NELC Children's Social Care
Adolescent Risk/Extra Familial Safeguarding Strategy 2020-2023

Introduction

This strategy describes how NE Lincolnshire Children's Social Care (single agency) are addressing and continuously improving the ways we are tackling potential risks to adolescent young people. It is acknowledged that risks may be present within both inter and extra familial situations, however, this paper focuses on our strategy to address extra familial factors, including our integrated and holistic approach to child criminal exploitation (as well as modern day slavery), child sexual exploitation and missing children informed by a contextual safeguarding framework.

To safeguard young people, it is important that we recognise their developmental stage, acknowledging that the dynamics of adolescence include a range of behaviours that may lead to:

- Risk taking, experimentation and motivation for "thrills"

- A desire for short term gains

- Challenges in emotional regulation, including intense feelings and emotions

- An increasing desire for autonomy and independence, with peer influence becoming more important than that of parental influence

We recognise the vulnerability of young people who display challenging, harmful, criminal and/or abusive behaviours as a consequence (or part) of the exploitation they experience.

Why we think this is important: Our Mission

NE Lincolnshire Children's Social Care working with partner organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area, including adolescents at risk of exploitation. The term 'contextual safeguarding relates to an approach developed by Dr Carlene Firmin and colleagues within the University of Bedfordshire. The term was first used in 2015 to describe how to advance practice and policy responses to extra-familial harm, i.e. risks that young people face outside of the family environment. Risks include criminal and sexual exploitation, gangs, serious youth violence, radicalisation, harmful sexual behaviour and online abuse. Contextual Safeguarding is included within statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 to recognise safeguarding approaches to extra-familial threats to children. Ofsted only use the term 'contextual' when referring to the approach developed by the University of Bedfordshire as defined below, otherwise they use the terms 'risk to children outside the home' or 'extra-familial abuse'. In this strategy we have adopted the same stance as Ofsted.

This strategy sits within the NE Lincolnshire Councils key outcomes framework in which we want all people in the area to:

- Feel safe and are safe

- Enjoy good health and well-being

- Fulfil their potential through skills and learning

What we mean by Child Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding: (See appendix 1 for further definitions)
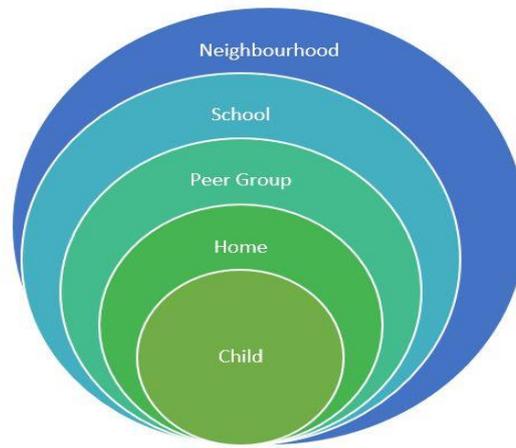
Child Exploitation as a form of abuse, is often characterised by power, exchange and (the restriction or absence of) consent, dynamics that are reflected in how the different categories of exploitation are defined in international and domestic legislation (see below Research in Practice Strategic Briefing 2020)

Category of Exploitation	Power	Exchange	Consent	Definition
Child Sexual Exploitation	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...	…. 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.	Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2018a) Child sexual exploitation: Definition and guide for practitioners (Department for Education, 2017)
Child Criminal Exploitation	Child criminal exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity…	…. in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/ or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence.	The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.	Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2018a) Serious Violence Strategy (HM Government, 2018b)
Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery	(a)"Trafficking of persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of	Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices	The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this Article shall be irrelevant where any of the means	Palermo Protocol (UN, 2000) Modern Slavery Act 2015 Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked (Department for

	force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.	similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs	set forth in sub-paragraph (a) have been used (c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking of persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in sub-paragraph (a) of this Article; (d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.	Education and Home Office, 2011)

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that children form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships. Therefore, children's social care practitioners need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra- familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that children are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts. (C. Firmin 2017 University of Bedfordshire)

It is therefore not a term that describes the extra- familial risks young people face, rather it describes an approach to addressing extra-familial forms of child abuse in which the context associated with that abuse becomes the subject of assessment and intervention.

