

Luton Borough Council

Child Sexual Exploitation Prevention and Intervention Strategy

Introduction

Statement of intent

Luton Borough Council is committed to preventing the sexual exploitation of children and young people and intervening to protect and support victims. Sexual Exploitation of children and young people is child abuse and is completely unacceptable. We recognise that the only effective way to tackle this abuse is through effective multi-agency and partnership working.

Tackling the sexual abuse of children and young people is a key strategic priority for Luton Safeguarding Children Board working with the LSCBs across Bedfordshire. This strategy sits alongside the *Pan Bedfordshire Sexual Abuse of Children and Young People through Exploitation Prevention and Intervention Strategy* and the Luton Safeguarding Children Board *Practice guidance and risk assessment tool to safeguard children and young people who are sexually abused through exploitation*. These documents are available on the Luton Safeguarding Children Board website. The strategy is also informed by national and local research including the work of the Office of the Children's Commissioner (available from <http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/info/csegg1>), the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) report '*Out of Mind, Out of Sight*' (2011) and research undertaken by the University of Bedfordshire.

We recognise that children in care and care leavers are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. This vulnerability arises from a number of factors including that these groups of children and young people are particularly targeted by abusers. In addition, some young people will enter the care system in order to protect them from sexual exploitation. As Corporate Parents, LBC is committed to doing everything possible to protect the children in our care.

Preventing child sexual exploitation and intervening to protect and support victims is not just the responsibility of Specialist Children's Safeguarding Services within LBC but is everyone's responsibility. The following services particularly have a part to play in implementing this strategy:

- Specialist children's services including child protection and services for children in care
- Youth Services and Youth Offending Services
- Schools and support services for schools including Education Welfare Services
- Anti-Social Behaviour Team and community development
- Housing
- Licensing and Environmental Health
- Community Safety including externally commissioned services such as Independent Sexual Violence Advisors, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors, and Victim Support

The approach to tackling sexual exploitation of children must continue to develop in light of the national and local research and national initiatives such as the recently published work of the Office of the Children's Commissioner on Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups.

Definition

Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where a child or young person is manipulated or forced into taking part in a sexual act. This could be part of a seemingly consensual relationship or in return for attention, affection, money, drugs, alcohol or somewhere to stay. The young person may believe their abuser is their friend, boyfriend or girlfriend. The abuser may physically or verbally threaten the young person, be violent towards them and may try to isolate them from friends or family.

Link to other Strategies

Child sexual exploitation cannot be tackled in isolation from other initiatives to support, educate and protect children and young people. For example, research shows that girls connected to street gangs are particularly at risk from sexual exploitation which can be a feature of gang initiation activity. This strategy must be considered and implemented alongside other strategies and procedures; particularly:

- The Children's Trust Board Strategy for Supporting Young People in responding to bullying
- Serious Youth Violence Strategy (in development)
- Luton Tackling the on-Street Sex Trade Strategy
- Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE)
- Children in Care Strategy
- Missing children Procedures

Role of the Local 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 and will receive regular assurance reports from partner agencies.

Prevention

Prevention of child sexual exploitation includes raising awareness of the issue and ensuring that young people develop a good understanding of healthy relationships including sexual relationships. This work must include work with boys as well as girls. Boys are at risk of being victims of sexual exploitation but also longer term prevention must involve influencing how young men view sex and sexual relationships as they grow up.

Luton Borough Council will:

Raise awareness among children and young people and ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to recognise sexual exploitation. This will include:

- Continuing to support the LSCB awareness raising programme for children and young people in schools and ensuring this work can be sustained
- Supporting the development of an appropriate PHSE curriculum on relationships and sex education (including through the work currently being done by Public Health)
- Ensuring that staff working with young people, particularly in youth services, have the skills and expertise to support young people to develop healthy attitudes about sexual relationships and to raise awareness of sexual exploitation with young people.

