



Bristol Safeguarding
Children Board

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Safeguarding Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation

December

2015

Practice guidance and procedure

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12/10/17	Updated links with sections added regarding Operation Topaz and CSE Intelligence and Response Network. Edited by Natalie Chamberlain.
03/10/ 2019	Removed section on pages 11/12 relating to A Regional Multi- Agency Response and related paragraph on page 14. Updated referencing link on page 15 to Working Together 2018. Edited by Lisa Collard.

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Part 1 – Guidance

1. Introduction

This guidance outlines the principles which underpin best practice interventions to safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation. Through **prevention, protection, prosecution & disruption** and following on to **recovery**. The guidance outlines the roles and responsibilities of different professionals when a young person is identified as being at risk of sexual exploitation or is assessed as currently experiencing sexual exploitation.

Finally, appendices provide supplementary and further detailed information to assist practitioners in safeguarding children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

The guidance is not a substitute for training, available through BSCB and 4YP, all practitioners should ensure their knowledge is up to date.

If you are a child, young person or a parent concerned about someone being sexually exploited please call First Response on 0117 9036444

2. Definitions

Sexual exploitation of children and young people is child sexual abuse. A more thorough definition is provided from joint work between project members of the '*National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People*' (NWG) 2008.

“Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive ‘something’ (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child’s immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without 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. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common. Involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person’s limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.”

“Someone taking advantage of you sexually, for their own benefit.

Through threats, bribes, violence, humiliation, or by telling you that they love you, they will have the power to get you to do sexual things for their own, or other people’s benefit or enjoyment (including: touching or kissing private parts, sex, taking sexual photos)”

(As defined by the Young Women’s Group, New Horizons: 2008 (the nia project & The Children Society)

perpetrator always holds power over the victim, increasing the dependence of the victim as the exploitative relationship develops.

Sexual exploitation can involve varying degrees of coercion, intimidation or enticement, including unwanted pressure from their peers to have sex, sexual bullying (including cyber bullying), and grooming for sexual activity. Technology can also play a part in sexual abuse, for example, through its use to record abuse and share it with other like-minded individuals or as a medium to access children and young people in order to groom them. A common factor in all cases is the lack of free economic or moral choice.

Grooming

Many children and young people are groomed into sexually exploitative relationships but other ways of becoming exploited exist. Some young people are engaged in informal economies that incorporate the exchange of sex for rewards such as drugs, alcohol, money or gifts. Others exchange sex for accommodation or money as a result of homelessness and experiences of poverty. Some young people have been bullied and threatened into sexual activities by peers or gangs which is then used against them as a form of extortion and to keep them compliant.

Young people can also be sexually exploited by informal and unorganised groups of people. Children and young people, who are themselves the victims of exploitation, may introduce other young people to their abusers. This may not be a deliberate attempt to groom others into sexual exploitation, but due to their lack of awareness or as a way of ensuring that their abuser's attention is deflected away from themselves, consciously or unconsciously. These children and young people are themselves victims and will be treated as such. Each situation will be judged on its own merits but it is very much the case that the context of any associated offending will be taken into account before ever deciding to treat such victims as perpetrators.

Similarly, children and young people may be groomed into 'party' lifestyles where they go to houses/ flats with numerous adults and other young people. These 'parties' often introduce children and young people to alcohol and drugs and offer a space to 'hang out'. No single relationship is formed but a general network is created. Young men may be groomed through 'casual' social relationships formed at common meeting places with perpetrators introducing them to an adult lifestyle of cafes/ bars/arcades, etc. This may develop into socialising and making money from criminal activities such as shop lifting or car theft and be linked to other risky behaviours such as drinking and smoking. Some young men and boys who are being exploited may be ambiguous and/or secretive about their actual sexual orientation, sometimes because they are still feeling unsure about their sexuality, but also because of the risks involved in 'coming out' as gay or bisexual.

The majority of sexually exploited children and young people will be hidden from public view. They

are unlikely to be 'loitering or soliciting' on the streets of red light areas. Sexual exploitation is also more likely to take place in private premises than the more 'visible' saunas or massage parlours. Young people are groomed to be secretive about their meetings, which are usually arranged over mobile phones or the Internet, and the places and people they are meeting, so the activities are concealed from parents or carers. As sexual exploitation can be difficult to identify, and services working with children and young people may be unaware of the indicators of sexual exploitation, it is difficult to accurately quantify the number of children and young people who are abused in this way.

Who are the abusers?

Although the predominant evidence is of men sexually abusing children and young people, both men and women have been known to sexually exploit young men and young women. There is a presumption that children and young people are sexually exploited by people they do not know. However, evidence shows that they are often abused by 'boyfriends' or people with whom they feel they have a relationship. Professionals should also be alert to organised familial abuse or abuse within closed community groups, including sexual exploitation and the making and distribution of abusive images of children and trafficking of children into, within and out of the UK.

Other perpetrators could include friends, peers and friends of older siblings. In some cases, perpetrators may target young people through their parents or carers, by providing drugs, alcohol or money to the parents or carers. This can often mean that the parents or carers approve of the perpetrator as a potential boyfriend or girlfriend as they are trusted and needed by the family.

