

**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE FROM CHILD SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION: WEST MIDLANDS
METROPOLITAN AREA CHILD SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION PROCEDURES**

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) have a responsibility, set out in statutory guidance to co-ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of the work of their member agencies to tackle child sexual exploitation (CSE).
- 1.2 In the West Midlands Police Force Area the seven LSCBs (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton) have agreed to work to regional procedures to promote a consistent and effective response to CSE
- 1.3 The regional procedures are underpinned by a set of regional standards (hyperlink to standards) that have been approved by all LSCBs and each LSCB will need to have its own CSE Strategy and Action Plan that will support implementation of the regional standards.
- 1.4 The regional standards have been designed to support the implementation of the Officer of the Children Commissioner's See Me Hear Me framework as well as to address the nine essential foundations of effective practice for safeguarding children and young people from CSE as identified by the Office of the Children's Commissioner



Figure 1 - Nine Essential Foundations of Practice

- 1.5 These procedures are aimed at front-line staff in any agency/setting who work with or come into contact with children and young people.

2 See Me Hear Me Framework

2.1 The See Me Hear Me framework is designed to promote a child-centred response to CSE. The key task for practitioners and partner agencies is to recognise and respond to the child or young person as a victim of child abuse or in the words of children and young people to “See Me and Hear Me”. It is important to recognise that:-

(i) Children and young people do not put themselves at risk – perpetrators are the risk and cause the harm to children. Children and young people need practitioners to recognise their experiences as abusive.

(ii) ‘They talked about me like I wasn’t even there. They were very harsh about me’¹.

(iii) Children and young people do not fail to engage with services instead they need time to build a relationship

“We built a relationship and they got to know us and when we felt trust we told them what was going on”¹

(iv) Children and young people may not recognise their experiences as abusive.

“I didn’t know what was happening, I thought it was normal. I thought they were my friends”¹

(v) Children and young people need to be involved when decisions are being made about their care, protection and on-going support and be kept informed on any issues that affect them.

“They acted like they knew everything about me, but they don’t know me”¹

(vi) Children and young people who are being sexually exploited need continuous and consistent support.

‘Sometimes you are feeling better and have built up your self-confidence. But then something happens and you feel afraid and feel down and are afraid to tell someone. That is why they should stick with you...’¹

2.2 The See Me Hear Me framework is about making children and young people who are victims of CSE or at risk of becoming victims

(i) SEEN

(ii) HEARD

(iii) ATTENDED TO

(iv) UNDERSTOOD

¹ If Only Someone had Listened (2012) Office of the Children’s Commissioner

- 2.3 The See Me Hear Me framework requires 5 essential questions to be addressed from the child's perspective at any stage in the work carried out under these procedures. Children and young people are emphatic that protection and support can only be effective when those questions are answered.
- 2.4 The 5 questions are set out below, followed by an associated question for practitioners and managers and indeed organisations to ask themselves to ensure that they are responding in a child centred way. A key practice message then follows each question.

Question 1

"What if I don't see it as abuse?"

Ask yourself "what is this child telling me about risk, harm and need – through signs and symptoms and not just words?"

Practice message 1: Don't make assumptions about the child and their needs.

Question 2

"How do I know that what you have planned will keep me safe?"

Ask yourself "are my decisions right for this child"

Practice message 2: help make the child safe and stop the abuse happening.

Question 3

"Have you checked who else may be at risk?"

Ask yourself "have I considered the other children who may be affected or involved?"

Practice message 3: consider the safety of other children and young people.

Question 4

"How will you support me if this goes to Court?"

Ask yourself "do I have everything in place to enable this child to make a complaint and support them through the Court process?"

Practice message 4: punish the right people.

Question 5

"Do I have hope for the future?"

Ask yourself "have I put in place services to respond to all the needs of this child now.....and in the future?"

Practice message 5: Don't think there is a quick fix.

3 What is CSE

- 3.1 The West Midlands Metropolitan Area has adopted the following definition of sexual exploitation taken from statutory guidance:-

"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."

- 3.2 Sexual exploitation can take many forms from seemingly “consensual” relationships where sex is exchanged for attention, affection, accommodation or gifts, to serious organised crime including group and gang related exploitation as well as child trafficking.
- 3.3 What marks out exploitation is an imbalance of power within the relationship and how the perpetrators use that power to groom and then abuse their victims and then prevent them from disclosing the abuse and being helped to extract themselves from the abuse. The perpetrator always holds some kind of power over the victim, increasing the dependence of the victim as the exploitative relationship develops. Often illegal drugs and alcohol are used as part of creating dependence and reducing the child’s awareness of the abuse.
- 3.4 Whatever their experience of child sexual exploitation it is important to be aware that **children and young people are not making a free and informed choice to participate in the sexual activity**. They often make constrained choices against a background of vulnerability and because of their age, unmet needs or vulnerability they are unable to give informed consent. Young people under the age of 16 cannot legally consent to sexual activity and sexual intercourse with children under the age of 13 is statutory rape. A child under 18 cannot consent to their own abuse through exploitation.
- 3.5 Technology can 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 and groom children and young people including through social media sites in order to groom them. Victims may also be recorded being abused for example on mobile phones and those images shared or used as another means of threatening, humiliating or coercing the child.
- 3.6 Sexual exploitation has strong links with other forms of crime, for example, domestic abuse, online and offline grooming, the distribution of abusive images of children, child trafficking and organised criminal gang related activities.

- 3.7 The perpetrators of sexual exploitation are often well organised and use sophisticated tactics. They are known to target areas where children and young people gather without much adult supervision, e.g. parks or shopping centres or sites on the Internet.

