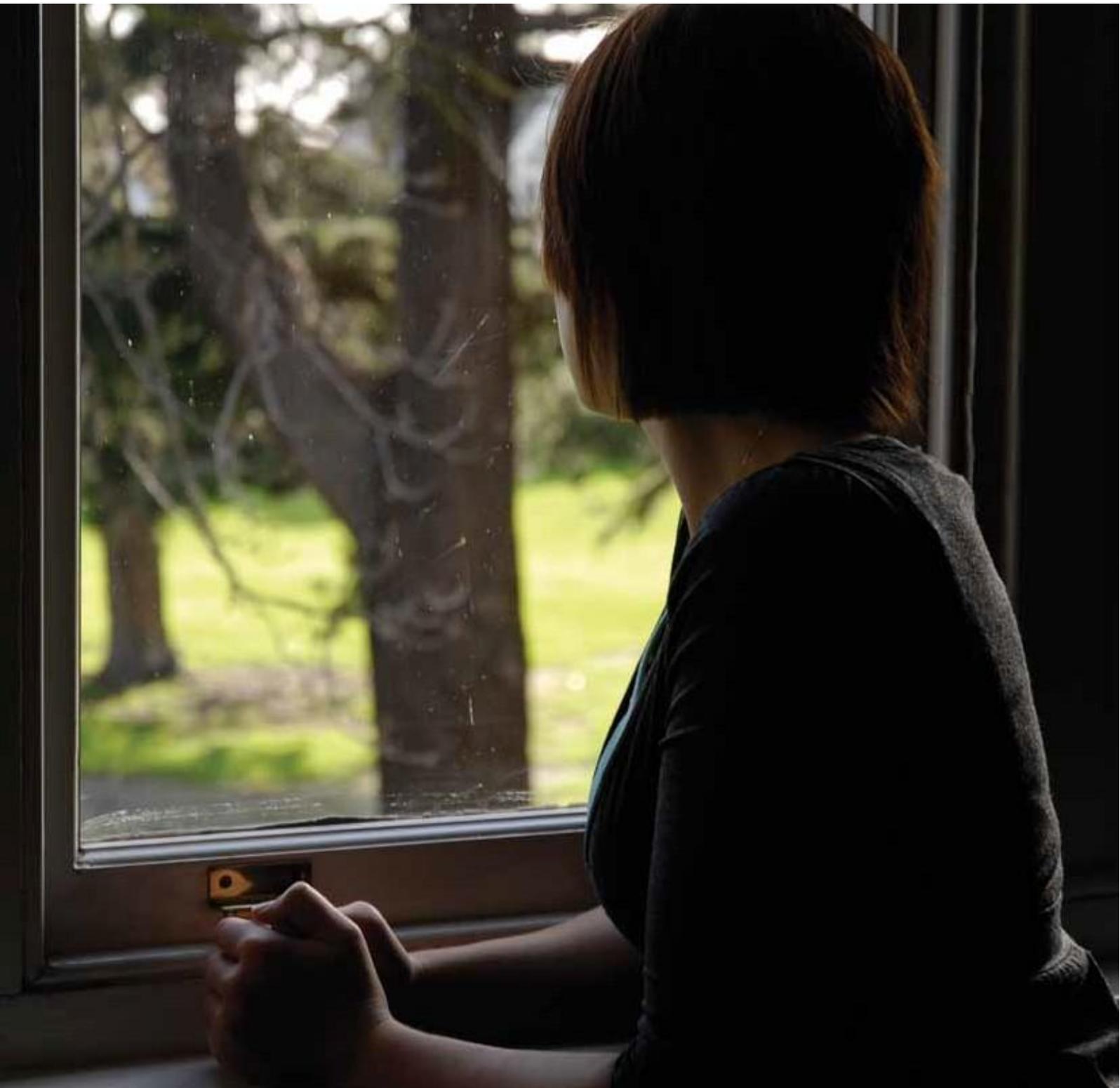


City of Edinburgh Inter-Agency Guidance on Child Sexual Exploitation



November 2015



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This guidance has been adapted and draws heavily from the Barnado's Scotland/West of Scotland Child Protection Consortium, which was originally developed in 2012. Barnado's Scotland is a member of the multi-agency Edinburgh Child Protection Committee.

Introduction

The sexual exploitation of children always requires a child protection response. This is reflected in the Edinburgh and Lothians Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures (2015) and the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2014).

Child sexual exploitation is a distinct form of child abuse, which can affect both boys and girls. Children and young people affected are victims of abuse.

The issue of child sexual exploitation is receiving an increased level of political and public interest across the UK. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997 – 2013) has been instrumental in changing our perceptions in how we tackle child sexual exploitation in Scotland. In November 2014, the Scottish Government published its National Action Plan to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation. In Edinburgh, the Child Protection Committee has included tackling the child sexual exploitation in its 2014-2016 improvement plan.

It is critical that all partner agencies responsible for the protection of children learn from these reviews, from research and best practice, and from what our children and young people tell us. We need to improve our knowledge and understanding of the issue and ensure that all staff across sectors and agencies recognise the indicators of child sexual exploitation and are confident in tackling it.

Early intervention and protection of children, together with disruption and prosecution of perpetrators are the key features of an effective approach.

This guidance has been developed alongside learning and development materials for practitioners who may be unfamiliar with child sexual exploitation and need information on what they should do if they have concerns about a child or young person. It is designed to enable practitioners to recognise the signs of child sexual exploitation and give them the confidence they need to confront it.

When developing a response to child sexual exploitation, public sector bodies have a general equality duty to consider the role of gender and other protected characteristics in order to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Referring to violence as 'gender-based' highlights the need to understand violence within the context of the way in which society is ordered; the relationships between men and women; the social, political and cultural environment within which they operate; and the code of conduct expected of them.

A gendered analysis lets us consider the way in which girls and boys may be more at risk from different forms of sexual exploitation. For example, boys and young men may be more at risk of online abuse, whereas girls and young women may be more at risk from an older 'boyfriend' or controlling adult. The impact of sexual exploitation on young men may be different because their abusers are mostly male. A gendered analysis of child sexual exploitation helps us understand which children may be more at risk, how abuse impacts differently on victims and how our detection and responses may need to vary accordingly. A gendered analysis also encourages us to take account of how wider societal expectations

and gender roles contributes to the context which allows abuse to thrive.

By acknowledging these links, this guidance seeks to play its part in developing a culture where everyone feels safe, respected and equal in our communities and where attitudes that allow sexual exploitation to flourish are challenged.

The guidance applies to male and female children up to the age of 18 years, irrespective of whether they are living at home, with carers, in a residential setting or independently. All references in this guidance to children or young people mean those under the age of 18, as defined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

Purpose of guidance

This guidance is designed to assist practitioners in preventing child sexual exploitation, protecting children and young people who are at risk of abuse or are abused through sexual exploitation, and disrupting and prosecuting those who perpetrate this form of abuse.

The guidance is supported by the Edinburgh Child Protection Committees public awareness and learning and development strategies. Everyone must take responsibility for protecting children from abuse and that means not only knowing your role, but also understanding the roles of other agencies and individuals.

This guidance is intended to support local agencies in applying Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) effectively in relation to child sexual exploitation. It should help local agencies to:

- identify those at risk of being sexually exploited
- take action to protect and promote the well-being of particular children and young people who are being or are at risk of being sexually exploited
- take action against those who are intent on abusing and exploiting children and young people in this way.

Sometimes the background and experiences of children and young people who are exploited sexually impact negatively on their behaviour, which may be challenging. The key principle for all practitioners is that children and young people who are sexually exploited are the **victims of abuse**. The responsibility for their sexual exploitation lies with the abuser. The focus of police investigations and of prosecutions should be on those who coerce, exploit and abuse children and young people.

What is child sexual exploitation?

The sexual exploitation of children and young people is an often hidden form of child sexual abuse. A number of different definitions have been developed through the work of researchers and practitioners, although the concepts of exploitation and exchange are central to each. Child sexual exploitation is defined in s.572-584 of [The National Guidance](#)

[for Child Protection in Scotland \(2014\)](#) and [Scotland's National Action Plan to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation](#).

Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse, in which a young person is manipulated or forced into taking part in a sexual act. This could be as part of a seemingly consensual relationship or in return for attention, affection, money, drugs, alcohol or somewhere to stay. The young person may think that their abuser is their friend, or even their boyfriend or girlfriend, but they will put them into dangerous situations, forcing the young person to do things they do not want to do.

The abuser may be male or female; they may threaten the young person physically or verbally, or be violent towards them. They will control and manipulate them, and try to isolate them from friends and family.

Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology, without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet or on a mobile phone, without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child or young person will have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common. Involvement in exploitative relationships is characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited choice, resulting from their social, economic and emotional vulnerabilities.

Who does it affect?

Young people from any background can be exploited for sex in this way. Boys and young men are abused, as well as girls and young women. The grooming and abuse can happen in person or online, and although most abusers are adults, some victims are exploited by their peers. There is often a misconception that only children from disadvantaged or chaotic backgrounds can be drawn into sexual exploitation because of their existing vulnerabilities. Whilst these children may be more at risk, abusers are very clever in the way they manipulate and take advantage of the children they abuse. Any child or young person can be taken in by their deception, no matter their background.

How does it happen?

There are numerous routes into sexual exploitation, many of which involve grooming. There is a growing understanding within agencies responsible for child protection that grooming plays an integral part in the sexual exploitation of children and young people. This is recognised within Section 1 of the [Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#), which makes it a criminal offence to groom a person under the age of 16.

Many young people are groomed by an abusing adult who befriends the young person and makes them feel special by buying gifts or giving them attention. In most cases, the abuser will have power of some kind over the young person. It may be that the abuser is older or more emotionally mature, physically stronger, or that they are in a position where they are able to control the young person. There are some situations that can make young people

more vulnerable to exploitation. Young people who are having difficulties at home, who go missing regularly, or who have experienced care may be particularly vulnerable.

Barnardo's has distinguished three **distinct models of abuse**, which practitioners may find helpful in understanding how perpetrators operate:

- **Inappropriate relationships:** this usually involves just one abuser who has power – physical, emotional or financial; or control over a young person. The young person may believe they have a genuine friendship or loving relationship with their abuser.
- **Boyfriend:** the abuser grooms the victim by striking up a normal relationship with them, giving them gifts and meeting them. A seemingly consensual sexual relationship develops, but later turns abusive.
- **Organised exploitation and trafficking:** victims are trafficked through criminal networks, often between towns and cities, and can be forced or coerced into sex with multiple men. They may also be used to recruit new victims. This serious organised activity can involve the buying and selling of young people.
- **Technology:** young people's access to the internet makes traditional protective factors more difficult to apply. Protection messages for children and young people on the safe use of technology should include reference to raising awareness on child sexual exploitation and the appropriate response if they are concerned about their own safety or that of others. All young people may be at risk, whether due to a lack of confidence and experience in the online world, or high exposure due to increased accessibility.

