

# City of York

Safeguarding Children Partnership



City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership

## Exploitation Guidance

October 2021



# I. Introduction

## I.1

This guidance has been written in line with [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(DCFS 2018\)](#) and [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020](#). This practice guidance is for practitioners to work in a multi-agency context and to enable practitioners to increase their awareness and understanding of the risks for children who may be at risk of exploitation, including experiencing Child Sexual and or Criminal Exploitation.

## I.2

The purpose of this guidance is to assist practitioners in identifying known indicators that a young person may be vulnerable to exploitation and assist practitioners in their understanding and work with young people. This is a tool designed to assist practitioners specifically around the areas of child criminal/ sexual exploitation and missing and should not be used in isolation without consideration of wider issues and circumstances that may be challenging the family and or young person. Exploitation and missing should be considered in all assessments and the risk should be assessed in conjunction with the CSC Exploitation Team, weekly Multi-agency Risk management meetings, monthly Multi-agency child exploitation and missing meetings (MACEM) and discussed as part of a multiagency assessment and plan.

## I.3

Historically different forms of exploitation have had different approaches and responses, for example child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, child trafficking. However this procedure recognises that whilst there are different forms of exploitation, there exists a child who is at risk of and/or subjected to abuse and harm from exploitation. Therefore this procedure takes a holistic view of exploitation whilst recognising that it can occur through different forms and often occurs in amongst other vulnerabilities that children and young people may be exposed to.

## I.4

By the very nature of vulnerability and exploitation, the different themes of exploitation are invariably intertwined. This practice guidance considers vulnerability and contextual safeguarding from a holistic perspective. The risks and vulnerabilities of the child are seen as a complete picture, so their needs can be addressed in a way that improves their long term outcomes, as appose to reducing risk in one particular area of vulnerability.

## I.5

Exploitation often occurs without the child's immediate recognition and/or with the child believing that they are in control of the situation and can therefore be difficult to identify. Further, the nature of life is that online and offline domains are no longer two distinct and separate areas. The relationship between the two is now fluid and interchangeable and as such we need to be able to recognise and respond to risk both in the online and offline environment.

## 1.6

This guidance should be used alongside the following CYCSP procedures:

- [CYSCP Procedure for Child Protection Conferences and Core Group meetings](#)
- [CYSCP Non recent, Organised and Complex Abuse Procedure](#)
- [CYSCP Managing Allegations against Staff Procedure and Practice Guidance](#)
- [CYSCP Non recent, Organised and Complex Domestic Abuse Procedure](#)
- [CYSCP Children who Sexually Harm Procedure](#)
- [CYSCP Threshold document](#)
- [One Minute Guide Child Exploitation – North Yorkshire & York ‘Trusted Relationships’ Project](#)
- [North Yorkshire and City of York Criminal Exploitation and County Lines Practice Guidance](#)
- [Adolescent strategy Child disruption tool kit](#)
- [NRM One Minute Guide](#)

## 1.7 Scope

This guidance is for all professionals who work with children and young people who are at risk of or are being exploited either for criminal or sexual purposes and:

- Provides information for practitioners in the City of York regarding identifying if a child is at risk of being exploited in any context.
- Advises the correct referral process when young people have been identified.
- Explains the support available to both practitioner, young people and families.
- Provides information regarding how to disrupt risks and the impact on young people and families.

## 1.8 Legislation and Standards

- Child Sexual Exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners (DFE, 2017)<sup>2</sup>
- Safeguarding Children who may have been Trafficked (DFE 2011)<sup>3</sup>
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)<sup>4</sup>
- Office of the Children Commissioner Report Gangs and Group CSE “If only someone had listened” (2013)<sup>5</sup>
- Children and Young Person’s Missing from Home, Education or Care (2014)<sup>6</sup>
- Children and Families Act (2014)<sup>7</sup>
- Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults (2020)
- Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020

## **1.9 Definition of Child Sexual Abuse Working together 2018**

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

## **1.10 The definition of child sexual exploitation (CSE) Working together 2018**

*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.*

## **1.11 Definition of Child and Young Person**

The 'Children Act 1989' defines a child as anyone under the age of 18.

However there are groups of young people up to the age of 25 who could additionally be vulnerable such as: children in the care of the local authority; those transitioning out of care or who have left care, and children who may have special educational needs and disabilities.

## **1.12 Definition of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) Working together 2018**

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.

As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy, published by the Home Office, 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 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. 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.

### **1.13 Definition of County Lines Working together 2018**

As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy, published by the Home Office

The UK government defines county lines as:

“County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.”

County lines activity and the associated violence, drug dealing and exploitation has a devastating impact on young people, vulnerable adults and local communities.