For Further Information visit The Contextual Safeguarding Network

https://www.csnetwork.org.uk/en/publications/training-resources

This short video provides a brief introduction to the principles of Contextual Safeguarding:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0lE-XENewM

Extra familial safeguarding seeks to identify and respond to harm and abuse posed to young people outside their home, either from adults or other young people. As individuals move from early childhood and into adolescence, they spend increasing amounts of time socialising independently of their families. During this time, the nature of young people's schools, neighbourhoods, and social media platforms and the relationships that they form in these settings, inform the extent to which they encounter protection or abuse.

Young people can come to harm when they are in public places - things like robbery on public transport, sexual violence in parks, or gang related violence on the streets. Sometimes young people make friends who abuse and exploit them, and they are also harmed by adults who are outside of their family settings. Safety in public spaces, and the friends that young people make in these settings, are often beyond the control of parents or carers.

Adopting An Integrated Approach

To some extent CCE, CSE and missing are all different forms of abuse, presenting different and sometimes unique challenges. For example, the economic gains a young person may experience when being criminally exploited, and the severity of offences they might commit in the process, will not feature when a young person is being sexually exploited by their peers at school. But while every child's experience is different, from the perspective of designing our service intervention and developing the workforce, these various forms of exploitation also share much in common.

They may:

1. Manifest within, or are facilitated by risks within, extra-familial environments, including schools, public spaces and online platforms

2. Be shaped by peer norms and relationships

3. Involve young people perpetrating criminal offences, including the exploitation of others, as well as experiencing harm themselves

4. Present as the result of perceived 'choices' a young person has made, and/or continues to make, despite professional or parental intervention

5. Feature grooming, coercion, criminality and serious risks of significant sexual and physical harm, which create climates of fear and reduce engagement with services

6. Be beyond the control of parents, and rarely instigated by parents, although familial context and childhood experiences may well play a part in exacerbating (or mitigating) vulnerability and risk

7. Can lead to multiple relocations following a rapid escalation in risk including children coming into care for the first time at age 12 or over and/or managed moves across schools

8. Predominantly occur during a stage in development where individuals experience changes that impact their emotional regulation, approach to 'risk', desire for autonomy and ability to understand long-term gain or consequences – factors that can be both challenging for existing statutory service models and utilised by those who want to exploit young people

9. Continue into adulthood, particularly young people during the 18 to 25 transitional period

Extra Familial Harm/Contextual Safeguarding and the Child Protection System

The child protection system, and the legislative and policy framework which underpins it, was designed to protect children and young people from risks posed by their families and/or situations where families had reduced capacity to safeguard those in their care. Extra-familial risks can reduce/undermine the capacity of families/carers to safeguard young people – and to this extent extra-familial risks are accommodated by existing approaches, especially where parents may require intervention to help them recognise the risks to which their children are exposed. In traditional systems this dynamic would be addressed by intervening with families to increase their capacity to safeguard young people from harm and/or relocating young people away from harmful contexts.

There is, however, increased recognition across the sector that the child protection system is not working effectively enough for adolescents. Safeguarding services have traditionally been designed around younger children and their families, and not around the needs of adolescents experiencing risk of harm outside the family home. Exploitation largely manifests within extra-familial settings, including schools and neighbourhoods, where it can impact a young person's safety and undermine otherwise relatively safe and protective families.

Many families with adolescent children are themselves worried about extra-familial risks and want professionals to both support them and take action to help them manage the situation – in these scenario it is possible to intervene to support parents manage the risks via Early Help assessments, robust Child in Need plans, Child in Need Meetings or Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) processes, rather than pursuing a statutory child protection approach.

Adopting a contextual safeguarding system supports the development of approaches which disrupt/change harmful extra-familial contexts rather than move families/young people away from them. While parents/carers are not able to change the nature of extra-familial contexts we who manage or deliver services in these spaces are; and parents/families/communities become critical partners in the safeguarding agenda. This approach extends the concept of 'capacity to safeguard' beyond families to those individuals and sectors who manage extra-familial settings in which young people encounter risk.

The contextual approach also seeks to identify the ways in which professionals, adults and young people can change the social conditions of environments in which abuse has occurred and then hold them responsible for making these changes. For instance, rather than housing professionals trying to relocate a young person they may seek to involve youth workers and safer neighbourhood teams to make the housing, in which the young person already lives, safer.

