matter of urgency and in no less than 5 days.

## 6 Exploitation response meeting

### 6.1 When to hold a meeting

An exploitation response meeting should be held for any case where the CCE or CSE risk assessment indicates a RAG rating of Amber or Red in order to fully discuss the child's circumstances with the professional network and arrive at a more detailed consideration of risk.

Where a risk assessment indicates a Green RAG rating but it is felt that there is a lot of unknown information and that the score is not reflective of the potential risk, an exploitation response meeting may still be convened if this is the judgement of professionals involved.

### 6.2 Arranging a meeting

The timescale for holding an exploitation response meeting should be determined by the level of risk to the child but in any event should not be held more than 10 working days from the date of the risk assessment being carried out.

As CCE and CSE involves extra-familial harm and risk comes from outside the home, parents will often wish to work in partnership with CSSW to protect their child and should be invited to the meeting together with the child. However, information of a confidential nature involving other children or perpetrators should be discussed outside of the meeting (see section 6.3).

For **new cases**, the meeting should be set up by the receiving Early Help, YOS or CSSW team, depending on the RAG rating of the case and the professional judgement on the likely trajectory of the case.

For **known cases** the meeting should be set up by the allocated worker (social worker, Early Help worker or YOS worker).



## Child exploitation guidance

The MASH will chair all Amber and Red ragged cases that originate from YOS and Early Help.

Where the case has an **Amber RAG** rating, workers should consult with an IRO to discuss who is best placed to chair the meeting (IRO or CSSW Team manager).

Where the case has a **Red RAG** rating, the meeting should be chaired by an IRO.

The meeting should be recorded on the exploitation response meeting record.

The following should attend:

- the allocated worker and their supervisor or team manager
- the currently allocated YOS or EH worker working with the child
- a representative from the child's school or education provision
- the child's GP, school nurse or any other health worker who is working with them including CAMHS
- for LAC, the child's foster carer, residential worker or housing key worker
- representatives of any private and voluntary organisation working with the child
- a representative from the relevant Police team, depending on the level of risk; all requests for police attendance should be sent via the CAIT
- where appropriate, the child and their parent or carer
- where an allocated case held in early help or YOS has resulted in an amber or red risk rating, a MASH social worker should be invited.

The Missing and Exploitation Coordinator and Analyst should be invited to all exploitation response meetings in order to gather information and intelligence on CCE and CSE activity in the borough.

The purpose of the exploitation response meeting is to:

- share and clarify information on the type of exploitation and establish the level of concerns and appropriate level of intervention
- decide whether any further action should be taken by CSSW under child in need or child protection procedures
- consider what can be done by the family and professional network to reduce risk
- consider what therapeutic support or preventative input the child may need
- consider whether any other children associated with the subject are also at risk from exploitation, including siblings, and agree any action needed to safeguard them

- consider whether any immediate action, including legal action, is needed to safeguard the child
- share intelligence on perpetrators and other victims and consider any action to be taken by the police in order to disrupt CCE or CSE activity in the borough or prosecute perpetrators, including a referral to the MACE group
- draw up an outline CCE or CSE plan.

### **6.3 Managing the meeting**

Exploitation response meetings (and subsequent review meetings where CSE and CCE plans are reviewed) may involve sharing information about potential perpetrators, police investigations or operations or other young victims.

Camden's policy is to encourage parents and young people to attend meetings. To enable this whilst maintaining confidentiality of information shared at meetings, chairs should consider a range of options to manage meetings so that confidentiality is not breached and parents and young people can participate.

Chairs may choose to have pre-meeting discussions with Police or other professionals or hold a separate meeting or split meetings in order to cover confidential issues; this is particularly important for CIN or LAC reviews where a more extended professional network may attend.

Any separate discussion of CSE or CCE issues held outside of formal meetings and reviews must be recorded on the exploitation response meeting addendum record available on MOSAIC by the chair of the meeting.