### **1.14 Signs of exploitation**

There are common vulnerability factors in children that can lead to them being more likely to be exposed to exploitation, and common signs and behaviours displayed by those who are already being exploited. The following are some of the typical vulnerabilities in children prior to abuse:

- Living in a chaotic household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, parental criminality)
- History of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of ‘honour’-based violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect)
- Recent bereavement or loss
- Gang association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships
- Attending school with children who are exploited
- Where a child may have some Learning disabilities
- Unsure about sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families
- Friends with children who are exploited
- Homeless
- Lacking friends from the same age group
- Living in residential care
- Living in a hostel, bed and breakfast accommodation, a foyer or homeless
- Low self-esteem or self-confidence
- Young carer

The following are some of the signs and behaviour generally seen in children who are already being exploited:

- Regularly missing
- Parents/Carer not reporting young person missing
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Has extra money/new items/‘gifts’ that cannot legitimately be accounted for/received from unknown sources
- Change in physical appearance or behaviour
- Pregnancy, termination or repeat testing for sexually transmitted infections
- Young person has been coerced to take/share indecent images
- Arrested/involved in criminality
- Found/travelling out of area
- Multiple mobile phones
- Young person feels indebted to an individual or group
- Family or young person having to move or leave their home
- Items missing from home
- Young person carrying/concealing weapons
- Absent from school/non-school attendance
- Services have not been able to engage with child
- Self-harm indicators and/or mental health concerns and/or suicidal thoughts/attempts
- Injuries – evidence of physical or sexual assault
- Relationship breakdown with family and or peers
- Association with older and/or risky peers
- Change in education attendance/Change in education provider/Missing from education/ Non-attendance in education

Practitioners should also remain open to the fact that child exploitation can occur without any of these risk indicators being obviously present. 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 exploitation.

## 1.15 The 4 P's

The City of York Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CYSCP) promotes a multi-agency approach to child exploitation which emphasises the need to work together to:

- **Prepare** by providing strong leadership, effective systems, gathering of intelligence and partnership working together to tackle sexual abuse and exploitation of children and young people;
- **Prevent** by raising awareness amongst young people, parents, carers and communities and to work together to provide children and young people with strategies to recognise, avoid, report and/exit exploitation at any stage and to remove opportunities for potential perpetrators across the County;
- **Protect** by safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, supporting professionals, parents, carers, families and communities who may be at risk and identifying potential victims, risks, patterns and perpetrators at the earliest opportunity and to
- **Pursue** by investigating, disrupting, arresting and prosecuting those who seek to coerce, exploit and abuse children and young people whilst supporting victims and their families effectively through the criminal justice system.

Where a practitioner has reason to believe that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm they must make a referral to the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).

Concerns should also be discussed with the organisation designated child protection officer regarding the concerns but this should not build delay in ensuring a child's immediate safety.

If there is concern that a child could be at risk of exploitation in any form the partnership screening risk assessment tool should be used.

All children referred to the MASH will have a multi-agency risk assessment completed.

## 2. Understanding Child Exploitation

### 2.1 How common is Child Exploitation?

CSE and CCE can be hard to identify and assess when working with Children and Young People. Indicators can be perceived to be within the normal parameters of teenage behaviours. For example 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 and that any child from any community and ethnic group can be exploited and abused. Children might also be involved in grooming or trafficking themselves and they are also victims. No child can consent to their own abuse.



## 2.2 Who and how do young people become involved?

- It is important to recognise that child exploitation is never the victim's fault, even if there is some form of exchange. All children and young people under the age of 18 have a right to be safe and should be protected from harm.
- Research suggests that children aged 12-15 years of age are most at risk of child exploitation although victims as young as 8 have been identified, particularly in relation to online concerns. With ever changing social media and applications it is easier for exploitation to remain hidden. Equally, those aged 16 or above can also experience 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 with limited economic or systemic support.

## 2.3 Though research suggests that 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.

- Heightened vulnerability factors: Working Together (2018) makes clear the requirements for holistic assessment. 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.
- Practitioners should not rely on 'checklists' alone but should make a holistic assessment of vulnerability, examining risk and protective factors as set out in the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. Practitioners should also have an awareness and understanding that there can be subtle differences between CCE and CSE and should seek guidance and support to ensure the appropriate interventions are being used. Exploitation and abuse throughout this document apply to young people in either/ both situations and practitioners should be mindful that young people involved in CCE and County Lines are also victims.
- Children and young people who are sexually abused and exploited are always groomed by the perpetrator. This may start with showing the child or young person a lot of interest, affection and making the child or young person feel special. They may do this through offering the child or young person drugs and/or alcohol, and a place to 'hang out' away from parents/carers. They may also buy presents such as clothes, mobile phones or give them money. This grooming can take place either inside or outside of the family network.
- Once the perpetrator has gained the child or young person's trust and affection they may change: becoming threatening and violent towards the child or young person, and may demand sexual favours for themselves, and others, in return for all the things they have previously given them for free.