The perpetrators of sexual exploitation can be well organised and use sophisticated tactics.. They are known to target areas where children and young people might gather without much adult supervision, such as shopping centres, cafes, takeaways, pubs, sports centres, cinemas, bus or train stations, local parks, playgrounds and taxi ranks/offices, or sites on the Internet used by children and young people. The process of grooming may also be visible in adult venues such as pubs and clubs. In some cases perpetrators are known to use younger men, women, boys or girls to build initial relationships and introduce them to others in the perpetrator networks. They can also operate opportunistically or in isolation.

Risk factors: 'PUSH' and 'PULL'

All children from every background are vulnerable to grooming and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). However it should also be noted there are clear risk factors and push and pull factors. Research (Barnardo's: Reducing The Risk, 2006) has found that the following factors make a young person vulnerable to sexual exploitation. These can be historical or current issues. They are sometimes referred to as 'PUSH' factors. Abusive adults will look out for signs of these factors in selecting a child to target. There are immediate risk issues and indicators that should be considered:

Risk Factors

- Going missing – the most immediate indicator of vulnerability to sexual exploitation
- Disengagement from education
- Drug and/or alcohol dependency
- Physical symptoms e.g. sexually transmitted infections, miscarriage, abortion, bruising or marks indicating physical or sexual assault
- Young people who have not received appropriate levels of attention from concerned adults
- Associating with older men or other 'risky' adults
- Accounts of social activities with no plausible explanation of the source of the money to fund these activities
- New possessions, acquisition of money, expensive clothes, drugs or other possessions without plausible explanation about their source
- Being alienated from family or community
- Being in care and having placement breakdown
- Associating with other young people who are known to be victims of exploitation
- Some kinds of offending behaviour

Push factors will include:

Push Factors

- Children who have been the victim of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and emotional abuse
- Children from households where domestic violence and abuse has been a feature
- Children of parents with a high level of vulnerabilities (e.g. drug and/or alcohol abuse, mental illness, learning disability, their own history of an abusive childhood)
- Family breakdown / disrupted family life / problematic parenting
- Insecure immigration status
- Children who have physical or learning impairments

The grooming techniques used to gain the child's attention, admiration and affection often taps into insecurities or a desire for acceptance and status by the young person. These can be referred to as 'PULL' factors and include:

Pull Factors

- Being liked by someone older;
- Being liked/fancied enough that a stranger asks for their mobile number;
- Meeting someone who thinks they are special on the internet;
- Receiving alcohol, drugs, money or gifts;
- Getting a buzz and the excitement of risk taking/forbidden behaviour;
- Being offered somewhere to stay where there are no rules/boundaries;
- Being taken along to adult entertainment venues, red light or gay cruising areas (public sex environments);
- Being given lifts, taken to new places, and having adventures with a casual acquaintance.

The above categories/ indicators should be used as a working guide in the identification of risk. A variety of tools and checklists have been developed in order to assist professionals in identifying children about whom there are concerns and who may be at risk of sexual exploitation. Professionals should bear in mind, however, that they are neither definitive nor prescriptive, given that each child's exploitation may be unique and change over time.

Recovery

Impact on children and young people and in later life.

Sexual exploitation can have a serious impact on the life of children and young people. It can lead to difficulties in forming relationships with others, a lack of confidence or self-esteem and can affect their mental and physical health. Sexual exploitation can create feelings of worthlessness within children and young people, which can lead to acts of self harm, including cutting themselves, overdosing and eating disorders. It can put the young person at increased risk of sexually transmitted infections including HIV, unwanted pregnancy and abortion, as well as long-term sexual and reproductive health problems. It can also ultimately impact on their parenting capacity in the future. Where children or young people manage to recover to some extent from sexual exploitation they will sometimes feel unable to stay in their local area because of the associations it holds for them (or because of very real threats from networks around their abusers) leading to family break-ups and isolation from family and friends.

Child sexual exploitation must be tackled effectively to prevent further problems in later life. Many adults involved in formal sex work report difficult childhood histories that include domestic violence, familial child abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, time spent in care, disrupted schooling and low educational attainment. For many, their experience of sexual exploitation began as children or young teenagers, when the circumstances in their lives were problematic.

Impact on families, parents and carers

Sexual exploitation can have profound and damaging consequences for families, including parents

and carers, siblings and extended members, and impact on their health, work life, family cohesion, economic stability and social life. The use of technology can further complicate this, where abusive images have been posted on or shared through the Internet. Once these images have been distributed in this way there is no control over who can access them, leading to the repeated victimisation of the child.

Targeting and grooming children and young people often has psychological implications for parents and other family members: life becomes difficult to manage and the stress of a situation which they do not understand can lead to despair, limiting their capacity to respond to the needs of their children and to deal with crises that occur as a result of the exploitation.

