



Richmond House

Social Care Services CIC

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

2024



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1. PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of Richmond House Social Care Services. Children and young people's programme is to offer the children a safe and welcoming environment with fun activities where the children can grow and learn. Whether this is through Outreach and Short Breaks activities.

2. SCOPE

The policy applies to all staff of Richmond House, volunteers and who may come into contact with children from 0 up to 25 years of age and vulnerable adults. It also applies to other service users in the wider community that come to the attention of Richmond House staff and or representatives in the course of their work or duties.

Richmond House values young people and children as being a vital part of the organisation and desires to see them grow, mature and be challenged in a healthy and safe environment.

The name of the child protection officer for the group will be displayed in the minutes and a copy of this child protection policy will be kept with the register manager.

Aims

- To provide activities for children and young people to help them develop from childhood into adulthood and to provide support for them.
- To enable the children to express themselves.
- To assist the children in integrating into the community.
- To help children/young people appreciate the diversity of their cultures.



Richmond House Organisation

1. Each child and young person should be formally registered within the group. The information includes an information/consent form which their parent/guardian must complete. These forms have vital information about health and emergency contacts and should be kept securely and brought to each session. (see Appendix B)
2. Attendance register: a register should be kept for each session.

For activities for under 8s, which run for more than two hours in any one day, OR if you run a holiday club for six or more days a year, you must register the activity. To register, contact your local Social Services Office and ask for the local Day Centre adviser. The law assumes that registration will be granted unless there are good reasons why it should not be.

Child Protection Policy Statement

Richmond House Social Care Services for Children and young people with disabilities aims to safeguard children from abuse and exploitation in all that we do, in line with Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The register manager has appointed a child protection representative, whose name is displayed within the minutes and contact details on the notice board in the reception area. If any worker has any child safety concerns, they should discuss them with her. The register manager will take on the following responsibilities:

- Ensuring that the policy is being put into practice;
- Being the first point of contact for child protection issues.
- Keeping a record of any concerns expressed about child protection issues.



- Bringing any child protection concerns to the notice of the Management and contacting the Local Authority if appropriate;
- Ensuring that paid staff and volunteers are given appropriate supervision;
- Ensuring that everyone involved with the organisation is aware of the identity of the Child Protection Representative.

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is meeting its aims.

Trips/Outings

1. When organising a trip/outing make sure a trip/outing slip is completed. This includes details about the trip and a section for parents to give their consent. These slips must be returned before the event takes place and must be brought on the trip with the completed group information/consent forms. (If a group information/consent form has not already been completed for a child or young person, then it will need to be completed).
2. Ensure that there is adequate insurance for the work and activities.

Personal/Personnel Safety

- A group of children or young people under sixteen should not be left unattended at any time.
- Avoid being alone with an individual child or young person for a long time. If there is a need to be alone with a child or young person (e.g. first aid or he/she is distressed) make sure that another worker knows where you are and why.



- At no time should a volunteer or worker from any external organisation arrange to meet a young person away from the activity without someone else being there.
- As such meetings should be planned and have the approval of a member of the management (this must be someone other than the organiser themselves).
- Teenage assistants should always be supervised.

Child Safety

1. Make sure that the area you are using for activities is fit for the purpose, e.g. remove furniture, which could cause injury in energetic games.
2. Make sure that all workers and assistants know
 - Where the emergency phone is and how to operate it
 - Where the first aid kit is
 - Who is responsible for First Aid and how to record accidents or injuries in the incident book
 - What to do in the event of a fire or other emergency
3. Once a year there should be a fire practice
4. Do not let children go home without an adult unless the parent has specifically said they may do so. Never let a child go with another adult unless the parent has informed you that this will happen.
5. If private cars are used for an outing, the drivers must be approved by a manager, be properly insured, have been checked before driving, and should have



clean licenses. There should always be at least one other responsible person (16 or over) in each vehicle. All vehicles should be fitted with full seat-belts, not just lap belts. Full seat-belts should always be used.

Under normal circumstances, workers should only give a lift home to a young person from group activities if the parents of the young person have specifically asked for them to do so. (If workers are asked to give a young person or child a lift home, they are not obliged to do so, it is left to their discretion).