### **6.4 Review exploitation response meeting**

A review exploitation response meeting should be held whenever there was not enough information available at the first exploitation response meeting to make an informed decision on risk and further investigation is required to determine the level of risk or there is an escalation in concerns.

### **6.5 Outcome of the meeting**

The exploitation response meeting will be the multi-agency forum for deciding the level of risk and harm faced by the child and determining the most appropriate level of intervention in response to concerns. Professional judgment should be used to decide whether the case should be referred to CSSW or Early Help services for intervention based on the level of risk.

Cases may be referred to CSSW where there is a high risk from CCE or CSE or where there are concerns about parental abuse or neglect.

Cases will be allocated a risk level as follows:

**For CCE cases:**

- **Low risk** These are cases where the child is vulnerable to CCE and requiring a preventative early help service in order to divert the child from CCE and build their resilience. Indicators of low risk include:
  - some episodes of going missing from home or school
  - emerging problems with engagement at school
  - changes in peer group/reduced contact with family
  - low level concerns about health and mental wellbeing
  - some experimental use of substances
  - beginning to be known by police because of peer group and possible links with drug dealing.

These cases may be referred to/continue to be held by a universal service, a specialist youth service, youth early help or a private and voluntary specialist youth service for preventative support depending on the level of vulnerability. Where the child has experienced adverse childhood experiences and CSSW has had previous (or current) involvement with the family, consideration may be given to stepping up the case to CSSW.

Consideration may also be given to stepping the case up to CSSW due to multiple presentations for CCE, ie: where 3 or more risk assessments have been carried out in relation to an individual child.

Where there are no concerns around parenting and parents are fully engaged, the case should be held by Youth Early Help.

- **Moderate risk:** These are cases where there is evidence that the child is being groomed for CCE. Indicators of moderate risk are:
  - frequently going missing from home or school and staying out overnight
  - poor school attendance and engagement
  - peer group includes those known to be at risk of or already experiencing CCE
  - unaccounted for money and possessions
  - seen in locations associated with CCE
  - excessive and secretive mobile phone use
  - regular use of substances

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- growing concern about their health and mental wellbeing
- known to police as possibly being involved in drug dealing and use of weapons.

These cases should be referred to CSSW for a child in need service if the threshold is met but may otherwise be referred to or continue to be held by Early Help/YOS services.

- **High risk:** These are cases where there is clear evidence that the child is being criminally exploited and are likely to require a holistic multi-agency response, including consideration of a child protection response. Indicators of high risk include:
  - persistently going missing from home or school and staying out overnight
  - not in education/excluded
  - out of parental control
  - known to associate with older adults or gang members
  - excessive use of mobile phone and owning more than one
  - found in areas that they have no connection to or in “cuckooed” premises
  - arrested in possession of drugs/money
  - dependency on drugs
  - debt bondage (eg: owing money for drugs or a phone)
  - serious concerns about health and mental wellbeing, presence of injuries
  - known to have been physically or sexually abused
  - arrests or concerns around drug supply, both locally and through county lines.

These cases may be referred to CSSW for a child in need service or a child protection response in exceptional circumstances where professional judgement is that this is an appropriate and proportionate response and/or where there are concerns about parenting.

### **For CSE cases:**

**Low risk:** These are cases where the child is vulnerable to CSE and requiring a preventative early help service in order to divert the child from CSE and build their resilience.

- These cases may be referred to/continue to be held by a universal service, a specialist youth service, youth early help or a private and voluntary specialist youth service for preventative support depending on the level of vulnerability.

- Where the child has experienced adverse childhood experiences and CSSW has had previous (or current) involvement with the family, consideration may be given to stepping up the case to CSSW.
- Consideration may also be given to stepping the case up to CSSW due to multiple presentations for CSE, ie: where 3 or more risk assessments have been carried out in relation to an individual child.
- Where there are no concerns around parenting and parents are fully engaged, the case should be held by Early Help Services.