- Perpetrators can use sophisticated methods to draw children and young people into relationships. It is a common misconception that only men can be perpetrators of grooming and it is important to recognise that women can also be perpetrators and grooming does not always occur with a young person of the opposite sex.
- Perpetrators will target young people in a variety of ways and this can include but is not limited to; through family/ friends, gatherings of young people and online via applications or websites. The process of grooming may also take place in some adult venues such as pubs and clubs.
- Exploitation is defined by an imbalance in power whereby the perpetrator always has some power over the victim making them reliant on the perpetrator. Young people may be coerced in to thinking that they are in a consensual relationship where in actual fact sex is being used in exchange for attention, affection, accommodation or gifts, to serious organised crime and child trafficking.
- Young people can also be used as part of more organised groups to recruit other young people and these young people should also be viewed as victims of exploitation and grooming and not as perpetrators in their own right.
- Children and young people are likely to have a large online presence via computers, laptops, tablets, game consoles and mobile phones to access the internet for social networking or to visit potentially inappropriate websites. This opens up further opportunities for perpetrators to make contact and to groom children and young people. The fact that online users often lie about their true identity means that young people can be more easily groomed and coerced into meeting up with potential perpetrators. (For more information, contact CEOP or visit their website [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)).

### 3. Contextual Safeguarding

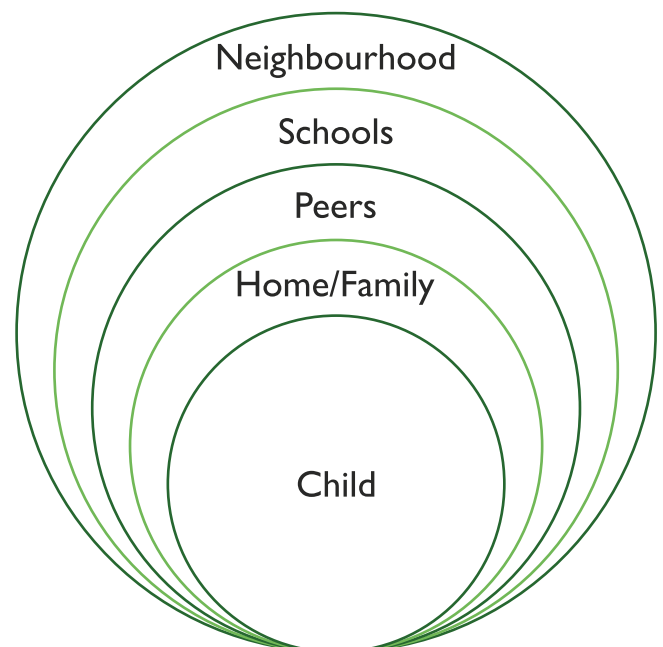
#### 3.1

In 2018 the term “Contextual Safeguarding” was included in the 2018 iteration of Working Together to Safeguard Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 in order that this form of abuse was recognised and acknowledged.

#### 3.2

“Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people’s experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people’s experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent child relationships” (Firmin, 2017, 3).

Figure 1 (pictured right): Contexts of Adolescent Safety and Vulnerability (Firmin 2013, 47)



### 3.3

Children and young people can be vulnerable to exploitation for a range of reasons as outlined in Section 2. There are some socioeconomic factors that make children and young people more vulnerable to being targeted to be exploited for example where they live such as an area of high deprivation with higher knife crime, where they attend school, where they spend their free time and so on. This is referred to as contextual safeguarding and links not only to a child or young person's circumstances in the home but also in their day to day lives and community where they live.

### 3.4

Assessments of children and young people in such cases should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life and are a threat to their safety and/or welfare, this includes those young people who are seen as perpetrators of exploitation and they should be assessed to understand the roles contextual issues have in their day to day safety. Planned interventions across agencies should take place and should look to address the environmental factors which place the young person at risk.

### 3.5

Multiagency working is essential to ensure that all aspects of the young person's circumstances and behaviours are understood and this will enable risks to be reduced to help keep the young person safe.

### 3.6

**Reachable moments:** The 'Waltham Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board Serious Case Review on Child C, a 14 year old boy' was published in May 2020. It outlines the tragedy and murder by stabbing of Child C in Waltham Forest in January 2019. Alongside a number of other systemic issues this review highlights the importance of maximising 'reachable moments' e.g. when a child is in crisis situation in police custody or being transported back to their home local authority from another area with reflection time during the car journey.

### 3.7

This report states that a 'reachable moment' is a concept taken from education, where it is called a 'teachable moment', and describes an unplanned opportunity that arises in a classroom where a teacher has a chance to offer insight to her or his students. In other areas of life the same opportunity can be called a 'reachable moment', and constitutes the same opportunity to break through a carefully constructed façade that is resistant to the development of personal insight.

### 3.8

The national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel describe a similar concept as 'critical moments' defined below: There is a concept in systemic theory literature described as a critical moment which changes social worlds. Systemic therapists promote the importance of acting wisely to identify when the words used at a particular critical moment can have a powerful influence on the direction taken after the conversation has ended.