Where does the risk come from?

Content – children and young people accessing pornographic material or being exposed to unwelcome sexual content.

Contact – being targeted by a stranger who develops a relationship with the intent of sexually exploiting the child/young person.

Conduct – children and young people creating, uploading or seeking out sexually inappropriate material.

Combinations – content, contact and conduct are intrinsically linked and young people can be exposed to different risks at different times.

Policy and legislative context

[The Edinburgh and Lothians Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures](#) (2015) reflect our collective commitment to inter-agency collaboration and joint responsibility, and will be followed by all services in dealing with child protection concerns. For children, young people

and their families, these procedures set out what can be expected from the professionals who have a responsibility for their protection.

[Edinburgh's Policy Statement on Sexual Exploitation](#) is a statement of commitment by all the partners in Edinburgh. It provides a set of guiding principles and definitions in relation to the prevention of sexual exploitation, the support and protection of victims and the disruption and prosecution of offenders. It is based on the shared belief that sexual exploitation of vulnerable individuals is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. We aim to reduce the risk by challenging misunderstandings about the children, young people and adults who are victims of sexual exploitation, and emphasise the need to focus on disrupting perpetrators.

[The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (1989) is an international agreement, which protects the human rights of children under the age of 18. It forms the basis for GIRFEC, and the Scottish Government has committed to embed this agreement into all of its work with children and young people. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is clear within articles 35 and 36 that the state shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including 'prostitution', trafficking for sexual purposes and involvement in the production of child sexual abuse images.

[Getting It Right for Every Child](#) provides a framework for all those who work with children and young people. The framework puts children and young people at the heart of service provision, as well as encouraging inter-agency working to ensure children and young people have the best start in life. GIRFEC is being worked into policy and practice. The [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act, 2014](#) embeds the core principles of GIRFEC in legislation.

The 'Lead Professional' is the person within the network of practitioners supporting the child and family who will make sure that all agencies act as a team and the help they offer fits together seamlessly to provide appropriate support. The 'Named Person' acts as a main point of contact for children and families to help them access universal services.

[Vulnerable Children and Young People: Sexual Exploitation through Prostitution \(2003\)](#) highlights that sexual exploitation is abuse and should be treated accordingly. Any criminal justice action must focus on investigating and prosecuting those who are involved in abusing children. This includes not only those who sexually abuse children directly, but also those who coerce and are involved in the sexual exploitation of children in any way.

[The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland \(2014\)](#) provides a framework for all those working with children and young people to enable all organisations, services, agencies, practitioners and individuals to protect children and promote their wellbeing. The guidance sets out key responsibilities and information regarding strategic planning of services and their delivery. Guidance on specific issues, such as child trafficking is also provided for practitioners working at local level. The guidance has specific sections, which should be read alongside this document.

[The National Risk Framework to support the Assessment of Children and Young People \(2012\)](#) is a national risk assessment toolkit for child protection to support

practitioners in identifying and acting on child protection risks for children and young people. Based on the GIRFEC approach to well-being and on the National Practice Model, it sets out a process for assessing risk to enable practitioners to consider key factors in the child or young person's life. The factors include risk as well as resilience and protective issues. It can be used alongside any other assessment frameworks specifically designed to assess particular circumstances where children or young people may be at risk of harm or abuse at home or in the community.

Identification and Prevention

Child sexual exploitation is a hidden form of abuse and is not visible until we recognise some of the signs and begin to enquire further. Therefore staff should apply professional curiosity when there is any indication of a child or young person being exploited.

Children and young people who are the victims of sexual exploitation often do not recognise that they are being exploited. This makes it very hard to identify victims. It is therefore essential that we are able to recognise the signs and provide an appropriate response or intervention.

Children at risk of sexual exploitation may find themselves in high risk situations, isolated from protective, nurturing adults. Of particular relevance is the impact of those who may have groomed and conditioned children in order to coerce and abuse them. Children may be under very strong pressure, intimidated, afraid or dependent on those who have exploited them, especially where substance misuse is a factor. Children may therefore reject offers of help and support, and we need to work creatively with them to address this.

There are a number of signs that a child may be being groomed for sexual exploitation. Practitioners who have regular contact with children and young people have a key role in understanding the connections between these behaviours and the wider context of the young person's life.

Practitioners should exercise professional curiosity. If it is believed that there is any indication, however slight, that a child could be at risk, action should be taken and information should be shared.

Child sexual exploitation is widespread and can affect all young people, but there are certain vulnerabilities, which can make a young person more susceptible to exploitation.

Vulnerability Factors include:

- **A disrupted family life:** young people who get drawn into child sexual exploitation often have a chaotic or disrupted home life. This can include parental breakdown or separation and being looked after by the local authority.
- **A history of abuse and disadvantage:** this can include emotional, physical and sexual abuse as well as neglect.

- **Problematic parenting:** an evaluation of several child sexual exploitation services in the UK found that there was a huge deficit in the parenting capabilities of many parents of children who were exploited sexually. Fathers were often absent. Some young people move into adult life prematurely.
- **Disengagement from education:** school plays an important safeguarding role in a young person's life; if they disengage from education, they can be left vulnerable. They may become disconnected from their peers and lose sense of a regular routine.
- **Learning difficulties:** a young person with learning disabilities may be less able to recognise the risky situations they may be getting themselves into and they may be more susceptible to exploitation.
- **Going missing:** many young people have a history of going missing from home or care for various reasons. This leaves them susceptible to exploitative adults who may offer them a place to stay or somewhere to pass the time.
- **Poor health and well-being:** low self-esteem in adolescence may leave some young people vulnerable to older people who compliment them and make them feel good about themselves by offering them gifts and giving them attention.
- **Drug and alcohol misuse:** alcohol and drugs are frequently used in the grooming process. For young people who already have problems with substance misuse, this makes them easier targets for exploitation. They are more likely to be lured into risky situations by the incentive of drink or drugs. In the evaluation of several child sexual exploitation services in the UK, substance misuse was a key factor in approximately three quarters of cases.

The impact of drink and drugs

Underage drinking (offences related to sale and supply) and drug taking are criminal activities. Substance misuse can mask the exploitation and criminality and make adults less sympathetic to the young person's situation.

Perpetrators may lure young people in with the promise of drugs, alcohol, parties and a good time. Young people may come to rely on drink and drugs to cope with the sexual exploitation they are experiencing.

Know the signs – risk indicators

There are a number of indicators to which practitioners should be alert as signs of child sexual exploitation. These indicators should trigger concerns and a proportionate response.

Risk indicators can include, but are not restricted to:

- **Staying out late and going missing:** does the young person regularly return home late? Is the young person missing overnight or for longer with no known home base?

- **Multiple callers:** does the young person regularly receive calls or messages from unknown adults or young people who may be slightly older than them? Perpetrators of child sexual exploitation routinely use mobile phones as a means of controlling their victims.
- **Excessive use of a mobile phone or multiple mobile phones:** does the young person use their mobile phone more than would otherwise be expected of them? Are they secretive about who they are contacting and why? Young people are often given more than one mobile phone so that perpetrators can contact them.
- **Expressions of despair:** is the young person displaying signs of self-harm, overdosing, eating disorders, challenging behaviour or aggression?
- **Disclosure of abuse followed by withdrawal of allegation:** has the young person disclosed being abused and then retracted the allegation? This can indicate fear and intimidation.
- **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies:** has the young person contracted an STI or disclosed an unwanted pregnancy? These are often signs of unsafe sex and could indicate sex with multiple people.
- **Peers involved in sexual exploitation:** has the young person disclosed peers being sexually exploited? It is very common for peers to be the gateway into child sexual exploitation.
- **Drug and alcohol misuse:** has the young person started experimenting with drugs or alcohol? Drink and drugs are a central part of the grooming process. Young people may start to normalise the sexual behaviour that follows, even if they don't like it at first, because it leads to the good feelings of drugs and alcohol.
- **Use of mobile devices that cause concern:** does the young person spend more time than usual online? Are they secretive? Are they accessing inappropriate websites? The internet is a very effective means for perpetrators to connect with, groom and exploit young people. They can have almost unlimited access to young people via social networking and gaming sites, whilst grooming them for face to face exploitation.
- **Lack of positive relationship with a protective or nurturing adult:** does the young person have a strong adult figure in their life to whom they can turn? If they do not have a nurturing adult in their lives, they may look elsewhere.
- **Truancy or exclusion:** has the young person been excluded from school or been truanting persistently? Young people who are not in school during the day may be more at risk of sexual exploitation. Living independently and failing to respond to attempts by a worker to keep in touch: has the young person started withdrawing from their social and formal networks? Perpetrators will try and separate young people from their networks of support. They may try and convince the young person that their family and friends do not care about them.

- **High number of sexual partners:** is the young person displaying signs of sexual behaviour with multiple partners? This may be a sign of exploitation; the young person may be being coerced or forced into having sex with others.
- **Unexplained amounts of money or other material items:** does the young person turn up with expensive clothing or other items? Children who appear to have new clothes, jewellery, mobile phones or money that cannot plausibly be accounted for may be being groomed.

Other **significant** risk indicators to look out for include:

- presence of an older boyfriend or relationship with a controlling adult
- abuse by boyfriend or controlling adult
- entering and leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults
- frequenting areas known for street prostitution
- physical injury or symptoms of abuse
- children under 13 years asking for sexual health advice
- being taken to flats, houses or hotels and engaging in sexual activity.

Lack of disclosure and response

Disclosure of sexual exploitation is always difficult for children. The sophisticated grooming and priming processes executed by abusing adults and the exchange element of this form of abuse can act as additional barriers, which increase denial and make disclosure especially difficult.

Children and young people who are victims of sexual exploitation can display disruptive and difficult behaviour and often fail to recognise that they are being exploited. This presents practitioners with many challenges in providing the support they need to escape exploitation. The grooming process may be so effective that young people believe they are in a real relationship over which they have control.

Young people are unlikely to disclose information to people they do not trust. If they feel as though an adult does not understand or that they will judge them, they are unlikely to disclose what is happening.

Challenges practitioners face in identifying and responding to sexual exploitation as a child protection issue:

- **Age** of the child or young person – responses can vary if the child is 16 years and over. Nevertheless, there should be a robust inter-agency response.
- **Gender** of the child or young person – responses can vary if the child is male. Practitioners should guard against making assumptions based on gender.

