



City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership

Exploitation Guidance

November 2024



- Title: City of York Children’s Safeguarding Partnership Procedure for Child Exploitation
- Version: 3
- Date: November 2024
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Update and Approval Process

Version	Group/Person	Date	Comments
1.	Exploitation Documents Task and Finish Group	18/09/2024	Protocol review with task and finish group
2.	City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership Safeguarding and Professional Practice Sub-Group	24/10/2024	Signed off by City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership Safeguarding and Professional Practice Sub-Group
3.	City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership Child Exploitation Sub-Group	07/11/2024	Signed off by City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership Child Exploitation Sub-Group

Issue Date: November 2024

Review Date: November 2026

Reviewing Officer: City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Unit



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1. Introduction

1.1

This guidance has been written in line with [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#) and [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024](#). 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 Exploitation (CSE) and or Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE).

1.2

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 within all assessments and the risk should be assessed in conjunction with the Children's Social Care (CSC) Exploitation Team, weekly Multi-agency Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Meetings (CERAM), monthly Multi-agency Child Exploitation Disruption Meetings (CEDM) and discussed as part of a multi-agency assessment and plan.

1.3

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.

1.4

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.



1.5

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
- North Yorkshire and City of York Domestic Abuse Strategy
- CYSCP Children who Sexually Harm Procedure
- CYSCP Threshold document
- North Yorkshire and City of York Criminal Exploitation and County Lines Practice Guidance
- Child exploitation 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)²
- Safeguarding Children who may have been Trafficked (DFE 2011)³
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)⁴
- Office of the Children Commissioner Report Gangs and Group CSE “If only someone had listened” (2013)⁵
- Children and Young Person’s Missing from Home, Education or Care (2014)⁶
- Children and Families Act (2014)⁷
- Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults (2020)
- Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020

1.9

Definition of a Child Working Together 2023 (appendix A).

Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.

1.10

Definition of Child Sexual Abuse, Working Together 2023 (appendix A).

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.

1.11

Definition of Modern Slavery; Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for England and Wales (under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) and Non-Statutory Guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Human trafficking consists of three basic components: action, means and purpose of exploitation. All three



components must be present in an adult trafficking case; for child trafficking the 'means' component is not required. In human trafficking cases, exploitation can take many forms, including: sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude, forced criminality and removal of organs. Some people may not be victims of human trafficking but still victims of modern slavery if they have been subject to slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour.

1.12

The definition of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Working together 2023 (appendix A).

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) 230 Serious Violence Strategy 155 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.

1.13

Definition of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) [Serious Violence Strategy 2018](#).

As set out in the [Serious Violence Strategy](#) (2018) , 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.



1.14

Definition of County Lines Working Together 2023 (appendix a).

As set out in the [Serious Violence Strategy](#) published by the Home Office, 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. This activity can happen locally as well as across the UK; no specified distance of travel is required.

1.15

Definition of Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), [Group-based child sexual exploitation characteristics of Offending 2020](#).

As set out in the Home Office's paper on Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation Characteristics of Offending (2020), Group-Based CSE is defined as a form of CSE perpetrated by groups, a form of child sexual abuse characterised by multiple interconnected offenders grooming and sexually exploiting children. This includes forms of offending commonly referred to as 'street grooming' or 'grooming gangs'.

1.16

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 abuse, 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 present with Learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Unsure about sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families and/or friends
- Friends or known associates 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 signs and behaviours may be indicators seen in children who are 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
- 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.

1.17

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.

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 and harm; 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 all genders. 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.
- Though research suggests that child sexual exploitation may be most frequently observed amongst young females, males and other genders are also at risk. Practitioners should be alert to the fact that males and other genders may be less likely than females to disclose experiences of child sexual exploitation and less likely to have these identified by others.

2.3

Working Together (2023) makes clear the requirements for holistic assessment, considering all the needs and vulnerabilities of the child, as vulnerabilities may be exploited by others. 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.

2.4

Practitioners should not rely on 'checklists' alone but should make a holistic assessment of the child's strength, vulnerabilities, past trauma and experiences, consider network around the child including their siblings. 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.

