

Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee

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Edinburgh's Multi-agency Sexual Exploitation Policy

Item number	7.9
Report number	
Wards	All

Links

Coalition pledges	P1 , P43
Council outcomes	CO1 , CO5 , CO10 , CO11 , CO15 , CO21 and CO26
Single Outcome Agreement	SO2 , SO3 , SO4

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Executive summary

Edinburgh's Multi-agency Sexual Exploitation Policy

Summary

This report presents to members the draft multi-agency sexual exploitation policy for Edinburgh. It is a statement of commitment from all partners in Edinburgh and provides a set of guiding principles and definitions in relation to the prevention of sexual exploitation, the support and protection of victims and the management of perpetrators. The draft policy is attached at Appendix 1.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee:

- a) approves the multi-agency sexual exploitation policy attached at Appendix 1
- b) notes that the Edinburgh Partnership will be asked to adopt the policy at its next meeting on 18 June 2015
- c) notes that associated and separate strategies and action plans for the sexual exploitation of children and adults will be developed and their progress monitored as part of our improvement activity.

Measures of success

The guiding principles outlined in this policy will inform the joint sexual exploitation strategies and action plans being developed by partner agencies locally. Performance measures will be agreed as part of this work and will be reported to members on a regular basis. The policy and outcome measures will be consistent with Council strategic priorities and the Edinburgh Single Outcome Agreement. Quarterly performance reports will be submitted to the Edinburgh Chief Officers' Group – Public Protection.

Financial impact

The guiding principles in this policy will inform the review and development of local service delivery. Any review should maximise the use of existing resources. It is possible that the action plan could make recommendations, which have financial

implications. These will be considered in detail and reported on as necessary, but will require to be addressed within the Council's long-term financial plan.

Equalities impact

Addressing the issue of sexual exploitation reflects partner agencies' responsibilities in respect of equalities. Any service developments will be subject to equalities impact assessment.

Sustainability impact

There are no sustainability impact issues arising from this report.

Consultation and engagement

The draft policy has been developed in consultation with the City of Edinburgh Council, NHS Lothian, Police Scotland and voluntary sector partners. The policy is being submitted to NHS Lothian Board for approval and to Police Scotland. Any review and further development of sexual exploitation services in Edinburgh will be carried out in consultation with service users.

Background reading / external references

[Alexis Jay Report - Rotherham](#)

[Louise Casey Report - Rotherham](#)

Main Report

Edinburgh's Multi-agency Sexual Exploitation Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 A report by Professor Alexis Jay, published in August 2014, highlighted alarming concerns regarding the response by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council to evidence of the sexual exploitation of children in its area. The Jay report was followed up by a report from Louise Casey, commissioned by the UK Government to determine whether Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council had the capacity to address the problems identified. This was published in February 2015.
- 1.2 Both of these reports post-dated the identification of child sexual exploitation as a priority for the Edinburgh Child Protection Committee's improvement plan. Whereas there has not been the evidence to suggest a problem in Edinburgh of the scale of Rotherham, it is important that we use learning from other areas to inform improvements and service design. A multi-agency working group was established to agree the development of policy, strategies and action plans in response to the sexual exploitation of both children and adults.
- 1.3 A brief summary of the key points from the 'Jay' and 'Casey' reports is set out at Appendix 2.

2. The Policy

- 2.1 The sexual exploitation of children or vulnerable adults is both abusive and criminal. It is an often hidden form of sexual abuse, with distinctive elements of exploitation and exchange. 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.
- 2.2 Tackling sexual exploitation effectively requires a shared commitment from all responsible partner agencies and organisations; and an understanding of its prevalence and impact on individuals and communities; it also requires training, awareness-raising and resource allocation.

- 2.3 There are varying forms of sexual exploitation, with the main categories being adults and children. These two categories require different approaches, tailored to the specific characteristics, needs and development stages of victims. The intention is that separate multi-agency strategies, action-planning and training for child sexual abuse and adult sexual abuse will reflect these differences, but that as a high level, over-arching statement of principles, one policy can encompass both categories.
- 2.4 Once this policy is agreed by all partners in Edinburgh, separate strategies and action plans will be developed for adults and children. These will be reported to members once finalised. A shared understanding and commitment to the policy will allow for consistency of approach and work towards common objectives.
- 2.5 Details of how performance should be reported will be explored as part of the development of strategies and action plans, in due course, but could include, for example reporting to the Chief Officers' Group – Public Protection, and/or for children, to the Corporate Parenting Member Officer Group.