- **Sexuality** of the child or young person – responses can vary if workers are focused on the possibility of young people exploring their sexuality.
- Difficult **behaviour** of the child or young person.
- **Scale of child sexual exploitation** – some disclosures may seem implausible to workers.
- Children may be involved in other **criminal activity**.
- **Lack of awareness or training** on the part of the practitioner.
- **Lack of understanding** of the child protection response to be triggered.
- **Lack of disclosure** – children do not see it as abusive or dangerous and trivialise or blame themselves.
- **Fear** of what follows disclosure.
- **Continuity** in support to young people aged 16 years.

What prevents young people disclosing sexual exploitation? Young people rarely self-disclose directly, sometimes because they **do not recognise** the exploitation. Other inhibiting factors are set out below.

- Loss of supply of alcohol, drugs
- Loss of “boyfriend” – love and attention
- Fear of retribution from other young people
- Fear of domestic abuse from “boyfriend”
- Shame – family, friends and workers finding out
- Fear of letting everybody down
- Fear of being labelled a prostitute or gay
- Fear of not being believed
- Fear of separation from family or change of placement
- Threat of secure accommodation
- Fear of loss of control following disclosure
- The perceived benefits of the exploitation appear to outweigh risks
- Fear that the situation will get worse

All young people have a right to be: listened to; respected; valued and feel valued.

These are key principles for practitioners when it comes to reading the signs of child sexual exploitation.

Key messages from recent significant case reviews (SCR)

Several SCRs have been undertaken over recent years in response to cases of child sexual exploitation. The SCRs are intended to draw out what went wrong and find out what lessons can be learned for individual agencies, so that similar things do not happen again.

The SCR in Rochdale uncovered several themes.

- Services **not listening** to young people
- Young people felt that they had given sufficient information for the agencies to protect them, but **nothing changed** and the abuse carried on
- Parents were told by the police that their daughter was associating with the wrong crowd and was **making choices** about relationships and sexual partners
- Perpetrators had **control** over every element of their lives
- **Threats** and the **use of violence** – towards young people and their families
- **Threats towards families** as one of the main reasons for not telling parents and coming forward to services
- Young people were told they would **not be believed**
- Young people with **no hope** of escape
- Even when the young people cooperated with services, nothing changed and **the abuse continued**

Emerging themes contained within the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham are set out below.

- Leadership, in particular from elected members, senior police and council officers is critical
- Inappropriate negative attitudes of agencies to challenging behaviour of looked after and accommodated children and young people, and/or young people presenting difficult behaviour in local communities
- Need for trauma-informed awareness
- Taxi services linked to organised crime
- Resources, volume of demand and pressures on staff
- Rarity of prosecutions

- Traditional statutory approaches versus the effectiveness of community and third sector resources, which may connect better with local communities
- The line between a reluctance to believe and active collusion
- Inaction justified by fear of accusations of racism; a simplistic understanding of a complex dynamic
- Need for effective:
 - awareness-raising
 - strategic planning
 - resource allocation
 - professional supervision
 - engagement with children, young people and their families
 - engagement with local communities
 - criminal investigations

16 and 17 year olds

It is important to remember that just because a young person is over the age of 16 – irrespective of whether they are subject to a statutory order – it does not mean they cannot be victims of child sexual exploitation. A young person who has been subject to a complex pattern of life experiences, including sophisticated grooming, does not stop needing support and protection when they reach the age of 16. They remain a vulnerable young person with ongoing needs. A person’s vulnerability will depend on their circumstances and environment, and each case must be judged on its merits.

Practitioners should take account of child protection and adult protection procedures when considering 16 and 17 year olds. **The age of the individual concerned should not be a barrier to an Inter-agency Referral Discussion taking place. A response proportionate to the level of risk being effected is the priority.**

Roles and responsibilities

As all child sexual exploitation will warrant a child protection referral, individual and agency roles and responsibilities must accord with those set out in the [Edinburgh and Lothians Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures](#) (2015).

The Edinburgh Child Protection Committee (CPC) is an inter-agency strategic partnership responsible for the design, development, publication, distribution, dissemination, implementation and evaluation of child protection policy and practice across the public, private and third sectors in Edinburgh. The CPC’s role is to provide individual and collective leadership and direction for the management of child protection services in the city.

Monitoring

The CPC will ensure that monitoring arrangements are in place. The number of strategy meetings held under this protocol, number of children involved and any deficits in service provision will be recorded and monitored by the CPC in order to evidence local prevalence and need, and to ensure adequate service provision.

Member agencies are encouraged to collect information to monitor prevalence, activity patterns and effectiveness of interventions for children who are sexually exploited.

Understanding prevalence

Child sexual exploitation is a hidden issue. There is no central system for recording cases, meaning that it can be difficult to get an accurate picture of the number of young people at risk. However, without systems in place to monitor local levels of risk, young people who are experiencing exploitation are all the more likely to go unnoticed and unprotected.

Accessing specialist support

Child sexual exploitation is a child protection concern and support will always be available from the core agencies, alongside any other specialist supports, where available. It is vital that the right specialist support is available to help young people exit and recover from exploitative situations, and that there are clearly determined pathways from universal to specialist services.

Raising awareness

Professionals in universal services have a critical role in identifying and addressing sexual exploitation. Frontline staff in services for children and young people should be able to recognise the warning signs and risk factors of child sexual exploitation and know how to respond using child protection procedures. The Edinburgh Child Protection Committee has a role in engaging with the public to raise awareness of child protection issues, including child sexual exploitation, providing advice on what the public should do if they have concerns. A communication strategy has been developed to form part of the Speak Up – Speak Out publicity campaign.

Police Scotland

The priority for Police Scotland is the safety and wellbeing of the victim. A child centred approach should always be adopted during efforts to secure evidence to prosecute offenders. All intervention and disruption opportunities for perpetrators should be fully explored and implemented. This role should be carried out in accordance with the principles of multi-agency cooperation to protect children.

The role of the police is central to tackling child sexual exploitation. Victims often display behaviours deemed anti-social and sometimes criminal, such as underage drinking, drug taking, underage sex, truancy and other risky behaviours. The police therefore are often on the frontline and are best placed to pick up on these indicators. A balance must be struck between dealing with anti-social or criminal behaviours and being alert to signs of child sexual exploitation.

The single force gives increased opportunities for national training on the issue, stronger

multi-agency relationships and action to ensure there is always a culture of support for victims.

Set out below is a checklist of core features for effective local policing of child sexual exploitation.

- Clear responsibility for the issue
- Officers with specialist knowledge
- Force-wide training; strong, local multi-agency links; strong cross-border police links
- System to identify child sexual exploitation on local police data bases
- Culture of support for young victims

Responsibility

Police action on child sexual exploitation needs strong leadership to ensure that it is not undermined by staff changes or resource pressures. This lead should be clear to police and external agencies.

Specialist Officers

Dealing with young people who may have been sexually exploited presents specific challenges, even for experienced officers. Having officers with specialist knowledge can help young people in giving evidence, enhance inter-agency working and assist in developing a picture of local abuse. Interviewing child witnesses requires a sensitive approach and tailored specialist support.

Force-wide training

Both frontline officers and senior officers should have training. Training senior staff promotes a force-wide understanding of the importance of tackling this abuse. Any training should be updated as knowledge of the issue continues to develop.

Database indicator

The interim Vulnerable Persons' Database (iVPD) enables Police Scotland to flag child sexual exploitation on the national database (whether known or suspected cases) to help police profile the local problem and manage individual risks.

Multi-agency links

Police Scotland is central to the efforts to tackle child sexual exploitation and is represented by senior staff on the Edinburgh Children's Partnership, Edinburgh Child Protection Committee and the Edinburgh Chief Officers' Group – Public Protection.

Cross-border links

Policing needs to respond to cross-border movement by abusers and victims. Systems for working with neighbouring police forces would reinforce individual efforts to tackle child

sexual exploitation.

Culture of support

Young victims of sexual exploitation and young people who are highly vulnerable deserve to be treated sensitively by the police. Furthermore, they need confidence in the police before they will engage with efforts to protect them or prosecute the abusers.

Missing from home

Police Scotland is also the main agency involved when a young person is reported missing, runs away from home or absconds from a residential unit. We know that children who go missing or run away regularly are at risk of becoming involved in sexual exploitation. Going missing may also be an indicator that sexual exploitation is occurring. Police Scotland has been instrumental in the development of new procedures for **Looked after Children who go Missing from Residential and Foster Care in Scotland**.

A UK survey conducted in relation to Barnardo's sexual exploitation services found that 44% of all service users had gone missing on more than one occasion. Findings were similar in the University of Bedfordshire study, which found that over half of young people using sexual exploitation services on one particular day were known to have gone missing.

The entrapment of children and young people in sexual exploitation does not occur overnight. They may become more vulnerable if they are spending a lot of time away from home, from their care placement or from school because they are running away. Each time a young person is reported missing the police should assess their level of risk. If a young person goes missing regularly, there is a danger that professionals become complacent, believing the young person will return as usual or that they can somehow manage. This is when they are at greatest risk and we know that the people who exploit children in this way are all too aware of how the system works.

Running away or going missing should not be seen as normal teenage behaviour, it should not be assumed that they will be okay if they are 'streetwise' and will return when they are ready. Unhappy, lonely young people are flattered and seduced by the attention of adults who will appear to sympathise with their situation. In short, they become highly vulnerable to the well-rehearsed grooming techniques of abusing adults.

The Edinburgh CPC will ensure that relevant agencies know what to ask a child or young person when they go missing, ensuring that the response and support are appropriate, sensitive and timely. Key questions are set out below.

- **Where have they been staying?** Have they been sleeping rough or staying with 'friends'? Perpetrators often offer accommodation to runaways as part of the grooming process.
- **In what locations have they been staying?** Internal trafficking of young people is an increasing problem. If a young person goes missing regularly and for several days at a time, they may have been taken to other towns or locations as part of the exploitation.

- **With whom have they been?** Those intending to exploit children sexually may specifically target and befriend young runaways by offering gifts and friendship. Other young people already involved in child sexual exploitation might be persuaded to draw in other vulnerable young people on the street.
- **Have they been drinking or taking drugs?** Substance misuse is a common facet of child sexual exploitation. Perpetrators may lure young runaways to 'parties' with the promise of drink and drugs to facilitate exploitation.
- **What problems led them to run away?** Finding the route cause is key to preventing the young person from going missing again.

Social Work Services

Social work services have a statutory general duty for the promotion of the welfare of the person. Children's social work services have a specific responsibility for:

- supporting families to maintain children at home and in their community where appropriate
- investigating allegations of child abuse
- where necessary, providing appropriate care placements for children.

The Council has a statutory duty under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act, 2011 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need and to enquire into the circumstances of children and young people who may require compulsory measures of supervision, who may have been abused or neglected or be at risk of abuse or neglect, and take all measures to protect them from further harm.