In the case of trips or outings, it should be made clear if workers' cars will be used and where the children or young people will be returned to.

New Workers

Workers and assistants are by far the most valuable resource the group has for working with young people. When recruiting and selecting paid workers and volunteers the following steps will be taken:

- Completion of an application form;
- An interview by three people when possible, who will take the final decision;
- Identifying reasons for gaps in employment, and other inconsistencies in the application;
- Checking of the applicants' identity (passport, driving license, etc);
- Taking up references prior to the person starting work;
- Ensuring criminal record checks have been carried out through relevant local agencies approved by the Criminal Records Bureau;
- Taking appropriate advice before employing someone with a criminal record;
- Allowing no unaccompanied access to children until all of the above have been completed;
- A probationary period of 3 months for new paid workers and volunteers;
- On-going supervision of paid workers and volunteers;



- Ensuring good practice is followed in working with children and young people by providing appropriate training and guidance;
- A nominated child Protection representative on the Management Group.

Training

It is a great benefit if workers undertake regular training for this type of work. The committee should keep workers informed of relevant courses.

What is child protection?

Child protection is the response to the different ways in which a young person's or child's physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual health are damaged by the actions of another person.

What you should do

1. Listen to the child/young person
2. Look at them directly and do not promise to keep any secrets before you know what they are, but always let the child/young person know if, and why, you are going to tell anyone
3. Look at them directly and do not promise to keep any secrets before you know what they are, but always let the child/young person know if, and why, you are going to tell anyone
4. Take whatever is said to you seriously and help the child/young person to trust his/her own feelings. Take notes of exactly what is said about you avoiding assumptions and conjecture.



5. Is noted the role of the worker to investigate any allegations (this would contaminate evidence if a situation went to court). Any disclosure by a child/young person must be reported to the named child protection officer.
6. Speak immediately to the register manager, or to Chief Executive, which they will inform the Local Authority for further advice and guidance.

What you should *not* do

1. Project workers/volunteers should not begin investigating the matter themselves.
2. Do not discuss the matter with anyone except the correct people in authority.
3. Do not form your own opinions and decide to do nothing.

Things to say or do:

- 'What you are telling me is very important'
- This is not your fault'
- 'I am sorry that this has happened/is happening'
- 'You were right to tell someone'
- What you are telling me should not be happening to you and I will find out the best way to help you'
- Make notes soon after the event. Try to write down exactly what the young person or child said. Avoid assumptions or conjecture.

Things *not* to say or do:

- Do not ask leading questions – Why? How? What?
- Do not say 'Are you sure?'
- Do not show your own emotions e.g. shock/disbelief
- Do not make false promises



Definitions of Abuse

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when apparent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberate causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. On a lesser scale this may involve the abuse of a young person's trust by letting them down, expecting too much or promising too much.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.



What we will do

We will meet our commitment to protect children from abuse through the following means:

Awareness:

we will ensure that all staff and others are aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children.

Prevention:

we will ensure, through awareness and good practice, that staff and others minimise the risks to children.

Reporting:

we will ensure that staff and others are clear what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children.

Responding:

we will ensure that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

In order that the above standards of reporting and responding are met, members of Richmond House Social Care Services will also ensure that they:

- Take seriously any concerns raised
- Take positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subject of any concerns
- Support children, staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns
- Act appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation



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- Are guided through the child protection process by the principle of 'best interests of the child'
- Listen to and takes seriously the views and wishes of children
- Work in partnership with parents/carers and/or other professionals to ensure the protection of children.

How we will ensure our commitments above are met

All staff will sign up to and abide by the attached code of conduct

All staff and volunteers will have access to a copy of the child protection policy

Recruitment procedures will include checks on suitability for working with young people

Induction will include a briefing on child protection issues

Every workplace will display contact details for reporting possible child abuse and every member of staff will have contact details for reporting.

Systems will be established by every Member to investigate possible abuse once reported and to deal with it

Training, learning opportunities and support will be provided by Richmond House members as appropriate to ensure commitments are met.

Code of conduct

All staff must sign up to and abide by this Code of Conduct. See Richmond House Code of Conduct Policy - DCP V5 2024 for further information.