2.5

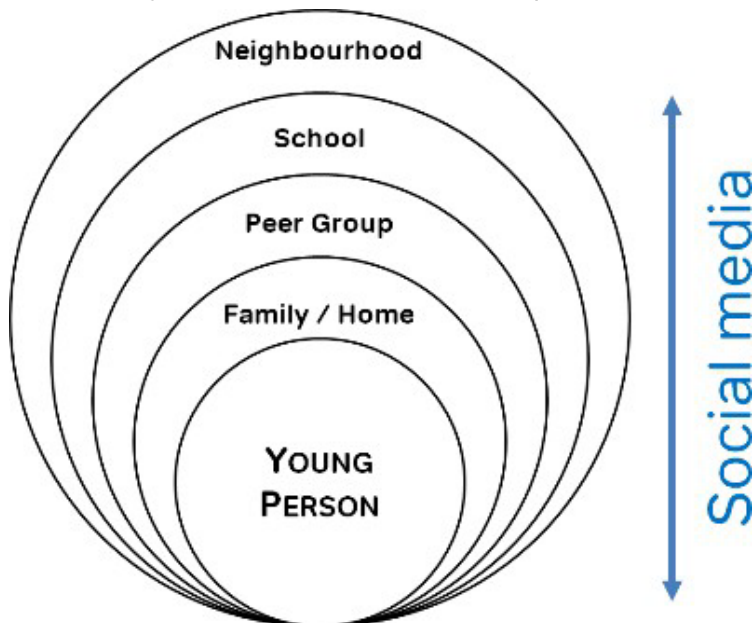
Children and young people who are sexually abused and exploited are always groomed by the perpetrator. This may start with showing the child or young person a lot of interest, affection and making the child or young person feel special. They may do this through offering the child or young person drugs 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 <http://www.thinkyounow.co.uk>)

3. Contextual safeguarding and Extra-familial harm

3.1

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. Therefore, children's social care practitioners, child protection systems and wider safeguarding partnerships need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra- familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse beyond their front doors. ([Contextual Safeguarding Network 2021](#))



This image represents a diagram of concentric circles showing the influence of different social systems on a young person. Each layer moving outward.

From the centre signifies a broader social environment:

- *Young Person: At the core of the diagram.*
- *Family/Home: The immediate support system surrounding the young person.*
- *Peer Group: Friends and social connections.*
- *School: Educational environment.*
- *Neighbourhood: The local community or area where the young person resides.*

An upward arrow labelled "Social Media" implies that social media interacts with or affects all these layers, possibly influencing the young person across multiple domains simultaneously.

3.2

Extra familial harm is discussed in much the same way, and examples of extra familial harm defined within Working Together To Safeguard Children 2023 include; “criminal exploitation (such as county lines and financial exploitation), serious violence, modern slavery and trafficking, online harm, sexual exploitation, child-on-child (nonfamilial) sexual abuse and other forms of harmful sexual behaviour displayed by children towards their peers, abuse, and/or coercive control, children may experience in their own intimate relationships (sometimes called teenage relationship abuse), and the influences of extremism which could lead to radicalisation.”

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.

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.

3.7

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. 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.

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

4.4

[City of York have published Transitional Safeguarding Practice Guidance](#) for professionals and agencies. The purpose of this protocol is to:

- Provide clear referral guidance to follow in those situations where it may not be clear which Safeguarding Procedures (Adults or Children's) apply.
- Ensure effective and timely safeguarding referrals are made between Children's and Adult services.
- Develop and improve joint working practices across all services.

4.5

The protocol specifically covers Child Exploitation, recognising how the risk changes for a young person when they turn 18 and ongoing support is crucial to continue to disrupt contextual concerns. Through children's and adult services working together as the child progresses to age 18, ensures continuity of care and support for the individual as well as the community.

5. Trafficking, Modern Slavery and NRM

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 within 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 do not 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 through the One Minute Guide 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

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

5.8

The City of York and North Yorkshire are involved within the Devolving Child decision making pilot programme. This pilot is trialling NRM decisions being discussed and made by Local Authorities and multi- agency partners , and moving away from Single Competent Authority as decision makers. The purpose of the Pilot is to test whether determining if a child is a victim of modern slavery within existing safeguarding structures is a more appropriate model for making modern slavery decisions for children. This approach will enable decisions about whether a child is a victim of modern slavery to

be made by those involved in their care and ensure the decisions made are closely aligned with the provision of local, needs-based support and any law enforcement response. This pilot has been extended into 2025.

5.9

The NRM Panel is a fortnightly 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.

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 is defined in the New Definition for Extremism (2024) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-definition-of-extremism-2024/new-definition-of-extremism-2024>:

Extremism is the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance that aims to:

1. negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others;
or
2. undermine, overturn or replace the UK's system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights or
3. intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve the results in (1) or (2).

6.3

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](#).



Potential Level of Risk Guide

Practitioners should follow guidance and use the partnership screening tool to identify level of risk posed to a Child.

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.

