



Safeguarding Children from Child Sexual Exploitation

Every Local Authority has an independent Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) who have a duty to ensure that children are protected, and their welfare promoted. The Board consists of statutory and voluntary partners who work with children and young people. For many LSCB and Local Authorities, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a priority due to the particular vulnerability of children looked after. Practice regarding Child Sexual Exploitation can be improved through reviewing past cases, auditing the response to referrals from statutory and voluntary agencies and most importantly, making sure children and young people have access to information and people they can trust.

As with every aspect of children's welfare, AFA need to regularly review their safeguarding procedures to ensure they remain pertinent and comprehensive. However, it is essential that staff and foster carers also have access to training, information and advice. Child Sexual Exploitation involves the sexual abuse of children and young people and is the organised and deliberate exploitation of them for the gratification of others. Any young person can become a victim of Child Sexual Exploitation which affects both girls and boys, who can come from any background or ethnicity.

There are considerable concerns regarding the increase in Child Sexual Exploitation and extensive research has been carried out to try and identify areas for improvement in practice. The following are ways that young people can be drawn into Child Sexual Exploitation:

- **The relationship/peer model**

Previously termed the 'boyfriend model', this type of grooming takes place when perpetrators befriend young people and make them believe they are in a loving 'relationship' or friendship and then coerce them to have sex with friends or associates. Peer to peer grooming can be associated with gang activity, where the young person carrying out the grooming is also a victim.

- **Inappropriate relationship model**

This usually involves one perpetrator who has exclusive power or control over a young person. An indicator could be a significant age gap, or a person in a position of authority who exploits a young person for sex. The young person may believe they are in a loving relationship.

- **Organised sexual exploitation/network model and trafficking model**

This type of exploitation includes the trafficking of young people, cross country or internationally, or even just between houses or hotels. This can be as part of an organised network of 'buying and selling' the sexual services of young people by perpetrators, both male and female. This will sometimes take place at 'sex parties' and some young people themselves become involved in recruiting other young people into the network. This model usually involves numerous victims and perpetrators and is widely reported by the media.

- **Gang model**

There is still a limited understanding of the gang model within Child Sexual Exploitation, however it can include exploitation through gang initiation rituals, gang pressure or as punishment between one gang and another for crossing areas/boundaries. Many gang members are also themselves victims.

Child Sexual Exploitation can also take place over the Internet with young people being encouraged to send photos or take part in activities or conversations that are inappropriate. As with all types of Child Sexual Exploitation, drugs or alcohol may be given to children and young people to reduce inhibitions and encourage dependence.

Training on the signs of Child Sexual Exploitation is essential for both staff and carers as many 'normal' teenage behaviours could also be potential indicators that a child is being sexually exploited. Trying to establish the reason for any changes in the behaviour of a Looked after Child can be particularly challenging, as it may be linked to past experiences prior to coming into care or current issues such as contact with birth family or plans for moving to a long-term placement. Children and young people are safest when they have a positive attachment to their caregivers and feel able to share their concerns openly.

Child Sexual Exploitation should be considered as a risk if a young person:

- Has unexplained gifts or new possessions such as clothes, jewelry, a mobile phone or money that can't be accounted for;
- Is using their mobile more frequently or becoming secretive about who they are talking to;
- Appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol;
- Is being picked up or dropped off in cars driven by unknown adults;
- Has a significantly older 'boyfriend' or 'friend' or lots of new friends;
- Is spending an excessive amount of time online and is increasingly secretive about what they are looking at or who they are talking to;
- Has a sudden involvement in criminal behaviour or an increase in offending;
- Has sexual health problems such as repeated sexually transmitted or urinary infections;
- Has unexplained injuries or bruises;
- Has a change in behavior at school including attainment, attendance and friendships;
- Changes their appearance; and/or
- Has a change in their relationships.

If a Foster Carer identifies any of the above changes for a child or young person in their care, it is advisable to contact the Placement Manager and/or the child's Social Worker.

Child Sexual Exploitation can also involve 'trafficking', which is the term used to describe the movement of a child or young person within a country or between countries, whether by force or not, with the purpose of exploiting the child. This could include a child being moved from one property to another on the same street for the purpose of exploitation and does not rely on crossing borders or area boundaries.

Child Sexual Exploitation is also linked to other forms of Criminal Exploitation including 'County Lines'.

Any concerns regarding children and Child Sexual Exploitation, or any past or current abuse, should be discussed with the Placement Manager or, in their absence, the Duty Worker or Designated Safeguarding Lead. Staff and carers should also refer to the AFA safeguarding procedures.

Information from AFA

AFA has produced:

Triple T leaflet – information for Young people on CSE

Information for Foster Carers on CSE

For further information see:

Barnardos www.barnardos.org.uk

NSPCC www.nspcc.org.uk

Child line www.childline.org.uk

CEOPS www.ceop.police.uk

Children's Society www.childrenssociety.org.uk

Child Sexual exploitation awareness - <https://www.nwgnetwork.org/> or www.gov.uk

Connected Policies or Guidance

Name of Policy / Guidance	Relevant for
Record Keeping and Confidentiality Policy	All staff and Foster Carers
Safeguarding Policy	All staff and Foster Carers
Children Missing from Care	Foster Carers, Placement Managers
Foster Carer's Handbook	Foster Carers, Placement Managers
Staff Handbook	All staff
Safeguarding Children from Trafficking	Foster Carers, Placement Managers
Safeguarding children from Gang Activity	Foster Carers, Placement Managers
Safeguarding children from Criminal Exploitation including County Lines	Foster Carers, Placement Managers
Alcohol, Drugs and Solvents Policy	Foster Carers, Placement Managers

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