Parents and carers are often distraught, traumatised and under severe stress. They feel helpless and guilty for not being able to protect their children from sexual predators. They are likely to suffer verbal and physical aggression from the exploited child as well as violence or threats of violence from the perpetrators. Sexual exploitation of their children also places strain on family relationships. Sexual exploitation of one child in the family places other siblings at significant risk of being groomed and exploited. Siblings can be alienated and faced with bullying and their self-esteem and performance affected. Parents, carers and siblings can themselves suffer serious threats of abuse, intimidation and assault at the hands of perpetrators.

4. Key principles

Agencies will work together to **prevent** sexual exploitation occurring, will intervene to **protect** effectively when it does happen and will work together to **prosecute** the perpetrators of exploitation. All efforts to tackle sexual exploitation should be grounded in the following principles which inform effective practice in this area.

The approach must be child centred. Action should be child-centred and focus on the child's needs. Professionals should be wary of the potential for being overly child led and should maintain a focus on the need to safeguard the child and others. The particular needs and sensitivities of girls and boys, children with a physical disability or learning disabilities, those from ethnic minority communities, or those for whom English is not their first language, should be reflected in the provision of services. The wishes and feelings of children and young people as well as the concerns of parents or carers should be sought and taken into account in reaching any decisions about the provision of services which affect them. However, professionals should be aware that children and young people do not always acknowledge what may be an exploitative and abusive situation. This may mean that the approach – which should be sensitive and aimed at empowerment - needs to be sustained over a long period of time. It takes time to get alongside the young person and if intervention is too intrusive at an early stage it may alienate the young person and inhibit their chances of a successful exit from an exploitative situation. Young people may only exit when they are ready and they may be in denial about their involvement in sexually exploitative relationships.

Action to tackle sexual exploitation should be proactive. It should focus on **prevention**, early identification and intervention, as well as on disrupting activity and prosecuting perpetrators. Interventions to safeguard children and young people should, where possible, support the gathering of evidence to increase the chance of successful criminal prosecutions of their perpetrators, thereby safeguarding potential future victims.

Parents and carers play the most important role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of their children. If a child or young person is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm through sexual exploitation by someone outside the family, this will not necessarily be as a result of parents or carers having difficulties in meeting their child's needs. While professionals will need to take account of family circumstances in assessing and deciding how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child or young person, only in exceptional cases should there be compulsory intervention in family life – that is, where this is necessary to safeguard a child from significant harm. However, professionals also need to be aware that, in some cases, parents and carers may be complicit in the exploitation of their children.

Children and Young People have rights to be safeguarded. Children and young people are entitled to be safeguarded from sexual exploitation, just as agencies have duties in respect of safeguarding and promoting other aspects of their welfare. **Children and Young People have rights to determine their own behaviour** this guidance is not aimed at controlling young people. Young people's sexual behaviour is primarily a matter for themselves and needs to be guided and informed by parents and carers and by information from a variety of sources.

However, because young people can be abused through exploitative and harmful sexual behaviour, there are some key principles which services and others should follow:

- **sharing information** at the earliest possible stage where necessary to enable professionals to consider jointly how to proceed in the best interests of the child and to safeguard and promote the welfare of children more generally.
- **intervening to prevent harm** to a child or children and young people, and
- **taking action against those who sexually exploit children** and young people to minimise the risk of further exploitation.

Responsibility for criminal acts

The focus of police investigations and of prosecutions should be on those who coerce, exploit and abuse children and young people (See Section 13 Operation Topaz).

- children who are sexually exploited are victims of child sexual abuse
- Children who are sexually exploited have been or are being seriously abused and are therefore suffering significant harm and should not be regarded as having bad or criminal behaviour;
- The responsibility for the sexual exploitation of children or young people lies with the

abuser:

- either the person who pays for sex, in some way,
- or the person who grooms the child and/or organises the exploitation.

An integrated approach

Effective measures to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people cannot be seen in isolation from the wider range of support and services available to meet the needs of children, young people, and families.

A shared responsibility

Effective safeguarding depends on effective joint working between different agencies and professionals that work with children and young people, including education services (e.g. schools and colleges), health services including sexual health services and therapeutic mental health services, youth services, and Child and family support services, together with criminal justice agencies and voluntary sector services supporting children and families. BASE (Barnardo's Against Sexual Exploitation) plays a key role in supporting young people who are being sexually exploited in Bristol.

All agencies should be alert to the risks of sexual exploitation and be able to take action and work together when an issue is identified.

5. Use of tools/ Checklists for identifying those at risk of Sexual Exploitation

BSCB Standards for CSE Tools/ Checklists

What are the purposes of these tools?

- Proactive identification of unidentified victims
- Support professionals to remember CSE and refer to evidence-based risk indicators
- Shared language across agencies and disciplines

In the field of sexual exploitation anyone may pick up indicators that a child or young person is being or is at risk of being sexually exploited. Given that all agencies have very different roles and will have highly varying levels of contact with children their structures to promote the proactive identification of unidentified children will be similarly varied.

The BSCB CSE Sub-group has repeatedly raised concerns that to use a tool as an assessment of threshold poses significant risk that children may be missed and professionals' assessment skills may be overlooked with reliance on a tick box. There is also risk that the use of safeguarding frameworks will be bypassed by professional by professionals through creating additional structures. This is very concerning particularly in an area where victims are often experiencing

multi-factorial abuse and neglect, not solely sexual exploitation.