4 Boys and Young Men

- 4.1 Sexual exploitation is not just an issue for girls and young women, but also a reality for boys and young men.
- 4.2 However, it can be more difficult to detect when boys and young men are at risk of sexual exploitation or are being sexually exploited, as they are generally harder to work with and less willing to disclose this type of information. They may also find it harder to disclose that they are being abused by other men because of issues about sexual identity. It is important that professionals who are assessing young men do not become distracted when exploring their sexual identity and fail to notice that they may be being, or are at risk of being sexually exploited.
- 4.3 The indicators at paragraph 10.5 also apply to boys and young men; however some further indicators may also be relevant. Further guidance on the issues including specific indicators, for boys and young men can be found at paragraph 5.12 of DfE guidance 'Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation'.

5 Children and Young People from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities

- 5.1 Sexual exploitation is complex and widespread and not limited to one community. In particular, sexual exploitation does not only involve Asian offenders who target white girls. Those who sexually exploit children and young people come from all ethnic backgrounds and they do not respect children and young people of any race or faith.
- 5.2 Sexual exploitation is about exploiting vulnerabilities of victims and access. Children and young people from the perpetrator's own backgrounds may be more accessible because of shared heritage, culture, faith and ethnicity.
- 5.3 Children and young people from Black and Minority ethnic communities can have specific vulnerabilities associated with their culture which constitute a barrier to disclosing or reporting the abuse e.g. blackmail connected to shame and dishonour can be used as a method of control. In addition if a child or young person from a Black or Minority ethnic community discloses they have been sexually exploited, they may face additional dangers from their family and the multi-agency network will need to recognise and respond to these risks e.g. blaming female victims rather than the perpetrator(s) or risk forced marriage.

6 Prevention

- 6.1 The aim is to prevent children and young people from becoming victims of CSE and to prevent locations being used to recruit, groom and abuse children and young people.
- 6.2 Work to prevent child sexual exploitation includes:
- (i) Undertaking an assessment of the extent of the problem within the local area/West Midlands Police Force Area

- (ii) Awareness raising and prevention education to equip children and young people with the skills they need to make safe and healthy choices and avoid high risk situations.
- (iii) Ensuring children and young people know who they can turn to if they are worried, need advice or support.
- (iv) Awareness raising for parents and carers so they are aware of the risks, understand the patterns of abuse, know about key indicators and where to access advice and support.
- (v) Awareness raising in communities – geographic, communities of interest, faith communities etc.
- (vi) Awareness raising and training for professionals working in universal, targeted and specialist services; including a focus on known risk factors.
- (vii) Awareness raising and training for staff and managers in hotels and licensed premises including fast food outlets and takeaways (hyperlink to Say Something if you See Something campaign materials).
- (viii) Utilising LSCB powers as a Responsible Authority under the Licensing Act 2003 to create licence conditions that will reduce the likelihood of CSE occurring at a licensed premise.

7 Multi-agency response

- 7.1 Providing an appropriate response to CSE requires the combined efforts and skills of a protective network for children and young people and depends heavily on a multi-agency response. Tackling child sexual exploitation means managing high levels of risk – including professional risk and this is best managed through shared responsibility with each agency playing its part and supporting the others. No professional should feel they are alone in tackling CSE.
- 7.2 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people depends on effective joint working between different agencies and professionals that work with children and young people. Their full involvement is vital if children are to be effectively supported and action is to be taken against perpetrators of sexual exploitation. 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.
- 7.3 In relation to confidentiality, where there are concerns that a child or young person is subject to sexual exploitation, all agencies have a responsibility to report their concerns and share information. The need for a child to be safeguarded overrides their right to confidentiality. Data protection should not prevent the sharing of information but ensures that personal information is shared appropriately. It is never acceptable for an individual or agency to decide not to share information when there are concerns about the safety of a child.

8 Information Sharing

- 8.1 The sharing of information amongst professionals working with children and their families is essential. In many cases it is only when information from a range of sources is put together that a full picture is created where a child can be seen to be vulnerable, in need or at risk of harm. Appropriate sharing with other practitioners and agencies is essential if children and families who may be in need of support and services are to be identified at an early stage before problems become serious. Sharing can also enable information from different cases to be put together and assist the process of assessing levels of concern and any potential risks.
- 8.2 A professional or agency view that a child is At Risk of Harm (Category 1) may be incomplete. Sharing information about the child with other agencies may reveal the child to be at Significant Risk of Harm or high risk - and in need of immediate protection.
- 8.3 Where there are concerns that a child may be being harmed or abused, there is no legal or ethical restriction on sharing information between child protection agencies. Information should always be exchanged when such disclosure is necessary for the purposes of child protection.
- 8.4 All professionals should maintain clear contemporaneous records of contact with the child, their concerns, all information shared and discussed (and with whom), decisions made and actions taken.

9 Role of CSE Co-ordinators

- 9.1 Every West Midlands Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit within West Midlands Police has a dedicated co-ordinator ([hyperlink to list of CSE officers](#)) who will liaise with Local Authority Children's Services and other relevant statutory partners/third sector organisation in cases of child sexual exploitation.
- 9.2 In addition, each Local Authority area will have a designated Child Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator ([hyperlink to list of co-ordinators x 7](#)) who can provide advice and guidance to the multi-agency workforce. In addition, the CSE co-ordinator will, on behalf of the LSCB, maintain a dataset of all child sexual exploitation cases to assist the LSCB understand the nature and extent of child sexual exploitation.