**Moderate risk:** These are cases where there is evidence that the child is being groomed for CSE.

- These are cases where the child is in contact with perpetrators or those who are recruiting for the perpetrators or may have begun a relationship with an older partner or a peer that gives cause for concern.
- They could be receiving gifts or attending parties with perpetrators and may be in contact with perpetrators via mobile phones. They may be being given drugs and alcohol by perpetrators to disinhibit and disorientate them which will make them more vulnerable.
- This group will require targeted intervention and services in order to build resilience, address their needs and disrupt the grooming process or reduce the level of dependence on perpetrators. It is important that robust action is taken at this level as this is the main opportunity agencies will have to protect the child and divert them away from CSE.
- Following the exploitation response meeting, if the case meets the threshold for a CSSW service, the child can be worked with as a child in need. Otherwise, the case can be allocated to or remain with Early Help Services or the YOS.

**High risk:** These are cases where there is clear evidence that the child is being sexually exploited and is likely to require a holistic multi-agency response, including consideration of a child protection response.

- These are children who are very likely being sexually exploited and have become deeply enmeshed in the exploitation so that it is difficult for them to exit. Intervention at this level will be aimed at helping the child exit the

exploitation and make a recovery and may also involve criminal investigation and action by the police against the perpetrator.

These cases may be referred to CSSW for a child and family assessment and child in need service; a child protection response will be used in circumstances where professional judgement is that this is an appropriate and proportionate response and/or where there are concerns about parenting.

### 6.6 Other actions

- Consideration should be given to the immediacy of harm to the child and whether additional services including Housing, CAMHs, Community Safety, the Evolve team (see section 12) etc need to be involved. In all cases specialist provision to engage and provide support to the child should be identified.
- The response meeting should consider whether the level of risk to the child is high enough to warrant checking their social media account to gain important information about perpetrators and/or other children who may be at risk.
- Where it is decided to go ahead with the check of social media accounts this will be carried out by the Missing and Child Exploitation Coordinator and Analyst in line with CSSW procedures. [..\Direct Work\Social media surveillance guidance.docx](#)
- The response meeting may also decide to refer the case to **MACE group** (see section 11) or for a **NRM meeting** (see section 13).
- Where required a Review response meeting can be held (see section 6.4). Otherwise, the CCE or CSE response plan (which has now been added to all plans) can be reviewed at the child's CIN, CP, LAC or TAF review meeting.
- Where possible, the response meeting should agree the trajectory of the case and the most suitable service/team for referral and it is essential that the relevant service managers attend the response meeting to facilitate this.
- It is essential that the network uses response meetings to explore which agency/worker is best placed to carry out direct work with the young person in order to facilitate continued engagement. Where CSSW are involved in a case, workers from Early Help and YOS may continue to work with the young person, supported by social workers who will carry out statutory processes and co-ordinate the network as lead professional.

## 7 Strategy meeting

A child protection strategy meeting may be convened for cases with a RAG rating of Amber or Red where there are concerns that the young person is at risk of significant harm and where it is felt that the case requires a child protection approach and the allocation of a social worker to address the risk. Cases progressing to a child protection strategy meeting must be referred to CSSW for the London child protection procedures to be initiated.

Where the strategy meeting uncovers information relating to several linked victims and/or perpetrators consideration should be given to following the organised and complex abuse procedures (see section 8 of the London child protection procedures).

[https://www.londoncp.co.uk/organised\\_complex.html](https://www.londoncp.co.uk/organised_complex.html)

## 8 Assessment

CSSW, YOS workers and any early help service working with a child who is a victim of CCE or CSE should carry out an assessment in order to decide what services and support should be put in place to help safeguarding their welfare. The assessment should:

- take into account any extra-familial harm arising from the child's peer group, community or environment;
- consider all evidence of harm faced by the child as part of their criminal or sexual exploitation, for example debt bondage, gang violence, sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy;
- consider any personal attributes that may make the child more vulnerable, for example learning difficulties;
- look at the history of the child and their family, including any adverse childhood experiences;
- consider the extent to which the child's family are able to provide a protective home environment.