The BSCB CSE Sub-Group have reviewed their policy on the use of tools. We have agreed that in some settings a tool can be helpful for informing professional thought processes in identifying CSE which, should then trigger a referral to First Response. Tools should **never** be used as an assessment. Assessments should be undertaken using the existing holistic statutory assessment frameworks¹.

CSE Identification Standards

Agencies do not need to use a CSE Identification tool but if they do not they must have defensible evidence that this need is being met within current processes and is consistent across their practitioners.

If an agency chooses to use a CSE Identification tool it must meet the following standards.

The tool must:

- Allow for professional judgement throughout
- Not be solely tick boxes
- Encourage analysis
- Be viewed within the agency as an aid to professional judgement not an assessment
- Be linked to research about CSE risk indicators and best practice in the area
- Sit alongside a wider agency strategy around CSE, identification of unidentified victims and a proactive approach
- Never replace professional judgement, safeguarding legislation or dictate a certain action

Alongside this agencies must:

- Identify CSE leads who have oversight of the use and application of the CSE tool and responsibility for review it
- Reporting to the BSCB through BSCB representatives about their use of CSE tools and victim identification strategies

The BSCB CSE Sub-group can provide support to agencies in reviewing their CSE policies, any tools used, and reviews or audits of effectiveness.

Non-compliance by agencies will be addressed by the BSCB CSE Sub Group.

This approach has been discussed and approved by the Avon and Somerset CSE Consortium as a model of good practice.

¹ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/33391/SAF%20guidance%20April%202014%20FINAL.pdf/8d746908-caf8-455a-a1c5-fa916de034ca>

Part 2 – Procedure

6. Identifying that a child is at risk of sexual exploitation.

All professionals working with young people should be aware of the links between the circumstances and behaviours outlined above and the risk of sexual exploitation. The response made will depend on the degree of risk of harm suspected or identified. When professionals are unsure what level of response their concern requires, they can seek advice from the Police - Children's Social Care and BASE. The contact details are in Appendix 2. They can also make use of a toolkit/ checklist where this would meet the standards outlined in Part 1.

Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Toolkit

<http://www.brook.org.uk/old/index.php/traffic-lights> useful for practitioners in identifying sexual behaviour in children and young people which may be a cause for concern.

Recognised CSE checklists

Different agencies will have differing requirements in respect of the tools and checklists used to assist in the identification of children at risk of CSE.

These are the tools recommended and in use by the following:

Avon and Somerset Constabulary – [SERAF](#)

Health providers – [Spotting the Signs](#) (Brook and BASHH)

<https://www.brook.org.uk/our-work/spotting-the-signs-cse-national-proforma>

Children's Social Care – NWG Checklist (Adapted). **Social Workers should use the checklist based on the NWG Checklist which has been adapted for use within LCS. This will ensure that the risk of CSE to a particular child is clear understood and identified within LCS.**

Schools – contact Schools Safeguarding Team

Other agencies can use any of those specified above or a tool not mentioned which meets the standards outlined above.

7. Information Sharing.

Working Together (WT, 2018), provides guidance about sharing information.

Confidentiality

In deciding whether there is a need to share information, professionals need to consider their legal obligations, including whether they have a **duty of confidentiality** to the child.

Where there is such a duty, the professional **may lawfully share information**

- if the child consents, or
- if there is a public interest of sufficient force.

This must be judged by the professional on the facts of each case. Where there is a clear risk of significant harm to a child, or serious harm to adults, the public interest test will almost certainly be satisfied. However, there will be other cases where practitioners will be justified in sharing some confidential information in order to make decisions on sharing further information or taking action – the information shared should be proportionate.

The child's best interests must be the overriding consideration in making any such decision including in cases of under-age sexual activity. The cross - Government guidance, *Information Sharing Guidance for safeguarding practitioners*², provides advice on these issues. Any decision whether or not to share information must be properly documented. Decisions in this area need to be made by people with suitable competence in child protection work such as named or designated professionals or senior managers.

Responding to disclosure

Staff should be aware that when a young person discloses sexual exploitation to them, they will need to take action, and this may include sharing information with the Police and Local Authority Children's Social Care – First Response. This should be explained to the young person. When they carry out an investigation, the Police may request access to the records that an agency holds of any disclosure and contact it has had with the young person. In view of this, staff should be aware of the need not to ask leading questions to young people who make disclosures of exploitation. Questions should be open and not suggestive, as this may compromise the Police investigation. Staff should also be mindful that their recording may need to be used in a subsequent criminal investigation. It is therefore strongly advised that staff keep any rough (i.e. handwritten) notes that have been made, these may be required in any subsequent court hearings.