Work with partners to raise awareness among in the community. This will include:

- Use of LBC resources including Luton Line and the LBC website to raise awareness

Develop services that address the needs of young people who are developing sexually oppressive behaviours. This will include:

- Ensuring that work with young people through the youth service and Youth Offending Service addresses attitudes to sex and sexual relationships
- Ensuring that the CAMHS commissioning strategy prioritises work with young people with sexually harmful behaviour

Focus prevention work on children in care and care leavers. This will include:

- Ensuring that all staff, including foster carers, working with children in care and care leavers have the skills and expertise to support young people to develop healthy attitudes about sexual relationships and to raise awareness of sexual exploitation with young people.
- Ensuring that we have the same expectations of all services commissioned to provide services for children in care and care leavers, particularly Independent Fostering Agencies, Children's Homes and Residential Schools and supported placements for care leavers

Identification and Early Intervention

The CEOP report *'Out of Mind, Out of Sight'* (2011) found that "agencies which did not proactively look for child sexual exploitation would as a result fail to identify it". It is therefore crucial that the whole range of council services are involved in identifying and taking steps to intervene in child sexual exploitation

Luton Borough Council will:

Raise awareness among its staff of the risks to children and young people, how to recognise the signs and symptom indicating that children and young people are at risk and what action to take. This will include:

- Ensuring that safeguarding children leads in all LBC services are well informed about child sexual exploitation
- Ensuring that staff receive appropriate training including attending the LSCB multi-agency training where appropriate to their role
- Maintaining a communication strategy including establishing a link from the LBC website to the resources held on the LSCB website and publicising the LSCB Information Leaflet for professionals
- Supporting schools to identify and support children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

Develop the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to coordinate services to support children and young people thought to be at risk of sexual exploitation and the families of these children and young people including reviewing the Child Sexual Exploitation Panel (CSEP) process to ensure support is offered through CAF processes.

Make full use of the Child Sexual Exploitation Panel (CSEP) and other multi-agency mechanisms to share intelligence, identify "hot spots", plan and implement multi-agency interventions to protect young people and prevent and disrupt sexual exploitation. This will include:

- Providing the necessary resources to support the work of Child Sexual Exploitation Panel (CSEP)
- Ensure learning from Child Sexual Exploitation Panel (CSEP) is shared with other professionals
- Ensuring that all services that might come into contact with children are aware of the need to refer all children thought to be at risk to Child Sexual Exploitation Panel (CSEP) as well as making the necessary child protection referrals
- Ensuring that all services refer any intelligence about possible activity indicating sexual exploitation to the Police

Work with the LSCB on a campaign with taxi drivers in Luton to raise awareness of sexual exploitation and action needed to identify and report this

Identify support services that can develop trusting relationships with children and young people (boys as well as girls) who are believed to be being sexually exploited but who have not been able to disclose, recognising that this can involve several months of relationships building

Focus Identification and Early Intervention work on children in care and care leavers. This will include:

- Ensuring that all staff, including foster carers, working with children in care and care leavers recognise the signs and symptoms indicating that children and young people are at risk and know what action to take
- Ensure staff develop trusting relationships with children and young people to support disclosure
- Ensuring that we have the same expectations of all services commissioned to provide services for children in care and care leavers, particularly Independent Fostering Agencies, Children's Homes and Residential Schools and supported placements for care leavers
- Work with children's homes located within the borough to ensure they are making full use of local mechanisms for information sharing and identification of risk
- Take action to provide alternative placements for children, including placements out of area, where this is necessary to protect children in care and care leavers from sexual exploitation

Specialist Support

Once children and young people have been identified as having been subjected to sexual exploitation, services must be provided to protect them, support them and their families and to promote recovery. This includes supporting children and young people and their families through any criminal proceedings against the perpetrators of the abuse.

Luton Borough Council will:

Ensure that child protection procedures are used fully to support and protect children and young people who have been abused through sexual exploitation

Work closely with the police and other agencies to disrupt perpetrators and gather information to assist prosecutions

Ensure that family support services such as Stronger Families and the Intensive Support Team are able to assist families to support and protect children and young people who have been abused through sexual exploitation

Ensure that the CAMHS joint commissioning strategy prioritises provision of treatment for children and young people who have been abused through sexual exploitation

Work with the NSPCC to ensure that the Protect and Repair Programme being developed in Luton is well known and receives appropriate referrals.

Ensure that the needs of children in care and care leaver who have been abused through sexual exploitation are fully met. This will include:

- Ensuring that the assessment, care planning and review process fully recognises children and young people's needs arising from sexual exploitation and includes specialist input where necessary
- Ensuring that the commissioning strategy provides suitable placements where children and young people are protected and supported
- Ensuring that therapy and other services that support recovery are available for children and young people, including those placed out of area for their own safety