## 9 Plans

Where it is established that a child is at risk from CCE or CSE, they must have a plan and this plan should be recorded in the CCE or CSE plan template alongside any other plan that the child is subject to:

- For children known to the YOS, the plan should be part of the child's intervention plan and should be reviewed every 3 months.
- For children known to Early Help, the plan should be recorded in the CCE or CSE plan template alongside the Team Around the Child plan and should be reviewed every 3 months unless something significant has happened.
- For children known to CSSW, the plan should be recorded in the CCE or CSE plan table alongside the main child in need, child protection or care plan and should be reviewed at the child in need review, child protection case conference or statutory LAC review on a 6 monthly basis.

## 10 Looked after children and care leavers

### 10.1 Exploitation response meeting

Where the child is looked after, the exploitation response meeting should consider the following:

- whether the child should remain in their placement
- risks to other children in the placement
- whether and how parents should be informed; any decision not to inform parents should be recorded on MOSAIC
- what action CSSW can take to reduce risk, for example dissuade the child from leaving or use of curfews, limiting access to computers or confiscating mobile phones; this must be discussed with the LAC service manager and legal advice taken as necessary with any agreed action being included in the care/pathway plan
- what steps staff or foster carers should take to gather evidence of exploitation, for example monitoring visitors, phones calls or people collecting the child, cars seen waiting for them
- whether the child is regularly going missing or there are patterns to the child going missing, for example during the school day or over weekends.

The social worker and fostering link worker or Resource team social worker should meet with the foster carer or residential worker to discuss the outcome of the exploitation response meeting and the steps to be taken by the foster



carer/residential unit. This needs to take place in consultation with the fostering team manager or Resource team manager.

Foster carers and residential workers should be made aware that if a child is absent without leave from the placement and staff/foster carers are concerned that they are at risk of exploitation, they should follow the *Missing children protocol*, and discuss with the social worker whether to inform the police. [link](#)

## **10.2 Placements outside of borough**

If a child is placed out of borough, it is essential that LAC social workers and Resource team social workers contact the receiving authority to get information on the local area and the level of risk to children placed there, including risk of criminal or sexual exploitation. This is particularly important if the child is being placed out of Camden due to risk of CSE or CCE. The allocated social worker should carry out a risk assessment of the new placement and should provide the foster carer or key worker with a copy of Camden's *Missing children* protocol.

## **10.3 Involvement of groups of young people in care**

Where it is thought that a group of children in care who are perhaps living in the same residential unit or housing provision and who may be being controlled by the same perpetrator, it is important that the pan London organised abuse procedures are followed.

The CSE or CCE aspect of the care plans of the children involved should reflect joint action and it is important that where young people from other local authorities are involved there is joint action with that borough.

## **10.4 Care leavers**

Where there are concerns that a care leaver aged between 18 to 25 years old is being criminally exploited, personal advisors should work with the young adult to help them address vulnerabilities and exit from the exploitation. Where appropriate, personal advisors should consider a referral to the Adult Social Care MASH for an adult safeguarding response.

A CCE or CSE plan should be part of the young adult's pathway plan and should specifically identify their vulnerability and address the factors known to impede successful diversion from criminal exploitation (e.g. homelessness, poverty, lack of educational and employment opportunities and lack of supportive social contacts).

## 11 Referral to the MACE group

The MACE group is a tactical group with responsibility for planning and implementing actions across the community in response to all forms of child exploitation, including sexual exploitation, county lines, modern slavery and trafficking.

The group will consider all Red and Amber rated cases referred on in order to get a better understanding of the scale of the problem, identify any trends and emerging issues and to plan a multi-agency strategic response.