Children's social care workers need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of risk management systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts.

Underpinning Principles Guiding Our Approach

- The key objective of this strategy is the prevention and protection of children and young persons from the harms of child exploitation, using a risk management approach that balances their rights to a family life where it is safe for them to remain supported within their families.

- When a child has been exploited, it is important to recognise that it is **never** the child's fault and the language that we should be using to describe a child's behaviour and or presentation has to clearly reflect this position (see appendix two below for examples). A child who is being exploited is or has experienced abuse or maltreatment and requires intervention that adopts a relational trauma focused approach. A focus on the importance of developing consistent trusting relationships is required to support this group of young victims effectively.

- Robust contextual safeguarding practice is based on strong multi-agency partnership working arrangements, intelligence sharing and evidence gathering. To address the complexities within contextual safeguarding these multi-agency relationships need to extend beyond the usual partners within statutory practice and include a broad range of community based and voluntary sector effective working relationships.

- Enforcement: we will work with partner agencies to promote a pro-active & zero tolerance approach to the targeting of individuals and groups committing exploitation offences.

Our Aims and Objectives

- Build greater connectivity between siloed areas of practice which impact the welfare of adolescents, e.g. work on child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, children missing from home, school and care, serious youth violence, trafficking, harmful sexual behaviours, domestic abuse and neglect through the development of our holistic and integrated service offer

- Help support parents to parent their child safely by ensuring that safeguarding risk assessments include questions that focus on extra-familial as well as intra-familial risks. Removal of an adolescent child should be seen as last resort, and may at times be inappropriate as this may lead to increased risk as a child may become more vulnerable to extra-familial abuse outside the family where peer relationships become more important/valued or the child is more isolated and vulnerable to exploitation.

- To develop a highly trained and skilled workforce able to hold and manage risk

- Work with partner agencies to target the contexts in which abuse occurs, from assessment through to intervention.

- Frame our work to ensure we address extra familial abuse through the lens of child welfare, as opposed to crime reduction or community safety, delivering a trauma informed response

- Develop internal data analysis and child recording systems around prevalence, impact and intervention outcomes of child exploitation so that we are fully sighted on the profile around child exploitation and can plan effectively

NE Lincs Children's Social Care safeguards young people on a day to day basis and has several strategies already in place to take a lead role in implementing the safeguarding response to extra-familial risks delivered through:

➤ The integrated front door arrangements where along with multi-agency partners, parents and professionals can access advice and information, early intervention services and assessments of need

➤ MASH, including identification and assessment of extra-familial risk factors, reviewing of exploitation within referrals, peer mapping and early identification of need for multi-agency intervention planning

➤ Early help targeted services, including parenting support, family group conferences and vulnerabilities workers based in locality hubs

➤ Risk management including use of child exploitation risk assessment tool which already covers all aspects of exploitation, including CCE, CSE, Missing and intra and extra familial risk factors

➤ Multi-agency Child in Need conferences to explore identified risks young people experience and develop plans to reduce risk, increase protection and agree intervention planning

➤ Co-chairing MACE meetings with Police partners that explore specific contextual risks, themes

➤ Strong working relationships with external agencies including schools, Police and Youth Offending service leading to several joint initiatives, including targeted Police operations, the delivery of multi-agency training and awareness raising in schools, contextual approaches to safeguarding including peer mapping, hotspot identification and safety mapping.

➤ We aim to build on the work of the GRAFT (Gaining Respect and Finding Trust) project – this is a Home Office funded initiative intervening with children at risk of or exposed to CCE and providing them with trauma related recovery services. We are currently seeking funding which would allow us to broaden the service offer to include children subject to sexual exploitation as part of this integrated strategy

➤ Delivery of Child protection case conferences where both intra and extra familial risk factors are addressed

➤ Intervention within legal arena to protect children and young people where necessary once all other avenues of support/intervention have been explored

Working with young people who are being exploited is complex and can provoke anxiety within the workforce and also for partner agencies. This may be driven by a combined awareness of the potential consequences for that young person and the apparent limited options available to reduce risk (particularly when services struggle to engage a young person who does not recognise themselves as being exploited). This may produce a desire for tools and interventions that provide a straightforward process for identifying and responding to risk – which, in practice, may equate to a reliance on risk indicator checklists and the placement of children at a distance from their home or into secure accommodation on welfare grounds. We aim through this strategy to support workers to manage the 'messiness' of exploitation – utilising professional curiosity and a range of engagement techniques to understand a young person's life and work with them to create safety. We believe that it is important to support practitioners to hold onto risk, and therefore hold onto young people, in the acknowledgement that placing them elsewhere or scoring their vulnerability won't necessarily leverage a reduction in that risk.