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf

7 Golden Rules for Information sharing

1. Remember that the Data Protection Act is not a barrier to sharing information but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about living persons is shared appropriately.
2. Be open and honest with the person (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. Seek advice if you are in any doubt, without disclosing the identity of the person where possible.
4. Share with consent where appropriate and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case.
5. Consider safety and well-being: Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the person and others who may be affected by their actions.
6. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure: Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely.
7. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

8. Education Settings.

Through their PHSE programmes schools will promote models of healthy and consensual sexual relationships. Empowering young people to make positive choices in their relationships is fundamental to them making informed decisions that protect them from sexual exploitation. This work will be targeted, particularly in schools which deal with more vulnerable pupil groups (e.g. Pupil Referral Unit, special schools).

Schools will be aware of the risks associated with pupils with poor attendance records and will follow the available guidance on managing attendance, determined by the assessed level of risk.

Schools should be vigilant in being aware of any activities by adults towards pupils which cause concern. This may involve adults who loiter outside a school or who are suspected of inviting pupils to their homes. In such cases, schools will link with Police , tel:101

9. Health Professionals' role.

Health professionals have a key role to play. School nurses, CAMHS staff, sexual health services and other Health staff will be mindful of the circumstances/ risk taking behaviour outlined above. They

will be aware of their duty of confidentiality and to share information in order to protect children and young people. Whenever there is a concern about a young person and it is not clear if there is a duty to share information, they will contact their designated lead for Safeguarding to discuss the appropriate action.

If general issues emerge of how health professionals can best manage the conflicting demands of confidentiality and the need to protect, they may be referred to the quarterly Multi-Agency Group meeting held at Bristol Sexual Health Services which discusses cases of sexual health/ exploitation/ risk taking behaviour. Cases for discussion at this meeting should be made through the designated Safeguarding lead.

Health professional that are involved with children who are at risk of CSE should when requested attend strategy discussions and in particular complex strategy discussions.

10. Early Help's role.

Any incident or situation in which a young person is assessed as being at risk of sexual exploitation but there is no clear evidence or disclosure of exploitation taking place, should lead to a request for help being made to First Response. Advice on SAF processes is available in the Threshold³ and SAF Guidance⁴. In such cases, a lead professional will be identified to complete a SAF. In completing the SAF practitioners should be mindful of the key principles outlined above in Section 4 if they are using tools to assist in the identification of CSE. In completing the SAF, professionals may need to involve or share information with Police, First Response and BASE. If there is an escalation in the risk of harm faced by the young person. Staff need to be aware of the primary duty to protect the welfare of the young person and to share information with other agencies in accordance with Information Sharing Guidelines (see above 7).

All professionals considering a request for help in relation to CSE should complete a CSE checklist (see above) in order to clearly outline their concerns. It may be that it is necessary to refer to Children's Social Care via First Response due to the need to intervene to safeguard the welfare of the child or young person. ASAF may not be suitable in all cases especially where the risks are particularly high (see s.12 BASE and Appendix 1 for contact details for Police, BASE and First Response).

11. Children's Social Care role.

All agencies should make a referral to First Response whenever there is evidence to suggest that a young person is being sexually exploited and is at risk of significant harm.

When a parent, professional, or another person contacts First Response with concerns that a child is being sexually exploited, First Response will decide on the course of action within 24 hours. This

3. http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/children_and_young_people/child_health_and_welfare/Final%20Thresholds%20guidance%20February%202014.pdf

4. http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/children_and_young_people/child_health_and_welfare/SAF%20guidance%20April%202014%20FINAL.pdf

will normally follow discussion with any referring professional or service, and involve other professionals and services as necessary, including the police as a criminal offence may have been committed against a child. Possible outcomes include, referral for assessment, convening a strategy discussion, passing referral to Early Help. Where there is a Social Worker already allocated the information will be passed to the Social Work unit to respond to. If a Social Worker is unsure or suspects that CSE may be a factor it is advised that the NWG Checklist (Adapted) is completed to assist in clarifying the concerns in relation to CSE. It will also be necessary to share relevant intelligence with the police regarding suspected perpetrators or specific locations using the relevant forms alongside the NWG checklist.

Assessment under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

This consideration of the child's needs and circumstances should address, on the basis of the available evidence, whether there are concerns about impairment to the child's health and development (including actual and/or potential harm) which justifies further enquiries, assessment and/ or intervention. If further action is needed, a decision is required on when enquiries and/ or intervention should begin and how best to undertake them. It may also be necessary to consider a Strategy Discussion at this stage.

Children and young people who are sexually exploited, or at risk of being sexually exploited, are a particularly vulnerable group of children who may become 'lost' to the statutory agencies, whose welfare or need for immediate services may be overlooked and for whom subsequent planning and intervention may be less than satisfactory. Particular care and attention is required, therefore, when assessing the needs of children and young people who are sexually exploited and considering how best to help them, during assessment.

The assessment led by Children's Social Care of any children in need (whether or not there are child protection concerns) should be completed within a maximum of 45 working days of the date of referral. The urgency of some situations may dictate that the assessment is completed more quickly. Using the framework (see Fig1, Assessment Triangle) set out in *Working Together, 2015* it should address the following questions:

- What are the needs of the child?
- Are the parents or carers able to respond appropriately to the child's needs?
- Is the child being adequately safeguarded from significant harm, and are the parents or carers able to promote the child's health and development?
- Is action required to safeguard and promote the child's welfare?