10 Identification of Child Sexual Exploitation

- 10.1 Children and young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation or who are being sexually exploited may display highly complex and challenging behaviours. They may appear abusive and anti-social and may become involved in exploitative activities towards others. These behaviours may mean that professionals can experience difficulty in recognising their vulnerability and responding to it. However, it is also important to recognise that some children/young people who are being sexually exploited do not exhibit any external signs of this abuse.
- 10.2 An unsubstantiated allegation that a child or young person has established associations, or who may be on the periphery of sexual exploitation should be considered carefully. None of

the following indicators, whether singly or in combination, should be viewed as conclusive proof of involvement in sexual exploitation, but a combination of them may be taken as suggestive of the possibility

10.3 Careful consideration should be given to whether sexual relationships which are presented as consensual by children or young people actually are, or whether exploitation is taking place. Professionals should be alert to the ways in which perpetrators can operate, especially where there is a large age-gap between the individuals involved. Please refer to [Multi Agency Protocol for Identifying and Responding to Cases of Harm arising from Under Age Sexual Activity](#)

10.4 The following are typical vulnerabilities in children prior to being sexually exploited:

- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, parental criminality);
- History of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of 'honour'-based violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect);
- Recent bereavement or loss;
- Gang association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships (in cases of gang associated CSE only);
- Attending school with young people who are sexually exploited;
- Learning disabilities;
- Unsure about their sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families;
- Friends with young people who are sexually exploited;
- Homeless;
- Lacking friends from the same age group;
- Living in a gang neighbourhood;
- Living in residential care;
- Living in hostel, bed and breakfast accommodation or a foyer;
- Low self-esteem or self-confidence;
- Young carer.

10.5 The following signs and behaviour are generally seen in children who are already being sexually exploited:

- Missing from home or care;

- Physical injuries;
- Drug or alcohol misuse;
- Involvement in offending;
- Repeat sexually-transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations;
- Absent from school;
- Change in physical appearance;
- Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites;
- Estranged from their family;
- Receipt of gifts from unknown sources;
- Recruiting others into exploitative situations;
- Poor mental health;
- Self-harm;
- Thoughts of or attempts at suicide.

10.6 Teachers, Health Professionals, Youth Services and Outreach workers are able to identify children and young people at risk of exploitation by being alert to the risk factors identified in paragraph 10.5 above. A young person's involvement in child sexual exploitation may also come to the attention of specialist services, drug agencies, the Youth Offending Service, school counsellors, school nurses, Housing Teams, sexual health services, GP's.

10.7 Staff working in residential units and foster carers should be aware that **Looked After Children** can be particularly vulnerable to being targeted/groomed and the location of the placement may well be known and specifically targeted by perpetrators. Furthermore, the informal networks established by children and young people who are Looked After, particularly in residential units, can mean that information about vulnerable Looked After young people is more readily available to those who groom children and young people

11 Legal age of consent

11.1 The fact that a young person is 16 or 17 years old and has reached the legal age of being able to consent to sex should not be taken as a sign that they are no longer at risk of sexual exploitation. These young people are still defined as children under the Children Act 1989 and 2004 respectively. They can still suffer Significant Harm as a result of sexual exploitation and their right to support and protection from harm should not be ignored or de-prioritised by services because they are over the age of 16, or are no longer in mainstream education or training.

- 11.2 Guidance on identifying and responding to case of harm arising from under age sexual activity can be found in the [Multi Agency Protocol for Identifying and Responding to Cases of Harm arising from Under Age Sexual Activity](#).

12 Regional CSE Screening Tool

- 12.1 Professionals in all agencies should be alert to the possibility that a child/young person for whom they have concerns may be at risk of being sexually exploited. They should discuss their concerns with their agency's designated safeguarding adviser and they should use the CSE Screening Tool ([Appendix 1: CSE Screening Tool](#)) to inform their assessment about the risk of harm to the child/young person.
- 12.2 The screening tool groups indicators of risk of harm into 3 categories:
- **Category 1 (At Risk of Harm):** a child who is at risk of being groomed for sexual exploitation;
 - **Category 2 (Significant Risk of Harm):** a child who is targeted for abuse through the exchange of sex for affection, drugs, accommodation and goods etc. The likelihood of coercion and control is significant;
 - **Category 3 (Serious Risk of Harm):** a child who is entrenched in sexual exploitation, but often does not recognise or self denies the nature of their abuse, and where coercion/control is implicit.
- 12.3 The framework at [Appendix 1: CSE Screening Tool](#) needs to be used flexibly to take account of each child's individuality, the uniqueness of his / her circumstances and the changes that may occur for him / her over time.
- 12.4 In cases where a child is considered to be at risk of harm (Category 1), a plan for focused early intervention should be made to safeguard the child. Agencies should consider, in discussion with the agency's designated safeguarding adviser, the extent to which the agency is able to meet the child's needs themselves as a single agency, and how to proceed if not.
- 12.5 In cases where the risk is considered to be Significant Risk of Harm or Serious Risk of Harm (Categories 2 and 3), the professional and/or their designated safeguarding adviser should make a referral to Children's Social Work Services in accordance with the [Referrals Procedure](#).
- 12.6 The CSE Coordinator should be notified of all young people who are at risk of harm from CSE so that data can be collated by the LSCB about the nature and prevalence of CSE.

13 Category 1 – At Risk of Harm

- 13.1 If the outcome of the completion of the child sexual exploitation screening tool is that the child/young person is considered to be at risk of child sexual exploitation, the worker who completed the screening tool should consider how the agency can provide focused early intervention to meet the child's needs as a single agency. The aim of the intervention will be to enable the child/young person to recognise and avoid risky behaviours and individuals

and to engage in positive activities and relationships. If the child requires co-ordinated support from more than one agency because they have additional needs, the worker who completed the screening tool should convene a multi-agency meeting, or ensure another professional does, to devise a multi agency early help plan. As above, this plan should include intervention to enable the child/young person to recognise and avoid risky behaviours and individuals and to engage in positive activities and relationships. Awareness raising work may also be required with parents/carers.

