



## **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 who are looked after. Practice regarding CSE 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. CSE involves the sexual abuse of and is the deliberate exploitation of children and young people for the sexual gratification of others. Any young person can become a victim of CSE and it affects both girls and boys, who can come from any background or ethnicity.

There are considerable concerns regarding the increase in CSE, and extensive research has been carried out to try and identify areas of practice that need to be improved. The following are ways that young people can be drawn into CSE:

- **The Relationship/Peer 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/Network Model and Trafficking Model**

This type of exploitation includes the trafficking of young people, cross country or internationally, or even just between houses (even on the same street) or hotels. This can be as part of an organised network of 'buying and selling' the sexual services of young people by perpetrators. Some young people involved in an organised network may also be used to recruit other young people. This model usually involves numerous victims and perpetrators and is widely reported by the media.

- **Gangs Model**

There continues to be a limited understanding of the gang model in CSE, but it can include exploitation through gang initiation rituals, gang pressure or as punishment for crossing areas/boundaries. Many gang members are also victims themselves.

CSE 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 CSE, drugs or alcohol may be given to children and young people to reduce inhibitions and encourage dependence.

Training on the signs of CSE is essential for both staff and carers as many 'normal' teenage behaviours may be indicators that a child is being sexually exploited. Trying to establish the reason for any changes in the behaviour of a child looked after 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.

CSE should be considered if a young person:

- Has unexplained gifts or new possessions such as clothes, jewelry, a mobile phone or money that cannot 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;
- Change in behavior at school including attainment, attendance and friendships;
- Change of appearance; and/or
- Change in relationships.

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

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

Any concerns regarding children and CSE, 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

Both are available via the Agency's Management Team or Placement Managers

**For further information for both carers and young people see:**

National Working Group – An organisation who tackles CSE <https://www.nwgnetwork.org/>

Barnardos <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/protecting-children/cse>

NSPCC <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/child-sexual-exploitation/>

Child line <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/abuse-safety/sexual-abuse/>

CEOPS <https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/How-can-CEOP-help-me-YP/>

Children’s Society <https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/information/professionals>

**Connected Policies or Guidance**

| <b>Name of Policy / Guidance</b>  | <b>Relevant for</b>               |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 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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