The assessment should involve obtaining relevant information from professionals and others in contact with the child and family. It should include professionals who have expertise in working with children and young people involved in sexual exploitation. In the course of this assessment, children's social care should ask:

- Is this a Child In Need? (Section 17 of the Children Act 1989)
- Is there reasonable cause to suspect that this child is suffering, or is likely to suffer,

significant harm? (Section 47 of the Children Act 1989)

Agencies with statutory child protection powers must, at all stages, consider whether the child may be in need of urgent action to secure his/her safety because of the risk to the child's life or likelihood of serious harm.

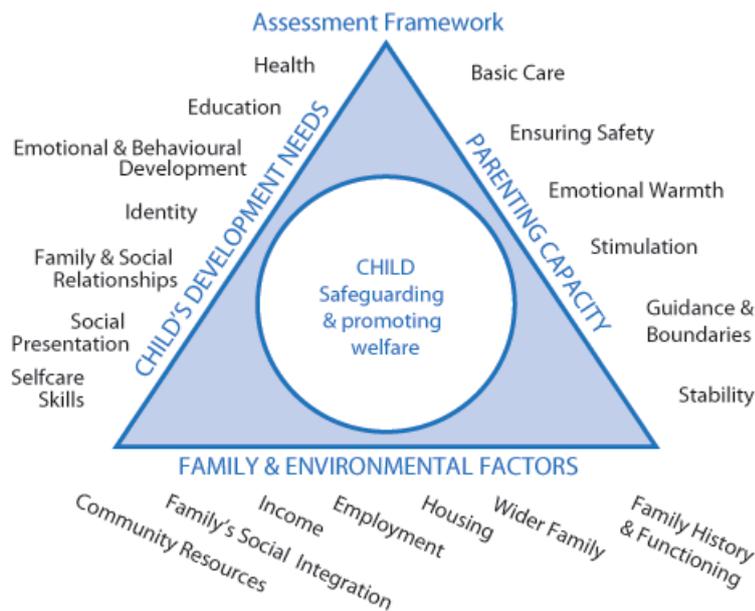


Fig. 1, The Assessment Triangle

An assessment may indicate that a child is ‘in need’ as defined by Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, but that there are no substantiated concerns that the child may be suffering, or is at risk of suffering significant harm. There may be sufficient information available to decide what services should be provided, and by whom, according to an agreed plan though a brief assessment or through a brief assessment or a more in-depth assessment of a child's health and development, of the parents' or carers' capacity to respond to their child's needs, and of their wider context may be required. These factors still apply even where the concerns are about abuse by non-family members.

Strategy Discussion

A strategy discussion between statutory agencies and Barnardo's Against Sexual Exploitation (BASE) should take place to consider whether the criteria for initiating a Section 47 inquiry are met and as necessary plan the enquiry. A referral to the CSE Intelligence and Response)Network Meeting (section 4) and/or Operation Topaz (section 13) may be required if the relevant criteria are met.

It may also be beneficial for parents to attend or be involved in a Strategy Discussion or

interagency meeting (this will be at the discretion of the Consultant Social Worker chairing the meeting). Where there are a number of victims that are or appear to be linked in some way (possibly by the same alleged perpetrator or a specific location), a **Complex Strategy** should be convened. This should be a meeting not a telephone discussion and must be chaired by an area Service Manager. Consideration should be given also to the necessity of convening a joint Complex Strategy when children from another Local Authority area are involved. Responsibility for chairing these meetings will reside with the authority convening the meeting.

If at any stage:

- there is reasonable evidence that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, or,
- the child is in police protection (under Section 46 of the Children Act), or,
- the child is the subject of an Emergency Protection Order (under Section 44 of the Children Act),

a Section 47 enquiry will be required.

This may result in a plan to immediately protect or accommodate the young person.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Social workers should be particularly aware when undertaking initial assessments of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) of the risk of sexual exploitation and child trafficking. Should concerns regarding possible trafficking be raised the Social Worker should refer to [SWCPP](#) (Guidance and Procedure for Preventing and Safeguarding Children Who Are at Risk or Have Been Trafficked). This will apply, also, during the 'Joint Age assessment'⁵. If the young person shows any sign of distress relating to abuse, staff will be aware of the risk of sexual exploitation and, if they are concerned, will follow the procedure outlined above and liaise with police in order to protect the young person.

12. BASE (Barnardo's Against Sexual Exploitation)

BASE (tel. 0117 934 9726) delivers one to one support to young people who are at high level of risk of sexual exploitation or who are currently experiencing sexual exploitation. BASE's model of support is founded on the 4 A's deemed effective in Barnardo's Reducing The Risk research, 2006. They are:

- Accessible services, so removing barriers individual young people may have to taking up the support;
- Assertively reaching out to young people;
- Attention being given to individual young people;

⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/432724/Age_Assessment_Joint_Working_Guidance_April_2015_Final_agreed_v2_EXT.pdf

- Advocating on their behalf.

BASE works closely with a range of partner agencies in delivering support to individual young people and has staff from partner agencies seconded into its service. Referrals can be made to BASE by anyone concerned about a young person being sexually exploited in Bristol. BASE advise possible referrers to contact the project to discuss possible referrals before making a formal referral.