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Links

Coalition pledges	P1 - Increase support for vulnerable children, including help for families so that fewer go into care P43 - Invest in healthy living and fitness advice for those most in need
Council outcomes	CO1 - Our children have the best start in life, are able to make and sustain relationships and are ready to succeed CO5 - Our children and young people are safe from harm or fear of harm, and do not harm others within their communities CO10 - Improved health and reduced inequalities CO11 - Preventative and personalised support in place CO15 - The public are protected CO21 - Safe – Residents, visitors and businesses feel that Edinburgh is a safe city CO26 - The Council engages with stakeholders and works in partnership to improve services and deliver on agreed objectives
Single Outcome Agreement	SO2 - Edinburgh's citizens experience improved health and wellbeing, with reduced inequalities in health SO3 - Edinburgh's children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential SO4 - Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric
Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Edinburgh's Multi-agency Sexual Exploitation Policy2. Key Messages from Rotherham

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION – DRAFT 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

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION KEY MESSAGES FROM ROTHERHAM

Section 1 is drawn from general learning and a number of sources, Section 2 is specific to Rotherham. Appendix A lists 10 common myths relating to the sexual exploitation of children and the associated reality.

1. LEARNING FROM INQUIRIES AND UK GOVERNMENT REPORTS

Key components of an effective approach to child sexual exploitation

- focus on victims
- leadership, challenge and scrutiny
- professional attitudes and use of language
- coordinated, strategic responses and performance management
- training for all professionals from a wide variety of backgrounds, from social work and teaching to environmental health, housing and licensing
- better awareness raising and education for professionals and the wider community
- engagement with all communities
- disruption and prosecution

Expectations elected members should have of their services

- knowledge of the extent and profile of child sexual exploitation locally
- an established, multi-agency strategy and action plan, developed with the involvement of children and young people, with clear links to other plans and a means of monitoring and reporting progress
- an understanding of how effectively the Child Protection Committee is tackling the issue
- a means for members to monitor and challenge practice
- knowledge of how training is delivered and whether it extends to all relevant groups, e.g. social workers, community workers, teachers, environmental health officers, elected members, etc
- activity to raise awareness in the local community
- knowledge of the support available to current, potential and historical victims

2. ROTHERHAM-SPECIFIC ISSUES (LOUISE CASEY REPORT): “Rotherham does not learn, even in the most tragic circumstances”

Failure of services to recognise some of the indicators of child sexual exploitation and/or misinterpreting challenging or disruptive behaviours:

- frequent absconding from care or home
- excessive and age-inappropriate material goods
- underage pregnancy/miscarriage/termination

- drug and alcohol misuse
- mental health problems
- anti-social behaviour
- truancy/exclusion
- child sexual exploitation can not be squashed into standard child protection/social work approach; it needs assertive outreach – joint working and multi-faceted approach to all the issues
- criticality of early intervention/youth work – services other than social work, when statutory criteria not met
- need:
 - a programme to address areas of persistent local rumours
 - missing from home procedures
 - to understand the importance of work in the community
 - support for victims, rather than condemnation of their challenging behaviours
 - proper identification – training for staff and prioritisation of child sexual exploitation within service responses

Failure of management and leadership, both at a senior officer and elected member level

- Rotherham Council achieved Investors in People: Gold – 14 years of failure to reach minimum acceptable standards, contrasted with IIP Gold
- “no team in the Council can regard itself as serving its community well, if the Council is failing its most vulnerable people”
- silos – no sense of shared ownership
- no leadership, strategic direction, prioritisation, performance management
- no challenge from senior officers or members
- improved educational attainment masked failing social work – focus on education attainment instead of vulnerable children
- too many severance agreements instead of disciplinary or performance management procedures
- no capacity to improve in terms of leadership, governance or management
- child sexual exploitation not seen as a corporate issue

Financial Management

- Council finances in order – proper level of control, however, financial planning needs to be linked to a clear strategic vision – finance leading instead of supporting
- budget did not consider the overall impact of reductions
- cuts considered in isolation led to significant weaknesses
- failures of arms’ length management organisations and grant giving
- downsizing focused on numbers, not on skills required going forward

Risk Management

“On paper things were much as we expected, however...”

- downgrading of high risk with no rationale, this meant that areas of concern were no longer visible to members
- audit reports were acceptable, but areas of concern were not included in the programme – the selection process focused on better performing areas and allowed poorly performing services to escape scrutiny
- audit arrangements excluded areas of critical operational delivery, e.g. children’s services, taxi licensing
- the Jay report led to child sexual exploitation being escalated to the highest risk on register, but this was all about reputation, inward investment, morale, etc. – no reference to risk to children
- prioritisation of risks reflects the heart of the culture of the organisation
- legal services and operations need to have input into risk prioritisation, e.g. is the Council at risk of not meeting its statutory duties (children/adults)?
- negative/defensive reaction to inspection reports – Ofsted, etc., instead of using these to improve, the Council complained about the quality/impartiality of the reports; this was also true for Children’s Commission reports
- objective analysis of these external reports indicates that they were accurate, honest, and transparent
- major failings identified as: front line staff not listened to, carrying too much risk, unsupported in decision making
- in an example of a very serious case – the response was criticism of referrer for using wrong procedure, rather than addressing the concerns being raised
- concern that corporate HR not sufficiently aware of operational business, making decisions without consultation or understanding the impact, and operating in a vacuum
- IT needs to be fit for purpose