The Missing and Child Exploitation Coordinator and Analyst will be invited to all exploitation response meetings in order to ensure the MACE group has access to all information and intelligence on CCE and CSE activity in the borough.

## 12 Evolve team

This is a multi-agency team that works with young people aged 17.5-24 who are affected by youth violence and exploitation either as a victim and/or perpetrator or who are affected by gang activity. The team provides support for the young person to help them take back control of their lives, providing interventions around education, training and employment, physical health and mental wellbeing, healthy relationships and safety within the community.

Any agency working with a young person affected by CCE or CSE may make a referral to the team. The Evolve service can also signpost professionals and young people to other 18+ provision in Camden.

Decisions on making a referral to the team can be taken at the exploitation response meeting or strategy meeting.

## 13 The Children Society Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) 1:1 support service

The Children's Society (TCS) provide a one-to-one intervention programme to support young people who are at risk from, or experiencing, child exploitation. The CSE programme of support is provided by specialist practitioners at TCS who can work 1:1 with young people to understand the risks with CSE and tailor support for young people. The CSE programme enables greater joint working between CCSW and our partners and is embedded in our RHI service to identify exploitation, monitor change and understand patterns of behaviour. The content of the programme with young people explores:

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- What is CSE?
- Healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Consent
- What grooming is and looks like
- Exploring protective factors such as education; interests; friendships; family
- Emotional wellbeing and mental health

### 14 National Referral Mechanism

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the national framework for the collection and collation of data on victims of trafficking and modern slavery in the UK. The NRM allows agencies to share information and intelligence in order to support victims and gather evidence against perpetrators.

Where an exploitation response meeting establishes that a child is a victim of trafficking and modern slavery as a result of their exploitation, the meeting may decide that it is appropriate to make a referral to the NRM.

The exploitation response meeting may decide to convene an NRM meeting to explore any such referral. Workers should refer to the NRM protocol for further details on procedures to follow. [National Referral Mechanism protocol.docx](#)

### 15 Engaging children

Good engagement is based on good relationships but engagement with children who are experiencing CCE and CSE can be difficult and this can negatively affect the success of interventions.

There are many reasons why children may not wish to engage:

- pull of the peers and risk taking behaviour may outweigh the influence of family or professionals;
- intervention may be seen as an interference with their assertion of independence and self-determination;
- they may fear a “loss of control” to coping mechanisms in the face of interventions;
- they may have little trust in adults and/or professionals based on previous experiences;
- they may feel “judged” by professionals;

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- their exploiters may influence them through threats or coercion to stop them from engaging with services;
- children who are missing or out of London due to exploitation and/or county lines will have difficulty engaging with services.

These can create barriers to professionals forming trusting relationships with children.

To overcome these barriers, workers should:

- recognise why children are not engaging and try to address these issues in order to build a good working relationship;
- be consistent, open and honest when working with children, explaining options for intervention and giving young people choices;
- using independent advocates where possible to bridge gaps in trust;
- seeking support from others with specific knowledge and experience of working with this cohort;
- recognise that children's actions when exploited are not a "lifestyle choice" but stem from a lack of choice.

## 16 Involving parents

When dealing with cases involving extra-familial harm, Camden follows the relational safeguarding model whereby children and parents and carers are encouraged and supported to become fully involved in planning for the child's safety. Therefore it is essential that they are fully involved in assessments and attend meetings.

Parents will be anxious to work with staff to protect their child. If there is no evidence that parents are involved in or complicit with the exploitation, parents should be invited to the exploitation response meeting and all subsequent reviews of the plan as they are likely to have important information about the exploitation and will play a key role in implementing any safety plan.

Many of the children for whom there are concerns about CCE or CSE will be living at home so the role of parents in protecting their child and gathering evidence of grooming and exploitation will be crucial.