All social work staff have responsibilities to respond to the needs of children who may be vulnerable or at risk of abuse. This includes those working in criminal justice, substance misuse workers, hospital social workers and child and adolescent mental health workers. All staff must work in close collaboration with their colleagues in children and families services to protect children who may be at risk of harm or abuse. **All staff across social work services** have a duty to contribute to the assessment of risk of all children.

All referrals received suggesting a child may be in need of protection will be dealt with through an Inter-Agency Referral Discussion, as a matter of the highest priority, on the same working day.

In all referrals suggesting that a child is in need of compulsory measures of supervision, social work staff will make enquiries and give the Children's Reporter all relevant information about the child.

Criminal justice social work staff have a statutory responsibility with the police for supervising and managing risk from adults who have committed offences against children.

Corporate Parenting

There are difficult boundaries and balances around the roles and responsibilities of corporate parents with regard to the sexual activities of children in their care. However, there is often a danger that behaviour, which could be part of child sexual exploitation is sometimes not checked and challenged quickly enough in residential units or foster placements.

Edinburgh's Integrated Plan for Children and Young People is supported by the Corporate Parenting Action Plan. This was launched in March 2012, with 36 actions points under six key themes: Leadership; Health and Wellbeing; Education; Employment and Training; Support and Protection; and Accommodation. Following significant consultation and engagement with stakeholders, including children and young people, the refreshed Corporate Parenting Action Plan was launched in May 2014.

Vulnerabilities of accommodated children

Looked after children and young people, especially those who are accommodated are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Perpetrators will often target residential homes because they know the young people there will have existing problems and vulnerabilities, which have led to them being accommodated. Residential workers must be able to recognise the signs and have a good understanding of what to look for, such as going missing, disengagement from education, appearing with unexplained gifts, and changes in temperament or mood. Staff should take positive action to clarify and record any concerns, and minimise the child's involvement in child sexual exploitation. If suspicions are confirmed, the following steps should be taken.

- **ALWAYS** treat as a child protection response.
- Treat the child as a victim.
- Ensure that all relevant information is recorded in the child's care plan and file concerning adults and identifying information, e.g. appearance, street names, car registration details, telephone activity, the child's patterns of going missing, together with decisions and directions for action.
- Make every effort to dissuade the child from leaving to engage in child sexual exploitation by talking to them, involving them in alternative activities, and ensuring they have the resources to attend those activities, including escorting where necessary.
- Consider the joint protocol in relation to children who go missing from local authority care.

- Ensure the child is aware of the legal issues involved, for example that those exploiting them are committing a range of offences.
- Monitor telephone calls, text messages and other correspondence, clarifying the possibility of police downloading information from young person's mobile phone (this is a measure Police Scotland may implement to evidence an enquiry). Reasons for intercepting letters and calls (for example, they relate to a dangerous adult) should be included and agreed as part of the care plan.
- Monitor callers to the home or adults collecting children by car. This may involve turning visitors away, or passing information directly to the police; monitor any suspicious activity in the vicinity of the home and inform the police.
- Use appropriate methods, in accordance with relevant guidance, to prevent the child leaving home to engage in child sexual exploitation (these should be recorded in the care plan).
- Where these efforts fail, and the child leaves, staff need to decide whether to follow them and continue to encourage them to return.
- If they will not return, staff should inform the local police that the child is missing and pass on all relevant information.
- Liaise with outreach agencies, so they can look out for a child who has gone missing.
- Offer sensitive and welcoming responses to children returning home.
- Identify or be able to describe the adults who are spending time with the young person.

Education Services

Any concerns that a child is at risk of sexual exploitation should be raised with the relevant 'designated member' of education staff, who should share that information with social work, in line with the school's child protection procedures.

Many victims of child sexual exploitation are disengaged from education and may be either permanently or temporarily excluded from school, not attending school and not in employment.

Staff in schools, further education colleges and other education establishments are well placed to recognise and refer children who are exposed to the risk of sexual exploitation. Disengagement from education is a strong indicator of involvement in child sexual exploitation. Staff are also in a position to support children to reduce vulnerability and risk of sexual exploitation and to support abused children to recover.

- School staff should be alert and competent to identify and act upon concerns that a child is vulnerable to, at risk of, or experiencing abuse through child sexual exploitation. They should be familiar with vulnerability and risk factors and appropriate associated actions in relation to each level of risk.
- Relationship, Sexual Health and Parenthood studies (RSHPE) within curriculum for excellence provides a sound platform through which to explore ideas around healthy sexual relationships and to provide children and young people with a sense of control about their bodies and selves. This also needs to include opportunities for children and young people to understand the very real risks involved in staying out late and going missing from school, home or care.
- Staff should be aware of the importance of sharing any concerns related to children and young people who go missing during the school day and reporting information that perpetrators may be targeting the school.
- Any concerns should be passed to the school's 'designated member' of staff for child protection. They should monitor information to identify when more than one child in the school or community may be being targeted for child sexual exploitation. These lead individuals should have or develop a level of expertise in relation to child sexual exploitation. They should be able to advise within their school or service on identifying and referring a child at risk and how their agency can contribute to risk reduction work and a protection plan.
- All schools and educational facilities should ensure that staff receive appropriate training to ensure they are competent to identify a child who may be vulnerable to child sexual exploitation and act accordingly.

Health Services

Any health professional with concerns that a child is at risk of, or is being abused through child sexual exploitation (based on vulnerability and risk factors set out in the sexual exploitation risk assessment framework) has an individual responsibility to share concerns with the on-call paediatrician for child protection, the NHS Lothian child protection advisor, police or social work, in line with child protection procedures. There should be no delay in sharing concerns.

Health professionals, and especially those working in sexual health clinics, are on the frontline when it comes to child sexual exploitation. Health provision is a universal service and staff may have more opportunities to spot indicators that a child or young person is being abused in this way.

Sexual health workers are in a position to communicate with young people and encourage disclosure if they suspect sexual exploitation. Health professionals in sexual health clinics may not be viewed in the same way as other professionals in a young person's life. Young people may feel less likely to be judged because staff deal with sexual health issues on a daily basis. It is important therefore that they and other health professionals who come into

contact with children and young people are able to recognise the signs of child sexual exploitation and can ask questions in a sensitive manner.

Health professionals are in a prime position to gather information and build trusting relationships with young people. These can result in positive outcomes in both meeting the needs of young people and identifying the perpetrators of child sexual exploitation.

Health professionals should be familiar with vulnerability and risk factors and appropriate associated actions in relation to each level of risk.

Signs to look out for in young people include:

- pregnancy, termination or miscarriage
- pregnancy in very young girls
- young people asking for contraception
- young people engaging in sexual activity at a young age
- young people disclosing rape and sexual assault
- young people being presenting multiple times at Accident and Emergency, particularly for sexual or physical assault
- sexually transmitted infections

Relevant information **MUST** always be shared when there is suspicion of child sexual exploitation or any form of abuse.

The National Guidance: *Under-age Sexual Activity: Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People and Identifying Child Protection Concerns (2010)* provides direction.

“The needs of each child and young person are the primary consideration when professionals decide upon the relevant and proportionate sharing of information... confidentiality does not prevent information sharing where there is the risk of significant harm to the young person or others.”

In addition, the Scottish Government Child Protection Guidance for Health Professionals 2013 states that:

“When it is recognised that a child or young person’s safety is compromised and/or that they are likely to experience significant harm, health care staff have a responsibility to follow local procedures for reporting and sharing these concerns”.

Other Services

Everyone has a responsibility to act if they suspect a child is being harmed or abused in any way. The role of staff in relation to children abused through child sexual exploitation is in the prevention, recognition and referral stages.

Key frontline workers include street wardens, shopping centre security, concierges, CCTV operatives and staff in pubs, clubs or hotels. Most sexual exploitation takes place in private. However, public places such as cafes, hotels, B&Bs, cars, parks or taxis can be used to meet, groom and abuse children.

All staff must be vigilant – from landlords to security staff, and from petrol station attendants to takeaway workers. People working in the night time economy are particularly well placed to notice whether exploitation is occurring in their area and pick up valuable information.

If concerns are raised, they should be progressed in accordance with the Edinburgh and Lothians Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures.

Signs to look out for include, but are not limited to a young person:

- being taken into a hotel room by one or more adults who do not seem to be family members
- being in a hotel room which is visited or requested by a number of additional adults
- going by taxi to a hotel or other venue to meet a group of adults who do not seem to be family members
- being out late with older adults who do not seem to be family members
- being bought alcoholic drinks by adults although they are already intoxicated
- being in the company of adults who are known or suspected of being involved in adult prostitution
- being bought food or drinks by a much older adult whom they seem to see as a boyfriend/girlfriend
- showing indications of sexual activity with one or more adult who is significantly older than the young person
- showing indications of sexual activity when they are known or suspected to be under 16
- being moved around for the purposes for sexual exploitation (internal trafficking).

Hotels, B&Bs and local authority tenancies can be central to the process of child sexual exploitation. Staff therefore must be aware of the signs and alert to groups of older men frequenting rooms with young people. The authorities should be contacted immediately if any illegal activity is suspected.

While housing staff will not be directly involved in the investigation of alleged or actual abuse, they may have important information regarding families or individual tenancies to contribute to a child protection investigation or assessment. They should be prepared to share this information and to attend case conferences, as required. Housing services often play a key role in the management of risk posed by dangerous offenders. Where the local authority does not provide the housing service, independent housing organisations and associations should play an active role in supporting and identifying vulnerable children.

Voluntary Sector and Community Groups

Many young people are reluctant to engage with statutory services and might find voluntary agencies more approachable sources of help. By working in partnership with statutory bodies, voluntary agencies are able to offer services that help young people understand the grooming process, and raise awareness of risks and the implications of risk taking behaviour.

There is a wide range of specialist and other voluntary and community agencies and groups (youth clubs, sport, drama groups, faith groups, etc.), which might be well placed to identify children who are at risk of, or are being exploited. Voluntary and community sector agencies often have a close relationship with their local communities and can develop trusting relationships and maintain a link to the children or young person if they disengage from statutory services. Outreach agencies are often the first point of contact for children in risky situations, and specialist voluntary agencies often have the opportunity to provide vital support to reduce the risk.