### 3.9

In a similar vein, the notion of the teachable moment is well established in education, youth offending and health sectors. Examples of critical moments such as after a child has been arrested, taken to hospital after being injured, attending the youth court for the first time, awaiting sentence, or being excluded from school.

Are there opportunities for reachable or critical moments in your practice?

## 4. Transitional Safeguarding

### 4.1

Transitional Safeguarding is a term coined by Research in Practice following recognition of the need to improve the safeguarding responses for older teenagers and young adults. Research by Sawyer et al. 2018 identified emerging evidence that adolescence extends into the early/ mid-twenties and children who are vulnerable to or being exploited at age 17 do not suddenly become less vulnerable the day they reach their 18th birthday. There is recognition that the support needs of those young people entering adulthood needs to be well planned and requires a fluid transition between child and adult services.

### 4.2

There is also emerging evidence that meeting the needs of adolescents and young adults more effectively early on, can significantly reduce the need for costly later interventions for example involvement in the criminal justice system, access health services, drug and alcohol treatments etc. (Rees et al, 2017).

### 4.3

Young adults can also experience a range of risk and harms that may not be as relevant to younger children and require a different safeguarding response. Hanson & Holmes (2014) outlines these often inter-connected risks including:

- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse
- Neglect
- Emotional abuse
- Homelessness
- Poor mental health and self-harm
- Criminal exploitation including gang association
- Substance misuse



## 5. Trafficking, Modern Slavery and CSE/CCE

### 5.1

Child trafficking and modern slavery are child abuse. Many children and young people are trafficked into the UK from other countries, children are also trafficked around the UK. Trafficking involves the “movement” of a child with a “view” to exploit them. The “movement” can occur across an International border or it can occur internally within the same Country, City or indeed street.

### 5.2

Perpetrators don't need to actually physically move the child themselves – if children are invited to go to an address where the person who invited them knows, or should know that they will be exploited they have then trafficked the child.

### 5.3

Whilst Trafficking may involve tricking, forcing or persuading a child to be moved with the intention of exploiting them, it is important to remember that a child cannot consent to their own exploitation and their actions may appear entirely voluntary but this does not make them any less of a victim.

Children are trafficked for:

- Sexual exploitation
- Benefit fraud
- Forced marriage
- Domestic slavery like cleaning , cooking and childcare
- Forced labour in factories or agriculture
- Criminal exploitation including committing crimes like theft, working on cannabis farms, moving drugs

### 5.4

Trafficked children experience many types of abuse and neglect. Traffickers may use physical, sexual and emotional abuse as a form of control or rely upon an imbalance of power as the means by which they exploit a child.

### 5.5

All incidents of trafficked young people and modern slavery should be referred to the Police and Children's social care via MASH who will ensure a referral is made to the National Referral Mechanism. Further information is available on the [City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership website](#).

## 5.6

Children and young people involved in any form of exploitation should be treated as the victims of abuse and their needs carefully assessed; the aim should be to protect them from further harm and they should not be treated as criminals. The primary law enforcement response should be directed at perpetrators of abuse.

## 5.7 Referring to NRM

### 5.8

The National Referral Mechanism is the national framework for identifying and referring victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support. The Single Competent Authority (SCA) administers it, which is part of the Home Office.

### 5.9

All incidents of trafficked young people and modern slavery should be referred to the Police and Children's social care via MASH who will ensure a referral is made to the National Referral Mechanism.

### 5.10

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support.

### 5.11

In England and Wales, only designated first responders can refer cases to the NRM. First Responders are: Local Authorities (this includes social workers and youth offending teams) Police forces; UK Border Force; Home Office Visas and Immigration; Home Office Immigration Enforcement; Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority.

### 5.12

The City of York and North Yorkshire are currently taking part in a pilot of devolved decision making, which means that making the decision about whether a child has been subjected to modern slavery or human trafficking sits with the local decision making multi-agency NRM panel.

### 5.13

The NRM Panel is a weekly virtual panel made up of senior managers from a number of key agencies including North Yorkshire Police, Children Social Care, Youth Justice Services, Health, and the Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship (ICTG) Service.

### 5.14

The aim of the panel is to ensure there is consistent multi-agency decision-making and robust planning in respect of children who may be subjected to Modern Slavery. The panel will take place twice a week on a Monday (City of York) and a Friday (North Yorkshire).

### 5.15

Modern slavery is a complex crime and may involve multiple forms of exploitation. It encompasses:

- slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour
- human trafficking

Human Trafficking		
The Action	The Means	The Purpose
Recruitment Transportation Transfer Harbouring Receipt	Fraud Coercion Abduction Abuse of power Threat or use of force Abuse of a position of vulnerability Deception etc.	Sexual exploitation Forced labour Forced criminality Removal of organs Servitude Slavery

Victims may not be aware that they are being trafficked or exploited, If you think that Trafficking or modern slavery has taken place, the case must be referred to the police and MASH.

