



Fife Child Protection Committee

Child Sexual Exploitation

Guidance for Practitioners

Guardian(s):	CPC
Version number:	V1
Approved by CPC	11.11.16
Effective from:	11.11.16
Due for review on:	11.11.18
Suitable for Publication Scheme:	Yes
ECHR compliant:	Yes
Diversity compliant:	Yes
Data Protection compliant:	Yes
FOI compliant:	Yes
Health & Safety compliant:	Yes
GPMS compliant:	Yes

Introduction

This document is intended to provide agencies and professionals who deliver services to children in Fife with information regarding the issues surrounding Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). The document defines what CSE is, and what vulnerabilities and risk indicators may be present in a child's life which could pre-dispose them to be at risk of, or a victim of CSE.

Work is ongoing in Fife in respect of early intervention and prevention, particularly through the Fife Multi-agency Underage Sexual Activity Protocol, the Community Safety Strategy and the Child Health Strategy. This is further complemented by the Child Wellbeing Pathway, and the work currently ongoing in respect of the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 as agencies and services move towards implementation of the GIRFEC aspects of the Act.

The Fife Multi-agency Underage Sexual Activity Protocol applies to all key agencies in Fife and outlines risk assessment and actions in accordance with the national guidance on the Rape and Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009, and other relevant legislation. This has also been updated. This will take account of the Children and Young People Act 2014 and other developments including CSE.

This document defines what action agencies, professionals and services should take if they have a concern regarding any child with whom they have contact if there is a concern about CSE.

Agencies working with young people over the age of 16yrs old should be aware of this guidance and referral processes given the National Guidance considers children up to the age of 18yrs in terms of CSE.

Sexual Exploitation

Sexual crimes perpetrated against children and young people have long been recognized as a form of child abuse, **as no child or young person can consent to their own abuse**. In recent time legislators, the media and society have adopted the term Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) which reflects a variant of child sexual abuse with distinctive elements of 'exploitation' and 'exchange'.

Any form of CSE has a damaging and long lasting impact on victims and their families. In order to address this problem, effective multi agency partnership working has been developed over the years, where partners work to the established principle that protecting children is everyone's job.

Practitioners therefore need to be clear on their respective roles and responsibilities in the prevention, early identification and investigation of this form of abuse. It is clear we must work together, as partners, to prevent and eradicate CSE in Fife.

National Guidance definition:-

‘Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse in which a person(s), of any age takes advantage of a power imbalance to force or entice a child into engaging in sexual activity in return for something received by the child and/or those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. As with other forms of child sexual abuse, the presence of perceived consent does not undermine the abusive nature of the act.’

As noted in the definition above, CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse encompasses ‘any act that involves the child in any activity for the sexual gratification of another’. CSE clearly falls within this, and like any other form of sexual abuse can include both contact and non-contact sexual activity, in person or via virtual means.

Also like other forms of sexual abuse, CSE:

- Is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the abuse;
- Can involve coerced and/or enticement based methods of compliance;
- Can still be abuse even if it is claimed the child consented or assented – where the age of the child means they cannot legally give consent or the circumstances mean that agreement is not freely given.

The key factor that distinguishes cases of CSE from other forms of sexual abuse is the additional requirement for some form of exchange; the fact that the child and/or someone else receive something in return for the sexual activity:

- Where the gain is on the part of the child, this can take the form of tangible or intangible rewards (for example: money, drugs, alcohol, status, protection or perceived receipt of love or affection). Fear of what might happen if they do not comply can also be a significant influencing factor; in such situations the ‘gain’ for the child could be prevention of something negative, for example a child who engages in sexual activity in order to avoid harm to other friends or family.

Where the gain is solely on the part of the perpetrator/facilitator, it must be something more than sexual gratification to fall within the sub-category of CSE. This could be money, other financial advantage (reduced cost drugs/alcohol or discharge of a debt for example), status or power.

- While few would dispute the abusive nature of the situation where it is the perpetrator who is organising or benefitting from the sexual exploitation of a child, experience shows that we can struggle to identify the abuse when the child is the one receiving something from the exchange. This is particularly true where they are the one initiating the exchange. However it is critical to remember that the receipt of something does not negate the abusive nature of the act. In fact it may be this need for something that creates the vulnerability to abuse in the first place.

Just because a child receives something they need or desire does not mean they are not being abused. Taking advantage of this need or desire – and the limited alternative options the child may have to meet these – and making them think they are in control because the child is getting something in return can be part of the abusive process.

Like other cases of child sexual abuse, cases of CSE can potentially involve the commission of a range of sexual and other offences. CSE refers, not to the specific offence, but to the context within which this offending occurs.