- Staff should be alert and competent to identify and act upon concerns that a child is vulnerable to, at risk of, or experiencing abuse through child sexual exploitation.
- Agencies and services should pass any information or concerns to the designated child protection officer. These lead individuals should have or develop a level of expertise in relation to child sexual exploitation. They should be able to advise their team or service on identifying and referring a child at risk and how their agency can contribute to risk reduction and a protection plan.
- Any concerns that a child is at risk of sexual exploitation should be raised with their designated lead for child protection, who should share their concerns in line with the agency's child protection procedures.
- All agencies should ensure that their child protection procedures include reference to the responsibilities outlined in this guidance.
- It is essential that voluntary agencies and community groups operate as multi-agency network partners in order to provide children with access to the widest possible range of intervention and support services.

What should all practitioners be doing? Looking past the behaviours being displayed to find the root causes.

A recent case review in Torbay following an incident of child sexual exploitation concluded a range of lessons to be learned.

“Action that was taken was often focused on addressing the immediate presenting concerns, such as offending behaviour, drugs and alcohol misuse and sexual activity, rather than identifying and addressing the underlying reasons why the young persons were presenting as they were. Their behaviour was often justified or excused as ‘their choice’ and as ‘adolescent behaviour’, and was not considered to be a reaction to

longer term deeper issues or current abusive relationships”

What can I do as a practitioner?

As a practitioner working with children and young people, you may have opportunities to identify issues early, so it is important to familiarise yourself with the signs that a child or young person is being exploited and to share this information with your colleagues or practitioners in other agencies.

Some of the steps you can take to help protect young people are set out below.

- **Staying alert** to changes in behaviour or any physical signs of abuse and investigating these further.
- Ensuring you know the child protection lead in your work place and that you are **aware of the procedure** to follow if you have concerns about a young person.
- Thinking about ways that you might be able to **support and help young people** more effectively to share information if they are worried about their own or another young person’s situation.
- **Identifying opportunities to educate** young people and their parents about healthy relationships and about sexual exploitation.

Barnardo’s has developed a model of practice called the 4 As for adults working with children. Following this model may encourage children and young people to disclose any abuse or exploitation they are experiencing. This is more likely to result in the appropriate support being provided.

Access: services for children and young people should be provided in a safe, attractive environment; they should support young people on their own terms and most of all build trust.

Attention: give young people time and positive attention, focusing on what matters to them. Often, victims of child sexual exploitation will have been drawn to their exploiter through a need for love and attention that they may not have been receiving elsewhere.

Assertive Outreach: make consistent and persistent efforts to contact the young person through a range of methods. Victims of child sexual exploitation are often targeted because of their existing vulnerabilities. These children and young people may be seen as hard to reach or ‘troubled’. In addition, many victims will be reluctant to disclose or may not even realise they are a victim. It is therefore all the more important to persevere and not give up if the child or young person is not receptive to help initially.

Advocacy: support young people to get the services they need. It is very important

to advocate on behalf of the child and not stigmatise them for their involvement in sexual exploitation. Sign-posting young people to the appropriate services will enable them to get the support they need. Additional stigmatisation or criminalisation may push them further into exploitation.

Working with children and young people

Working with children and young people for whom sexual exploitation is an issue requires a holistic approach and the investment of time and resources in long-term intervention. An important aspect of the work is maintaining contact and being available to children and young people until they reach a point where they are ready to think about their situation and accept support. The process and effort spent by a worker on relationship building are important factors in their reaching this stage. When these windows of opportunity present, they should be capitalised on fully, providing the right support at the time it is required by the young person. This can only be achieved through the cooperation and joint working of an established network of appropriate agencies.

Establishing a positive trusting relationship with vulnerable children and young people takes time. A relationship needs to be developed, which offers something tangible to the child or young person. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that workers are not providing friendship, but a professional support and protection service. Change needs to happen at a pace that is set by the young person; provide real choices; and promote a sense of positive control for the young person. Working with children and young people who are exposed to risk and experiences of sexual exploitation requires an approach that is non-judgmental.

- Intervention should begin with relationship building, and assessment of risks and vulnerabilities with the child or young person.
- Honest discussions and inclusion in assessment and planning processes will assist the child or young person to feel included, and will create a sense of ownership and connection with the plan.
- The plan should address each of the identified areas of risk.

Workers need to be realistic about expectations and to understand that this is long-term, intensive work, where progress will not always be consistent.

If the child is in a residential unit, staff should be asked to take positive action to clarify and record any concerns and minimise the child's involvement in sexual exploitation.

If the child is in foster care, the social worker and fostering link worker should meet with the foster carer to decide which of the above steps could reasonably be taken by the foster carer as part of the multi-agency plan.

The child's behaviour and attitude may be extremely challenging, and carers and staff will require ongoing support, advice and training to allow them to respond appropriately and effectively. These needs must be considered and resources identified, either by the manager of the residential unit, or the fostering link worker. The Emergency Social Care Service

should be made aware of how to respond out-of-hours.

Young people aged 18 years and over

In cases where a young person entitled to receive services under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, 2014 is assessed as at medium or high risk of abuse through sexual exploitation, the actions above should be followed.

The pathway planning should specifically identify their vulnerability to sexual exploitation, and address the factors known to impede successful recovery, e.g. homelessness, poverty, lack of educational and employment opportunities and lack of supportive social contacts.

Information and awareness raising actions, and where necessary, work to reduce the risk of sexual exploitation should be included in the pathway planning process. Risk should be assessed and addressed on an ongoing basis. For children and young people under the age of 18, liaison between social services and the Police Public Protection Unit is also required.

A young person who has been subject to negative life experiences, including sophisticated grooming, which have brought them to a point where they are at risk of, or are abused through, sexual exploitation will continue to need support and protection when they reach the age of 18 years. They remain vulnerable, with ongoing needs. A person's vulnerability will depend on their circumstances and environment, and each case must be judged on its merits. Consideration should always be given to referral through Edinburgh's [Adult Support and Protection arrangements](#).

Individuals with a learning disability, cognitive impairment and/or mental health problems are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse. Reasons for this include:

- society's attitudes and assumptions, which often devalue individuals with disabilities
- prejudice and misconceptions regarding people with learning disabilities, e.g. belief that they are insensitive to pain
- communication difficulties may make it difficult for individuals to be heard or understood
- failure by professionals to recognise the signs of exploitation and the misidentification of behaviour as symptoms of illness or impairment, e.g. self harm
- the individual may be isolated and prone to grooming via the internet and social media sites
- an impaired capacity to avoid or resist abuse
- a tendency to show affection easily to strangers and acquaintances
- the individual may have learned to be compliant, by having to fit in around others whose approval is essential for well-being or survival

- lack of sexual knowledge and understanding about sexuality
- the individual may have no other frame of reference and may not recognise that they are being exploited.

Edinburgh recognises commercial sexual exploitation, and in particular prostitution and trafficking, as a significant social problem, which disproportionately affects vulnerable people, as well as families and communities. Prostitution and trafficking are part of the same continuum – a widespread manifestation of violence and abuse. Violence, experience of abuse, homelessness, poverty and addiction are at the root of prostitution in Edinburgh. Women caught up in systems of prostitution and trafficking survive prolonged periods of emotional, physical, mental and sexual trauma. Women victims are amongst the most disadvantaged and marginalised in our community.

There is also an often hidden population of men and young people who engage in prostitution, and a similar partnership approach is in place to meet the needs of this equally vulnerable group.

Information sharing

The key to good multi-agency working is information sharing. This is central to any multi-agency meetings. Successful exchange of information supports both the identification of victims and the development of appropriate responses.

The 'Getting it right for every child' (GIRFEC) approach focuses on early intervention. If a practitioner believes a child or young person's wellbeing is at risk or they are at risk of harm, this information needs to be shared.

"A Practitioner Guide to Information Sharing, Confidentiality and Consent to Support Children and Young People's Wellbeing" was produced by the Lothian Data Sharing Partnership in 2014 to assist staff in promoting, supporting and safeguarding the wellbeing of all children, young people and their families.

Guidance from the Information Commissioner's office on this matter states that:

"Where a practitioner believes, in their personal opinion, that there is risk to a child or young person that may lead to harm, proportionate sharing of information is unlikely to constitute a breach of the (Data Protection) Act in such circumstances".

Managing individual cases

The Barnardo's Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF)

The risk assessment tool SERAF has been developed by Barnardo's to enable the identification of children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation. It was developed in

response to issues raised by practitioners. It is an additional tool, specific to child sexual exploitation, to be used alongside the National Risk Assessment Toolkit.

The development of a framework, which includes four categories of risk, is intended to inform appropriate responses in relation to protecting children and young people. Providing an appropriate response requires a protective network for children and young people. Effectiveness depends heavily on a multi-agency response. This response is delivered most effectively in the structure offered by local protocols. Different responses are required in relation to each level of risk. Each of the four categories of risk has an associated action.

Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF)

SERAF Category of Risk	Indicators of risk	Description	Associated actions
Category 1 Not at risk	No risk indicators but may have one or more vulnerabilities present.	A child or young person who may be 'in need' but who is not currently at risk of being groomed for sexual exploitation.	Educate to stay safe. Review risk following any significant change in circumstances.
Category 2 Mild risk	Educate to stay safe. Review risk following any significant change in circumstances.	A vulnerable child or young person who may be at risk of being groomed for sexual exploitation.	Consider multi-agency meeting to share information and agree a plan to address risk and/or need. Work on risk awareness and staying safe should be undertaken with this child/ young person. Review risk following any significant change in circumstances.
Category 3 Moderate risk	Multiple vulnerabilities and risk indicators present.	A child or young person who may be targeted for opportunistic abuse through exchange of sex for drugs, accommodation (overnight stays) and goods etc.	Convene multi-agency meeting under local procedures for sexually exploited children and young people to ensure effective exchange of information with multi-agency colleagues and agree safety plan. At least one review meeting to be convened. Work should be undertaken with this child/ young person around risk reduction and keeping safe.

Category 4 Significant risk	Multiple vulnerabilities and risk indicators. One or more significant risk indicators also likely.	Indication that a child or young person is at significant risk of or is already being sexually exploited. Sexual exploitation is likely to be habitual, often self-denied and coercion/control is implicit.	Convene multi-agency meeting under local procedures for sexually exploited children and young people to ensure effective exchange of information with multi-agency colleagues and agree safety plan, including regular review meetings. Protection plan should include long-term intensive direct work with the child or young person.
Moderate or Significant risk	As above	Young person aged 16 years or above.	Where a young person is aged 16 years or over and not subject to statutory measures, the associated action in relation to Moderate and Significant risk: sexual exploitation should be addressed as an issue in relation to this young person through liaison between Social Work and Police Public Protection Unit to address the young person's protection.

Category 1 – Not at risk of sexual exploitation

Children and young people in Category 1 do not have indicators of risk in relation to sexual exploitation. The majority of children and young people will not be at risk. However, children and young people in contact with support agencies, such as social work are likely to have some vulnerability.