- 13.2 Such meetings should be attended by / involve agencies currently providing services for the child/young person - e.g. the child's school and/or Education Welfare Officer, health services as appropriate (school nurse, sexual health professional, GP), CSE Coordinator and any other agency which is in a position to contribute significantly to the development of a support plan for the child/young person. The meeting will need to address what information needs to be shared with West Midlands Police to support the safety of the child/young person.
- 13.3 Children, young people and their family should be invited to attend the meeting, involved in devising the multi-agency early help plan, as well as involved in all subsequent meeting to review the plan.
- 13.4 The multi agency early help plan should be recorded using any locally agreed template. The plan should be shared with the child/young person, family and relevant professionals in the child's life. The multi agency early help plan should be reviewed within a timeframe that is commensurate with the child's needs or no later than 3 months after the initial meeting and a record of the review should be made and distributed as well as the early help plan where changes have been at the review.

14 Categories 2 and 3: significant risk of harm or serious risks of harm.

- 14.1 If the outcome of the completion of the child sexual exploitation screening tool is that the child/young person is considered to be at significant risk of harm or serious risk of harm from sexual exploitation, a referral should be made to Children's Services.
- 14.2 Upon receipt of the referral, a discussion should be held and as a minimum the Police and Children's Services should participate in the discussion and it should also include any other agency that has information or involvement. In some cases, and based on the referral information, this discussion will be held as a strategy discussion. The discussion should be held as soon as possible following the referral and in most cases this should be within 3 working days. Where it is being held as a strategy discussion, it should take place within 24 hours of the referral. The discussion/strategy discussion should consider the completed screening tool and decide on the next course of action, taking into account the level of risk that has been identified to the child or young person. The level of risk, agreed actions and key information shared should be carefully recorded. It is important that the discussion/strategy discussion also considers any risk the young person may present to others including whether they are being asked to introduce other young people to the perpetrators.
- 14.3 The discussion/strategy discussion may conclude that

- An **Assessment** will be undertaken by Children’s Services to identify the child's level of risk and need for service provision; **Appendix 2: NWG Risk Assessment Tool** provides a specialist CSE risk assessment framework for use by those working with young people considered to be at Serious Risk of Harm or Significant Risk of Harm from CSE;
 - The child is at immediate risk of **Significant Harm**. This will necessitate a **Section 47 Enquiry**;
 - Where no concerns are identified that require a social work service, Children's Services will advise the referrer verbally and in writing as of the outcome of the referral.
- 14.4 In cases where the assessment by Children’s Services identifies that a child is being sexually exploited a multi agency sexual exploitation meeting (MASE) should be convened.
- 14.5 In cases of child sexual exploitation, the minimum threshold for Section 47 Enquiries is:
- An immediate risk of Significant Harm;
 - Concern that abuse through sexual exploitation is being actively encouraged by a parent/ carer;
 - Concern that a related or unrelated adult, in a position of trust or responsibility to the child, is organising or encouraging abuse through sexual exploitation
- 14.6 The younger the child the more likely it is that child protection procedures will be appropriate. However, the vulnerability of older children must not be dismissed. As with all referrals child protection procedures should be initiated at any point that it is recognised that the threshold has been met.

15 Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Meetings

- 15.1 Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) meetings should be chaired by a Children’s Services Manager or the Local Authority CSE co-ordinator and take place within 15 working days of the referral to Children’s Services. **Appendix 3** “Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation meeting initial agenda” provides a suggested format for the agenda and the record of the meeting will constitute a record of attendees, the completed specialist CSE risk assessment and the child’s plan.
- 15.2 Attendance at the meeting should include:
- The referrer, if a professional;
 - Education and health services;
 - Police
 - Social worker;

- CSE Coordinator;
 - Child/young person;
 - Parent(s)/carer(s);
 - Any other relevant person (e.g. fostering link worker, residential key worker / manager, YOS worker, voluntary agency worker, GP); and
- 15.3 Children/family/carers will be invited to all or part of the meeting where appropriate; however a decision will be made on a case by case basis depending on the circumstances of each case. It may be necessary if there is a confidential police investigation underway, surveillance or concerns about the parents or carers that the child and parents/carers are excluded from all or part of the meeting.
- 15.4 In advance of the MASE meeting and as part of the social work assessment, the Social Worker will contact the GP to establish if any relevant information is known in relation to CSE. Where such information is known; the GP will be invited to attend the MASE meeting. After the MASE meeting and where a GP has not been in attendance, the Social Worker will formally advise the GP that the child is subject to CSE safeguarding concerns.
- 15.5 The purpose of the meeting should be to:
- Share and clarify information in order to complete CSE risk assessment;
 - Establish exact nature of concerns and the child or young person's needs;
 - Establish risk for any other children, including siblings;
 - Share information pertaining to a suspected perpetrator(s) with police, i.e. car registration, nickname/ alias, descriptions, tattoos, premises/locations etc;
 - Consider the disruption and prosecution of perpetrators;
 - Consider a referral using the National Referral Mechanism in cases where a child/ young person may have been trafficked;
 - Develop a multi-agency plan to meet the child's needs including support for parents/carers;
- 15.6 The outcome of meeting may be that:
- There is a need to invoke child protection procedures ;
 - There is a possibility of criminal action against an adult;
 - Coordinated multi-agency support is required to support and divert the child from involvement in sexual exploitation;
 - There is insufficient information at this stage, but concerns remain, and further assessment is required to clarify them;

- 15.7 If a decision is made during the MASE meeting that a Section 47 Enquiry should be initiated, then the status of the meeting should change to that of a Strategy Discussion.
- 15.8 Where ongoing work is required, a Lead Professional will be identified at the meeting. This will usually be a social worker.
- 15.9 The Child's Plan must identify the desired outcomes for the child/young person and specify who is responsible for undertaking the work to achieve the desired outcomes. The ICS Template for a Child's Plan should be used to record the plan. Unless Child Protection Procedures are invoked, a date for a review meeting should be agreed to take place in a timeframe commensurate with the child's needs and no later than three months after the initial meeting. Appendix 4: Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation Meeting Review Agenda provides a suggested format for an agenda for these meetings.

