

Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board  
**Safeguarding children together**

## **Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation Strategy**

The following strategy has been developed in recognition of the particular risks associated with Child Sexual Exploitation. However the issues and actions described take place within a broader context of safeguarding activities and a well established legislative framework supported by statutory guidance. As a result this document is designed to be read in conjunction with the 'online' Berkshire LSCB Child Protection Procedures (<http://berks.proceduresonline.com/index.htm>)

### **1. Introduction and Key Principles**

Sexual exploitation of children and young people has been identified throughout the UK, in both rural and urban areas, with both victims and perpetrators coming from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds. It affects boys and young men as well as girls and young women. It is a form of sexual abuse and can have a serious impact on every aspect of the lives of children involved.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes a number of important duties in respect of children's lives, rights and freedoms. Within the 54 Articles of the convention, the obligations set out below have particular relevance for Child Sexual Exploitation and require Governments to:

- Do everything to protect children and young people from sexual exploitation (including prostitution) and sexual abuse (Article 34)
- Do everything to protect children and young people from being taken away, sold or trafficked (Article 35)

(<http://www.unicef.org.uk/>)

Since 2010, the scale of this abuse has become much clearer, with complex police investigations leading to successful prosecutions of multiple abusers. Knowledge of CSE has also increased due to the substantial research evidence recently gathered, which in turn led to the launch of a two-year Inquiry into sexual exploitation in gangs and groups by the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England.  
<http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/info/csegg1>

In 2011, the Government acknowledged the prevalence of this abuse by appointing the Children's Minister as the lead minister for child sexual exploitation and by producing a National Action Plan to ensure that 'everything which can be done is done to make our children safer from sexual exploitation'.

The Department for Education (DFE) published the Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan in 2011 which includes a requirement for all Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) to 'develop an effective local strategy ensuring there is a coordinated multi-agency response to child sexual exploitation based on a robust, thorough risk assessment of the extent and nature of child sexual

exploitation locally.’ (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation-action-plan>).

Bracknell Forest, like most other areas of the UK, is faced with the challenge of tackling the issue of children being abused through child sexual exploitation. This strategy and action plan sets out how Bracknell Forest will coordinate services across all agencies to respond effectively to the local issue. It is important to also recognise that cooperative working with our neighbouring areas is crucial as child sexual exploitation often involves the ‘trafficking’ of victims from one area to another.

## **2. Definition of child sexual exploitation**

The sexual exploitation of children is described in the government guidance document

(<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00689-2009>)

as “involving exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive ‘something’ (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of their performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. It can occur through the use of technology without the child’s immediate recognition; e.g. being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child’s limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.”

Children involved in any form of sexual exploitation should be treated primarily 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 who groom children for sexual exploitation.

The government guidance requires agencies to work together to:

- Develop local prevention strategies;
- Identify those at risk of sexual exploitation
- Take action to safeguard and promote the welfare of particular children and young people who may be sexually exploited: and
- Take action against those intent on abusing and exploiting children and young people in this way

## **3. What do we know about child sexual exploitation?**

Any child or young person may be at risk of sexual exploitation, regardless of their family background or other circumstances. Sexual exploitation results in children and young people suffering harm, and can cause significant damage to their physical and mental health. It can also have profound and damaging consequences for the child’s family. Parents, carers and siblings are often traumatised by the effect on the victim.

There are strong links between children involved in sexual exploitation and other behaviours such as going missing from home or care, bullying, self-harm, teenage pregnancy, truancy and substance misuse. In addition, some children are

particularly vulnerable, for example, children with special needs, those in residential or foster care, those leaving care, migrant children, unaccompanied asylum seeking children, and those involved in groups and/or gangs.

Sexual exploitation can take many forms from the seemingly 'consensual' relationship where sex is exchanged for attention, drugs and/or alcohol, accommodation or gifts, to serious organised crime and child trafficking. Evidence shows that children and young people are often sexually exploited by people with whom they feel they have an intimate relationship, e.g. a boyfriend/girlfriend.

Due to the nature of the grooming methods used by perpetrators, it is very common for children and young people who are sexually exploited not to recognise that they are being abused. Young people may believe themselves to be acting voluntarily. They and may not recognise, or be reluctant to accept that they are being sexually exploited.

As a result, it is important that all those working with children/young people and their families are aware of the sophisticated dynamics associated with the influence and control often present within child sexual exploitation. Evidence shows that perpetrators seek to establish power over victims, increasing the dependence of victims as the exploitative relationship develops.

