



CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION POLICY

Definitions

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is the coercion or manipulation of children and young people into taking part in sexual activities. It is a form of sexual abuse involving an exchange of some form of payment which can include money, mobile phones and other items, drugs, alcohol, a place to stay, 'protection' or affection. The vulnerability of the child or young person and grooming process employed by perpetrators renders them powerless to recognise the exploitative nature of relationships and unable to give informed consent.

Policy

Early Intervention

To help children and young people achieve good outcomes it is important to identify issues and problems early and to take prompt preventative action. Early intervention is likely to be far more effective than intervention at a later stage when the impact on the child's or young person's health or development is likely to have escalated.

A Child Centred Approach

Children and young people at risk of CSE will often be in high risk situations and isolated from protective, nurturing adults. They will need to be encouraged to express their wishes and feelings to make sense of their particular circumstances and contribute to decisions that affect them. Of particular relevance is the impact of those who may have groomed and conditioned children and young people, to coerce and abuse them. Children and young people may also be under very strong pressure, intimidated, afraid and/or dependent on those that have exploited them where substance misuse is a factor. Children and young people may therefore reject offers of help and support and appropriate interventions need to be designed to address this.

Recognising Risk Factors

The key to safeguarding vulnerable children and young people is the ability to recognise 'at risk' children and young people and for agencies to work effectively together.

Levels of risk can be identified by considering the number and range of risk indicators present in a child's or young person's life.

Vulnerabilities include:

- Family history of abuse or neglect;
- Family history of domestic abuse;
- Family history of substance misuse;
- Family history of mental health difficulties;
- Breakdown of family relationships;
- Low self-esteem;
- History of local authority care.

Risk indicators include:

- Staying out late;
- Multiple callers (unknown adults/older young people);
- Use of a mobile phone that causes concern;
- Expressions of despair (self-harm, overdose, eating disorder, challenging behaviour, aggression);
- Disclosure of sexual or physical assault followed by withdrawal of allegation;
- Sexually transmitted infections;
- Peers involved in clipping (receiving payment in exchange for agreement to perform sexual acts but not performing the sexual act) or sexual exploitation;
- Drugs misuse;
- Alcohol misuse;
- Use of the internet that causes concern;
- Unsuitable or inappropriate accommodation (including street homelessness, rooflessness, and living in a place where needs are not met);
- Isolated from peers and social networks;
- Lack of positive relationship with a protective, nurturing adult;
- Exclusion from school, unexplained absences from school or not engaged in education or training;
- Living independently and failing to respond to attempts by workers to keep in touch.

Significant risk indicators include:

- Periods of going missing overnight or longer;
- Older 'boyfriend/girlfriend' or relationship with a controlling adult;
- Physical or emotional abuse by that 'boyfriend/girlfriend' or controlling adult;
- Entering and/or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults;
- Unexplained amounts of money, expensive clothing or other items;
- Physical injury without plausible explanation;
- Frequenting areas known for sex work.

Child sexual exploitation is becoming more prevalent in today's society and exposes children and young people to abuse, assault and emotional vulnerability. It can threaten their well-being and lead to a loss of self-esteem.

The children and young people in the care of ELHAP are amongst the most vulnerable in society and as a result have little understanding of risks they may be exposed to.

Simply because a child or young person is looked after by a residential home does not make them any less vulnerable to those who choose to abuse children and young people through exploitation or pornography and staff must be well aware of the potential risks open to the children and young people in our care.

Vulnerable children and young people will be identified and targeted by abusers/coercers and we must ensure that both we and local agencies act quickly and sensitively in the best interests of the child or young person concerned. It is vital that good strong support and re-integration strategies are put into place to ensure a positive outcome.

ELHAP works alongside local agencies and adheres to local protocols developed within the framework of Working Together to address this form of abuse. It is our primary aim to safeguard and promote the welfare of our children and young people and to encourage the investigation and prosecution of criminal activity by those who coerce children and young people and abuse them through exploitation.

- It is our policy to discuss concerns regarding child involvement in exploitation such as exploitation or pornography etc. on a multi-agency level. Staff must collaborate together to recognise the problem, treat the child or young person as a victim, safeguard and promote their welfare, investigate and aid prosecutions and to develop strategies for children and young people to exit exploitation for good.
- A child or young person involved in exploitation may have been victim to physical and sexual abuse, the responsibilities of reporting and supporting the investigation of abuse are set out in our ELHAP Safeguarding Children Policy. Staff should be particularly alert to relationships of children and young people with older persons, presence of gifts, money etc., and frequent absences from the home or encouraged visits to the person's home.
- Children or Young people developing regular contact with older persons may see these persons picking them up in cars, loitering around premises and if concerns exist should always be reported to senior staff and the police.
- Staff must be alert to disrupting such patterns of contacts and to the potential alienation the child or young person may feel from their peers, key workers etc. Any concerns raised should trigger company procedures and local procedures and multi-agency protocols.
- ELHAP Staff should be in contact with the local safeguarding team and Police and should keep aware of the extent of the local problem concerning exploitation of children and young people in the area.
- Key agency contacts will be LSCB, Police, Social Services, LADO, NSPCC, Health Authority, Education and Youth Services, YOT and local voluntary agencies.
- OFSTED must be notified of any child or young person involved or suspected of involvement in sexual exploitation.
- Staff must always give consideration to the needs of the child or young person and arrangements for their immediate safety, continuing protection and safeguarding the child or young persons' diversion from exploitation.

This Policy must be read in conjunction with the ELHAP Safeguarding Children Policy
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This policy was approved by the ELHAP Manager on 15th July 2016.