16 Child Protection Conferences

- 16.1 If at the end of a Section 47 enquiry the assessment is that the child is at risk of ongoing significant harm, a Child Protection Conference should be held as set out in the Initial Child Protection Conference Procedure.
- 16.2 The Child Protection Conference Chairperson must ensure that a plan is developed to promote the child's safety as well as the disruption/investigation of perpetrators. As appropriate, parents/carers should be included as key partners in any Child Protection Plan including being asked to report the child missing from home and record any information that would support a future prosecution.

17 Children and young people known to Children's Services

- 17.1 In any case where a child or young person known to children's services presents signs of child sexual exploitation, the CSE screening tool should be completed by the allocated worker and also the CSE co-ordinator should be advised.
- 17.2 Indeed, Children's Services may decide to routinely screen vulnerable groups of children and young people for CSE to support prevention and early identification. If the outcome of the screening tool is that the child or young person is considered to be at risk of child sexual exploitation, the allocated workers in conjunction with other professionals working with the child/ young person should, consider who can provide intervention to enable the child to recognise and avoid risky behaviours and individuals. The child/ young person should also be supported to engage in positive activities and relationships. The agreed intervention should be included in the existing child's plan and reviewed through the relevant review process.
- 17.3 If the outcome of the screening tool is that the child/ young person is considered to be at significant risk of harm or serious risk of harm from sexual exploitation the child's assessment should be up dated through the completion of the CSE risk assessment tool. In cases where the updated assessment by Children's Services identifies that the child is being sexually exploited, a multi-agency meeting should be convened under the appropriate planning and review process and actions agreed to support the child's safety and wellbeing. The meeting can be chaired by a Children's Services Manager or the CSE Coordinator. The

agreed actions should be incorporated into the existing child's plan. The meeting will need to address the issues set out at currently 15.5.

- 17.4 The child's plan will continue to be reviewed and revised in accordance with the relevant review process to support the child / young person's safety and wellbeing. As appropriate, parents/carers should be included as key partners in the child's plan including being asked to report the child missing from home and record any information that would support a future prosecution.

18 Children in Care

- 18.1 In any case where a child or young person who is looked after presents with signs of child sexual exploitation, the CSE screening tool should be completed by the allocated worker and the CSE co-ordinator should also be advised. Indeed Children's Services may decide to routinely screen looked after children/young people over the age of 10 for CSE to support prevention and early identification.
- 18.2 If the outcome of the screening tool is that the child/young person is considered to be at risk of child sexual exploitation, the allocated workers in conjunction with other professionals working with the child/ young person should consider who can provide intervention to enable the child to recognise and avoid risky behaviours and individuals. The child/ young person should also be supported to engage in positive activities and relationships. The agreed intervention should be included in the existing child's plan and reviewed through the relevant review process.
- 18.3 If the outcome of the screening tool is that the child / young person is considered to be at significant risk of harm or sexual risk of harm from sexual exploitation, the child's assessment should be updated through the completion of the CSE risk assessment tool. In cases where the updated assessment by Children's Services identifies that a looked after child is being sexually exploited, a multi agency meeting should be convened and actions agreed to support the child's safety and well-being. The meeting can be chaired by a Children's Services Manager, the CSE co-ordinator or if it is being carried out as part of the statutory review process by the child's Independent Reviewing Officer. The agreed actions should be incorporated into the Child's Care Plan. The meeting and revised care plan will need to address the issues set out at (currently 15.5). The Care Plan will continue to be reviewed by the Looked After Review process.
- 18.4 The same procedures as above should be followed in cases where young people in the 16+ team are considered to be at Significant Risk of Harm or Serious Risk of Harm of abuse from sexual exploitation.

19 Involvement of multiple children in child sexual exploitation.

- 19.1 Where there is knowledge or strong suspicion that children or young people are involved in sexual exploitation together, or are being controlled by the same person, there will need to be additional planning, including consideration of the use of child protection procedures and/or **Complex (Organised or Multiple) Abuse Procedure**.

- 19.2 It will be essential to ensure that there are no inconsistencies between individual children's Care Plans. Where a looked after child is placed in the area of another authority, or children from other authorities are involved, that authority's duty manager must be contacted, to discuss which authority is to take overall responsibility for convening the meeting and co-ordinating the response. Please see Complex Organised or Multiple Abuse Procedure (CSE) for guidance in such circumstances.

20 Trafficking

- 20.1 Children who are abused through child sexual exploitation may also be trafficked.
- 20.2 There are three different types of trafficking of children for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Firstly, there is trafficking from abroad into the United Kingdom. The second category is internal trafficking, where children are moved from one place to another in the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation. This may be from one street to a neighbouring street, from one area of a town or city to another area, or across Local Authority borders. It is not the distance that is relevant in the definition of internal trafficking, but the movement of a child or young person for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The third is being trafficked out of the UK to other countries and brought back again.
- 20.3 Trafficking children, including for the purpose of sexual exploitation, is a criminal offence and concerns that a child may be being trafficked should always be reported to the police.
- 20.4 Professionals will need to collect as much data as possible which includes anything you hear the child say, or hear other children say about them, dates and times when you know or suspect they have been trafficked and any information about the people they were with and vehicles used to transport them. This should be recorded carefully and passed to the police for investigation. Consideration should also be given to making a referral using the National Referral Mechanism.
- 20.5 For more information, please see the multi-agency procedures for safeguarding children who may have been trafficked ([add link](#)).