What we Intend to Do about Tackling Extra-familial Risk? Our Action Plan.

Objective	Workstream	Activity	By Whom	By When	Impact	Evidence
Increase awareness and understanding of child exploitation and its impact on children and young people	Training and workforce development	Single agency awareness raising sessions ensuring the workforce is competent to identify and actively intervene to address common features of all forms of child exploitation rather than siloed working/interventions	Identified internal advanced practice leads	Dec 20	Increased knowledge More confident workforce	Training evaluation records
		Skills based training for targeted staff to support engagement and intervention with the complexities of holistic approaches to child exploitation and adolescent risk	Identified staff	Mar 21	Effective risk management and intervention	Records of attendance at external training events CPD evidence
		Dissemination of up to date research and strategies maintaining and informed workforce	Exploitation lead	Monthly	Knowledgeable workforce	Included in Exploitation newsletter
		Dissemination of Monthly Newsletter ensuring that child exploitation remains visible and high on everyone's practice agenda	Exploitation lead	Monthly	Increased focus on child exploitation within workforce	Records of newsletters
	Service Development	Early help vulnerabilities workers and family group conferencing delivering specific exploitation/contextual services Locality based hubs	Early Help Lead	Onwards from Sept 20	Children and families able to receive joined up services from local hubs	Children's services new structure

		Adopt appropriate language across the whole service avoiding victim blaming language. Develop information for children using child appropriate language – see appendix 2	Exploitation lead	Nov 20	Use of appropriate language to describe child exploitation	Social Work reports Service leaflets with child accessible language
Prioritise development opportunities, develop guidance and seek resources	Identify Resources	Seek to obtain data analysis resources so that child level profiles of need/demand can be developed as well as developing mapping that supports a holistic and integrated understanding of exploitation in NE Lincs	Strategic lead	Mar 21	Profile of extent of child exploitation within Children's Services casework known and understood	Exploitation profile available
		Seek opportunities to establish sustainable Funding for GRAFT ahead of 2022, including funding opportunities to broaden intervention to address all forms of exploitation	Exploitation lead	July 21	Sustainable service model	Integration of and existence of project
	Service development	Review all internal paperwork to ensure it captures "context" and extra-familial harms, including Threshold guidance	Exploitation lead and Advanced Practitioner	Oct 20	Context and extra-familial harm raised directly	Revised paperwork
		Identify examples of robust exploitation risk assessment/intervention for the Children's Services "Social Work Practice Hub"	Advanced Practitioner and PSW	Oct 20	Support for social workers leading to increased standards of practice	Practice examples available that are of high standard

		Invest in the importance of the Child's voice in co-designing services, including improving ways of engaging with children at risk of exploitation. Ensure services promote a culture of working alongside children and young people rather than deliver services "to" them (actively respecting their choice and consent) with the primary objective of safeguarding (as opposed to criminal justice, detection, and enforcement	Exploitation lead and Participation lead All staff Exploitation lead	Onwards from Aug 20	Children's voice is heard and informs service development Consent is explicitly referenced in casefiles Safeguarding needs of children are clearly identified within exploitation planning	Participation work Casefile records MACE records
		Develop internal exploitation pathway on Liquid Logic Child record system. Develop Tri-x policy and procedures regarding child exploitation which captures pathways of intervention.	Exploitation lead and IT support	Dec 20	Improved recording and reporting	Existence of, and use of, tri-x module re exploitation
Support and protect children and young people at risk of or from, child exploitation	Effective challenge	Challenge misattributions regarding child behaviour (eg as troublemakers) and victim blaming language across the whole service	All staff	Onwards from Aug 20	Greater understanding of the impact of exploitation on children	Case records and reports
	Service Development	Ensure all children and young people exposed to exploitation can receive Trauma focused recovery and intervention services	Exploitation lead	Dec 20	Emotional recovery for children	Take up of services