### 5.16

For more details about the NRM pilot is available on the [NRM One Minute Guide](#).

### 5.17

When a referral is submitted, North Yorkshire Police should be copied in to the email using the following address [modernslavery@northyorkshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:modernslavery@northyorkshire.pnn.police.uk) to ensure that an appropriate crime is recorded and an investigation commenced. Only secure mail should be used to share personal and sensitive information via email. MASH should also be copied into the email at [MASH@york.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@york.gov.uk).

### 5.18

The MASH has established links with the Child missing and exploitation Team and the NRM panel chair and will ensure a referral to the NRM Panel is made.



## 6. Radicalisation and referring to PREVENT

### 6.1

If you believe a young person may be involved or being groomed into radicalised or extremist behaviour (as defined below) please see The Prevent Guidance.

### 6.2

Extremism definition working together 2018 and Prevent strategy 2019:

Extremism goes beyond terrorism and includes people who target the vulnerable – including the young – by seeking to sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society.

### 6.3

The Government has defined extremism in the Prevent strategy as:

“Vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces.”

### 6.4

Radicalisation is a process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremism ideologies associated with terror groups. Radicalisation can be both violent and non-violent. Violent extremism is caused by a combination of interlocking factors:

- An ideology which justifies terrorism by manipulating theology as well as history and politics
- Radicalisers and their networks which promote violent extremism through a variety of places, institutions and media;
- Individuals who are vulnerable to the messages of violent extremists;
- Communities which are sometimes poorly equipped to challenge and resist extremism; and
- Grievances, some genuine and some perceived, and some of course directed very specifically against government.

There are multiple pathways that constitute the process of radicalisation, which can be independent but are usually mutually reinforcing.

If there is a concern about an adult displaying radicalised behaviours and they have or care for children a referral for the child should be made to MASH in the usual way. Also where adults are in positions of power there should be a LADO referral.



## 7. Risk Assessment/ Screening Tool and Actions

### 7.1

The CYSCP Child Exploitation screening tool has been developed to assist practitioners in determining the level of risk of sexual abuse and exploitation by consideration of the behaviours that have been expressed, observed, heard or identified with regard to the child.

### 7.2

Once the behaviours have been identified this will enable the practitioner to make a judgement as to whether to initiate further action or to monitor and reassess at an appropriate point, for example if the child's behaviour changes or new information is known.

### 7.3

The child and/or young person does not need to exhibit every behaviour listed in the tool. The tool is designed as a guide to inform a practitioner's judgement. It can also be used to measure progress for an individual victim in achieving a positive change in their vulnerabilities and behaviours.

### 7.4

Types of sexual abuse and exploitation are constantly evolving, as are the control methods and grooming techniques of perpetrators, therefore note that the list provided within this toolkit is not exhaustive and the indicators are simply those most commonly recognised to indicate a risk of sexual abuse or exploitation.

### 7.5

At any stage there should be a consideration as to the effectiveness of any current interventions with the child/young person and their family (assessed via Single assessment, CAF, FEHA etc) to:

- Protect the child/young person
- Prevent the young person from going missing
- Protect the young person from being exposed to any further risk
- Prevent sexual abuse/exploitation
- Change risk taking behaviour.

Please see below the 'Potential levels of risk' guide. Practitioners should also refer to the [CYSCP Threshold Guidance](#).

Level of Risk	Evaluation of Risk	Potential actions and/or considerations
No Risk	<p>Practitioners should follow guidance and use the partnership screening tool to identify level of risk posed to a Child</p> <p>The screening tool is used to help consider the level of risk a child or young person. The tool is a guide to help make a decision about the need to refer. If you are concerned a child may be being exploited make a referral to MASH and a full risk assessment using multiagency information will be undertaken.</p> <p>The screening tool to use as guidance is available to download here: <a href="http://www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk/tools.htm">www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk/tools.htm</a></p>	
Emerging Concerns	<p>Some emerging concerns that the child/young person is at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation. Some concerns that the child/young person is at risk of being targeted or groomed, but there are positive protective factors in the child/young person life.</p> <p>Some emerging concerns or information regarding an individual that could be grooming or concerns regarding an establishment such as a hotel, takeaway or taxi firm.</p>	<p>Complete CYSCP Child Criminal Exploitation (CE) (included Sexual Exploitation) Screening Tool and consider a referral to <a href="#">MASH</a>.</p> <p>Ensure information is recorded on own agency IT system, flagged at appropriate risk level.</p> <p>Consider CAF/ Family early help assessment FEHA.</p> <p>Information should be shared regarding perpetrators and/or community intelligence.</p>