Children and young people assessed as being in this category need access to basic information, which will enable them to develop an awareness of the risks that can lead to a situation in which they may be exposed to sexual exploitation. They need access to information that will equip them to avoid risky situations and to protect themselves. Social workers are well placed to deliver such information as part of their interaction with the children and young people with whom they are in contact.

The school Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE) curriculum provides a sound platform through which to deliver basic information, to explore ideas around 'healthy' sexual relationships and to provide children and young people with a sense of control about their bodies and selves. This also needs to include opportunities for children and young people to understand the very real risks involved in staying out late and going missing from school, home or care.

Health professionals, such as school health nurses, practitioners in young persons' advisory/sexual health clinics and GPs have a role in promoting the young person's health, which includes identification of immediate and ongoing health needs (including sexual health and emotional needs). As a universal service, health is well placed to offer support, counselling and information to enable young people to understand the risks and develop strategies for staying safe.

Category 2 – Mild risk

A child identified as at mild risk is likely to have multiple vulnerabilities, such as problematic parenting and childhood experiences. One or two risk indicators may also be present. These vulnerabilities increase the risk of children and young people being groomed for sexual exploitation. Early intervention and preventative work are needed to protect children and young people who have multiple vulnerabilities.

A practitioner or agency view that a child is at mild risk (Category 2) may be inaccurate, and sharing information about that child may reveal them to be at moderate or significant risk – and in need of protection. Interventions to interrupt abuse and support children to recover a healthy lifestyle are more likely to be successful if a child who is at risk can be identified and concerns shared within a multi-agency support network as early as possible.

Consideration should be given to convening a multi-agency meeting to ensure all information is shared and to agree a child's plan to address risk and need. The plan should include a programme of direct work with the child to raise awareness of sexual exploitation and to provide tools for the child to self protect. The programme should raise risk awareness, provide information on keeping safe and address specific identified issues that pose a threat to safety. It should be delivered by a practitioner who has a good working relationship with the child or young person. It should include opportunities for the child to understand the very real risks involved in activities such as staying out late and going missing from school, home or care.

Risk must be reassessed regularly as part of the planned work undertaken with a child or young person. Any significant change in circumstances that might increase vulnerability, or any incidence of behaviour associated with risk should result in an immediate reassessment of risk using the sexual exploitation risk assessment.

Category 3 – Moderate risk

A child or young person identified as at moderate risk is likely to have multiple vulnerabilities present as well as one or more indicators of risk. Children and young people at moderate risk may be groomed or targeted for opportunistic abuse and/or exploitative relationships by abusing adults.

It is in this category that any missing information can have the greatest effect on the accuracy of assessment and information sharing. A multi-agency strategy meeting for children at risk of abuse should always be convened in relation to child or young person assessed as at moderate risk. Multi-agency strategy meetings enable the effective exchange of information between representatives of key agencies. The meetings should include the individual who has identified the risk or raised concerns in relation to the child or young person and representatives from social work, police, health, education, placements and any specialist child sexual exploitation services. Multi-agency strategy meetings should respond to the needs of children and young people for whom risk of sexual exploitation is indicated but not known, as well as responding to cases where evidence of sexual exploitation is available.

The multi-agency strategy meeting should agree a protection plan and action to include direct work with the individual child or young person. The focus of any safeguarding plan and

of direct interventions should be the reduction of specific risks that are causing concern. In particular, where staying out late and/or going missing from school, home or care are identified, these should be addressed as a priority. The safeguarding implications of staying out late and going missing should not be underestimated by any agencies. The length of intervention required will be different in each case and is reliant on the specific circumstances of the child or young person and the nature of the risks that are being addressed. Individual children and young people may respond to intervention in different ways and this will also impact on the length of that intervention.

A change of circumstances, such as a placement change, may support the reduction of risks in a relatively short time. Conversely, a placement change could escalate risk. At least one review meeting by the multi-agency strategy group should be conducted to ensure that actions have been taken, and to assess progress, consider the impact of interventions, share further information and reassess the level of risk. Risks should be monitored carefully and reviewed over time in relation to children and young people for whom there have been concerns.

Risk should be reassessed regularly as part of the planned work undertaken with a child or young person. Any significant change in circumstances that might increase vulnerability, or any incidence of behaviour associated with risk should result in an immediate reassessment of risk using the sexual exploitation risk assessment.

The approach to working with children and young people at significant risk or who have been abused set out below can also be applied to children and young people in Category 3.

Category 4 – Significant Risk

This category is where a child is assessed as being at significant risk of sexual exploitation or where they are already being abused. This is likely to include cases where abuse is habitual, denied, and where coercion and control are strong factors.

A multi-agency strategy meeting for children at risk should always be convened in relation to a child or young person assessed as at significant risk. As with Category 3, multi-agency strategy meetings should ensure the effective exchange of information between representatives of key agencies. The meetings should include the individual who has identified the risk or raised concerns in relation to the child or young person, and representatives of social work, police, health, education, placements and any specialist child sexual exploitation services. Participants in the meeting should agree a protection plan and action to include long-term intensive direct work with the individual child or young person. Review meetings should be conducted regularly to ensure that agreed actions are implemented, and to assess the progress and impact of agreed interventions. Risk should be monitored closely and reassessed regularly, as part of the risk management plan.

A coordinated and synchronised approach by all agencies maximises the effectiveness of interventions and the impact of planned actions. All agencies should agree and adopt a consistent approach, which does not shy away from or collude with risky behaviour. All agencies and professionals need to be aware of the intensive and long-term nature of the approach required. The presence of multiple vulnerabilities and risks in the lives of children and young people at significant risk often means that they are difficult to engage and that

positive outcomes take time.

The use of a fit-for-purpose sexual exploitation risk assessment framework should allow for the identification of vulnerability and risk in relation to the majority of children and young people at an earlier stage. Over time, routine assessment, early identification and appropriate interventions should reduce the number of children and young people who are exposed to significant risk of sexual exploitation.

Strategy discussion

In cases of child sexual exploitation, the Inter-Agency Referral Discussion (IRD) may determine that a SERAF assessment is required.

Following completion of the assessment, an initial strategy discussion may be required. A strategy discussion should always take place where a child is assessed as at moderate or significant risk of sexual exploitation. A strategy discussion may also take place where a child is assessed as at mild risk of sexual exploitation.

Police, health and social work should share and discuss all information gathered with other agencies as appropriate, and decide on the next steps within 24 hours, or immediately if there is imminent risk to the child. **This will be managed through the IRD process.** The person making the referral should be informed of the outcome of the strategy discussion.

Multi-agency strategy meetings

Multi-agency strategy meetings for children at risk of sexual exploitation **MUST** always be considered by the IRD. A strategy meeting should always be convened for children at moderate or significant risk of sexual exploitation.

An Initial Strategy Meeting will be arranged and chaired by Police Scotland (Detective Inspector or above) within 10 working days of the IRD.

The following professionals, or a delegated representative, will attend the meeting:

- Service Manager, Children and Families Practice Teams
- Senior Education Manager
- Consultant Paediatrician for Child Protection
- Child Protection Advisor, NHS Lothian
- Senior Manager, Housing Services
- Lead Officer, Child Protection Committee
- Lead Professional/Named Person
- Any other relevant frontline practitioner who can contribute to the meeting.

Consideration should also be given to inviting any of the following professionals where their involvement with either the young person or the alleged perpetrator(s) is known:

- Manager of voluntary agency
- Sexual health service
- Senior Solicitor, Licensing Section, City of Edinburgh Council
- Manager of out of authority residential school or establishment
- Social Work Service Manager, Criminal Justice
- Psychiatrist
- Psychologist
- Social Work Service Manager Mental Health
- Social work managers from other local authorities
- Lead Officer for Child Protection, Adult Protection and/or Domestic Abuse

A record of the meeting will be taken by the Public Protection Committees Administrator.

Purpose of strategy meeting

- Identify those who are at risk by sharing information and assessing risks
- Address the risks associated with victims, perpetrators and locations by proactive problem solving
- Work collaboratively to ensure the safety and welfare of children and young people who are being or are at risk of being exploited sexually
- Take effective action against those intent on abusing and exploiting children and young people in this way
- Carry out risk assessment(s)
- Develop a shared picture of intelligence on all threats
- Grade responses to the risks identified
- Provide early intervention to reduce the harm posed to children and young people
- Investigate, prosecute and disrupt perpetrators
- Adopt a collective watching brief to determine further interventions required
- Promote positive physical and emotional health and wellbeing
- Ensure relevant and timely access to appropriate health services

Roles and responsibilities – chair

- Encourage all members to contribute to the meeting on equal terms
- Efficient administration of the meeting

- Ensure the information shared is recorded accurately and disseminated
- Advise the Child Protection Committee or nominated sub-group of the investigation, updated two-monthly and at conclusion of enquiry

Roles and responsibilities – participants

- Attend any further meetings required
- Contribute to the information sharing to enable the meeting to fulfill its purpose
- Identify all risks (including those in the sexual exploitation risk assessment framework), agree action and make recommendations to address each risk
- Disseminate appropriate levels of information shared at the meeting to enable further integrated working with other frontline partners
- Contribute to the actions agreed during the meeting and provide timely reports on progress and outcomes
- Consider the likelihood of prosecution of relevant adults, and where prosecution is not likely, consider the range of alternative action against perpetrators
- Identify additional resources as required
- Represent and act as a communication link with their organisation
- Develop a **written** plan to safeguard the child or young person
- Agree a date to review the plan
- Identify the key worker to undertake direct work with the child or young person to promote recovery

Outcome of initial strategy meeting

- No further action
- Child protection investigation
- Child sexual exploitation inquiry

Child sexual exploitation inquiry – role of initial strategy meeting chair

- Refer to the Senior Police Officer (rank of Superintendent or above) with responsibility for public protection to consider establishing the structured command framework, including a Gold Group to provide direction and oversight and a Silver Group to provide tactical and operational accountability
- Specify the terms of reference for the inquiry/investigation
- Identify the strategic leads in the investigation
- Bring together a team of people with the necessary training, expertise and objectivity to manage and conduct the criminal investigation and/or child protection investigation

on a day to day basis

- Decide whether there is a need for an independent team to investigate the allegations, particularly where the alleged perpetrators are foster carers, prospective adopters or members of staff employed by a member agency of the Child Protection Committee
- Agree the terms of reference and accountability for the investigating team, including the parameters and timescales of their enquiries/investigation
- Ensure that appropriate resources are deployed to the investigation, including access to legal and other specialist advice, resources and information
- Ensure that appropriate resources are available to meet the needs of the children and families or adult survivors, including any specific health issues arising from the abuse
- Ensure the investigating team members are supported with personal counseling if necessary and that issues of staff safety are addressed
- Ensure that suitable accommodation and administrative support are available for the investigation
- Liaise as necessary with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service at an early stage before arranging services for a child in need of counseling or therapeutic help so that the help can be given in a way that is consistent with the conduct of any criminal investigation
- Identify how young people and their families are to be involved/informed
- Agree a communications strategy, including the handling of political and media issues, and communication as necessary with the Care Inspectorate
- Ensure that records are stored securely and a high level of confidentiality is maintained at all times
- Hold regular strategic meetings and reviews, which must be recorded, to consider progress, including the effectiveness of the joint working, the need for additional resources and next steps.