21 Working with parents/carers

- 21.1 Child sexual exploitation affects children from all backgrounds and often their parents or carers will be the first to pick up signs that something is wrong. Where a parent or carer approaches services their concerns must be listened to carefully. It may be helpful to use the CSE Screening Tool with the parents or carers to help identify the concerns and whether they are indicative of CSE or point to other concerns.
- 21.2 In a small minority of cases, the parents or carers or wider family may be implicit or complicit in the CSE and attempts should be made to assess this at the earliest stage to ensure lingering concerns do not become a barrier to effective working or compromise any police investigation.
- 21.3 Unless there are grounds to suspect that the parent or carer are implicated they should be treated as key partners in safeguarding and protecting their child. They should be encouraged to record and share all information (including using the CSE information sharing

tool, appendix 5) and should be encouraged to be active participants in all professionals meetings.

- 21.4 Where the parents, carers or wider family members are implicated this should be dealt with as with any other child protection issue, including through discussions with the police in a strategy meeting.
- 21.5 In some cases the parents will have additional needs such as mental health problems, disabilities, substance misuse issues or domestic abuse. In such cases consideration should be given to how best support the parents. That is likely to be through the appropriate adult services. In such cases the child safeguarding professionals must ensure close working with the adults' workers.
- 21.6 Where there is not a professional linked to the adult and they do not meet the criteria for services in their own right, consideration should be given to a team approach with one worker allocated to the child and another to support the parents or carers. Clarity of roles and responsibilities and good communication will be essential.
- 21.7 In most families the parents and carers are best placed to protect their child and strategies should be put in place to support them in this role.
- 21.8 Parents, carers and other family members, including siblings are likely to be distressed by what is happening to their child and are likely to experience feelings such as anger, powerlessness and fear. This will be compounded if they do not understand what steps are being taken to protect their child and to deal with their abusers. It is important that there are clear lines of communication and that parents and carers are kept informed at all stages of the process

22 Supporting staff

- 22.1 All staff who work, or who might come into contact with sexually exploited children and young people should be provided with comprehensive and regular training which covers:
- preventing child sexual exploitation
 - identifying all models of child sexual exploitation
 - investigating child sexual exploitation, compiling a case, and supporting children through the process
 - the importance of specialist supervision in this work, and how to use it.
- 22.2 All staff dealing with CSE should be offered regular supervisory or consultation from an experienced supervisor who should support and explore the potentially traumatic impact of the work on the emotions, judgement and resilience of individual professionals.
- 22.3 The See Me Hear Me framework provides a set of questions to support agencies and managers/supervisors address their responsibilities to their staff. It is through staff that agencies meet their responsibilities to vulnerable children and young people and without the right training and support, frontline staff cannot act effectively.

- 22.4 The 4 questions that professionals ask or are concerned about are set out below followed by a message for managers/supervisors and should be used to provide high quality supervision and support to staff working with CSE

Question 1

'What is this young person's behaviour telling me?'

Message 1 for managers/supervisors

Explore with your staff that they have and are being curious about the child or young person.

Question 2

'Do I know enough?'

Message 2 for managers/supervisors

Explore with your staff how confident and able to act they are

Question 3

'This work is stressful – how do I manage the impact on me?'

Message 3 for managers/supervisors

Explore with your staff how they are managing their emotions and feelings and how these are impacting on their unconscious and conscious thinking and practice.

Question 4

'Will my managers back me, when I need to make difficult decisions?'

Message 4 for managers/supervisors

Explore with your staff how supported they feel by you, management and the organisation to safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation . Explore if they are experiencing any barriers

23 Supporting witnesses

- 23.1 Victims and witnesses involved in cases of CSE are particularly vulnerable. Victim support is vital in its own right but is also an important aspect of ensuring a successful prosecution. Many of the issues facing young victims and witnesses are addressed in a Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) policy document on prosecuting cases involving children and young people as victims and witnesses. You can access the CPS guidance on this link:

http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/v_to_z/safeguarding_children_as_victims_and_witnesses/

- 23.2 Special measures are available for any witness under 17, and can be requested for a vulnerable or intimidated witness of any age. For those under 17 it would be usual for evidence to be video-recorded, and for a live link to be used. These measures can also be

made available to vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. Indeed the court will consider any difficulty faced by the young witness provided that it is brought to their attention. Given the protracted nature of investigations in sexual exploitation cases, it is not unusual for a young person to have reached the age of 18 before the case comes to court. It is important that consideration should be given to applying for special measures in these cases.

23.3 Special measures include the following:

- Using a video of the child's evidence to give their account of what happened;
- Answering questions from the defence using the live link from another room;
- In sexual cases, giving evidence in private by clearing the court of people who do not need to be there;
- Advocates and judges in the Crown Court removing their wigs and gowns;
- Aids, such as sign and symbol boards, for children who have difficulty speaking;
- Screens to prevent a witness who is in court from having to see the defendant;
- An intermediary to help explain the questions or answers if necessary.

23.4 It is important that these are considered on an individual basis and discussed with the child concerned. Assumptions should not be made for the child as, for example, some children do decide they want to actually face their abuser(s) in court rather than give evidence via video link.

23.5 Sound preparation and effective witness care can increase the likelihood of an effective trial. Care should be taken in managing the support to a victim and their family before and during the court process. A victim care strategy should be driven by the victim's needs and include details such as:

- Bail management of suspected perpetrators
- Keeping them updated with trial dates
- Sending reminders
- Encouraging and assisting in pre-trial familiarisation visits
- Providing victims and other child witnesses with age appropriate child witness packs
- Pre-viewing of ABE
- Offering transport to and from court and practical and emotional support overnight
- Facilitation of face to face meeting with the trial Barrister
- Debriefing them at the end of each day
- Reassuring them of their safety
- Arrangements for attendance at sentencing as part of the closure process
- In extreme cases, where there is further risk of CSE or threat to life, arranging re-housing through the Local Authority
- Assisting with an application for criminal injuries compensation (after trial)

23.6 It is a fundamental aspect of the Crown Prosecution Service policy and the multi-agency practice guidance on pre-trial therapy that the best interests of the child are paramount when deciding whether, when and in what form, therapeutic help is given. Further details can be found in the multi-agency practice guidance entitled 'Provision of Therapy for Child Witnesses Prior to a Criminal Trial'.