The screening tool to use as guidance is available to download here:

<https://www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk/resources/cyscp- documents-resources/6>

Level of Risk	Evaluation of Risk	Potential actions and/or considerations
No Risk (Green)	Whilst there may be concerns for the welfare of the child/young person, which may involve the requirement of service provision, for other assessed risks, there is no current evidence that there is a risk of the child/young person being at risk of or is experiencing sexual abuse/exploitation.	
Emerging Concerns	Some emerging concerns that the child/young person is at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation, some concerns that the child/young person is	Complete CYSCP Child Criminal Exploitation (CE) (included Sexual
(Yellow)	at risk of being targeted or groomed, but there are positive protective factors in the child/young person life. 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.	Exploitation) Screening Tool and consider a referral to MASH . Ensure information is recorded on own agency IT system, flagged at appropriate risk level. Consider CAF/ Family early help assessment FEHA. Information should be shared regarding perpetrators and/or community intelligence. If there is any information regarding specific/named child then a referral should be made to the police/MASH. Consider completing North Yorkshire and City of York Partnership Information Sharing Form and sending to Police Central Referral Unit.

Level of Risk	Evaluation of Risk	Potential actions and/or considerations
<p>Escalating Concerns (Orange)</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 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 MASH.</p> <p>Complete North Yorkshire and City of York Information Sharing Form and sending 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 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
Significant Concerns (Red)	<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). 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 North Yorkshire and City of York Information Sharing Form 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>

For all Referrals made to MASH where there are concerns a child may be at risk of exploitation (Red)

City of York MASH will screen the referral and will determine the level of support and next steps required for the referral. 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.

Are you reporting events where a person, child or young person is at immediate risk of harm?

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. York MASH Team can be contacted on: 01904 551900. The outcome of a referral to MASH can result in a referral to CERAM. Assessment by CSC /Partner led Family early help assessment FEHA and TAF. Assessment and Intervention by the early help service FEHA and TAF

8. Information Sharing

Working Together 2023 highlights a successful outcome for children depend on strong partnership working between parents/carers and the practitioners working with them. Practitioners should take a child centred approach to meeting the needs of the whole family.

It is recognised that no one agency or person can have or know the full picture of a child's experience and effective information sharing is crucial to keep children safe. Practitioners need to share information proactively, respond to worries and concerns at the earliest opportunity which might even be when problems first emerge, for example persistent school absences. Sharing information across agencies ensures building and understanding of patterns of behaviours and identifying locations of extra familial harm.

It is important to work alongside families in collaboration, however consent should not be seen as a barrier to share information, specifically when the purpose is of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of a child provided. It is good practice to be transparent and inform parents/carers that you are sharing information for these purposes and seek to work cooperatively with them, where it is safe to do so.

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.

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.

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

Child Exploitation Disruption Meeting (CEDM)

The York CEDM is the Multi-agency Child Exploitation Disruption Meeting (CEDM).

This takes place monthly and is chaired by the Child Exploitation service manager of Children's Social Care.

Core Membership of the Panel includes:

- North Yorkshire Police Exploitation and Missing Team
- York and Scarborough Teaching Hospital Foundation Trust (YSTHFT) to include Sexual Health and Emergency Department attendance
- Youth Justice Service
- Education Service Rep (consideration how to include specific schools)
- Volunteer and Trusted Relationship Service
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- York Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service
- St Giles SoS +
- Ivison Trust
- Social Worker

The Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Panel may co-opt members from the partnership or relevant agencies to attend the Panel Meeting when deemed appropriate to do so.

The Child Exploitation Disruption Meeting is a multi-agency decision-making meeting which will be responsible for discussing and sharing information regarding wider contextual safeguarding issues i.e places,

spaces, perpetrators, and person of concerns within the City of York and will be responsible for taking forward multi-agency actions in response to disruption activity in regard to Child Exploitation. Exploitation should be taken to mean criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation, and modern slavery/human trafficking.

North Yorkshire Police will be responsible for screening Intelligence 1 month prior to each meeting.

The Child Exploitation Disruption multi-agency is responsible for:

- Discussing Places: Addresses, Businesses (hotels, takeaways), Pubs, Taxi Companies etc.
- Discussing Spaces: Open parks, streets, areas within the community etc.
- Discussing Perpetrators of Child Exploitation: those officially assessed and adopted as perpetrators by North Yorkshire Police.
- Discussing Persons of Concern: where intel received by North Yorkshire Police has highlighted them as a concern of being a potential perpetrator of Child Exploitation, however, they have not yet been assessed by North Yorkshire Police.
- Discussing Disruption Activity. A disruption/activity is achieved when an agency takes action in response to a threat and the Organised Crime Group or individual is unable to operate at the same level of criminality. All partners, in addition to law enforcement agencies, will share details of disruption activity in relation to places, spaces, perpetrators and persons of concern.
- All agencies that attend the meeting are there to engage, contribute and are responsible for taking forward actions in response to disruption activities in relation to contextual safeguarding i.e. places, spaces, perpetrators and persons of concerns.
- Where actions have been identified all agencies are responsible for taking forward these actions and provide updates at the next meeting.
- This meeting will not discuss individual children however, during discussions if children/young people are identified as being at risk of exploitation the Chair of the Child Exploitation Disruption Meeting is responsible for sharing child/young person's details at the next Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Panel Meeting.