Staff and others must never:

Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children

Child Protection Policy

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Develop physical/sexual relationships with children

Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive

Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse.

Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive

Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative

Have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised

Sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working

Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves

Condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive

Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse

Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.

Acknowledgements

The following documents have been utilised in producing this policy. They have provided invaluable advice and information.

(1) Working together to safeguard children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. HM Government 2013

(2) The Keeping Children Safe Coalition, 2006: Toolkit 1, Standards for Child Protection – 2006



(3) The Keeping Children Safe Coalition, 2006: Toolkit 2, How to implement the standards

(4) The Keeping Children Safe Coalition, 2006: Toolkit 3, Training for Child Protection

MONITORING THE POLICY

Policies and procedures can only be effective if implemented across the entire organisation and at each level. Checks are therefore required for the following reasons:

To ensure that implementation is happening consistently across the organisation ☐

To identify any practical difficulties in implementing the policy at an early stage

To identify support required to fully implement the policy

To assist in gathering information of examples of the policy in practice, to be used for practice sharing and development

The monitoring process includes the following:

Annual child protection plans

Quarterly child protection reporting

The monitoring process will also include a review of incidents reported as a result of implementing the policy.

All incidents will be reported in strict confidentiality. Regular opportunities to discuss concerns about current procedures within teams or with other colleagues will help to develop a safe working environment and an open and supportive culture.

Feedback from such opportunities as well as from exit interviews with staff should be included in the monitoring process. The monitoring process should also incorporate the views of the children for whom it is intended, as well as local communities, foster families and other stakeholders.



Annual Review

The results of the annual review can also be used when working with other agencies and organisations in order to work together in achieving a greater common understanding of issues across agencies.

Policy reviews The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed every three years.



Appendix A

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Appendix B

Definition of Child Sexual Exploitation

What is child sexual exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). The definition of child sexual exploitation is as follows: Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. Like all forms of child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation:

- can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years, including 16 and 17 year olds who can legally consent to have sex;
- can still be abuse even if the sexual activity appears consensual; •
- can include both contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity;
- can take place in person or via technology, or a combination of both;



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- can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence;
- may occur without the child or young person's immediate knowledge (through others copying videos or images they have created and posting on social media, for example);
- can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults. The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse; and
- is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the abuse. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

Child sexual exploitation is a complex form of abuse, and it can be difficult for those working with children to identify and assess. The indicators for child sexual exploitation can sometimes be mistaken for “normal adolescent behaviours”. It requires knowledge, skills, professional curiosity and an assessment which analyses the risk factors and personal circumstances of individual children to ensure that the signs and symptoms are interpreted correctly, and appropriate support is given. Even where a young person is old enough to legally consent to sexual activity, the law states that consent is only valid where they make a choice and have the freedom and capacity to make that choice. If a child feels they have no other meaningful choice, are under the influence of harmful substances or fearful of what might happen if they don't comply (all of which are common features in cases of child sexual exploitation) consent cannot legally be given whatever the age of the child.

One of the key factors found in most cases of child sexual exploitation is the presence of some form of exchange (sexual activity in return for something); for the victim and/or perpetrator or facilitator.



Where it is the victim who is offered, promised or given something they need or want, the exchange can include both tangible (such as money, drugs or alcohol) and intangible rewards (such as status, protection or perceived receipt of love or affection). It is critical to remember the unequal power dynamic within which this exchange occurs and to remember that the receipt of something by a child/young person does not make them any less of a victim. It is also important to note that the prevention of something negative can also fulfil the requirement for exchange, for example, a child who engages in sexual activity to stop someone from carrying out a threat to harm his/her family.

Whilst there can be gifts or threats involved in other forms of sexual abuse (e.g a father who sexually abuses but also buys the child toys) it is most likely referred to as child sexual exploitation if the 'exchange', as the core dynamic at play, results in financial gain for or enhanced status of, the perpetrator.