Level of Risk	Evaluation of Risk	Potential actions and/or considerations
		<p>If there is any information regarding specific/named child then a referral should be made to the police/MASH.</p> <p>Consider completing <a href="#">North Yorkshire and City of York Partnership Information Sharing Form</a> and sending to Police Central Referral Unit.</p>
<p><b>Escalating Concerns</b></p>	<p>Child is vulnerable to being sexually or criminally exploited. There is evidence the child/young person maybe or is at risk of abuse, or being targeted/groomed. The child/young person may experience protective factors, but circumstances and/or behaviours place him/her at risk of exploitation.</p> <p>Peer on peer abuse and serious Violence.</p> <p>Concerns regarding an individual that could be grooming or concerns regarding an establishment such as a hotel, takeaway or taxi firm.</p>	<p><i>If a child or young person is at immediate risk of sexual exploitation or a crime is about to be committed – contact the police on 999 and CSC.</i></p> <p>Complete CYSCP Child Criminal Exploitation (CE) (included Sexual Exploitation) Screening Tool and make a referral to <a href="#">MASH</a>.</p> <p>Complete <a href="#">North Yorkshire and City of York Information Sharing Form</a> and sending to Police Central Referral Unit (see page 22).</p> <p>Where there is a service specific assessment such as ASSET in place this should be updated and the additional information used to inform pre-sentence reports.</p> <p>Ensure risk information is recorded for the child/young person on each agency IT system.</p>

Level of Risk	Evaluation of Risk	Potential actions and/or considerations
<p><b>Significant Concerns</b></p>	<p>Evidence/disclosure suggests the child is at immediate and/or continuing risk of sexual or criminal exploitation. The child/young person is engaged in high risk situations/relationships. Evidence/assessment, suggests that the child is experiencing exploitation, (they may not recognise this).</p> <p>Where a child is at risk of significant harm (s.47) an immediate referral to the police and City of York MASH.</p>	<p><i>If a child or young person is at immediate risk of sexual exploitation or a crime is about to be committed – contact the police on 999</i></p> <p>Make a safeguarding referral into MASH</p> <p>Complete <a href="#">North Yorkshire and City of York Information Sharing Form</a> and send to Police Central Referral Unit</p> <p>Where there is a service specific assessment such as ASSET in place, this should be updated and the additional information used to inform pre-sentence reports.</p> <p>Ensure information is recorded.</p>
<p><b>For all Referrals made to MASH where there are concerns a child may be at risk of exploitation</b></p>	<p><b>City of York MASH will screen the referral and will determine the level of support and next steps required for the referral.</b></p> <p><b>Following the referral, a risk assessment will be undertaken by MASH in Liaison with the Child Exploitation Team and in conjunction with partners using the Child Exploitation risk assessment.</b></p> <p><i>Are you reporting events where a person, child or young person is at immediate risk of harm?</i></p> <p><i>Consider requesting immediate police response by calling 999 or call 101 to obtain police assistance or advice if not an emergency, or if you feel a crime is being or has been committed.</i></p> <p><i>York MASH Team can be contacted on: 01904 551900</i></p>	<p><i>The outcome of a referral to MASH can result in a referral to MACEM</i></p> <p><i>Assessment by CSC / Partner led Family early help assessment FEHA and TAF</i></p> <p><i>Assessment and Intervention by the early help service FEHA and TAF</i></p>

## 8. Information Sharing

### 8.1

Guidance on information sharing is available on the CYSCP website 'Intelligence Sharing 'One Minute Guide'. Working Together to Safeguard Children (DCFS 2018) and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020.

### 8.2

It is legitimate for agencies to provide information to the police where they have reason to believe that a child might be at risk of exploitation, in order to assist the police in their investigations. There must be a clear decision making that is clearly recorded by each agency.

### 8.3

Statutory guidance advises that that:

- The investigation of exploitation requires a proactive approach to explore the nature and patterns of exploitation locally, and to share information with partner agencies about those at risk and potential perpetrators. Linking this work to the response to missing young people and children missing education and other public protection issues can help to identify and manage risk at an early stage.
- It is important that the police work closely with partner agencies to develop a coordinated response to any concerns about child exploitation, and to ensure that the response is in the best interests of the child whose welfare and safety should be paramount.
- Similarly partner agencies need to involve the police as early as possible to ensure that no information is lost that may be critical to a prosecution case, and so that a disruption plan can be put in place for the perpetrator. It is also vital that information is collated that may be vital to a prosecution even in cases where a young person has made no formal complaint. In many cases the processes of supporting a young person to recognise the exploitative nature of their relationship will be lengthy. By the time a formal disclosure is made vital information may have been lost unless there is a strategy of evidence gathering from the outset.
- The police are the prime agency for gathering evidence in connection with criminal cases, and tackling perpetrators. However, in many cases of exploitation this process will only be achieved by working closely with agencies in a position to build a trusting relationship with the young victim. Partner agencies may not previously have been involved in the gathering of evidence and may need guidance and support from criminal justice agencies to understand the kind of information that can be useful, and the process for recording that information so that it can be used in evidence where necessary.
- It is important for the police to focus on the offender. Alongside forums for sharing information to protect the child or young person, it is useful to have information sharing forums which focus specifically on suspected perpetrators.
- The police need to be aware of the early indicators of risk of exploitation and ensure that appropriate intervention is made at an early stage to build up a relationship with the young person and to begin to gather evidence. Other specialist agencies or educational establishments should be consulted at an early stage. Identifying risk factors and addressing them through early interventions demonstrates care for the young victim and builds trust to enable exploitation to be challenged and minimised.

