

# Basic Introduction to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

## Team Briefing Paper

March 2019



Leeds Safeguarding  
Children Partnership

## Why Talk about CSE?

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child abuse, which can happen to boys and girls from any background or community. It can range from seemingly 'consensual' relationships, informal exchanges of sex in order to get affection, accommodation or gifts, through to exploitation by gangs involved in serious, organised crime (Report of the Parliamentary inquiry into the effectiveness of legislation for tackling child sexual exploitation and trafficking within the UK, Barnardos 2017)

Child sexual exploitation is most frequently observed amongst those of a post-primary school age, with the average age at which concerns are first identified being 12 to 15 years of age (Child sexual exploitation, Definition and Guide for Professionals, Research in Practice June 2017)

## How to use this briefing paper?

This paper should provide you with some basic information to deliver an awareness session with a staff team around the topic of child sexual exploitation (CSE).

- Work through the information on the sheet, using it as a prompt to promote discussions.
- Use the discussion points at the end to explore how your team works with the topic.
- Consider if there are a further training needs in your team and who is best to pursue this.

## Defining CSE

The DfE in 2017 defined Child Sexual Exploitation as:

“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 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.”

## Things to consider

Child Sexual Exploitation can occur through use of technology without the child's immediate recognition, for example the persuasion to post sexual images on the internet / mobile phones with no immediate payment or gain.

In all cases those exploiting the child / young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and / or economic or other resources.

Child sexual exploitation is not an offence in itself and offenders are prosecuted using separate sexual offences, such as:

- Sexual activity with a child
- Taking / sharing indecent images of a child
- Rape
- Child abduction
- Trafficking

There are several models of grooming and exploitation which are used; some are used in isolation, some are used together, and can include:

- **Inappropriate relationships** - offender who has inappropriate power or control over a young person (physical, emotional or financial). The 'adult' engages in sexual activity with the child.
- **Boyfriend Model** - Those grooming befriend a young person into a 'relationship' and once the child trusts them / loves them they coerce or force them to have sex with friends or associates.
- **Peer Exploitation** - young people are forced or coerced into sexual activity by peers or associates.
- **Indirect peer** - peer of the child or young person facilitates but does not initiate the sexual exploitation: the young person facilitating the abuse may be controlled / ordered by others.
- **Party lifestyle** - Young people are encouraged / manipulated to attend 'parties' at flats, houses or hotels, where alcohol and drugs are frequently available and at which there are often unknown guests, children are often coerced to have sex with multiple others.
- **Internet grooming** - grooming a child over the internet
- **Organised / networked / commercial exploitation & trafficking**
- Gang exploitation

## Who is vulnerable to CSE

All children are vulnerable to being groomed and exploited by virtue of their age.

Boys and young men are equally likely to be sexually exploited as girls and young women.

There are some life experiences, situations and contexts which can impact on a child or young person's vulnerability to sexual exploitation including:

- Experience of domestic violence / adult mental health / substance misuse / significant abuse
- Experience of family breakdown / bereavement
- Children from migrant families / unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- Those absent or missing from education / home
- Those with learning disabilities / difficulties
- Children living in poverty
- Those who have mental health problems / misuse alcohol or substances
- Looked after young people
- Children affected by gang culture

## Recognising CSE

Child sexual exploitation is a complex form of abuse and it can be difficult for those working with children to identify and assess. The indicators for child sexual exploitation can sometimes be mistaken for 'normal adolescent behaviours'.

- Periods of missing from home, care or school
- Change in relationships with family & friends unaccounted for money or gifts / ability to buy goods
- Physical injuries / change in physical appearance
- Change in emotional wellbeing / self-harm / thoughts of, or attempts at suicide
- Change in drug or alcohol use
- Involvement in offending (new or increased)
- Sexually-transmitted infections / pregnancy and terminations
- Change in emotional wellbeing / self-harm
- Increase use of the internet / phone
- New peer group / boyfriend or girlfriend

## Responding to CSE

If you believe a child or young person is at risk of CSE or you have concerns about a potential perpetrator / facilitator you should raise this with your line manager or with a Safeguarding Lead Officer, to consider the next steps. This may include completing the Child Exploitation Partner Checklist and having a conversation with Duty and Advice at the Front Door (0113 3760336 / 0113 5350600 out of hours—professionals only).

**If you think a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.**

Depending on the circumstances, it may be appropriate for you to discuss your concerns directly with the family in order to get them the support they need. You need to consider whether this is appropriate in relation to the nature of your relationship with the family, for instance, you may visit them on a regular basis or you may have witnessed something in isolation, and the risk to the child or young person. You should always seek consent where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Practitioners in Leeds should have a good understanding of the following approaches and use these as guiding principles when working with CSE:

- [Early Help](#)
- [Think Family Work Family](#)
- [Restorative Practice](#)

Further information on these is available on the LSCP website and Leeds City Council One Minute Guides

## Areas for Consideration

- How do we recognise & respond to CSE in our service-user group?
- Is there more that we could do?
- Do we need to change any of our ways of working?
- Is there a further training need in our team?

## Further Information & References

- [Child sexual exploitation; Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation, DfE February 2017](#)
- [Child sexual exploitation; Annexes to 'Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation', DfE February 2017](#)
- [Key messages from research on child sexual exploitation: Multi-agency working, Nicola Sharp-Jeffs, Maddy Coy and Liz Kelly, London Metropolitan University June 2017](#)