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Child sexual exploitation

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Definition

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) describes sexual abuse as:

- ☀ forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening
- ☀ activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetrative (eg rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing
- ☀ they may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet)
- ☀ sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males; women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can children.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) tends to be a hidden activity and much more likely to take place in private residences than visibly on the streets. Barnardo's has identified three different models of activity; they are not exhaustive, but show a spectrum of exploitation:

1. Inappropriate relationships usually involving one perpetrator who has inappropriate power or control over a young person (physical, emotional or financial). One indicator may be a significant age gap. The young person may believe they are in a loving relationship.

2. 'Boyfriend' model of exploitation and peer exploitation. The perpetrator befriends and grooms a young person into a 'relationship' and then coerces or forces them to have sex with friends or associates. Barnardos have reported a rise in peer exploitation where young people are forced or coerced into sexual activity by peers and associates. Sometimes this can be associated with gang activity but not always.

3. Organised/networked sexual exploitation or trafficking. Young people (often connected) are passed through networks, possibly over geographical distances, between towns and cities where they may be forced / coerced into sexual activity with multiple men. Often this occurs at 'sex parties' and young people involved may be used as agents to recruit others into the network. Some of this activity is described as serious organised crime and can involve 'buying and selling' of young people by perpetrators.

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Where we are now

Currently, Rotherham is the subject of intense media scrutiny. There have been a number of other recent CSE investigations that have attracted national coverage of the subsequent trials (Rochdale and Oxfordshire) and serious case reviews.

CSE is a significant issue for local authorities and with factors including deprivation, a diverse population, good motorway links and cheap rental properties, the potential for increased CSE activity in Luton is highlighted.

The three children's safeguarding boards in Bedfordshire (Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton) all have child sexual exploitation as a continued priority for 2014/2015. Luton has a joint strategy and action plan for CSE, endorsed by the Luton Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The LSCB has a key role in monitoring the effectiveness of work done to protect children and young people from sexual exploitation. It receives regular assurance reports from partner agencies.

The Child Sexual Exploitation Panel (CSEP) was set up March 2013 in response to the government's *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation* action plan. This is a tri-borough panel involving Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton councils. It follows the process and principles of the SARAC (sexual assault risk assessment conference) model, which recognises the differences in the needs and concerns of victims of rape and sexual assault.

The CSEP is a multi-agency meeting which has the safety of local, high-risk victims of sexual exploitation as its focus. It involves the participation of statutory and voluntary sector agencies: eg housing, health service, substance misuse providers and the criminal justice system involved in supporting children and young people who are or

might be victims of sexual exploitation. The CSEP meets monthly in Central Beds (Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands).

In Luton, since April 2013, over 90 young people have been referred to the CSEP as victims at risk of or experiencing CSE.

The NSPCC has recently launched its *Protect and Respect* programme in Luton, a tailored programme of one-to-one, group work and therapeutic support to young people who have been sexually exploited as well as offering joint sessions with parents or carers with the young person's consent.

After an initial assessment, *Protect and Respect* can work with a young person for up to six months.

Young people may not be aware that they have been abused. The programme aims to:

- help them understand issues such as grooming
- secure a safer environment and a more stable lifestyle for them
- make them much less vulnerable to sexual exploitation

Referrals to *Protect and Respect* can be made using a referral form which should be filled out in conjunction with the young person.

Click [here](#) for a downloadable copy.

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Where we want to be in future

Identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice by sharing information with the police and supporting children/young people as witnesses.

Raise awareness of professionals, parents and carers of what signs to look out for and the services available to offer support.

Develop an appropriate range of services through consulting with children and young people.

Safeguard children and young people where they are at risk or are being sexually exploited.

Encourage a culture of openness and honesty where we can discuss anything that causes unease, unconstrained about fears of appearing judgemental or having pre-conceived ideas.

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Consistent assessment & recording of children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation



A decision has been taken by the director of children's services that the CSEP risk assessment tool **must** be used by all social workers when CSE is suspected. It should be used in all referrals and when single assessments are completed.

This action is to be implemented immediately upon receipt of this briefing and team managers and deputies must communicate this to their teams.

All social workers with **open** cases of suspected CSE where this tool has not been used must go back retrospectively, complete the assessment tool and record on *CareFirst* (see below). This does not have to be done for closed cases.

Social workers must also include information on *CareFirst* that records when there is suspected CSE and if the child is being referred to the CSEP.

To do this, go to '*Warning details*' and in the dropdown box next to '*Type*', select '*Child at risk of sexual exploitation*'. Notes can be added in the free type box. These should state if the case has been referred to the CSEP and when and whether the individual is a victim or potential perpetrator.

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What can I do as a practitioner?

Be aware of and look for the signs and risk factors, many of which are detailed below. In addition:

- ☀ identify issues early (*use the risk assessment tool below*)
- ☀ share this information with your colleagues or professionals in other agencies and/or refer to CSEP
- ☀ secure support to help strengthen the young person's family network, to avoid increased vulnerability or further dependency on the perpetrator
- ☀ think about ways you might be able to better support and help children/young people to share information if they are worried about their own or another child/ young person's situation.
- ☀ identify opportunities to educate children, young people and their parents about child sexual abuse through exploitation
- ☀ always consider whether the concern warrants multi-agency consideration in a strategy discussion

Here are a number of tell-tale signs that a child/young person may be being groomed for sexual exploitation. Please note this is not an exhaustive list, but it serves as an example of questions you should be considering:

- ☀ regularly missing school or not taking part in education
- ☀ staying out at nights, regularly returns home late and/or returns home after long intervals and appears well cared for; defensive about where they have been and what they've been doing

- ☀ appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions, money, mobile phones, clothes, jewellery etc
- ☀ suffers from sexually transmitted infections
- ☀ mood swings or changes in emotional wellbeing, use of language or physical appearance
- ☀ displays inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- ☀ secretive or withdrawn; look tired or ill, sleeping during the day
- ☀ associate with older men and develop a relationship of a sexual nature with a significantly older man or a woman.
- ☀ known to frequent locations associated with sexual activity
- ☀ use of drugs and alcohol
- ☀ receive more phone calls or text messages than usual
- ☀ marks or scars on their body which they try to conceal by refusing to undress or uncover parts of their body
- ☀ self-harming, suicidal tendencies

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Resources and contacts

Click on links

Luton Council: [Luton sexual exploitation early intervention and prevention strategy](#)

From the Luton Safeguarding Children Board:

[Child sexual exploitation in Rotherham: Alexis Jay report](#)

[Briefing for professionals on child sexual exploitation](#)

[A risk assessment tool with recommended required actions](#)

[A referral form to the Child Sexual Exploitation Panel](#)

[Information leaflet](#)

[Learning from case reviews around sexual exploitation](#)

[What schools can do to protect children and young people from CSE](#)

From the NSPCC:

[Protect and Respect information leaflet](#)

[Protect and Respect referral form](#)

From the DfE: [Step-by-step guide for practitioners](#)

From Research in Practice: [Research and best practice guides](#)

**If you are concerned a child or young person is at risk of or experiencing sexual abuse through exploitation, contact our referral & assessment team on 01582 54 76 53
For out of hours emergencies call 0300 300 8123**

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