## 8.4

There is a clear expectation that agencies will work with the police and will share information to assist the police to take a proactive approach. All information should be shared if there are safeguarding concerns about a child.

## 8.5

Agencies work in partnership with children however there may be occasions where it is not appropriate to seek consent to disclose from the child, for example if doing so would:

- Place a person (the individual, family member, yourself or a third party) at increased risk of significant harm if a child, or serious harm if an adult; or
- Prejudice the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime; or
- Lead to an unjustified delay in making enquiries about allegations of significant harm to a child, or serious harm to an adult.

# 9. Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Arrangements

## 9.1

The York MACEM is the Multi-agency Child Exploitation & missing (MACEM) meeting. This takes place monthly, and is chaired by a senior manager from the Police or Children Services. Membership includes lead practitioners and managers from: Early Help; Children Social Care; Police Child Exploitation leads; Adults and Health Social Care; Youth Justice Service; Health organisations; Education officers; CAMHS, accommodation providers and others.

## 9.2

The York MACEM meeting provides an overview of exploited children in York, making sure that all agencies know which children are at greatest risk and why. The meeting also discusses potential perpetrators, locations of concern and any emerging themes and trends to encourage the active sharing of information between Partners. The York MACEM is driven by weekly risk assessment and review meetings attended by a core group of Professionals including; Health, Police, Children's Social Care, Youth Justice, Education and Trusted Relationships. These weekly meetings identify and action, Partnership interventions which reduce the vulnerability and increase the safety of those children at risk of or subject to child exploitation. Neither the monthly nor the weekly meetings replace statutory planning processes such as strategy meetings, child protection conferences or care planning reviews for children looked after. The MACEM group reports into the City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership Child exploitation sub-group every quarter.

### 9.3

During the MACEM weekly meetings, a different criteria to Emerging, Escalating and Significant is used. This criteria simply is - NO ADDITIONAL RISK, LOW, MEDIUM or HIGH. The definitions are as follows:

- **NO ADDITIONAL RISK:** The child may be vulnerable and in need of support and service intervention but particular circumstances do not increase the child's risk of exploitation over and above "normal" adolescent behaviour (Not Adopted/flagged).
- **LOW (Emerging):** Whilst there is no information or evidence to suggest that the child is being exploited; specific circumstances, situations or vulnerabilities exist AND/OR protective factors are absent that increase the child's risk of being exploited over and above "normal" adolescent behaviour.
- **MEDIUM (Escalating):** Information/intelligence and/or a particular situation, incident or set of circumstances leads us to suspect that a child MAY be the victim of exploitation and further work is required to understand the risk involved.
- **HIGH (Significant):** Information/intelligence and/or a particular situation, incident or set of circumstances leads us to suspect that a child IS a victim of exploitation OR is in imminent danger of being exploited.

### 9.4

The purpose of the sub-group group is to: oversee the partnership strategy and action plan; ascertain that there are sufficient resources and policy direction to enable operational lead officers to undertake work to prevent exploitation, protect victims and to prosecute offenders. This is put into action by responding to themes, trends, emerging risks and practice issues reported from the MACEM meeting. In addition, the group seeks assurance that best practice is undertaken and also takes account of local and national research to continually improve safeguarding arrangements in this area of work.

### 9.5 The Child Exploitation and Missing Team

When a referral is received in MASH relating to concerns regarding a young person who is being exploited these concerns will then be screened and if appropriate and exploitation are the presenting concerns then the child will be allocated to the Children Missing and Exploitation Team.

The purpose of the team is to ensure that there is co-ordinated response from NYPS York CSC and health to the identification, investigation and intervention with cases of contextual safeguarding, developing effective joint strategies to tackle exploitation throughout the City.

The team aims to work in child centred ways, carrying out direct work with children and young people, and helping others to build the necessary skills to engage in meaningful and protective ways with children who are experiencing these types of harm. The team will work in ways, which lead to the reduction or risk, and increasing resilience for children concerned, by promoting social inclusion, minimising social exclusion and taking a relationship based and trauma informed approach to intervention. The team also aims to develop intelligence (alongside partners) to enable the effective identification of children at risk and adults who may present a risk in the district. The team also aims to ensure harm reduction and promote positive child sexual and emotional health and wellbeing for children.