		Reduce the number of young people placed in high-cost, out-of borough placements by managing the risks, with young people, in their own communities	Strategic lead	Mar 21	Children are supported within their families and communities where it is safe for them to be so	Placement data
		Develop Parents support groups via Locality Hubs	Early Help Lead	Dec 21	Parents benefit from peer group support	Delivery of group
		Review response to digital exploitation	Exploitation lead	July 21	Improved knowledge re extent of digital exploitation and impact on children	Review paper
Improve identification, intervention and risk management	Service Review	Improve timeliness of missing person interviews and reduce the number of episodes of children going missing.	Missing Person's Co-ordinator	Dec 20	Children receive help and support in timely way/in line with legislative requirements	Performance data
		Review current MACE and OVM processes to ensure they address all forms of exploitation. Develop referral criteria for case based Multi-agency Child Exploitation meetings	Strategic lead and exploitation lead	Dec 20	Clarity re process and criteria Effective MACE arrangements	Review paper Agreed referral criteria in place
		Complete themed Audit with focus on safeguarding response to extra-familial harm	Internal safeguarding QA and Audit	Dec 21	Senior managers aware of area specific quality of practice	Audit completed and findings analysed
		Review use of the National Referral Mechanism for	Exploitation lead	Oct 20	Appropriate use of referral process for	Review paper

		trafficked young people			trafficked children	
		Evaluate the effectiveness of the exploitation risk assessment tool used for all forms of exploitation	Strategic lead and exploitation lead	Dec 21	Analysis of use of tool leading to plan if needed for revisions to tool or practice	Evaluation paper
	Service Development	Develop IT system capable of accepting a referral for a "context" rather than individual child.

Ensure there is a system in place for profiling and assessment to recognise relationships between individual cases of exploitation and wider patterns of risk (within peer networks, public spaces and so on) | Strategic lead, IT and finance | 2021/22 | Ability to receive "contextual" referrals | Revised referral mechanism and themed analysis reports |
| | | Develop an outcomes-based exploitation performance framework focusing on the impact on children and young people | Strategic lead | Mar 21 | Improved knowledge about what difference we are making – inform future planning | Outcomes framework |
| Work alongside partners and communities to tackle exploitation | Effective challenge | Work to prevent children being excluded from school and support delivery of school training/awareness raising regarding exploitation | Exploitation lead | 2020/21 | Increased awareness and knowledge within schools regarding child exploitation

Less children excluded from school | Training programme and evaluation feedback

Casework records and use of challenge process |

					because of impact of exploitation	Exclusion data
		Seek to locate appropriate Housing options for young people leaving care	CLA lead	On-going	Young people have somewhere appropriate to live	Performance data re suitable accommodation
		Develop shared language re child exploitation & common understanding of thresholds across partner agencies	Strategic lead and exploitation lead	Dec 20	Effective partnership working relationships	Revised threshold guidance to include extra-familial risk factors
		Support an approach to child exploitation that allows social workers to be actively "curious" developing an understanding of the child's world and day to day life	All staff	Onwards from Aug 20	Knowledge of the child's lived experience	Supervision and casework records
		Maintain a child safeguarding approach that holds risk at the lowest possible level of intervention, ensuring that parents are supported to parent their child safely	All staff	Onwards from Aug 20	Legal proceedings used appropriately	Performance data and legal tracker New Edging Away from Care team in place
	Service Development	Implement the redesigned multi-agency leaving care services to support young adults through transition until 25 yrs delivering robust exploitation response	LC lead	Oct 20	Young people supported into early adulthood	Performance data Pathway plans
		Support families through the Edging aware from Care service – providing crisis led, holistic	Team Manager	Sept 20	Adolescent Children and their families receive intensive,	Team performance data

		flexible and solution focused response to adolescent risk			flexible service at point of crisis	
		Promote the development of a wide range of partnerships and working relationships with community-based organisations that can address "contexts" where child exploitation may occur	Exploitation lead	On-going	Children and families benefit from joined up approaches	Formal and informal partnership arrangements
	Service Review	Integrated front door – review all cases for signs of child exploitation and complete peer and safety mapping if appropriate	Exploitation lead	Weekly basis	Early identification of risk re children	Data records regarding Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker in MASH
		Promote effective information sharing arrangements with partner agencies, identifying "hotspots" of concern and "persons of interest"	Exploitation lead	On-going	Identification of thematic issues allowing for detailed forward planning and implementation of safety measures	MACE data analysis

The above will be reviewed and revised should new Government policy and guidance emerge promoting a national strategic position.