In regard to organised exploitation and trafficking, the perpetrators of sexual exploitation are often well organised and use sophisticated tactics. Victims are trafficked through criminal networks, often between towns and cities, forced or coerced into sex with multiple abusers. They may also be used to recruit new victims. They are known to target areas where children and young people gather without much adult supervision, e.g. parks or shopping centres or sites on the Internet. Technology can play a part in sexual abuse, for example, through its use to record abuse and share it with other like-minded individuals or as a medium to access children and young people in order to groom them. A common factor in all cases is the lack of free economic or moral choice.

### **Signs of risk and vulnerability**

The following section reflects the developing evidence base in respect of child sexual exploitation. Therefore, the following factors that may be associated with child sexual exploitation do not provide an exhaustive list of key issues and must be considered in the context of the child/young persons, individual circumstances.

Experience has shown that commonly the following vulnerabilities may be present in children prior to child sexual exploitation taking place:

- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, and 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 (in cases of gang associated child sexual exploitation only)
- Attending school with young people who are sexually exploited
- Learning disabilities
- Unsure about their sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families

- Friends with young people who are sexually exploited
- Homelessness
- Lacking friends from the same age group
- Living in a gang neighbourhood
- Living in residential care
- Living in inadequate accommodation
- Low self-esteem or self-confidence
- Young carers.

The following signs and behaviour are generally seen in children who are already being sexually exploited:

- Missing from home or care
- Physical injuries
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Offending
- Repeat sexually-transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations.
- Absence from school
- Change in physical appearance
- Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites
- Estranged from their family
- Receipt of gifts from unknown sources
- Recruiting others into exploitative situations
- Poor mental health
- Self-harm
- Thoughts of or attempted suicide.

Evidence shows that any child displaying several vulnerabilities from the above lists should be considered to be at high risk of sexual exploitation. However, it is important to note that children without pre-existing vulnerabilities can still be sexually exploited.

#### **4. The extent of the problem locally**

Currently in Bracknell Forest there is no systematic data collection in regards to children and young people at risk of becoming involved in sexual exploitation. This is an action to be addressed by this strategy.

However, agencies working with children and young people, i.e. Children's Social Care, youth offending service, DAAT and the Youth Service are increasingly identifying relatively small numbers of girls and young women in the 14 – 19 age range who are displaying several of the risk factors known to be indicators of vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Quarterly multi agency information sharing meetings have been set up to identify potential victims and perpetrators and put services in place to engage with and protect these young people. The involvement of local police is crucial to take the lead in proactively disrupting, pursuing and prosecuting perpetrators. It is important to recognise that some of the perpetrators may be vulnerable young people themselves and in addition to any enforcement, will need to be supported to disengage from abusive behaviour.

The most common circumstances associated with young people's vulnerability in respect of child sexual exploitation identified to date, appears to be related to substance misuse. The girls and young women appear to be coerced into sexual

activities in exchange for the supply of drugs and /or alcohol. So far, agencies' attempts to engage with these girls have revealed that in most cases they believe that their relationships with the abusers are consensual and they are reluctant to engage with statutory services in interventions designed to protect them. However, there is a good awareness amongst the local agencies of the need to sensitively engage with children/young people and where necessary persistently pursue a range of approaches with those who are resistant to offers of help.

Locally those thought to be at most risk of sexual exploitation are predominantly white British girls, aged between 14 – 19 yrs, and the perpetrators are mostly young white males within the age range 17 – 24 yrs. There are also a smaller number of predominantly white older males identified as potential abusers. We are also aware that there are likely to be barriers to young people disclosing this type of abuse as a result, the extent of our problem locally is not yet fully known. Boys and young people from minority ethnic groups may be under reported. As part of this strategy's action plan analysis will be undertaken to scope the nature and prevalence of child sexual exploitation in the Bracknell Forest area.

## 5. What do we need to do?

Bracknell Forest's holistic approach to tackling child sexual exploitation has four strands:

### **Prevention, Identification, Support and Prosecution**

The need for focussed, coordinated action in relation to these areas was highlighted in the 2012 Barnardos report Tackling child sexual exploitation: Believe in Children [www.barnardos.org.uk/tackling\\_child\\_sexual\\_exploitation.pdf](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/tackling_child_sexual_exploitation.pdf)

An action plan setting out the work that will be undertaken under these 4 headings by agencies working in partnership to safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation is attached (Appendix 1).

## 6. Links to other areas of Safeguarding

Bracknell Forest LSCB recognises that children/young people at risk of child sexual exploitation may have a range of additional needs and can be vulnerable to other forms of harm.

As a result, in addition to the delivery of its core business the LSCB has identified the following 'Targeted Priorities' that support its wider work and can also relate to child sexual exploitation:

- To co-ordinate and monitor the effectiveness of a local **Early Help** in safeguarding children and young people
- To work with partner agencies to reduce incidences of **Domestic Violence** and the impact this has on children, young people and families
- To work with partner agencies to analyse, understand and seek ways to reduce the impact of **Substance and Alcohol Misuse** on children, young people and families
- To work with partner agencies to develop a greater understanding of **Neglect** and the impact this has on children, young people and families; and to work together to reduce the number of children experiencing neglect.