Where the gain is only for the perpetrator/facilitator, there is most likely a financial gain (money, discharge of a debt or free/discounted goods or services) or increased status as a result of the abuse. If sexual gratification, or exercise of power and control, is the only gain for the perpetrator (and there is no gain for the child/young person) this would not normally constitute child sexual exploitation, but should be responded to as a different form of child sexual abuse.

How common is child sexual exploitation?

The signs and indicators of all forms of abuse can be difficult to detect and child sexual exploitation is no exception. A variety of factors can make it difficult to accurately assess how prevalent child sexual exploitation is. Many children who are sexually exploited may have been victims of other forms of abuse; the grooming methods that may be used can mean that children who are sexually exploited do not always recognise they are being abused, which can also affect detection rates. What is clear is that child sexual exploitation can occur in all communities and amongst all social groups and can affect girls and boys. All practitioners should work on the basis that it is happening in their area.



Who is vulnerable to child sexual exploitation?

Any child, in any community: Child sexual exploitation is occurring across the country but is often hidden so prevalence data is hard to ascertain. However, areas proactively looking for child sexual exploitation are uncovering a problem. All practitioners should be open to the possibility that the children they work with might be affected.

Age: Children aged 12-15 years of age are most at risk of child sexual exploitation although victims as young as 8 have been identified, particularly in relation to online concerns. Equally, those aged 16 or above can also experience child sexual exploitation, and it is important that such abuse is not overlooked due to assumed capacity to consent. Account should be taken of heightened risks amongst this age group, particularly those without adequate economic or systemic support.

Gender: Though child sexual exploitation may be most frequently observed amongst young females, boys are also at risk. Practitioners should be alert to the fact that boys may be less likely than females to disclose experiences of child sexual exploitation and less likely to have these identified by others.

Ethnicity: Child sexual exploitation affects all ethnic groups.

Heightened vulnerability factors: Working Together makes clear the requirements for holistic assessment. Sexual exploitation is often linked to other issues in the life of a child or young person, or in the wider community context. Practitioners should be alert to the fact that child sexual exploitation is complex and rarely presents in isolation of other needs and risks of harm (although this may not always be the case, particularly in relation to online abuse). Child sexual exploitation may be linked to other crimes and practitioners should be mindful that a child who may present as being involved in criminal activity is actually being exploited.

Sexual exploitation can have links to other types of crime. These include:

- Child trafficking;



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- Domestic abuse;
- Sexual violence in intimate relationships;
- Grooming (including online grooming);
- Abusive images of children and their distribution;
- Drugs-related offences;
- Gang-related activity;
- Immigration-related offences; and
- Domestic servitude.

Potential indicators of child sexual exploitation

Children rarely self-report child sexual exploitation so it is important that practitioners are aware of potential indicators of risk, including:

- Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc without plausible explanation;
- Gang-association and/or isolation from peers/social networks;
- Exclusion or unexplained absences from school, college or work;
- Leaving home/care without explanation and persistently going missing or returning late;
- Excessive receipt of texts/phone calls;
- Returning home under the influence of drugs/alcohol;
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age/sexually transmitted infections;
- Evidence of/suspicious of physical or sexual assault;
- Relationships with controlling or significantly older individuals or groups;



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- Multiple callers (unknown adults or peers);
- Frequenting areas known for sex work;
- Concerning use of internet or other social media;
- Increasing secretiveness around behaviours; and
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being. Practitioners should also remain open to the fact that child sexual exploitation can occur without any of these risk indicators being obviously present.

Practitioners should also be alert to the fact that some risk assessments have been constructed around indicators of face-to-face perpetration by adults and may not adequately capture online or peer perpetrated forms of harm. It is also important to remember that risk assessments only capture risk at the point of assessment and that levels of risk vary over time, and that the presence of these indicators may be explained by other forms of vulnerability rather than child sexual exploitation.

The first step for practitioners is to be alert to the potential signs of abuse and neglect and to understand the procedures set out by local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Those working with children and families should access training through those multi-agency arrangements to support them in identifying vulnerability, risk and harm. This will help practitioners to know what action to take and to develop a shared understanding about what best practice looks like.

How are children sexually exploited?

Child sexual exploitation takes many different forms. It can include contact and noncontact sexual activities and can occur online or in person, or a combination of each.