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS:

1. Approval of Children's Services Strategy

2. Dissemination within Children's Safeguarding Partnership

3. Internal and external promotion activities

4. On-going review and tracking of actions

5. Evaluation of current strategy and revisions in the light of the development of national strategies and emerging research 2022/23

How will we Know whether we have made a Difference?

Performance Measures to be adopted as part of Quality Assurance process:

Increase in % of missing reports completed within 72 hours

% of care leavers at risk of exploitation in suitable accommodation

% of young people/care leavers in education/training or employment

% of young people benefitting from Edging Away from Care/GRAFT intensive services

Further performance measures to be added once internal reporting system developed and outcomes framework developed, including % of high risk exploitation risk assessments reducing to amber or green and % of repeat referrals regarding child exploitation

Evaluation feedback from training delivered

Service user feedback, including Girls and Boys groups delivered by Vulnerabilities workers

Service user feedback from Parents self-help group once developed

Results from targeted joint operations between Police/Children's Services

Governance Arrangements:

Exploitation Data analysis and thematic reports via MACE process which report to Safeguarding Assurance Improvement Group (SAIG), and into the Children's Safeguarding Partnership Full Board for scrutiny

Internal reporting arrangements via performance meetings with senior leads into Director of Children's Services and Council Members. This includes risk management via corporate risk registers.

Appendix One:

Definitions we are Using:

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) 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 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.

(Home Office 2017)

Child Criminal Exploitation

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of a person under the age of 18 and may coerce, manipulate or deceive a child under that age into any 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 and/or

(c) Through violence or the threat of violence.

The victim may be exploited even if the activity appears consensual (i.e. moving drugs or the proceeds of drugs from one place to another). Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (Home Office 2018)

County Lines

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line". They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons. (Home Office 2018)

County lines is a form of Child Exploitation (CE). It is a major, cross-cutting issue involving drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing persons. The response to tackle it involves the Police, the NCA (National Crime Agency) and a wide range of Government departments, local government agencies and VCS (voluntary and community sector) organisations. County lines activity and the associated violence, drug dealing and exploitation have a devastating impact on children, vulnerable adults and local communities.

Cuckooing

Urban gangs establish a base in the market location, often by taking over the homes of local vulnerable adults by force and/or coercion, in a practice referred to as 'cuckooing'. Urban gangs then use children and vulnerable people to move drugs and money.

Modern Slavery Act 2015

Section 2 Human Trafficking

A person commits an offence if the person arranges or facilitates the travel of another person to exploit them. It is irrelevant whether the exploited person, adult or child, consents to the travel. A person may, in particular, arrange or facilitate another person's travel by recruiting, transporting or transferring, harbouring or receiving them, or transferring or exchanging control over them.

'Travel' means arriving in, or entering, any country; departing from any country and travelling within any country. A person who is a UK national commits an offence under Section 2 regardless of where the arranging or facilitating takes place, or where the travel takes place.

A person who is not a UK national commits an offence under Section 2 if any part of the arranging or facilitating takes place in the UK, or the travel consists of arrival in or entry into, departure from, or travel within the UK.

In determining whether or not a child is a victim of trafficking, their consent to being trafficked is irrelevant and how they are trafficked is also irrelevant. Only the act and the purpose need to be present. It is not necessary to prove coercion or any other inducement.

Exploitation alone does not constitute trafficking – there also needs to be recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person.

Slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour is, or may be, a crime in its own right under Section 1 Modern Slavery Act 2015.

National Referral Mechanism

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support. Modern slavery is a complex crime and may involve multiple forms of exploitation. It encompasses:

- human trafficking

- Slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour

An individual could have been a victim of human trafficking and/or slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour.

Victims may not be aware that they are being trafficked or exploited, and may have consented to elements of their exploitation, or accepted their situation. If you think that modern slavery has taken place, the case should be referred to the NRM so that the Single Competent Authority (SCA) can fully consider the case. You do not need to be certain that someone is a victim.

