## Short guide to child exploitation

**Policy**: Child exploitation is a safeguarding issue and social workers need to be able to identify when a child they work with is at risk of or being exploited, either via criminal exploitation or sexual exploitation, and take the necessary steps to reduce risks. This guide sets out the steps to be taken in cases of suspected exploitation and further details can be found at: child-exploitation-policy-and-procedures.pdf
Child exploitation is strongly linked with going missing; social workers should also refer to the missing procedures: missing-children-social-work-procedures.pdf

**Definitions:**

- *Child exploitation*: where an exploiter takes advantage of a child for their own personal or financial gain where there is a power imbalance within the relationship that enables the exploiter to control the child's movements and behaviour.
- *Child criminal exploitation (CCE):* where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into carrying out a criminal act, for example county lines drug dealing, pickpocketing etc
- *Child sexual exploitation (CSE):* where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activity in exchange for something the child needs or wants.

**Risk assessment:** A CCE or CSE risk assessment (available on MOSAIC) should be carried out whenever there is reasonable cause to believe a child is being exploited. The risk assessment will give a numbered outcome corresponding to a RAG rating indicating the level of risk and consequent actions: The risk assessment should be repeated every 6 months (prior to a review meeting) in order to measure any increase/reduction in risk.

- *Blue:* under 10 – no further action
- *Green:* 10-24 – refer for suitable Youth Early Help support **but** an Exploitation Response Meeting may be held where it is thought more information is needed and the risk assessment does not reflect the level of concern held
- *Amber:* 25-45 (CCE)/25-50 (CSE) – Exploitation Response Meeting
- *Red:* 45+(CCE)/50+ (CSE) – Exploitation Response Meeting

**Exploitation Response Meeting:**
- convened by the social worker
- held not more than *10 days* from completion of risk assessment
- cases with Red RAG rating to be chaired by a CP IRO
- cases with Amber RAG rating to be chaired by team manager or CP IRO (consult with IRO to decide)
- Missing and Exploitation Coordinator to be invited to every meeting to gather intelligence
- review meeting to be held where there is not enough information available to make an informed decision on risk levels
- Parent and child to be invited to the meeting as appropriate.

**Following an Exploitation Response meeting**

- Responses should be in proportion to the level of risk identified; see overleaf.
- Medium/High risk cases should be referred to the *Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE)* group in order to gather intelligence and identify any trends.
- Cases should be dealt with under the *National Referral Mechanism* protocol where there is evidence of trafficking and modern slavery in order to access further support for the child. national-referral-mechanism-protocol.pdf

**CCE/CSE plans:** Where it is established that the child is at risk from exploitation, a CCE/CSE plan should be incorporated into their existing CIN, CP or care plan.

**Child protection:** Child protection processes should only be followed and a strategy meeting convened with the agreement of the team manager in cases with a Red RAG rating where professional judgement is that this is an appropriate and proportionate response and/or where there are concerns about parenting. A strategy meeting can be convened immediately Where a risk assessment indicates this level of risk a strategy discussion may be convened directly with the agreement of the team manager.

**Levels of risk and intervention**

| RAG rating/risk level | Green – low risk<br>Child is vulnerable to exploitation | Amber – moderate risk<br>Evidence the child is being groomed | Red – high risk<br>Clear evidence of exploitation |
|---|---|---|---|
| CCE indicators | <ul><li>some missing episodes</li><li>emerging issues with school engagement</li><li>changes in peer group/reduced contact with family</li><li>becoming known to police due to peer group/possible link to drug dealing</li><li>some drug use</li></ul> | <ul><li>frequently missing/staying out overnight</li><li>poor school attendance/engagement</li><li>peer group already known to be at risk</li><li>unaccounted for money/possessions</li><li>excessive and secretive use of mobile</li><li>regular substance use</li><li>seen in locations associated with CCE</li></ul> | <ul><li>persistently going missing/staying out overnight</li><li>not in education/excluded</li><li>out of parental control</li><li>known to associate with gang members</li><li>excessive use of mobile/more than one mobile</li><li>found in areas they are not connected to/"cuckooed" premises</li><li>arrested in possession of drugs/money</li><li>debt bondage</li><li>arrests and concerns around county lines activity</li></ul> |
| CSE indicators | <ul><li>some missing episodes</li><li>emerging issues with school engagement</li><li>seen in areas associated with CSE</li><li>difficult relationships with parents and other adults</li><li>early gang involvement</li><li>some drug use</li></ul> | <ul><li>frequently missing/staying out overnight</li><li>poor school attendance/engagement</li><li>peer group already known to be at risk</li><li>unaccounted for money/possessions</li><li>excessive and secretive use of mobile</li><li>older boyfriend</li><li>speaks of going to parties with possible adult perpetrators</li><li>regular drug use</li></ul> | <ul><li>persistently going missing/staying out overnight</li><li>not in education/excluded</li><li>out of parental control</li><li>presence of STIs/pregnancy</li><li>movements restricted or controlled through mobile phone</li><li>associates with known CSE perpetrators</li><li>Estrangement from friends and family</li><li>Serious emotional and behavioural issues, self-harming</li></ul> |
| Responses | Consider referral to YEH/community resource for a service that diverts and builds resilience | Targeted social work service and child exploitation plan to disrupt grooming process, build resilience and divert the child<br>Referral to MACE | Targeted social work service and child exploitation plan to keep the child safe and them to exit from the exploitation.<br>Where applicable, child protection procedures should be used (see overleaf)<br>Referral to MACE |