Children can be perpetrators as well as victims

Children can be both experiencing child sexual exploitation and perpetrating it at the same time. Examples might include a child who is forced to take part in the



exploitation of another child under duress, or a child who is forced to introduce other children to their abuser under threats to their family's safety. These situations require a nuanced approach that recognises and engages with the young person's perpetration within the context of their own victimisation.

Children who perpetrate child sexual exploitation require a different response to adult perpetrators. Responses may involve criminal justice pathways at times, however every child who displays harmful sexual behaviour should also have their safeguarding and welfare needs actively considered in line with Working Together. Different agencies should work together to: (a) identify any prior victimisation and understand how this has contributed to the perpetration; and (b) map the environments and contexts in which peer-perpetrated child sexual exploitation occurs, looking at the social norms or power dynamics at play which may have influenced the perpetration of abuse. Dependent on the issues emerging, this will likely need both an individually-based response and wider work to address harmful social norms or power dynamics that enable the abuse to occur.

How does child sexual exploitation affect children?

The long-term consequences of any form of child abuse can be devastating and early identification and providing support as soon as problems emerge is critical.

Child sexual exploitation damages children and like any form of abuse, it can have long-lasting consequences that can impact on every part of a child's life and their future outcomes.

Child sexual exploitation has been shown to affect:

- Physical (including sexual) and mental health and well-being;
- Education and training and therefore future employment prospects;
- Family relationships;
- Friends and social relationships, current and as adults; and



- Their relationship with their own children in the future.

Child sexual exploitation is complex and children are often reluctant to disclose experiences of exploitation due to misplaced feelings of loyalty and shame. Many may not recognise what they are experiencing as abuse or that they require support or intervention, believing they are in control or in a healthy consensual relationship.

How to respond: working with young people

Child sexual exploitation is never the victim's fault: As stated above, all children and young people have a right to be safe and should be protected from harm.

“What I want is staff who sit down and talk to you calmly and they don't judge you ... you want someone to understand why you did what you did”

“Instead of shouting at me and saying, ‘why did you do it?’ ...[They should be] letting you get your point across first, then putting their point across and about how they see it differently, instead of just saying that was wrong” (young person cited in Warrington 2013)

Early sharing of information is key to providing effective help where there are emerging problems. As above, it is essential to have in place effective child protection services and procedures for sharing information.

Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. all practitioners should assume that in the course of their work with children they will encounter children at risk of sexual exploitation.

All practitioners working with children and families need to know where to get help:

Local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements will set out the process for referring concerns about the welfare of children to local authority children's social care. Anyone can make a referral and ask for advice. If a child is considered to be in immediate danger the police should be contacted.



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Any practitioner working with a child who they think may be at risk of child sexual exploitation should follow the guidance set out in Working Together and share this information with local authority children's social care.

You should refer any concerns about a child's welfare to local authority children's social care. If you believe a child is in immediate risk of harm, you should contact the police.

Managers of services should ensure they are facilitating this type of sharing culture within their agencies and across their local multi-agency partnerships.

- All practitioners working with children and families should respond in ways that are:
- Child-centred: recognising children and young people's rights to participate in decisions about them in line with their maturity, and focusing on the needs of the child.
- Developed and informed by the involvement of a child's family and carers wherever safe and appropriate: a holistic assessment will take account of the wishes and feelings of children and the views of their parents/carers;
- Responsive and pro-active: everyone should be alert to the potential signs and indicators of child sexual exploitation, as well as other forms of abuse, and exercise professional curiosity in their day to day work. It is better to help children and young people as early as possible, before issues escalate and become more damaging;
- Relationship-based: practitioners should establish and maintain trusting relationships with children and young people, continue to exercise professional curiosity and create safe spaces for disclosure; and
- Informed by an understanding of the complexities of child sexual exploitation: it is important to avoid language or actions that may lead a young person to feel they are not deserving of support or are in some way to blame for their abuse.



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Working with families Parents and carers can feel excluded in work with children and young people who are, or who are at risk of being, sexually exploited by perpetrators external to the family. Where assessment shows it is safe and appropriate to do so, parents and families should be regarded as a part of the solution. It is crucial to work with them not only to assess the risks of harm faced by the young person or child but to help them understand what the young person has experienced, the risks they face and how they can be supported and protected. The parents may need direct support and help to improve family relationships and keep their child safe.