Social workers need to ensure that parents and carers:

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- are aware of the signs and indicators of CCE and CSE
- know what action to take and who to contact where they are concerned that their child is being exposed to risk
- are able to provide a supportive and secure base for the child.

## Appendix 1: Information about child sexual exploitation (CSE)

### Definition

*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 or child under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or (b) the financial advantage of 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.*

### Profile of victims

CSE is more prevalent between 12 to 15 years but a significant proportion are 16 and 17 years; however this group are often overlooked because it is assumed they have chosen that lifestyle. More girls than boys are identified as victims, but this may be due to boys being less likely to be identified as victims.

Some circumstances may make young people more susceptible to sexual exploitation as their situation gives perpetrators more opportunities to groom them, for example:

- looked after children
- young people who run away frequently
- young people with difficult family relationships or a history of abuse
- young people who are out of education/NEET
- young people involved in gang activity
- young people living in unsafe accommodation.

However although these circumstances may make a child more vulnerable, young people from a variety of backgrounds can become involved in CSE and the absence of any vulnerabilities should not lead to CSE being ruled out if there are other indications of CSE.

### Routes into CSE

Young people may become involved in CSE because:

- they have been targeted and groomed by perpetrators because their behaviour such as being missing/ absent from home or care has made them more vulnerable;

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- it is a way of obtaining money or accommodation as they have no other means of support;
- they have been recruited by friends who are already being sexually exploited.

The grooming process may involve:

- targeting young people who are thought to be vulnerable in public locations with little adult supervision, such as shopping centres, sports centres, parks, bus and train stations and cafes; young people are often targeted on-line via social networking sites;
- establishing a relationship with the child, often through the “boyfriend” model, during which the child may be given gifts;
- creating a dependency through power and control, possibly through drug or alcohol use or restriction of movements, so that the child becomes more isolated from family and friends.

### Models of CSE

- **Inappropriate relationship:** the child is in a relationship with an older partner who exerts a great deal of influence and control over them due to an imbalance of power. The child is likely to believe they are in a serious adult relationship and not recognise its exploitative nature. This model may also be the starting point for organised exploitation.
- **Peer exploitation:** exploitation of a child by another child with whom they have a relationship and who subsequently coerces them into sexual activity with their friends. This is the model that gang related exploitation follows.
- **Organised exploitation:** networks of perpetrators who groom young people for coercion into sexual activity with different men and perhaps using the victims to recruit others. This may also involve trafficking young people within the UK.
- **On-line exploitation** where the child shares sexual images or videos or is coerced into carrying out sexual acts via web-cam.

## Appendix 2 Information about child criminal exploitation (CCE)

### Definition

CCE 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 into carrying out a criminal act.

CCE can take a variety of forms including:

- drug trafficking and dealing (including locally and through county lines)
- forced theft such as pickpocketing and shoplifting
- forced begging
- using the child's bank account to launder proceeds of crime (money mule)
- cannabis cultivation.

### Drug supply and dealing

Camden has a significant drugs market and children may be exploited within this market, both locally and through county lines. Children may be forced, coerced or deceived into selling or carrying drugs, or to participate in other associated criminality such as violence or the storing of weapons or money. Exploited children may be forced to 'work' in order to pay off a perceived debt, for example to pay off a mobile phone that was given to them for free. Children may also be set up by their exploiter, such as having their drugs 'stolen' from them by their exploiter. Creating this debt allows the exploiter to force the child to work to pay off this debt. Children exploited through the drugs market are at risk of violence and physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

### Cuckooing

Drug dealers, and other criminals, may take over a local property to use a base for their criminal activity; this is known as 'cuckooing'. Vulnerable people such as those with drug dependency or a learning disability may be targeted, and exploited children may be found on such premises.