Missing

Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located and their well-being or otherwise confirmed.

Appendix Two:

As a local authority we are on a journey to utilising and embedding Contextual Approaches to safeguarding. We need Council employees, representatives and partners to confidently and safely identify, assess and respond to children and families who experience harm outside of their home environment.

A key feature of the support we offer to residents and families is to think about the way we talk and describe the difficulties they may be facing. This includes how we can contribute to and get the best partnership response to help and assist them.

It is imperative that appropriate terminology is used when discussing children and young people who have been exploited or are at risk of exploitation. Language implying that the child or young person is complicit in any way, or responsible for the crimes that have happened or may happen to them, must be avoided. Language should reflect the presence of coercion and the lack of control young people have in abusive or exploitative situations and must recognise the severity of the impact exploitation has on the child or young person. Victim-blaming language may reinforce messages from perpetrators around shame and guilt. This in turn may prevent the child or young person from disclosing their abuse, through fear of being blamed by professionals. When victim-blaming language is used amongst professionals, there is a risk of normalising and minimising the child's experience, resulting in a lack of appropriate response.

Victim blaming language may reinforce messages from perpetrators around shame and guilt, which in turn may lead to a child not disclosing harm they have suffered.

For example:

"Their lifestyle choices keep placing them at risk"

This implies that the child is responsible for the risks presented by the perpetrator and that they are able to make free and informed choices.

As professionals, it is vital that we lead the way in representing and advocating for our children and their families. The tones/content and words we use will have an impact and will lead the child/family to decide how they would wish to engage with you, as a professional. Poor language affects the ability to engage.

It is our responsibility to understand the context within which "choices" are made and our responsibility to recognise abuse: if we do not recognise the constrained circumstances within which victims make "choices", we will see them as being in control and not recognise their need for intervention and support. Intensive language risks damaging trust and reinforces the victim's own sense of self blame.

Guidance for using appropriate language

The following table outlines terms that should not be used when discussing or recording issues of child exploitation and includes a list of appropriate alternative phrases.

INAPPROPRIATE TERM ✗	SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVES ✓
Spending time/associating with 'elders or adults of concern' **'Choosing to spend time with…'** This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.	The young person says that they are friends with a person and there are concerns about that person's age, the imbalance of power, exploitation, offending. The young person has been groomed, exploited, controlled. **Note**: If the elder is under the age of 18 years old, this will need to be considered using child protection processes.
Putting themselves at risk This implies that the child is responsible for the risks presented by the perpetrator and that they are able to make free and informed choices.	• The child may have been groomed. • The child is at an increased vulnerability of being abused and/or exploited. • A perpetrator may exploit the child's increased vulnerability. • The child is not in a protective environment. • The situation could reduce the child's safety. • The location is dangerous to children. • The location/situation could increase a perpetrator's opportunity to abuse them.

	- It is unclear whether the child is under duress to go missing. - There are concerns that the child may be being sexually abused. - It is unclear why the child is getting into cars. - There are concerns that there is a power imbalance forcing the child to act in this way. - There are concerns regarding other influences on the child.
Offering him/her drugs seemingly in return for sex or to run drugs This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.	- The child is being sexually/ criminally exploited. - The child is being criminally exploited through drug debt. - There are concerns that the child has been raped as they do not have the freedom or capacity to consent. - Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child. The child is being sexually abused. - The child's vulnerability regarding drug use is being used by others to abuse them. - The perpetrators have a hold over the child by the fact that they have a drug dependency.
He/she is choosing this lifestyle or **Lifestyle 'choices' are increasing his/her risk** This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.	- The child is being criminally exploited. - The child is being sexually exploited.
'The young person is dealing drugs for self gain' This implies the young person is gaining and receiving things in favour of their exploitation. We know that this is often a grooming technique and therefore this term does not recognise the exploitative context.	- The child/young person is being criminally exploited - The child/young person is being groomed
Recruit/run/work This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity	The child/young person is being criminally exploited

