



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 and young people are protected, and their welfare promoted. The Board consists of statutory and voluntary partners. For many LSCBs, and Local Authorities, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a priority due to the particular vulnerability of those looked after. Practice regarding CSE can be improved through the review of 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 a child'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 Parents also have access to training, information and advice. Any child or young person, of any gender, background or ethnicity can become a victim of CSE which involves the sexual abuse of and is the deliberate exploitation of children and young people, for the sexual gratification of others.

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 victims can be drawn into CSE:

The Relationship/Peer Model

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

Inappropriate Relationship Model

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

Organised/Network Model and Trafficking Model

This type of exploitation includes the trafficking of young people, cross country, 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 children and young people by perpetrators. Some victims involved in an organised network may also be used to recruit others. 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 this model, 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. 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 Foster Parents as many 'normal' teenage behaviours may also be indicators of CSE. Trying to establish the reason for any changes in a child's behaviour can be particularly challenging, as it may be linked to past experiences prior to their coming into care or current issues such as time with birth family or plans for moving to a long-term fostering arrangement. Children and young people are safest when they have a positive attachment to their caregivers and feel able to share their concerns openly.

The potential for 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 spending excessive amounts of time online and becoming secretive about what they are looking at or 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;
- 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;
- Displays a change in behavior at school including attainment, attendance and friendships;
- Changes their appearance; and/or
- Has a change in relationships.

If a Foster Parent identifies any of the above changes in a child or young person, they are advised to contact their Fostering Social Worker and/or the child's Social Worker.

Any concerns regarding CSE, or any past or current abuse, should be discussed with the Fostering Social Worker or, in their absence, the Duty Social Worker or Designated Safeguarding Lead. Staff and Foster Parents should also refer to AFA's safeguarding procedures. CSE is also linked to other forms of Criminal Exploitation including 'County Lines'.

Information from AFA

AFA has produced the following:

- Triple T leaflet – information for Young people on CSE
- Information for Foster Parents on CSE

Both are available via the Agency's Management Team or Fostering Social Worker.

For further information for both Foster Parents 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

Name of Policy / Guidance	Relevant for
Record Keeping and Confidentiality Policy	All staff and Foster Parents
Safeguarding Policy	All staff and Foster Parents
Children Missing from Care	Foster Parents and Fostering Social Worker
Foster Parents’ Handbook	Foster Parents and Fostering Social Worker
Staff Handbook	All staff
Safeguarding Children from Trafficking	Foster Parents and Fostering Social Worker
Safeguarding Children from Gang Activity	Foster Parents and Fostering Social Worker
Safeguarding Children from Criminal Exploitation including County Lines	Foster Parents and Fostering Social Worker
Alcohol, Drugs and Solvents Policy	Foster Parents and Fostering Social Worker

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