### County lines

County lines is where illegal drugs are transported from one area to another, often across police and/or local authority boundaries, though not always. Children and vulnerable people are often used by exploiters in this model, for example to carry, transport or sell the drugs, or to collect money or weapons. 'County line' refers to the mobile phone line used to deal the drugs. Children are often used as they are likely



to be stopped by police, allowing adult dealers to avoid the risk of arrest. The county lines model can also involve cuckooing addresses and the exploitation of children and vulnerable people in the new area.

### **Profile of young people at risk**

Exploiters are known to target vulnerable children, some very young, though mostly are aged between 15-17 years old. Some of the factors that heighten a child's vulnerability include:

- having prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse;
- lack of a safe/stable home environment, homelessness;
- regularly going missing from home or care;
- social isolation or social difficulties;
- connections with other people involved in gangs and drug dealing;
- having a physical or learning disability;
- having mental health or substance misuse issues;
- being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories);
- being excluded from mainstream education or frequently missing school.

However, workers should be aware that exploiters may deliberately target children from stable homes and privileged backgrounds with no discernible vulnerabilities as this makes them even less likely to be noticed by police and authorities.

### **Indicators of CCE**

Although the following indicators may suggest a child is being criminally exploited, they are not definitive, and professionals should consider all evidence in context when deciding what weight to place on the presence or absence of indicators.

- going missing from home or school or staying out late;
- being found in areas away from home that they have no connection with or in areas connected with exploitation;
- being found in possession of drugs and money;
- having more than 1 mobile phone, secretive and excessive use of mobile phones;
- changes in peer relationships, being secretive about who they are associating with
- relationship with controlling or significantly older adult
- dis-engagement with education, disruptive behaviour and/or exclusion;
- involvement in criminal behaviour;
- decline in physical and mental health and wellbeing;

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- returning home looking dishevelled or with injuries;
- out of parental control.

### **Grooming and coercion**

Various methods are used to recruit children:

- Children may be lured by the promise of earnings and given gifts such as designer clothing and jewellery.
- Children may be targeted because they are perceived as vulnerable or in crisis.
- Social media is often used to recruit young people. Offers of quick money for a day's work, sometimes as adverts, can be circulated on various social media sites such as Facebook and snapchat. Social media sites can also be used by exploiters to contact, befriend, coerce and threaten children.
- Music videos on YouTube can be used to glamorise gangs and to draw in children from wider social and geographical areas.
- Peer grooming is common and takes place in schools and via social media. There may be a cycle of exploitation in which exploited children go on to recruit other vulnerable children.
- Once established, children can be further enmeshed into criminal activity through drug debts which are often inflated or staged for example the child is robbed of their drugs supply by people known to the dealer and forced to pay back the debt.
- Children's own drug use may be exploited as part of the grooming process (with drugs being given as gifts).
- Gangs and exploiters may also trick children into getting into debt bondage, for example, by giving them a mobile phone only to later demand repayment for the cost of the phone.
- Gangs and exploiters often use threats, coercion and violence to force children to do what they want.
- Exploiters may threaten family members, using violence and intimidation to ensure engagement and cooperation with the network.

### **Risk of harm to young people**

- Children who are criminally exploited are very likely to be exposed to physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse. Exploiters use high levels of violence and intimidation to establish control of drug markets and the child involved. Levels of violence vary considerably but it often includes the use of knives, corrosives, firearms and other weapons.
- Violence against children involved may include 'taxing' where violence is used to punish children for making mistakes or failing to meet drugs sales targets

and as part of the debt bondage used to further enmesh children into the exploitation.

- Risks may also include sexual violence and sexual exploitation. It is used either as a means of control or exploitation, for the gratification of gang members, or as a means of exacting punishment. Girls are particularly at risk and may be considered as a commodity by gang members.
- 'Plugging' is the practice of concealing drugs internally used by both males and females involved. It is a common tactic used for the transport of drugs between the urban hub and rural marketplace, but also for the storage of drugs. This poses significant health risks, as those concealing the drugs will often do so for extended periods of time.