



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. CSE can happen in person or online. Violence or blackmail can be used to control victims, but also abusers can develop relationships to gain a child's trust before moving onto sexually abusing them.

Online abuse

When a child is sexually exploited online, they may be persuaded or forced to:

- Send or post explicit images of themselves
- Film themselves or be filmed taking part in sexual activities
- Engage in sexual conversations online

Once they have engaged in any of the above, these can be used to blackmail them or force them to continue to take part in such activities. They can also be shared more widely online.

In Person Abuse

In some instances, a perpetrator may try to develop a close relationship with a young person in a way that the young person believes this to be a loving relationship. They can then use this relationship to exert exclusive power or control over a child or young person. An indicator could be a significant age gap, or a person in a position of authority who exploits the victim for sex.

In other instances, children and young people may be invited to parties or gatherings and given drugs and alcohol, which can reduce inhibitions and encourage dependence. Young people may then be assaulted or sexually abused by one or more perpetrators, often in humiliating and degrading ways. Peer to peer grooming can be associated with gang activity, where those carrying out the grooming is also a victim.

In some instances, gangs use sexual exploitation to assert power and control, or use sexual violence as a weapon. Many gang members are also victims themselves. Sometimes, victims can be part of an organised 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 these networks may also be used to recruit others. This usually involves numerous victims and perpetrators and is widely reported by the media.

Indicators of CSE

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 unhealthy or inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- 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 in mood or their appearance
- 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'.

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.

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> and https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/who-will-notice-who-will-ask_0.pdf

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>

Government: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-sexual-exploitation-definition-and-guide-for-practitioners>

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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