Following a multi-agency strategy meeting, Category 3 and 4 cases will require allocation to a social work team to progress the child in need or child protection plan. Where a child is already allocated, the child's plan must be amended accordingly to reflect the specific nature of child sexual exploitation.

Implementing an effective child in need or child protection plan for a child at risk of sexual exploitation may require professionals to be extremely persistent in continuing to offer support and services. It may be that a professional from an agency other than social work is best able to provide a direct service. Nevertheless, the case should remain allocated to a social worker as Lead Professional, whilst child sexual exploitation concerns remain, as a point of contact for the child, family and professionals, and to co-ordinate the plans. Plans should address each identified risk.

The priority for Police Scotland is the investigation and prosecution of offenders who have been involved in abusing the child through sexual exploitation.

Child sexual exploitation is a particularly hidden form of abuse and disclosure by the child is extremely rare. It may not always be appropriate to interview the child or young person in a formal manner, particularly where a child does not believe they are being exploited.

Evidence shows that a relationship with a protective, nurturing adult who challenges the perceptions of the young person over time can lead to an increase in the awareness of the child in relation to risks and experiences. Information may be gathered most effectively over time by practitioners who have gained the trust of the young person in a manner that does not alienate them, but involves them in the process, contributing to their own safety.

Where there may be limited evidence in relation to perpetrators, for example, the absence of a statement, action may still be taken in relation to particular concerns, such as reports of internal trafficking or that an address or vehicle is being used for the purpose of child sexual exploitation. All intelligence should be recorded and collated. The police will consider using the range of powers at their disposal.

The Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) provide a national framework for the assessment and management of risk posed by sexual offenders. This includes individuals who are considered to pose a risk or potential risk of harm to children. Offenders are referred to the MAPPA process following conviction for a relevant offence.

End of Inquiry

At the conclusion of the inquiry/investigation, the chair of the strategy meetings will evaluate the investigation, identify the lessons learned and prepare an overview report for the Child Protection Committee, highlighting any practices, procedures or policies that may need further attention and require either inter-agency or individual agency action plans.

Child's wishes and feelings

Children at risk of sexual exploitation will often be in high risk situations and isolated from protective, nurturing adults. They will need to be supported to express their wishes and feelings to make sense of their particular circumstances and contribute to decisions that affect them. Of particular relevance is the impact of those who may have groomed and conditioned children, in order to coerce and abuse them. Children may also be under very strong pressure, intimidated, afraid and/or dependent on the exploiters. Children may therefore reject offers of help and support. Interventions need to be designed to address this.

Intervention

Within the four categories of the Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework, a different response is required in relation to each level of risk. Each of the four categories of risk has associated safeguarding actions.

Identifying and prosecuting perpetrators

Identifying, disrupting and prosecuting perpetrators must be a key part of work to protect children and young people from sexual exploitation. Whilst there should always be a proactive investigation aiming for successful prosecutions, a disruption plan targeting

suspected perpetrators can be extremely beneficial. A disruption plan might involve a number of activities, ranging from simple observation of an individual's activities, to the use of a range of civil orders, including Sexual Offences Prevention Orders and Risk of Sexual Harm Orders, depending on the type of behaviour and evidence available.

While the police and criminal justice social work lead on this aspect of work, the support of other partners, for example in recording information and gathering and preserving evidence is also vital. Identifying and prosecuting the perpetrators should be a key consideration of all agencies working to address the issue of child sexual exploitation locally. Any work to identify and prosecute perpetrators should not put children and young people at any further risk of harm.

Key action points for identifying and prosecuting perpetrators are set out below.

- Linking prosecutions to provision of support for children and young people
- Taking action against perpetrators
- Disrupting perpetrator behaviour
- Identifying offences committed
- Identifying individual perpetrators
- Tackling child sex offender or organised crime networks
- Evidence gathering and information sharing
- Managing offenders
- Victim and witness support
- Multi-agency public protection arrangements

The Council may be able to use its statutory powers to disrupt incidents of sexual exploitation. For example, if practitioners are aware of locations or venues, such as particular residential addresses, pubs and clubs where young people may be especially vulnerable to grooming, the Council's licensing or housing services may be able to exercise their powers to investigate venues and take necessary actions. Suspected perpetrators may also be identified through other work, such as community policing or work to tackle organised crime.

Below are the legislative tools available to Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) to prosecute those who exploit children and young people sexually.

[Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#)

The Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009 introduced a range of new offences. The Act includes clauses relating to offences against children under 13, rape, sexual coercion, communicating indecently, as well as providing a concrete definition for 'consent' to mean

free agreement. In addition, part 5 of the Act provides for offences concerning abuse of positions of trust.

The Act provides that:

“It shall be an offence for a person in a position of trust over a child under the age of 18 or a person with a mental disorder to engage in sexual activity with that child or person.”

Details on when a person will be considered to be in a position of trust can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/9/section/43.

[The Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#)

The Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005 was introduced to address crimes relating to child sexual exploitation. It creates an offence of ‘grooming’, which makes it an offence for a person to meet or travel to meet children for the purposes of committing a sexual offence, following earlier communications, and for specific offences concerning the sexual exploitation of children under the age of 18 through prostitution or pornography.

[Risk of Sexual Harm Order \(RoSHO\)](#)

This is a civil order aimed at protecting children under the age of 16 from those who display inappropriate sexual behaviour towards them (designed to tackle grooming behaviour online). The person does not need to have committed a criminal offence or have any prior convictions.

[Sexual Offence Prevention Order \(SOPo\)](#)

This is a civil order imposed by the court at the point of sentence, allowing restrictions to be applied to those convicted of sexual offences.

[The Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995 \(also S171\(2\) Children’s Hearing Scotland Act, 2012\)](#)

This Act contains a clause related to ‘harbouring’, which can prosecute anyone who:

- (a) knowingly assists or induces a child to abscond in circumstances which render the child liable to arrest under subsection (1) or (3) of section 82 of this Act
- (b) knowingly and persistently attempts to induce a child so to abscond
- (c) knowingly harbours or conceals a child who has so absconded; or
- (d) knowingly prevents a child from returning

[Civic Government \(Scotland\) Act 1982](#)

The sale, publication and possession of indecent images of children under the age of 18 are prohibited by Section 52 and Section 52A of this Act (as amended by the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005).

[Criminal Justice \(Scotland\) Act 2003](#)

Section 22 of this Act prohibits trafficking for the purpose of prostitution or making or producing obscene material, including any child under the age of 18.

[Criminal Justice and Licensing \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#)

Section 99 of this Act allows for the closing of premises associated with human exploitation.

Summary

Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse, in which a young person is manipulated or forced into taking part in a sexual act. Young people from any background can be exploited for sex in this way. Boys and young men are abused as well as girls and young women. In all cases, those exploiting the child or young person will have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources.

Everyone must take responsibility for protecting children from this abuse and that means not only knowing your role, but also the roles of other agencies and individuals.

Identification and prevention

Children and young people who are the victims of sexual exploitation often do not recognise that they are being exploited. This makes it very hard to identify victims and it is therefore essential that those working with children and young people are able to recognise the signs and intervene appropriately. Practitioners should exercise professional curiosity. If it is believed that there is any indication, however slight, that a child could be at risk, action should be taken and information should be shared among relevant agencies.

Roles and responsibilities

Child Protection Committees, police, social work, education, health and voluntary and community groups all have their own roles and responsibilities in relation to recognising and dealing with child sexual exploitation. Each agency should be aware of its child protection procedures and take account of the information contained in this guidance about what to look out for.

Managing individual cases

Barnado's Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF) has been developed to enable the identification of children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation and facilitate interventions. The development of a framework, which includes four categories of risk is intended to inform appropriate responses in relation to children and young people's safeguarding needs.

Identifying and prosecuting

Identifying, disrupting and prosecuting perpetrators must be a key part of work to protect children and young people from child sexual exploitation. Whilst there should always be a pro-active investigation aiming for successful prosecution, a disruption plan targeting suspected perpetrators can be extremely beneficial.

List of lead contacts

Agency	Child sexual exploitation lead	Telephone Number
Communities and Families (Social Work)	Sean Bell Acting Service Manager	0131 469 3129
Police	Alwyn Bell Detective Chief Inspector	0131 535 6240
NHS Lothian	Charlotte Kirk, Consultant Paediatrician	0131 536 0477
Education	Moyra Wilson, Senior Education Manager	0131 469 3066
Housing	Karen Allan, Access to Housing and Customer Strategy Manager	0131 529 6711
Child Protection Committee	Sean Byrne, Lead Officer: Child Protection	0131 469 6159
Adult Support and Protection Committee	Kate Fennell, Lead Officer: Adult Protection	0131 529 2207
Community Justice / Offender Management	Hanna Wesemann, Lead Officer: Community Justice	0131 529 6566

Appendix A:

Edinburgh Child Protection Committee Agenda for Initial Strategy Meeting



1. Introductions and apologies
2. Terms of reference for the inquiry/investigation
3. Identification of the strategic leads in the investigation
4. Consider each child – risks, vulnerabilities, action required
5. Consider each alleged perpetrator – evidence and intelligence of the risks, action/disruption tactics required
6. Consideration of resources/need for specialist resources or advice
7. Liaison with Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
8. Identify how young people and their families are to be involved
9. Communications strategy (consider communication with media, partner agencies, CPC, families, etc.)
10. Date of review meeting



Appendix B:

RESTRICTED ACCESS INFORMATION

Initial Strategy Meeting Minute

Meeting details

Present	Designation	Agency	Contact Details
Apologies	Designation	Agency	Contact Details
Date of Meeting		Venue	

Terms of reference for the enquiry/investigation:

Name of Strategic lead in the investigation

Children/Young People

Child 1			
Name		Home Address	
DOB		Current address	
Parent/Care Name(s)		Home Address	
DOB		Current address	
Sibling Name(s)		Home Address	
DOB		Current address	
Child 2			
Name		Home Address	
DOB		Current address	
Parent/Care Name(s)		Home Address	
DOB		Current address	
Sibling Name(s)		Home Address	
DOB		Current address	
Discussion			

Roles and Responsibilities

SERAF assessment

Intervention

Review of each young person's plan (whether actions have reduced to date risks and what further action/support is required)

Views of child / young person

Additional young people / adults of concern identified

Additional resource required or need for specialist support or consultation

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Alleged perpetrator / adult of concern

Adult of concern				
Name				
Date of Birth				
Home Address				
Current Address				
Agency identifiers:	Police		Chronology provided?	
	NHS			
	Social Work			
	Education			
	Housing			
Known children with whom the adult has regular contact or for whom they have caring responsibility				

Name	
Date of Birth	
Home Address	
Current Address	
Child 1	
Name	
Date of Birth	
Home Address	
Current Address	
Relationship to child	
Child 2	
Name	
Date of Birth	
Home Address	
Current Address	
Relationship to child	

Discussion

Known contact with children

Known offending history

UNIFI/CHS –

Identification of risk

INFO

VPD

Is there any evidence that an offence has been committed?