BASE provides training and consultancy to other professionals working with young people in Bristol who are at risk of sexual exploitation. (contact details for booking on training – 4YP 0117 9002424, BSCB 0117 3532505).

The following is the link to BASE's website: <http://www.barnardos.org.uk/basebristol>

13. The Police role.

The Police have a key co-ordinating role in achieving the disruption of activities carried out by sexually exploitative adults and in bringing about their successful criminal prosecution (see Operation Topaz below).

The Police use a wide range of legislation to achieve prosecution and disruption.

The Police require close communication and co-operation from agencies to help protect individual young people and end the activities of perpetrators. The police in general rely heavily on partner organisations in the sharing of background information on victims, suspects and vulnerable young people so that informed decisions on joint action can be made.

Any agency is encouraged to share information as intelligence with the police especially where there are concerns in relation to CSE. This can be done by calling 101. It should be made clear that the information is being shared as intelligence and is due to there being concerns in relation to CSE. Concerns can also be shared directly with the Safeguarding Co-ordination Unit by submitting the information sharing forms in relation to suspects and location alongside a victim CSE checklist.

Securing evidence

It is a feature of the joint approach to dealing with safeguarding issues that staff other than police officers may at times find themselves in a position to secure and preserve vital evidence which could support a subsequent criminal prosecution. In such circumstances advice can be obtained from the police in respect of how to seize and preserve the integrity of such evidence. This is particularly important with sexual offences where it may be possible to secure forensic evidence from the victim or their clothing but also applies to any notes or diary entries made by a victim at the time the offences were committed. Additional supporting evidence from involved parties such as case records from professionals should also be considered.

Operation Topaz

A pilot operation (Topaz) has been established in Bristol in which specialist leadership and direction is provided to CSE investigations to maximise the potential for positive outcomes and provide a problem solving and proactive approach. This effectively allows Avon and Somerset Police & Partner Agencies to get ahead of CSE risks and be proactive rather than reactive. [The two-weekly Operation Topaz meetings include Operation Topaz police representatives, the Safeguarding Education Team, Children Social Care, YOT, Catch 22, Barnardo's and Health representatives.](#)

The activity that is undertaken focuses on the three core principles of:

- Intelligence processing, assessment and prioritisation;
- Victim Identification and Engagement;
- Disruption of CSE offenders until such time as a disclosure is secured and a CSE investigation initiated.

Intelligence processing, assessment and prioritisation

The Topaz Risk Assessment Profile (TRAP) tool helps to prioritise subjects (CSE suspects) and allows detailed analysis of previous risk factors and indicators and enables names of victims at risk of CSE to be shared with key stakeholders.

Victim Identification and Engagement

The role of a Victim Contact Officer (VCO) who co-locates and engages victims within Barnardo's Against Sexual Exploitation (BASE) now facilitates effective engagement with victims which has led/will lead to improved information flow from victims. This role is separate from the disruptive investigative function within the team to ensure victim engagement is prioritised without the need for this officer to take direct action against perpetrators of CSE. This preserves the relationship with the victim when some young people are still collusive in their relationship with subjects and disruptive action needs to be taken against the subject. The VCO's remit is victim engagement, freeing them up to fit around the victim's lifestyle, commitments and needs, and be a single point of contact for the victim and support services. It also means that the victim's experience of the criminal justice system, which is inevitably difficult given the nature of the crime, is far shorter in that it only begins when they are ready to provide an evidential disclosure.