## 9.6 What should practitioners do?

Practitioners should continue to support children, young people and their families to manage risk within current well established frameworks, for example, Child Exploitation checklist, and single assessment plans as part of the overall plan for the child or young person. If it is felt that the criteria for referral to the MACEM meeting is met and a discussion is warranted, information should be referred and emailed via the usual referral route to [MASH@york.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@york.gov.uk) by completing the [MASH Referral form](#). Information provided should include: name; date of birth; what the risks are; what has been put in place to lessen the risk; and any early help or current support plans for the child.

If a child is already open to York Children social care contact should be made with the allocated social worker who will liaise with the child exploitation team.

Referrals will then be triaged, the social worker, team manager or other relevant practitioner involved will be invited to attend the MACEM meeting for a discussion.

For more information, please email Sara Sherwood, Child exploitation and Missing Lead, [sara.sherwood@york.gov.uk](mailto:sara.sherwood@york.gov.uk) or the City of York MASH Front Door Safeguarding Hub [MASH@york.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@york.gov.uk). In addition you can contact Rose Howley, Head of service MASH and Assessment [rose.howley@york.gov.uk](mailto:rose.howley@york.gov.uk).

## 10. Process for Practitioners

If you are worried that a child has suffered or is at risk of significant harm Contact the MASH team.

As a practitioner, if you are unsure and would like further advice or guidance, the first step is to approach your line manager or your designated child protection officer. Alternatively you can contact either:

### City of York Children's Social Care via the MASH

Telephone: 01904 551900 or

Email: [MASH@york.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@york.gov.uk)

### North Yorkshire Police

Telephone: 101

If your concern is outside of normal office hours, you should contact the Emergency Duty Team on 01609 780780.

In an emergency, always ring 999, you should call 101 to report crime and other concerns that do not require an emergency response.

## 11. Frequently Asked Questions Further Advice and Guidance

### **What if the young person states that they are consenting to the exploitation?**

The legal position is that any young person over the age of 16 can consent to sex with people their own age or older. However, it is vital to note that a person under 18 involved in an exploitative relationship cannot give consent to their own abuse even if they do not recognise it as such. This applies to “boyfriend” models equally as to the provision of sexual services in return for payment or promised payment.

Sexual activity for under 18s as part of an exploitative situation is child abuse and cannot be deemed a “lifestyle choice”, even if the victim does not see themselves as a victim. A child under the age of 13 is unable to consent to any sexual activity, irrespective of whether the child sees it as abusive or not, sexual activity with a child under 13 is statutory rape.

### **I have just heard something in passing and am not sure if it is relevant?**

If you have any concerns at all, use the screening tool and follow the processes outlined. It is important that information regarding a child at risk of exploitation however relevant is shared to enable a full picture to be built. The [North Yorkshire and City of York Partnership Information Sharing Form](#) should be used if you think you have information to share with the police about situations in which children, young people or adults may be vulnerable to exploitation.

### **What if I do not know all the information about a child?**

The tool has been designed to identify risks across a child or young person’s behaviour. Complete the screening tool and follow the process of completing the North Yorkshire Police Information Form (appendix one) if appropriate and refer the child to Children’s Social Care if thresholds are met.

### **I am concerned that if I identify someone at risk they will not be happy with my actions and it may jeopardise my relationship and trust with them?**

The risk screening tool has been designed so it can be shared with a child or young person to explain why their behaviour may have caused worry or concern to those around them. It will therefore prompt discussion and understanding that they are not being singled out.

It is your duty of care to share this information with the key agencies in order to protect the child or young person if the thresholds are met.

### **I am concerned that if I flag someone as being at risk of CSE or criminal exploitation that this will remain on their file:**

A child or young person’s situation should be risk assessed and reviewed at appropriate intervals to determine the appropriate level of intervention. Once a child is no longer considered at risk of exploitation any hazard flags will be removed from a child’s record.

## 12. Useful Numbers, Websites, Resources

### **National guidance & further information**

[Child Sexual Exploitation Definition and a Guide for Practitioners, Local Leaders and Decision Makers Working to Protect Children from Child Sexual Exploitation \(DfE, 2017\)](#)

[Child sexual exploitation: Practice Tool \(2017\) \(Research in Practice open access\)](#) – provides background information about child sexual exploitation and additional commentary around some of the complexities inherent in practically responding to the issue.

[Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit; disruption tactics \(2019, Home Office\)](#)

[Criminal Exploitation of Children and Vulnerable Adults: County Lines \(Home Office\)](#) - This guidance outlines what county lines (and associated criminal exploitation) is, signs to look for in potential victims, and what to do about it

[Children's Society Disruption Checklist for County Lines \(2018\)](#)

[Serious Violence Strategy \(HM Government, 2018\)](#)

### [Contextual Safeguarding](#)

[Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Hub \(part of National Crime Agency\)](#)

[Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Act 2015](#)

[The National Protocol on reducing the unnecessary criminalisation of Looked After children and care leavers, November 2018](#)

[NSPCC](#)

[Childline](#)