to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.	
Drug running – He/she is drug running This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.	• Child criminal exploitation (CCE). • The child is being criminally exploited. • The child is being trafficked for purpose of criminal exploitation.
Boyfriend/girlfriend This implies that the child or young person is in a consensual relationship and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context. Children have been challenged in court with practitioners recordings where a practitioner has referred to the perpetrator as the child's boyfriend or girlfriend.	• The young person says that they are in a relationship with a person and there are concerns about that person's age, the imbalance of power, exploitation and/or offending. • The young person has been/is being groomed, exploited and controlled.
Prostituting themselves This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the abuse and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context. Changes in legislation have meant that child prostitution is no longer an acceptable term and should never be used.	• The child is vulnerable to being sexually exploited. • The child is being sexually exploited.
Promiscuous This implies consensual sexual activity has taken place. Promiscuous is a judgemental term which stereotypes and labels people. It isn't appropriate in any context when discussing children and young people, but particularly if it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context.	• The child is vulnerable to being sexually exploited. • The child is being sexually exploited.
Involved in CSE This implies there is a level of choice regarding the child being abused. A five-year-old would never be referred to as being involved in sexual abuse for the same reasons.	• The child is vulnerable to being sexually exploited. • The child is being sexually exploited.
In a relationship with…	• The young person says that they are in a relationship with a person and there are

This implies that the child or young person is in a consensual relationship and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context.	concerns about that person's age, the imbalance of power, exploitation and/or offending. • The young person has been/is being groomed, exploited and controlled.
Offering him/her drugs seemingly in return for sex This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the abuse and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.	• The child is being sexually exploited. • There are concerns that the child has been raped. • Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child. • The child is being sexually abused. • The child's vulnerability regarding drug use is being used by others to abuse them. • The perpetrators have a hold over the child by the fact that they have a drug dependency.
Has been contacting adult males/females via phone or internet This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the communication and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context.	• Adult males/females may have been contacting the child. • The child may have been groomed. • There are concerns that the adult is facilitating communication with a child. • The child is vulnerable to online perpetrators. • There are concerns that others may be using online technology to access or abuse the child. • Adults appear to be using a range of methods to communicate with the child.
Sexually active since [age under 13] A child under 13 cannot consent to sex and is therefore being abused. This should be reflected in the language used.	• The child has been raped. • The child has been/may have been sexually abused. • Concerns exist that the child may have been coerced, exploited, or sexually abused.
Sexual activity with… This implies consensual sexual activity has taken place. If it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context this term is not appropriate.	• The child has been sexually abused. • The child has been raped. • There are reports of sexual abuse.

	• The child has described sexual activity; however, concerns exist that they child may have been groomed and/or coerced.
Running County Lines This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.	• The child(ren) in this location may be being trafficked and sexually/criminally exploited. • There may be harmful behaviours and or attitudes that exist towards violence and criminality within this area. • This environment may not be safe for these children. • The location/situation could increase the opportunity to abuse child(ren). • The child(ren) feel under threat/ coerced to remain in this location and/ or the grooming process is so powerful that the child believes this to be their choice. • The child(ren) do not feel safe enough to leave this location. **Note:** County Lines? Is s/he exploited through County Lines? This should always be framed as question where there is not an established link between County border locations or phone/social media 'lines' for the purpose of dealing/supply. There is a danger that broad use of the term 'County Lines' may distract practitioners from identifying and responding to children groomed, trafficked and exploited for the purpose of local drug dealing or supply.
They know right from wrong This implies that the child or young person/s are responsible for any exploitation they experience and does not consider the risk of threat, violence or coercion for young people in exploitative situations. This implies that they have the capacity to make a free and informed choice.	• The child/young person is being criminally exploited • Perpetrators are criminally exploiting them • The young person has been/is being groomed, exploited and controlled.
Despite the risk s/he continues to return to the location… This implies that the child or young people are responsible for any exploitation they experience in a	• The child(ren) have an existing peer network in this location. • The child(ren) have an ownership or investment in the area.

location. It does not recognise abusive or exploitative context or their right to be in the location without experiencing harm.	- The child(ren) considers themselves to be safe in this space/community/ neighbourhood. - The child(ren) did not consider themselves safe where they were. - The child(ren) have been groomed or coerced into being in this neighbourhood/location. - The child(ren) does not feel they have another safe place to go. - The location/situation could increase the opportunity to abuse child(ren). - The child(ren) feel under threat/ coerced to remain in this location. - The child(ren) do not feel safe enough to leave this location.