



Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together

Multi- Agency Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy

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This document sets out the strategy for Safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children from Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Wolverhampton.

1. Definition of Child Sexual Exploitation:

The WSCB has adopted the definition of sexual exploitation that is set out in statutory guidance¹:

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

CSE is a form of abuse where children receive something – such as accommodation, drugs, affection, gifts or money – in ‘exchange’ for sexual activity. Often the victim is groomed into believing the abuser cares for them.

CSE can occur through the use of technology without the child’s immediate recognition; for example, being persuaded to post images on the internet or mobile phones without immediate reward or gain.

However, violence, coercion, intimidation is common, involvement in exploitative relationships is frequently characterised by the child or young person having limited choices as a result of their social, economic or emotional vulnerability.

CSE is child abuse, involving the child being forced, coerced or intimidated. The child or young person is a victim. It is not an informed choice and they may not be aware that they are being abused.

In varying degrees CSE includes sexual, emotional and physical abuse and neglect. It is not the child’s fault and sexual activity with a child under the age of 16 years is unlawful.

2. Aims and objectives

The purpose of the strategy is to ensure a robust, coordinated multi- agency response to CSE in Wolverhampton under three broad headings: Prevention; Protection and Prosecution. Taking a proactive approach focused on early identification and intervention can only be achieved through an integrated approach, with effective joint working and a shared understanding of the problem. A key aim of the document is to ensure that the multi-agency response is child centred.

3.Principles

¹ Updated to reflect definition from: “Child sexual exploitation: Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation. February 2017”

The Wolverhampton multi-agency partnership has a duty to safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation in accordance with the policies, procedures and guidance of the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together (WST).

The principles underpinning a multi-agency response to the sexual exploitation of children include:

- Integrated working (e.g. co-location) – Close collaboration in multi-agency working is essential in developing ‘real time’ risk assessments to enhance decision making. A truly integrated approach helps to break down cultural barriers, leading to greater understanding and mutual respect among different agencies.
- Joint risk assessments – these ensure clear and sufficient information about particular cases and joint plans for individual interventions.
- A victim focused approach – the needs of the victim must be at the forefront of our approach not systems and processes.
- Good leadership & clear governance – strong leadership can often bind different organisations together to develop a shared culture.
- Frequent review of operations – to continue to drive improvement of service. (As detailed in the joint letter from the Ministry of Justice, Department for Communities and local government, Department of health and the Home Office to all Chairs of Local Safeguarding Children boards dated 3rd March 2015)

This document sets out how through our partnerships we will prevent children from being harmed by CSE, protect those who have been and prosecute offenders who have harmed them.

This multi-agency strategy for safeguarding children who are abused or at risk of abuse through CSE draws on good practice, guidance and legislation including:

- The West Midlands Regional framework for CSE (Appendix A)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE 2015)
- Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (Home Office March 2015)
- Sexual Exploitation of Children: ‘It Couldn't Happen Here, Could It?’ (A thematic report by Ofsted, November 2014)
- ‘See Me: Hear Me’ (OCC 2013), Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (DCSF, 2009),
- Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan (DfE, 2011)
- ‘I thought I was the only one in the world’: The Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups, (OCC 2012).

4. Abuse Models of Child Sexual Exploitation

Barnardos has identified three different models of CSE, these being:

1. Inappropriate relationships
2. Boyfriend model and peer exploitation
3. Organised exploitation and trafficking

More details of these can be found at Appendix B

Grooming using the internet and mobile technology is also becoming increasingly common. Along with a significant risk in the use of mobile phones, including Bluetooth technology, perpetrators target children and young people through online sites as well as grooming through text and picture messages.

5. Risk Indicators

There are a number of factors which may place child/young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

The list below is not exhaustive but highlights significant influences on a child/young person's vulnerability to sexual exploitation.

Wolverhampton recognises that the following could be indicators of a child being at Serious Risk of CSE:

- Periods of absence/missing (day & night)
- Relationship of concern with a controlling adult (male or female) or young person, which might involve physical and/or emotional abuse and/or gang activity
- Entering/leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults (not car theft)
- Unexplained amounts of money, expensive clothes or other items
- Frequenting areas known for risky activities
- Groomed/abused via the Internet and mobile technology and/or excessive use of mobile phone including late at night
- Having unexplained contact with hotels, taxi companies or fast food outlets
- Recurring Sexually Transmitted Infections/ Repeat Terminations

We also recognise that the following could be indicators of a child being at Significant Risk of CSE:

- Whereabouts unclear or unknown – day and/or night
- Absences/exclusion from school or not engaged in school/college/ training/work
- Regular/Multiple contacts from unknown adults/young people
- Physical injuries without plausible explanation
- Sexually transmitted infections/ Pregnancies / termination of pregnancies
- Alcohol Misuse/Drugs Misuse
- Self-harming/challenging behaviours/suicide attempts/ eating disorders/aggression
- Use of a mobile phone which causes concern – including sexting/multiple phones/sims
- Unsafe use of internet
- Has been sexually assaulted
- Disclosure of sexual/physical assault followed by withdrawal of allegation
- Risky/inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Lack of awareness/understanding of being safe
- Peers involved in sexual exploitation/risky or concerning behaviours
- Living independently and failing to respond to attempts by workers to keep in touch
- A&E attendance because of alcohol/drug misuse
- Being accompanied to appointments by an unknown person that causes concern
- Association with gang members that suggests sexual exploitation is a possibility
- Volatile behaviour/hostility in relationships with parents/carers and other family members