Racism

- tackling racism effectively does not equal avoiding difficult issues, including ignoring criminal activity
- corruption was masked by political correctness

Taxi Licensing

- driver checks inconsistent and incomplete
- complaints management inadequate and not connected to licensing decisions
- compliance not monitored effectively
- applications/policy need to be linked to complaints and investigations
- importance of consistency of recording

- focus should be on passenger safety, not on the driver as the customer
- elected members should not support applicants
- spot checks are an important part of compliance monitoring
- need to apply balance of probabilities to complaints investigations, not require a criminal standard of proof before taking decisive action
- need a commitment to robust complaint investigation

Ten myths dispelled

Myth #1: There are very few 'models' of child sexual exploitation

Reality: The grooming and sexual exploitation of young people can take many different forms. Child sexual exploitation can be carried out by individuals (lone perpetrators), by street gangs or by groups. It can be motivated by money, i.e. commercial sexual exploitation or for non-commercial reasons, such as sexual gratification or a belief in entitlement to sex. It can occur in a wide range of settings, but the common theme in all cases is the imbalance of power and the control exerted on young people.

Myth #2: It only happens in certain ethnic/cultural communities

Reality: Both perpetrators and victims are known to come from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Child sexual exploitation is not a crime restricted to British Pakistani Muslim males or white British girls, despite media coverage of high profile cases. Research indicates that the majority of known perpetrators in the UK are lone white males. Whatever the ethnicity of perpetrators or victims, the behaviour must be acknowledged and tackled.

Myth #3: It only happens to children in care

Reality: The majority of victims of child sexual exploitation are living at home. However, looked after children account for a disproportionate number of victims and can be particularly vulnerable. An estimated 20-25 per cent per cent of victims are looked after, compared with 1 per cent per cent of the child population being in care. This does, however, leave around 80 per cent per cent of victims who are not in the care system.

Myth #4: It only happens to girls and young women

Reality: Boys and young men are also targeted as victims. However, they may be less likely to disclose offences or seek support, often due to stigma, prejudice or embarrassment or the fear that they will not be believed. They may feel that they are able to protect themselves, but physical stature is irrelevant due to the coercion and manipulation used.

Myth #5: It is only perpetrated by men

Reality: There is evidence that women can be perpetrators of this crime too although they tend to be a minority. They may use different grooming methods, but are known to target both boys and girls. Where women or girls were identified as perpetrators, their role was primarily, though not exclusively, to procure victims. Women and girls are perpetrators often have histories of being sexually exploited themselves and of abusing others, in tandem with the group or gang that had previously sexually exploited them. Women and girls directly involved in sexually exploiting children were either in relationships with men who were perpetrators, or related to, or friends with, men and boys who were abusers.

Myth #6: It is adults abusing children

Reality: Peer-on-peer child sexual exploitation happens too and this can take various different forms. For example, young people are sometimes used to 'recruit' others, by inviting them to locations for parties where they will then be introduced to adults or

forced to perform sexual acts on adults. Technology can also play a significant role, with young people known to use mobile technology as a way of distributing images of abuse.

Myth #7: It only happens in large towns and cities

Reality: Evidence shows that child sexual exploitation can and does happen in all parts of the country. Child sexual exploitation is not restricted to urban areas such as large towns and cities, but also happens in rural areas such as villages and coastal areas. High profile police operations in areas as diverse as Rotherham, Rochdale, Cornwall and Oxfordshire are examples of this. Young people can also be transported between towns, cities, villages, etc., for the purpose of being sexually exploited and this is known as trafficking (an offence punishable by up to 14 years imprisonment).

Myth #8: Children are either victims or perpetrators

Reality: Inquiries have found that around 6 per cent per cent of victims were also identified as perpetrators. It is important to keep in mind that, although children may appear to be willing accomplices in the abuse of other children, this should be seen in the context of the controls exerted by the perpetrator.

Myth #9: Parents should know what is happening and should be able to stop it

Reality: Parents may be unlikely to be able to identify what is happening: they may suspect that something is not right, but may not be in a position to stop it due to the control, threats or fear of the perpetrators. There can be risks to parents when seeking to protect their children and they need support as well as their children. In some cases, there can be an overlap with abuse within the family and this could be a reason why parents do not intervene.

Myth #10:

Children and young people can consent to their own exploitation

Reality: A child cannot consent to their own abuse. 16 is the age of legal consent to any form of sexual activity. Any child under 18 cannot consent to being trafficked for the purposes of exploitation. Regardless of age, a person's ability to give consent may be affected by a range of other issues, including influence of drugs, threats of violence, grooming, a power imbalance between victim and perpetrators. This is why a 16 or 17 year-old can be sexually exploited even though they are old enough to consent to sexual activity.