In order to support this work, the Board is dependant on the commitment of its partner agencies from across Bracknell Forest, LSCBs and Strategic Partnerships across Berkshire and the Thames Valley. In particular, the priority for the Bracknell Forest Community Safety Partnership to address **Internet Safety** is a key strand which links to the work related to tackling Child Sexual Exploitation.

The following LSCB Sub Groups will play an important role in improving outcomes for children/young people who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation:

- Internet Safety Sub Group (also a sub group of the Community Safety Partnership)
- Raising Awareness Sub Group
- Training and Development Sub Group
- Early Intervention Sub Group

The action plan, Appendix 1, attached to this Strategy has actions allocated to the sub groups above for inclusion in their workplans.

## **7. Implementation, Monitoring and Review**

In addition to the above Sub Groups, the LSCB has established a strategic level Child Sexual Exploitation Sub Group that will have lead responsibility for ensuring implementation of the action plan. This group has representatives from key organisations and links with statutory and non statutory services who in turn, engage children/young people and their families/carers.

Terms of reference for this group is attached (Appendix 2)

The Child Sexual Exploitation Strategic sub group will report to the LSCB biannually on the progress of the Action Plan.

This Strategy and Action plan (Appendix 1) will be reviewed annually by the Child Sexual Exploitation Strategic Sub Group.

## **8. Key links and resources**

The National Working Group on Child Sexual Exploitation  
<http://www.nationalworkinggroup.org/>

The United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC)  
<http://www.soca.gov.uk/about-soca/about-the-ukhtc>

The NSPCC Child Trafficking Advice and Information Line  
[www.nspcc.org.uk/ChildTrafficking](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/ChildTrafficking)

Barnardos  
[http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/our\\_projects/sexual\\_exploitation.htm](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_projects/sexual_exploitation.htm)

Office of the Childrens Commissioner inquiry 2012  
I thought I was the only one, the only one in the world.  
[www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/.../content\\_636](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/.../content_636)

Tackling sexual exploitation – the DFE’s national action plan, with a cross government department focus (November 2011)

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/c/tackling%20child%20sexual%20exploitation%20action%20plan.pdf>

Thames Valley Police Joint working agreement (April 2012)

<http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/isa-rusafe.pdf>

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre

<http://ceop.police.uk>

Appendix 1

Action Plan to support the Bracknell Forest Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy

**To have an action plan in place to address the key themes of PREVENTION, IDENTIFICATION, SUPPORT AND PROSECUTION**

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Group/Officer</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
1.1	Ensure that awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation is raised within the local community so that all members of the community including vulnerable, young people and their parents/carers know how to report concerns about Child Sexual Exploitation.	LSCB Raising awareness sub group	Children / young people and their parents / carers are able to contribute to the developing strategy and service provision in respect of Child Sexual Exploitation
1.2	Partner agencies develop a range of resources and guidance which can be accessed by children / young people, and their parents/carers to inform and raise awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation and the associated risks.	LSCB Awareness Raising Sub Group, LSCB Child Sexual Exploitation strategic sub group	Children, young people and their parents/carers are made aware of the risks associated with Child Sexual Exploitation and the appropriate services are accessible to those requiring support / protection.
1.3	Ensure that all staff and volunteers across the children's workforce have access to and undertake training to raise their awareness of the risk factors associated with Child Sexual Exploitation	LSCB Strategic Training Sub Group	Staff and volunteers working with vulnerable children / young people and their parents/carers are aware of risk factors and are able to take preventative action to protect young people and provide their families with advice
1.4	TVP and partner agencies co-ordinate efforts to prevent and disrupt Child Sexual Exploitation by gathering and acting on intelligence in respect of suspected perpetrators, and their potential victims	Thames Valley Police	Suspected perpetrators' activities are disrupted. Safety plans are put in place to protect potential victims at the earliest opportunity
1.5	Those working directly with victims and perpetrators of Child Sexual Exploitation disseminate their knowledge and understanding of the dynamics associated with such abuse.	Child Sexual Exploitation Operational Group	A wide range of staff across agencies develop and maintain an understanding of the dynamics associated with Child Sexual Exploitation