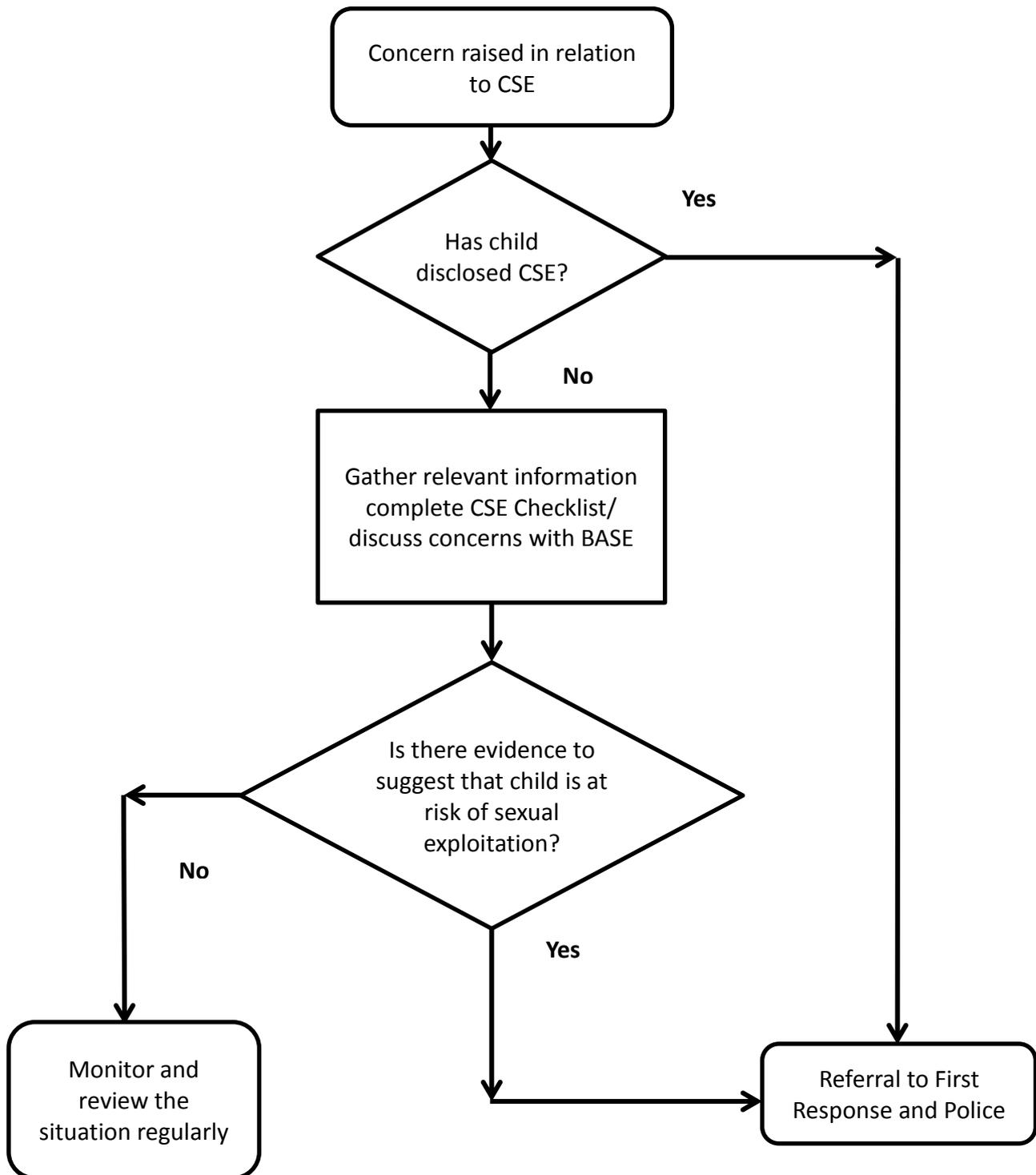
Disruption of CSE offenders until such time as a disclosure is secured and a CSE investigation initiated

Disruption is a proactive strategy and is critical to safeguarding victims and potential victims, and a responsibility that is prioritised by Topaz. This has required some 'thinking outside the box' for the Topaz Investigators who have had to be creative in the tactics they have employed to disrupt subjects. The disruption has involved officers being audacious and, where the professional judgement suggests they need to, find creative ways to use powers or gather evidence. It has also involved reclassifying the prioritisation of low level offences committed by Topaz Subjects when it

has presented an opportunity to disrupt their CSE offending.

The Topaz team will identify high risk CSE suspects and will put a disruption plan in place. This is a unique proactive approach where (via the TRAP scores) the team are able to targeted high risk suspects based on risk indicators, without necessitating recent referrals.

14. CSE Decision making



Appendix 1 – Information Sharing

Further advice and guidance regarding information sharing protocols can be found here:

<https://bristolsafeguarding.org/media/1280/92info-sharing-2013-new-link.pdf>

Information Sharing Guidance for safeguarding practitioners:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419628/Information_sharing_advice_safeguarding_practitioners.pdf

Appendix 2 – Contact Details

Further advice can be found from BASE, Police and CYPS – Children's Social Care

Children's Social Care – First Response (tel: 0117 9036444)

Police – 101

BASE - (tel 0117 934 9726)

PACE - <http://www.paceuk.info/> - Pace offers one-to-one telephone support, national and local meet-ups with other affected parents and information on how parents can work in partnership with police and social care –

See more at: <http://www.paceuk.info/support-for-parents/#sthash.uasix912.dpuf>

Appendix 3 - Other information and resources.

Training

4YP - <https://www.4ypbristol.co.uk/for-professionals/training/> - 4YP 0117 9002424
4YP provide a range of training including that to raise awareness of CSE and sexual health/relationship issues.

BSCB - <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/children-and-young-people/bscb-training-courses>
BSCB provide interagency training supported by BASE and the Police.

BASE provides training and consultancy to other professionals working with Children and young people in Bristol who are at risk of sexual exploitation.

Barnardo's - Reducing the risk report:

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/reducing_the_risk_report.pdf

Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015.

www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk

Safeguarding children and young people from Sexual Exploitation, June 2009.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/278849/Safeguarding_Children_and_Young_People_from_Sexual_Exploitation.pdf

What to do if you suspect a child is being sexually exploited, 2012.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/279511/step_by_step_guide.pdf

Barnardo's – What do we do...

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_projects/sexual_exploitation.htm

SWCPP – Trafficked Children

https://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/bristol/p_trafficked_ch.html

Childline

0800 1111

Appendix 4

Suspects intelligence sharing form (see website)

NWG checklist (see website)