24 Evidence gathering and information sharing

- 24.1 The effective identification and recording of information and intelligence in relation to individual cases is crucial to the successful disruption and prosecution of perpetrators. All professionals should continually gather record and share information with the appropriate authorities. Parents and carers should be encouraged and supported in identifying perpetrators, collecting and preserving evidence (medical, forensic and circumstantial) as well as in supporting their children through the criminal justice process. Such information can form the basis of strong intelligence and can help the police to start an investigation.
- 24.2 Ensuring that evidence is gathered in a way that will be accepted by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and can be used in court is critical. The CPS should work with local partners to discuss how to build a successful case in order to support successful prosecutions including a victimless prosecution.
- 24.3 The investigation should seek to identify and assemble evidence that will support charges to reflect the full extent of the abuse. Photographic evidence of physical abuse should be obtained whenever appropriate. It will help in establishing severe abuse even when the child may be unwilling or unable to give evidence. Photographic evidence of the conditions in which a child was kept could also provide valuable evidence for charges of kidnapping or false imprisonment.
- 24.4 Care should be taken, however, in obtaining such evidence to ensure that it does not compound the abuse suffered by the young person, and she or he should be made aware that photographs are being taken for evidential purposes. Those investigating criminal actions must understand that the welfare of the child is the paramount concern.

25 Information sharing tool

- 25.1 West Midlands Police have developed an information sharing tool to be used by front line practitioners to share information with regard to Child Sexual Exploitation (see Appendix 5: Information Sharing Tool). Due to the nature of information often being anecdotal or unsubstantiated, such sharing must be done with sensitivity to data protection, confidentiality and human rights. However, it is often small seemingly innocuous pieces of information that come together to identify those who present risk.
- 25.2 The purpose of this tool is for agencies to record any information that may be important and relevant for the police in order to build intelligence, for example:-
- Vehicle details including registration/make/model/colour etc.
 - Details/descriptions including names/nicknames of suspected perpetrators.
 - Details/descriptions of unusual/regular callers to children's homes.
 - Phone numbers of suspected perpetrators.

- Address details of suspected perpetrators
 - Details of any addresses or localities where the child may have been taken
- 25.3 This information will help the police keep an overview of linked crimes/cases etc. and help build intelligence and a bigger picture in relation to organised criminal networks.
- 25.4 This tool is a way of formalising information sharing between agencies and the police, and it is not to be used as a referral tool to children’s social care.
- 25.5 In using the information sharing tool, practitioners or others must submit the information securely to West Midlands Police and in accordance with their own agency’s information sharing arrangements.
- 25.6 The information will be assessed by West Midlands Police and filtered through police intelligence as appropriate.

26 Disruption

- 26.1 Disrupting perpetrator behaviour is an important part of work to tackle the sexual exploitation of children and young people.
- 26.2 A list of disruption strategies can be found below. However, this should not be used as an exhaustive list.
- (i) Consideration should always be given to using Child Abduction Warning notices under Section 2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984 and Section 4 of the Children Act 1989. Appendix 6A and 6B contain sample letters that can be used to issue a Child Abduction Warning.
 - (ii) Any ‘hotspot’ locations identified must be policed accordingly. These locations may include night time economy venues, hostels, bed and breakfast accommodation, hotels, food outlets, taxi ranks, schools or children’s homes, addresses frequented by missing children or other venues where perpetrators may prey on victims including parks. Appropriate information must be provided to patrolling Officers especially Local Neighbourhood teams to enable disruption and intelligence gathering to take place.
 - (iii) Proactive use of legislation to challenge and confront inappropriate behaviour, including:
 - (iv) Anti-Social Behaviour Orders
 - (v) Risk of Sexual Harm Orders (to be replaced by new powers shortly)
 - (vi) Sexual Offences Prevention Orders
 - (vii) Serious Crime Prevention Orders (to be replaced by new powers shortly)
 - (viii) Use of legislation to enforce/prevent children accessing certain premises, business or individuals

- (ix) Use of Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to require hotels and similar establishments to provide information to the police about guests.
- (x) Using housing legislation to close down premises for the purposes of CSE.
- (xi) Targeting Private Hire and taxi drivers who knowingly transport vulnerable young people for the purposes of CSE (including revocation of individual drivers licences)
- (xii) Visible policing and licensing enforcement in areas where CSE is known or suspected to be taking place; including hotels, B & B's, guest houses, restaurants and any spaces within or connected to licenses premises and
- (xiii) Trigger plans to deal with any street contact with victims or suspects
- (xiv) ANPR – any vehicles linked to CSE through evidence or intelligence should be linked to the ANPR system.
- (xv) Use of relevant markers/flags on Police systems (Corvus, Compact and PNC) e.g. for children and young people identified at risk of CSE who if stopped, sighted or dealt with in any circumstances or at any unsociable hour, the Officer is immediately alerted that the child or young person is at risk of CSE and can take the appropriate action to safeguard the child or young person.

27 Coordinating intelligence gathering and disruption activity

27.1 West Midlands Police through Force-wide use of intelligence is well placed to identify:-

- CSE hotspots in the Local Authority area as well as the wider West Midlands Metropolitan area.
- Trafficking both into and out of the region and
- Perpetrators including those who are linked to more than one child or young person or who operate as part of an organised network.