Appendix C

Child criminal exploitation (CCE)

Takes a variety of forms but ultimately it is the grooming and exploitation of children into criminal activity. Across each form that CCE takes, the current reality is that children who are coerced into criminal activity are often treated as criminals by statutory agencies rather than as victims of exploitation.

A statutory definition of CCE would send out a strong message that children who are forced to commit crimes are victims rather than criminals. It would:

- Enable a shared understanding and a better multi-agency response to this form of exploitation
- Lead to professionals spotting the signs of this exploitation earlier on in the grooming cycle
- Make sure children are safeguarded and supported earlier
- Create a greater focus on disrupting the activity of those who groom children for child criminal exploitation.

What is Child Criminal Exploitation?

Child criminal exploitation is increasingly used to describe this type of exploitation where children are involved and is defined as Child Criminal Exploitation is common in county lines and occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. Criminal exploitation of children is broader than just county lines, and includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft.

How does it affect young people and vulnerable adults? Like other forms of abuse and exploitation, county lines exploitation:

- can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years;



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- can affect any vulnerable adult over the age of 18 years;
- can still be exploited even if the activity appears consensual;
- can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and is often accompanied by violence or threats of violence;
- can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and young people or adults; and
- is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the exploitation. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

One of the key factors found in most cases of county lines exploitation is the presence of some form of exchange (e.g. carrying drugs in return for something). Where it is the victim who is offered, promised or given something they need or want, the exchange can include both tangible (such as money, drugs or clothes) and intangible rewards (such as status, protection or perceived friendship or affection).

It is important to remember the unequal power dynamic within which this exchange occurs and to remember that the receipt of something by a young person or vulnerable adult does not make them any less of a victim. It is also important to note that the prevention of something negative can also fulfil the requirement for exchange, for example a young person who engages in county lines activity to stop someone carrying out a threat to harm his/her family.

Who is vulnerable to county lines exploitation?

The national picture on county lines continues to develop but there are recorded cases of:



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- children as young as 12 years old being exploited or moved by gangs to courier drugs out of their local area; 15-16 years is the most common age range
- both males and females are being exploited
- White British children are being targeted because gangs perceive they are more likely to evade police detection but a person of any ethnicity or nationality may be exploited
- the use of social media to make initial contact with children and young people
- class A drug users are being targeted so that gangs can take over their homes (known as 'cuckooing').

We do know that county line exploitation is widespread, with gangs from big cities including London, Manchester and Liverpool operating throughout England, Wales and Scotland.

Gangs are known to target vulnerable children and adults; some of the factors that heighten a person's vulnerability include:

- having prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse
- lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past (domestic violence or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example)
- social isolation or social difficulties
- economic vulnerability
- homelessness or insecure accommodation status
- connections with other people involved in gangs
- having a physical or learning disability
- having mental health or substance misuse issues;



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- being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories)
- being excluded from mainstream education, in particular attending a Pupil Referral Unit.

Signs to look out for

A young person's involvement in county-line activity often leaves signs.

A person might exhibit some of these signs, either as a member or as an associate of a gang dealing drugs. Any sudden changes in a person's lifestyle should be discussed with them. Some potential indicators of county lines involvement and exploitation are listed below, with those at the top of particular concern:

- persistently going missing from school or home and / or being found out-of-area;
- unexplained acquisition of money, clothes, or mobile phones
- excessive receipt of texts/phone calls and/or having multiple handsets
- relationships with controlling / older individuals or groups
- leaving home/care without explanation
- suspicion of physical assault / unexplained injuries
- parental concerns
- carrying weapons
- significant decline in school results/performance
- gang association or isolation from peers or social networks
- self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being.



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Use your local safeguarding process, the first step of which is usually to contact your designated safeguarding lead within your organisation. If you don't know who this is, refer to your manager. Your designated safeguarding lead has the responsibility for linking in with your local authority's social services. If you are not satisfied with the local authority's response, you should follow up on your concerns by discussing these with your safeguarding lead.