It is important to remember that CSE, although predominantly experienced by those in their adolescent years, is not a catch-all category for all forms of violence and abuse in adolescence. Cases that do not involve the concept of exchange, for example, will not fall within the definition even where sexually exploitative behaviours (such as pressure or manipulation) are present and significant harm is being experienced. Similarly, a 15 year old boy pressuring his 14 year old girl/ boyfriend into having sexual intercourse in order to remain in the relationship (though an issue that requires a response) would not be defined as CSE if there is no significant power differential within the relationship. Nor would a one-off incident of sexual assault, where the victim has no prior or subsequent contact with the perpetrator and the only gain involved is the sexual gratification of the perpetrator, though this would also obviously require a response.

It is therefore critical that CSE is not viewed in isolation from the more inclusive concept of sexual abuse and other relevant concepts such as trafficking, going missing and gendered violence that offer alternative means of responding to these and other issues that fall outside the definition of CSE.

All forms of vulnerability and victimisation in childhood should be identified and responded to, in line with GIRFEC principles, irrespective of how they are defined or categorised.

Sexual exploitation is abuse and should be treated accordingly. Practitioners should be mindful that a “dual approach” is key in tackling CSE. Whilst a young person must be both engaged with and supported, there must also be a focus on proactive investigation and prosecution of those involved in sexually exploiting the young person.

What does CSE look like in practice?

CSE can take many different forms. It can include both contact and non-contact sexual activities and occur online or in person, or a combination of both. It should be noted that child sexual exploitation can happen to both boys and girls.

The following illustrative examples, although all very different in nature and potentially involving the commission of different sexual or other offences, could all fall under the definition of CSE:

- A 21 year old male persuading his 17 year old ‘girlfriend’ to have sex with his friends to pay off his drug debt;
- A 44 year old female posing as a 17 year old female online and persuading a 12 year old male to send her a sexual image, and then threatening to tell his parents if he didn’t continue to send more explicit images;
- A 14 year old male giving a 17 year old male oral sex because the older male has threatened to tell his parents he is gay if he doesn’t do this;
- A 14 year old female being told she has to have sex with a 16 year old gang member and his two friends if she wants the protection of the gang;
- A 13 year old female offering and giving an adult male taxi driver sexual intercourse in return for the taxi fare home;
- A mother letting other adults abuse her 8 year old child in return for money;
- A group of men bringing two 17 year old females to a hotel in another town and charging others to have sex with them;
- Three 15 year old females being taken to party houses and given ‘free’ alcohol and drugs, then told they have to ‘pay’ for them by having sex with six adult males;
- A 15 year old female who views a 21 year old male as her ‘boyfriend’ and engages in sexual activity with him, as he has said he will end the relationship with her if she doesn’t;

- A 15 year old female bringing two other 15 year old females to a party (where they are sexually assaulted) in order to prevent her from being sexually assaulted again. ⁵

These examples are by no means exhaustive; other forms of CSE currently exist and new forms continue to develop. Nor are they mutually exclusive – some children will experience abuse through a range of these scenarios, either simultaneously or in succession. Some may also concurrently be both a victim and perpetrator, as is the case in the final scenario above.

Vulnerabilities

In a high proportion of cases (although not all) victims of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) will have one or more social, situational, psychological or physical vulnerabilities. It is well recognised that children and young people who are Looked After or careleavers can be particularly vulnerable. Vulnerabilities can include;

- A history of living in a chaotic home environment (including parental substance use, domestic abuse, parental mental health issues and parental criminality)
- A history of abuse; Physical, Sexual, Emotional and Neglect
- Risk of Forced Marriage and Gender Based Violence
- Being looked after or formerly looked after
- Gang associations through, family, peers or intimate relationships
- Disengagement from education, frequent absences from school (regardless of time of day or length of time absent)
- Going missing from home or care environments
- Homelessness
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Criminality
- Learning disabilities
- Social Isolation
- Low self-esteem or low self-confidence
- Poor health and well being
- Young carer

This is not an exhaustive list and not all vulnerabilities need to be present to indicate a risk of exploitation.

Indicators of Child Sexual Exploitation

When a young person is being sexually exploited they may exhibit a range of types of behaviour or warning signs that might indicate that they are a victim or at risk of CSE. The following list is not exhaustive but the indicators listed have been proven to correlate to victims of CSE. Practitioners should be aware of any unusual factors which may suggest a child is being sexually exploited and should consider all the information in the assessment of the child –

- Evidence of / suspicion of physical assault or sexual assault (possible bruising)
- Disclosure of assault can be followed by withdrawal of an allegation
- Evidence of drug, alcohol or substance misuse