9.2

Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Meeting (CERAM)

The Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Panel is a multi-agency decision making

panel which will be responsible for the following:

- Review of exploitation assessments of children and young people that have been completed by either Police or Children's Social Care taking into account multi-agency information.
- Determine/agree whether a child or young person is deemed at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation/Child Criminal Exploitation and where applicable agree as a multi-agency partnership a risk status/adopted (High/Medium/Low).
- Where a child or young person has been given a risk status/adopted by the Panel; this will be reviewed regularly until the risk has been reduced. The following timescales will apply (these are in line with statutory timescales)
 - High Risk Status: The risk level will be reviewed every 4 weeks
 - Medium Risk Status: The risk level will be reviewed every 8 weeks
 - Low Risk Status: The risk level will be reviewed every 12 weeks

If there is an urgent need to review the status such as new information becoming known, then the case will be heard at the next available Panel meeting.

- Review missing from home/care episodes where there is a risk of exploitation and/or the young person has been adopted by North Yorkshire Police as a priority missing (5 episodes in 30 days).
- To agree suitability of referrals to NRM, St Giles SoS + and Ivison Trust.
- Where during discussion in the meeting a potential perpetrator/location is identified then an action should be raised to submit this information via the Police/Partnership intel form so that this can be fed into Child Exploitation Disruption Meetings.
- Where immediate safeguarding concerns have been identified, the Chair will escalate to the allocated worker and their Manager who is responsible for the case.

9.3

Child Exploitation Sub-Group

The purpose of the Child Exploitation 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 CEDM 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.

9.4

The Child Exploitation and Missing Team

City of York's Missing and Exploitation Team support children and young people most at risk of exploitation, where there is a medium or high-risk status, providing support and intervention to reduce the risk of harm/exploitation. This intervention occurs within single assessments, children in needs or protection plans, underpinned by Building Brighter Futures Practice Model which incorporates a Signs of Safety Approach. The focus of the work is to consider the context in which the harm is occurring, the influence of groups/individuals perpetrating harm, including where this takes place online, and identify patterns of harm, risk and protective factors in these contexts. This may include working across safeguarding and community safety partnerships to agree a plan for keeping children safe. Child Missing and Exploitation Team will work with families until exploitation risk is sufficiently reduced allow for case closure or step down to early help. There are some situations where this is achieved relatively quickly and others where exploitation risks/complexities are more entrenched and take longer to address.

Structure and Responsibilities of the Child Exploitation and Missing Team

Service Manager

- Overall responsibility and leadership of the team.
- CSC representative in multi-agency meetings including CERAM, CEDM and MFHC meetings.
- Oversight of patterns and trends of young people with risk flags, missing episodes, contextual safeguarding concerns.
- Disseminating learning, local and national policy across CYC.

- Provide training, consultation, and support to CYC in respect of exploitation and missing.

Social Workers

- Lead professionals for children/young people allocated to the team.
- Case hold; assessment, child in need, child protection and looked after where there are concerns about exploitation.
- Hosting consultation with social workers across service on exploitation or missing concerns.
- Co working closely with partners from NYP, Health and YJS.

Children and Family Support Workers

- Co allocated to young people within team and within the whole service.
- Parenting support and advice to help build skills and confidence in managing risks, setting boundaries and caring for their child within contextual safeguarding concerns.
- Evidence based interventions including respect programme, strengthening families, drug awareness.
- Complete return from home interviews on children not open to CYC.

Trusted Relationships FGC coordinator

- Co-allocated working alongside social workers.
- Help build resilience, self-esteem and self-efficacy young people vulnerable to exploitation.
- Help young people identify & develop networks of support that reduce risk of exploitation or missing, support to develop family or community safety plans.
- Developing community links to help bring services alongside areas/groups where exploitation concerns are identified. Community Conferences.

10. Useful Numbers, Websites, Resources

If you are worried that a child has suffered or is at risk of significant harm, contact the MASH team on **01904 551900** or MASH@york.gov.uk.

If your concern is outside of normal office hours, you should contact the Emergency Duty Team on 0300 131 2131.

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

11. National Guidance and 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](#)
- [Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation Characteristics of Offending \(Home Office, 2020\)](#)
- [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](#)