If you are aware that a potential victim may have come from / travelled to another area as part of their involvement in county lines, you should include this information in your referral to enable liaison between safeguarding agencies in the different areas.

Who to contact

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Jay Al Karaki, Head of Service and in person or on **07484 371525** or
- Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) is Hala Okasheh, the Registered Manager and in person or on **07761 540911**, or
- Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) is Pauline Bullement in person or on 07878471242 and it is felt that it would be unsafe for any reason to share concerns with the named person from the organisation. The following are appropriate contacts with whom to discuss your concerns:

Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

Children's safeguarding - 01522 782111 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm) Adults safeguarding - 01522 782155 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm) or 01522 782333 (outside office hours)

Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, Newland, Lincoln, LN1 1YL.

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/safeguarding/lscp>

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Tel. 01522 554674

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East Riding Of Yorkshire Council,
County Hall,
Cross Street,
Beverley, HU17 9BA

Email:

lado@eastriding.gov.uk

Web Site:

<https://www.erscp.co.uk/reporting-concerns/>

NYCC Local Authority Designated Officer

<https://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/news/duty-local-authority-designated-officer-lado-telephone-number-has-changed/>

The City of York Council LADO

<https://www.york.gov.uk/ChildProtection>

Contact MASH Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 5.00 pm:

- Telephone: 01904 551900
- email: mash@york.gov.uk

Doncaster Council – LADO

<https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/schools/local-authority-designated-officer>

Tel: [01302 737332](tel:01302737332)

Email: LADO@doncaster.gov.uk



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Police:
Phone 101 or in an emergency 999.

Doncaster Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) Procedure for Allegations Against Staff, Carers and Volunteers can be found at: https://doncasterscb.proceduresonline.com/p_alleg_against_staff.html

The LADO can then be contacted after the child is safe.

Children's Services:
Referral and Response Team
Office hours: 01302 737777
Out of hours: 01302 796000

Hull Safeguarding Children Board Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Tel: (01482) 790 933

<https://www.hull.gov.uk/children/worried-child>

Early Help and Safeguarding Hub (EHASH)

Email EHASH@hullcc.gov.uk.

Wakefield Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

<https://www.wakefieldscp.org.uk/>

Barnsley Local Authority Officer (LADO) Tel. **01226 772341**

Sheffield Local Authority Officer (LADO) Tel. **0114 2736870 Email.**

<https://www.safeguardingsheffieldchildren.org/scsp/processes/allegations-of-abuse-against-people-who-work-with-children-lado>

lado@sheffield.gcsx.gov.uk

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South Kesteven District Council

Community Safety Team

Council Offices

St Peter's Hill

Grantham

Lincolnshire

NG31 6PZ

Telephone: 01476 406080

www.southkesteven.gov.uk

City of Lincoln Council

Public Protection and Anti-Social

Behaviour Team

City Hall

Beaumont Fee

Lincoln

Lincolnshire

LN1 1DD

Telephone: 01522 873378

www.lincoln.gov.uk

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West Lindsey District Council

Communities and Localism

Guildhall Marshalls Yard

Gainsborough

Lincolnshire

DN21 2NA

Telephone: 01427 676676

www.west-lindsey.gov.uk

East Lindsey District Council

Community Safety Team

Tedder Hall

Manby Park

Louth Lincolnshire

LN11 8UP

Telephone: 01507 613095

www.e-lindsey.gov.uk

South Holland District Council

Community Development Team

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Council Offices

Priory Road

Spalding

Lincolnshire PE11 2XE

Telephone: 01775 761161

www.sholland.gov.uk

Boston Borough Council

Community Safety Department

West St Boston

Lincolnshire

PE21 8QR

Telephone: 01205 314318

[www.boston.gov.uk/ CommunityTrigger](http://www.boston.gov.uk/CommunityTrigger)



Signed on behalf of the Management Group by:

Signature.....H. Okasheh

Name in Capitals.....HALA OKASHEH.....

The policy has been reviewed by the Management Committee on:

Date...24/01/2024.....

Updated on 15/07/2024, 05/09/2024

Name in Capitals.....JAY AL KARAKI.....