6. National and Local Context

The prevalence of CSE is difficult to ascertain with any accuracy due to:

- Low levels of reporting by young people
- Variable levels of awareness & confusion around definition
- Inadequate intelligence gathering & information sharing
- Inconsistent recording

In 2013 The Office of Children's Commissioners Commissioner identified 2092 known victims of CSE nationally

In the West Midlands, existing estimates (as of July 2015²,) are:

- 376 identified victims of CSE in the West Midlands Region
- 24 identified victims of CSE in Wolverhampton
- 229 identified offenders of CSE in the West Midlands Region
- 15 identified offenders of CSE in Wolverhampton

Since June 2014 the number of victims and offenders of CSE has increased significantly which is allowing the authorities to better understand and respond to the issues across the borough.

Numbers of victims and offenders of CSE known to the authorities are continually changing as we strive to support and reduce the risk of those known to us and improve awareness of CSE and confidence in reporting it to us.

7. Our Delivery Plan

The Sexual Exploitation, Missing and Trafficked Committee (SEMT) have a working Delivery Plan divided into the following sections:

- PREVENTION
- PROTECTION
- PROSECUTE

7.1 Prevention

It is widely recognised that effective multi-agency preventative practices contribute to the safeguarding of children against the risks of CSE. The SEMT Committee Delivery Plan has targeted actions in the following areas:

- Undertake regular local CSE profiling using partnership information and intelligence regarding victims, offenders and locations (inc. missing, trafficked and gang information)
- Deliver a CSE awareness campaign for children and young people, parents, carers, professionals and business partners

² Updated information in Wolverhampton Problem Profile (WSCB 08.03.17)

- Undertake a review of services available to children and young people at risk/victims of CSE, missing or trafficked
- Ensure that Safeguarding training is provided for all frontline professionals including residential care providers and foster carers
- Ensure effective practices within Early Help provisions for children and young people who could potentially be a future risk of CSE
- Undertake regular self-assessments in order to judge the effectiveness of WSCB in CSE, missing & trafficked prevention activity

7.2 Protection

Victims of CSE are extremely vulnerable and therefore require a trusting wrap-around approach which offers support. The SEMT Delivery Plan has targeted actions in the following areas:

- Ensuring that the WSCB multi-agency strategy is regularly reviewed; to include cross border working arrangements and procedures for children placed outside of the borough
- Ensure that all Missing From Home interviews are completed within the required 72 hours and information shared with partners informing safeguarding activities are being implemented for each child
- Provide a service for parents and carers of children and young people victims of/ at risk of CSE; greater involvement of parents and carers in the safeguarding process
- Identify and address issues of gang related CSE in a coordinated partnership approach, sharing information and disrupting gang activity
- Review processes for identification of victims of CSE, missing and trafficked and risk is robustly addressed; to include those children placed within Wolverhampton from other Local Authority areas
- Ensure that the proposed Wolverhampton MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) understands and supports CSE delivery plan and regional processes
- Regularly review the Terms of reference, membership and effectiveness of SEMT in line with changing priorities with clear governance and accountability arrangements with the CCSE and Missing Operational Group (CMOG)

7.3 Prosecute

It is vitally important that all efforts are taken to bring to justice perpetrators who exploit and abuse children. Victims do not always perceive themselves to be victims and may not see that they are being abused, therefore it is vital that all agencies seek to disrupt activity in a co-ordinated manner with criminal justice partners seeking opportunities to prosecute for other offences should there be insufficient evidence for sexual offences.

The SEMT Committee Delivery Plan has targeted actions in the following areas:

- Develop disruption plans to utilise all legislation to maximise opportunities for prosecuting offenders and disrupt criminal activity related/not related to CSE
- Target vulnerable locations frequented by offenders and children at risk/victims of CSE, missing and trafficked
- Single and multi-agency training to include completion of CSE forms (screening tool/Risk assessments), intelligence submission and awareness of relevant criminal offences
- West Midlands Police and partners to review local multi-agency data collection processes to ensure information is shared
- Review practices to ensure victims of CSE who go on to become offenders are provided with rehabilitation and support
- West Midlands Police to provide regular information to CMOG in relation to local investigations
- Criminal Justice partners to ensure the utilisation of appropriate and effective interventions for working with CSE perpetrators
- Ensure effective victim support service(s) across Wolverhampton; key workers to be identified and maintain the link with victim(s) through the investigation process/court

8. Governance, Accountability and Monitoring

This strategy is the Wolverhampton Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) strategy and therefore all partners are accountable to the board for it.

The strategy is managed by the Strategic CSE sub committee (SEMT) of the LSCB, the Chair of this being a Detective Chief Inspector from West Midlands Police.

As per the regional framework, SEMT is supported by a CSE operational group (CMOG) which meets monthly, is chaired by a Detective Inspector from West Midlands Police and is made up of senior professionals within key agencies across Wolverhampton who deliver services, support, interventions and criminal justice options around CSE and reports any themes, barriers and operational issues.

Attendance at SEMT is monitored and any issues escalated via the LSCB.

The SEMT agenda includes a number of standing agenda items, including a review of the CSE delivery plan and an update report from CMOG.

The chair of SEMT presents a quarterly report to the LSCB detailing progress against the delivery plan and any barriers to delivering this strategy.

Link to WSCB website www.wolverhamptonsafeguarding.org.uk