27.2 In addition the local CSE Coordinator and partner agencies are well placed to identify links and trends in the sexual exploitation of children and young people at a local level as well as cross-border issues.

27.3 Work at a local level needs to be informed by intelligence and tackling perpetrator behaviour and local hot spots requires a partnership approach. To enable this to happen, every Local Authority area should establish a multi-agency group that will direct medium and long-term actions to disrupt and reduce the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed through sexual exploitation and missing episodes. These meetings are called Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Operational Group (CMOG) in the regional CSE pathway; however local areas will decide on what they will call this group.

27.4 The aims of CMOG are:-

- To ensure cases of CSE are well-managed by ensuring that all possible action has been taken to disrupt and bring perpetrators to account (NB partner agencies should

not wait until a CMOG meeting to address disruption and investigation and instead also ensure that disruption and investigative activity is integrated into any child's plan)

- To ensure that cases are considered by a single multi-agency group to support the identification of links between individual cases
- To ensure that intelligence relating to patterns of CSE and hot spots in the local area and region are analysed and action taken as required
- To promote the sharing of information to inform the local and regional intelligence picture (NB partner agencies should not wait until a CMOG meeting share information with the police and instead this information should be submitted to the police in a timely manner as set out at Section 25

27.5 CMOG meetings will be chaired by a minimum rank of Detective Inspector from the Child Abuse Investigation

Unit. Sample terms of reference for the CMOG meetings can be found at appendix 7.

28 Licensing Act 2003

28.1 To support disruption of perpetrator activity and child sexual exploitation at licensed premises, the LSCB should consider using its powers as a Responsible Authority under the Licensing Act 2003. Under this legislation, the LSCB is able to request a review of an existing licence where concerns have been identified about the protection of children from harm licensing objective.

28.2 Any such review will allow the LSCB and other Responsible Authorities, including the Police, to present information to the Local Authority Licensing Committee who have the authority to amend, suspend or indeed remove the premises licence.

29 Data Collection

29.1 Each LSCB should put in place systems to track and monitor cases of sexual exploitation that come to the attention of local agencies including schools, colleges and other education organisations, health, the police, social care, housing services and voluntary and community sector organisations. This information should be used to monitor prevalence, nature and responses to child sexual exploitation and also to contribute to local and regional problem profiling.

29.2 It is recommended that the University of Bedfordshire Child Sexual Exploitation data monitoring tool is used by the LSCB and this will support a consistent approach to compiling a regional problem profile.

30 Problem Profiling

30.1 Problem profiling means capturing all the patterns of sexual exploitation to which children and young people are subjected to in a local area. A comprehensive problem profile will need to be developed and updated at a local and regional level and will significantly improve the ability to safeguard all children and young people as it will enable the effective:

- Development of a multi-agency strategy and related action plans
 - Commissioning of services
 - Delivery of training and awareness-raising activity to support local professionals
- 30.2 West Midlands Police, working in partnership with other agencies, will lead the compiling of a comprehensive regional problem profile.
- 30.3 The Office of the Children’s Commissioner recommends that a comprehensive problem profile should draw upon the following:-
- An assessment of children who show the warning signs listed at 10.5 through the collation and matching of multi-agency data.
 - Intelligence on local street gangs including their structure, inter connections and the mapping of the females associated with them.
 - Intelligence on cases of sexual bullying and school exclusions for sexual misconduct.
 - Intelligence on local businesses that are of concern.
 - Intelligence on local prostitution and drugs markets.
 - Tasking of covert policing assets and collection of intelligence from across all multi-agency partners which are likely to come into contact with sexually exploited children (e.g. sexual health services, youth offending teams, schools).
 - A map showing the location of local residential children’s homes.
- 30.4 Further guidance on compiling a CSE problem profile can be found at Appendix 5 of the Office of the children’s Commissioners Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (Final Report) which can be accessed [here](#)

31 Performance management

- 31.1 CSE performance management information will need to be routinely gathered and analysed as part of single agency governance arrangements as well as the LSCB responsibility to monitor the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements.
- 31.2 A LSCB CSE performance dataset has been agreed at a regional level (see appendix 8) and should be used by LSCB’s as one mechanism to evaluate whether partnership working and services to tackle CSE are achieving the intended outcomes for children and young people.
- 31.3 It is important to highlight that the LSCB dataset cannot be a substitute for single agency CSE performance management arrangements and each partner agency will need to ensure robust performance management arrangements in respect of their contribution to tackling CSE.

32 Measuring impact including feedback from children and young people

- 32.1 At an individual case level, as well as service level, partner agencies should systematically and regularly evaluate whether immediate, short or long term outcomes for children and young people have improved as a result of the work undertaken. This evaluation activity should also include feedback from children and young people.

- 32.2 Appendix 9 sets out a list of measures that can be used to develop outcome focused plans and also to evaluate the impact of multi-agency intervention on outcomes of children and young people. The list should not however, be viewed as an exhaustive list. The distance travelled in terms of improving outcomes should be evaluated when the child's plan is reviewed.
- 32.3 Feedback from children and young people will assist services to ensure that the needs and best interests of children and young people are met.
- 32.4 The Office of the Children's Commissioner consulted with children and young people and found that they considered the following useful and important:-
- being listened to and understood
 - having their views considered
 - having their individual needs and equalities addressed
 - being kept informed of what is happening
 - given space to talk in their own time and be flexible
 - services that are attentive and respectful of their identity, culture, needs and wishes
 - being able to trust and know the people who are working with them
 - having one worker who sticks with them throughout
 - when people keep trying and do not give up on them
 - language that is accessible
 - provide evidence that their input has been taken in to account and has made a difference.
- 32.5 Each Local Authority area should develop a system to routinely secure the feedback of children and young people who are receiving support because of concerns about child sexual exploitation. The findings of this process should be used to inform further developments and improve practice.