- Truancy or exclusions from school or disengagement and change of behaviour in school
- Low self-esteem, mood swings, poor self-image, self-harming, suicidal ideations or attempts, mental ill-health
- Physical aggression to others
- Change in appearance
- Sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, seeking termination
- Sexually risky behaviour / high number of sexual partners
- Sexual relationships or unexplained relationships with older adults
- Children under 13 yrs seeking sexual health advice
- Relationships with controlling adults
- Frequenting places known for adult prostitution
- Isolation from peers / social networks
- Unexplained amounts of money or clothes, technology, jewellery etc.
- Entering / leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults
- Hostility in relationships with parents / carers / family members
- Associating with other children who are involved in sexual abuse and exploitation
- Spending long periods of time on the internet/ being secretive about on-line activities
- Inappropriate use of the internet and forming relationships with adults
- Multiple, unknown callers to mobile phones
- Persistent / Periods of being missing from, home care placement, residential placement, overnight or for long periods of time with no explanation where the child has been
- Returning after long periods of absence looking well cared for
- Reliable reports from others that a child has been frequenting B&Bs, hotels, houses to engage in sexual activity or is involved in sexual exploitation
- Adults loitering outside child's usual residence
- Young people frequenting known 'hot spots', late night shops/ food outlets, known 'party houses', taxi ranks etc.
- Accounts of social activities with no plausible explanation of the source of the necessary funding
- Going missing and being found in area where child has no known link

There are specific risks associated with the Internet in terms of child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, including;

- Children and young people spending long periods of time on the internet/ being secretive about on-line activities
- Adults inappropriately forming relationships with children and young people through social media websites
- Adults grooming children on-line for sexual abuse off-line
- Children and young people viewing abusive images of children / pornographic images
- Adults selling children on-line for abuse offline
- Adults making abusive images of children
- Children and young people having access to chat lines / inappropriate websites increasing vulnerability to coercion and blackmail
- Sexting : Sending sexualised messages and / or images
- Children and young people being coerced / ransomed to send indecent images of self to others with threats to distribute to others (friends, family, school etc.)

Non – Disclosure

It is important to recognise that children and young people who are victims of CSE rarely directly disclose because they often do not recognise their own exploitation. For example, a young person may believe themselves to be in an “adult relationship” with their abuser. Disclosure of sexual abuse & exploitation can be particularly difficult for young people; the sophisticated grooming and priming processes conducted by perpetrators and the exchange element of this form of abuse can act as additional barriers to disclosure.

Examples of other reasons for non-disclosure include:

- Fear that perceived benefits of exploitation may outweigh the risks e.g. loss of: supply of alcohol, drugs; the “relationship” and associated “love” and attention
- Fear of retribution or that situation could get worse
- Fear of violence within exploitative relationship
- Shame
- Fear of not being believed
- Fear of labelling e.g. as a prostitute or gay
- Fear of separation from family and /or threat of secure accommodation
- Loss of control; fear of Police involvement and court proceedings

Taking Action

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse and should therefore be treated as a child protection issue. As mentioned both boys and girls up to the age of 18 years are equally at risk.

The Fife Multi-agency Underage Sexual Activity Protocol applies to all key agencies in Fife. This should be referred to in all cases however ***if there is any doubt or concern that a child/young person ,up to the age of 18, is suffering, or may be at risk of sexual exploitation then a Child Concern Notification should be sent to the Social Work Contact Centre, in accordance with existing multi-agency child protection procedures.***

If you consider a child(ren) or young person(s) to be in IMMEDIATE danger, DO NOT wait, call Police Scotland 999 or Tel: 101

All cases of suspected or alleged child/young person abuse should be notified to the Social Work Contact Centre Service. (Tel No: 03451 551503 or Emergency Out of Hours on 03451 550099) unless the child/young person is in immediate danger, then call the Police.

If any professional has concerns about potential perpetrators of abuse, regardless of age, then this should also be reported to Police immediately.

Other Useful Publications and Links

This guidance is underpinned by a number of national guidance documents, key research and tools including;

- [Scottish Government's National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2014](#)
- [Scottish Government Child Sexual Exploitation Definition and Practitioner Briefing Paper October 2016](#)
- [Scottish Government Child Sexual Exploitation Definition and Summary October 2016](#)
- [CEOP's Thematic Assessment 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind'](#),
- [Scottish Government CSE Action Plan](#)
- [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham 1997-2013](#)
- [Safeguarding Scotland's Vulnerable Children From Sexual Abuse- A Review of The Scottish System](#)
- [The Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Framework, 2011-2015](#)
- [NCA's CEOP Command](#)

Fife CPC has also published the [Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy 2015-2017](#)
Local guidance which is complementary to this guidance includes;

[Child Concern Notification Form](#)

[Fife Multi – Agency Underage Sexual Activity Protocol](#)

[Child Wellbeing Pathway](#)

[Interagency Referral Discussion \(IRD\) Protocol](#)

Other local partnerships and organisations

[Fife Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership \(FDASAP\)](#)

[Fife Rape and Sexual Assault Centre \(FRASAC\)](#)

[Safe Space](#)