Prevention

Roles and Responsibilities

Disruption and investigation

Intervention

Identification and prosecution

Recovery support

Resources/need for specialist resources or advice

Liaison with Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

Involvement of young people and families

Communication strategy

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Chair	
Minute Taker	
Date of Review Meeting	



Appendix C:

Child Sexual Exploitation Child / Young Person's Plan (one plan for each child)

Identified Risks	Source of Risk	Evidence of Risk	Source of information	Desired Outcome	Action Required	Resources required	Person Responsible	By When



Appendix D:

Perpetrator / Adult of Concern Plan

Identified Risks	Evidence of Risk	Source of information	Desired Outcome	Action to target and limit perpetrator	Resources required	Person Responsible	By When



Appendix E:

Agenda for Review Strategy Meeting

1. Introductions and apologies
2. Consider each child (consider whether actions have reduced risks, what further action/support is required)
3. Consider each alleged perpetrator (update evidence and intelligence, consider whether actions have reduced risk or disrupted activity, what further action is required)
4. Consideration of resources/need for specialist resources or advice (consider whether additional resources or advice is required)
5. Liaison with Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (consider whether this is effective or further action is required)
6. Review how young people and their families are to be involved/informed, consider whether further action is required
7. Communication strategy (consider whether communication with media, partner agencies, CPC, families, etc. has been effective or requires amendment)
8. Date of review meeting

Appendix F: SEXUAL EXPLOITATION – MULTI-AGENCY POLICY STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

This policy is a statement of commitment by all the partners in Edinburgh. It provides a set of guiding principles and definitions in relation to the prevention of sexual exploitation, the support and protection of victims and the disruption and prosecution of offenders.

It is based on the shared belief that sexual exploitation of vulnerable individuals is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. We aim to reduce the risk by challenging misunderstandings about the children, young people and adults who are victims of sexual exploitation.

SCOPE

This policy is adopted by all statutory and voluntary agencies with a role in relation to tackling sexual exploitation and/or providing care and protection services. Its principles are consistent with individual agency procedures.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the National Action Plan, Edinburgh's associated action plans, Edinburgh's Harm Reduction Framework, trafficking legislation and local policies and procedures.

DEFINITIONS

The sexual exploitation of vulnerable children, young people and adults is an often hidden form of sexual abuse, with distinctive elements of exploitation and exchange.

In practice, sexual exploitation might involve people being coerced, manipulated, forced or deceived into performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities in exchange for receiving some form of material goods or other entity (for example, food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, gifts, affection, avoidance of violence). Sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology and in some situations, without the individual's understanding of what is happening to them.

In all cases, those exploiting vulnerable individuals have power over their victims by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are often common features.

In some cases, the sexual activity may only take place between one individual and the perpetrator. In other situations, the individual may be passed for sex between two or more perpetrators or this may be organised exploitation (often by criminal gangs or organised groups).

Sexual exploitation is a complex issue and cannot be considered in isolation. It can be hard to identify, as the individual may not always see themselves as a victim. Some victims see themselves in a loving consensual relationship and do not recognise the exploitation. It is often mistaken by parents, carers or agencies for rebellious or challenging behaviour displayed by young people.

Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation always requires a child protection response. This is reflected in the Edinburgh and Lothians Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures (2015) and the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2014). However, tackling the sexual exploitation of children and young people effectively is not the sole responsibility of social work and police, but requires a coordinated response from youth work, education and health – from statutory agencies and voluntary organisations, and from families and communities.

The sexual exploitation of children has recently received an increased level of political and public interest across the UK. Partners in Edinburgh are committed to learning from high profile cases to improve identification and support of victims and the disruption and prosecution of perpetrators in Edinburgh.

Young people from any background can be exploited. As well as girls and young women, boys and young men are abused. Grooming and abuse can happen in person or online, and although most abusers are adults, some victims are exploited by their peers. There is often a misconception that only children from disadvantaged or chaotic backgrounds can be drawn into sexual exploitation because of their existing vulnerabilities. Whilst this group may be more at risk, any young person can be taken in by the deception of perpetrators, irrespective of their circumstances or background.

Sexual exploitation of individuals with disabilities

Individuals with a learning disability, cognitive impairment and/or mental health problems are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse. Reasons for this include:

- society's attitudes and assumptions, which often devalue individuals with disabilities
- prejudice and misconceptions regarding people with learning disabilities, e.g. belief that they are insensitive to pain
- communication difficulties may make it difficult for individuals to be heard or understood
- failure by professionals to recognise the signs of exploitation and the misidentification of behaviour as symptoms of illness or impairment, e.g. self harm
- the individual may be isolated and prone to grooming via the internet and social media sites
- an impaired capacity to avoid or resist abuse
- a tendency to show affection easily to strangers and acquaintances
- the individual may have learned to be compliant, by having to fit in around others whose approval is essential for well-being or survival
- lack of sexual knowledge and understanding about sexuality
- lack of awareness with regards to consent and risk
- lack of access to appropriate sex education
- the individual may have no other frame of reference and may not recognise that they are being exploited.

Commercial sexual exploitation

Edinburgh recognises commercial sexual exploitation, and in particular prostitution and trafficking, as a significant social problem, which disproportionately affects vulnerable people, as well as families and communities. Prostitution and trafficking are part of the same continuum – a widespread manifestation of violence and abuse grounded in gender inequality. Violence, experience of abuse, homelessness, poverty and addiction are at the root of prostitution in Edinburgh. Women and men caught up in systems of prostitution and trafficking survive prolonged periods of emotional, physical, mental and sexual trauma. Victims are amongst the most disadvantaged and marginalised in our community.

There is also an often hidden population of men who engage in prostitution, and a similar partnership approach is in place to meet the needs of this equally vulnerable group. Agency procedures, which derive from this policy, will be targeted at ending the social exclusion of people involved in prostitution, focusing on prevention, harm reduction and exit routes.

PRINCIPLES

This policy articulates partner agencies' commitment to the following principles.

- Recognition of the harm done to individuals, families and communities.
- Respect for victims of sexual exploitation, prioritisation of their safety and well-being and the promotion of a non-judgmental approach to their identification.
- Commitment to tackling all forms of sexual exploitation, protecting victims, identifying locations and disrupting the activities of as well as prosecuting perpetrators.
- Recognition of the different needs and issues relating to different forms of exploitation, e.g. child sexual exploitation, trafficking.
- Commitment of all services to a non-judgmental and confidential approach to those involved in prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, including trafficking, lap dancing and pornography.
- Recognition of the importance of prevention, improved identification and more effective disruption.
- Commitment to the use of evidence and national data to inform our action planning.

Prevention

Sexual exploitation can result in significant, lifelong psychological and physical trauma and impairment. It is therefore imperative that we adopt a proactive approach to reduce the risk of vulnerable people becoming victims. We aim to prevent sexual exploitation by raising awareness and equipping victims and potential witnesses with the knowledge and skills to recognise the predicative factors and indicators of sexual exploitation. In parallel, staff require support and training in identifying and tackling this difficult area of work.

Support and protection of victims are critical; however, we recognise that our strategies and actions need to target perpetrators just as effectively if we are to have a significant, long-term impact on sexual exploitation. In addition to awareness-raising among staff, communities and potential victims, the identification of locations as well as the disruption and prosecution of offenders are important elements of prevention.

Disruption and prosecution of offenders

A comprehensive and robust response to perpetrators of sexual exploitation is an important part of our approach. Police Scotland will support this with a range of strategic and operational activity through the local public protection unit. The National Child Abuse Investigation Unit will maximise the impact of the range of specialist skills and expertise and improve the co-ordination and intelligence gathering in relation to child sexual exploitation.

Supporting individuals affected by sexual exploitation

Our response to sexual exploitation will reflect the learning from reports and investigations across the UK to ensure support, protection and recovery measures are robust and responsive.

We will adopt a whole community approach, which will include parents, carers, families and victims themselves. It will take into account equality and diversity issues.

Action Planning

We will develop action plans, which reflect this policy and which tackle the different aspects of sexual exploitation, e.g. child sexual exploitation, human trafficking, etc. Our action plans will ensure that practitioners across Edinburgh have the knowledge required to recognise and respond to sexual exploitation. The plans will ensure that scrutiny is applied to how services are delivered, as well as how the workforce is supported in that delivery. They will allow us to identify and consolidate best practice already in place, and build on it. Our action plans will:

- ensure effective leadership and challenge existing practices and culture
- identify the level of risk across Edinburgh
- co-ordinate multi-agency resources in this area to identify and share information regarding individuals at risk of sexual exploitation
- establish an awareness-raising and training programme for the workforce
- enhance public awareness of sexual exploitation, in particular with parents and carers, local businesses, community organisations, taxis, licensing and hotels
- review engagement arrangements for listening to victims, including the development of a network of champions who can represent the needs of victims
- ensure that vulnerable individuals are made aware of the issues around sexual exploitation and that preventive services are in place to reduce risk
- ensure effective information sharing in relation to potential abuse
- prevent and disrupt potential exploitation
- bring to justice the perpetrators of sexual exploitation and ensure that people most at risk are safeguarded and supported in the course of, and after, any criminal proceedings
- provide information to senior agency officers, elected members and board members to enable understanding, prioritisation and resource allocation.
- engage with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration to raise their awareness of sexual exploitation.

RESPONSIBILITIES

This policy will be maintained by the multi-agency lead officers for child protection, adult

protection and domestic abuse, and will be reviewed annually by the Edinburgh Chief Officers' Group – Public Protection to ensure its continued relevance.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

- National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2014)
- Scotland's National Action Plan to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation (2014)
- Vulnerable Children and Young People: Sexual Exploitation through Prostitution (2003)
- The National Risk Framework to support the Assessment of Children and Young People (2012)
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- Edinburgh and Lothians Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures (2015)
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, 2014
- Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)
- Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007
- Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls

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