<b>2. Identification</b>				
	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Group/Officer</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
2.1	Undertake annual analysis (informed by emerging research, practice experience and local knowledge), to scope the nature and prevalence of Child Sexual Exploitation within Bracknell Forest which includes specific focus on vulnerable groups i.e looked after children, care leavers	LSCB Partnership Performance and Project Officer BFC Thames Valley Police	The implementation of the Child Sexual Exploitation strategy and operational activities are evidence based	
2.2	Partner agencies ensure that staff and volunteers have access to a range of materials including information leaflets, on line information and advice and support from a lead professional to assist them in recognising the signs of sexual exploitation and identifying young people who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation.	The LSCB Raising Awareness Sub Group, E Safety Sub Group Child Sexual Exploitation Lead Professionals	All partner agencies are able to ensure that staff / volunteers are aware of Child Sexual Exploitation, are alert to the range of possible indicators and know how they can contact their organisation's lead professional for Child Sexual Exploitation.	
2.3	Partner agencies have processes in place to ensure that staff and volunteers share information at the earliest opportunity to identify young people in Bracknell Forest who are vulnerable to, or are experiencing sexual exploitation.	Child Sexual Exploitation strategic sub group Chair of Life Chances Team (Children's Social Care)	The potential risks to children and young people are identified at the earliest opportunity.	
2.4	Links with Berkshire Missing Children Forum, neighbouring LSCBs, regional and national forums are maintained and those attending these forums ensure that learning, emerging themes and developments in addressing Child Sexual Exploitation are incorporated into the work plan of the relevant LSCB sub groups	Pan Berkshire LSCB Chairs and Business Managers Child Sexual Exploitation Lead Professionals	Emerging themes, intelligence and learning in respect of Child Sexual Exploitation is shared across local, regional and national networks.	

<b>3. Support</b>				
	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Group/Officer</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
3.1	Partner agencies identify a lead professional to co-ordinate services within their agency to respond to children and young people who are vulnerable to or are experiencing sexual exploitation	LSCB Executive	Services to respond to Child Sexual Exploitation are coordinated in all agencies	
3.2	Develop a risk assessment tool to be used by all agencies from which a multi agency support plan can be developed in relevant cases	Child Sexual Exploitation Operational Group DI Nigel Doakes	Risk assessment is consistent across agencies and key themes are used to target resources	
3.3	Provide a range of training programmes for practitioners to enable them develop the necessary skills to support young people who are at risk of, or are experiencing Child Sexual Exploitation	LSCB training sub group	Skills of practitioners are developed through relevant training	
3.4	Develop the multi agency Child Sexual Exploitation Operational Group to lead on information sharing and action planning in specific Child Sexual Exploitation cases referred to the group by local agencies	Chair, Child Sexual Exploitation Operational Group	Child Sexual Exploitation Operational group is operating effectively in coordinating multi agency support tailored to each young persons needs and circumstances	
3.5	Partner agencies to have clear procedures in place for referral to multi agency forums for information sharing and joint action planning	Child Sexual Exploitation Lead Professionals	Relevant cases are referred to appropriate forums in an efficient way	
3.6	Ensure that particularly vulnerable groups i.e looked after children, care leavers are supported to disclose and report sexual exploitation	Child Sexual Exploitation Lead Professionals Children's Social Care	Groups of young people who are known to be particularly vulnerable to Child Sexual Exploitation feel confident in reporting Child Sexual Exploitation and receive the appropriate support to do this	

<b>4. Prosecution</b>				
	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Group/Officer</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	
4.1	Partner agencies to have a process in place to provide Child Sexual Exploitation intelligence/ information to Thames Valley Police in accordance with TVP's intelligence reporting procedures, and to share information with all relevant partners	CSE Strategic Sub Group	Intelligence and Information is passed on to TV Police and shared between the relevant agencies in an efficient way	
4.2	Partner agencies work with Thames Valley Police to support the implementation of their Statement of Intent and action plan	Child Sexual Exploitation Lead Professionals	TV Police Statement of Intent and Action Plan are implemented effectively	
4.3	Relevant agencies to have specialist interventions in place to offer young people and adults who are identified as potential perpetrators of Child Sexual Exploitation and access to training for practitioners to deliver these services.	Child Sexual Exploitation Lead Professionals in Criminal Justice Agencies	Targeted interventions are provided to perpetrators and potential perpetrators to reduce risk of offending / reoffending	
4.4	Partner agencies develop a process for accessing the appropriate support and protection for child witnesses	Child Sexual Exploitation Lead Professionals	Child witnesses are supported and protected	
4.5	Support the Thames Valley Probation Service to deliver actions in their briefing paper for working with perpetrators of group or gang associate sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse through effective information sharing	Child Sexual Exploitation Lead Professionals in Criminal Justice Agencies	TV Probation Service's work with perpetrators is effective	
4.6	Maintain links with neighbouring police forces and LA Child Sexual Exploitation leads to share intelligence regarding cross border Child Sexual Exploitation and trafficking	TVP representative on Child Sexual Exploitation strategic sub group	Cross border Intelligence is shared efficiently	

