



**Suffolk Safeguarding  
Children Board**

# **Children and Young Persons at Risk of Experiencing Exploitation Strategy 2017-18**

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## 1. Introduction

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This multi-agency strategy for safeguarding children and young people who are abused or are at risk of abuse through child sexual exploitation (CSE), are members of Gangs and Groups or go missing from their home or placement, draws on Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE 2015) and Child Sexual Exploitation

Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation (DfE February 2017), this defines CSE as:

*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.*

## 2. Aims

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To create a climate and culture that encourages agencies to listen to the voice of the child, focusing on their needs and finding ways of promoting young people's sexual and emotional safety.

## 3. Responsibility of the LSCB

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Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) are responsible for ensuring that appropriate local procedures are in place to tackle child exploitation. All frontline practitioners need to be aware of those procedures (including ones for early help) and how they relate to their own areas of responsibility. LSCBs and frontline practitioners should ensure that actions to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people who are exploited, be that sexually, or through membership of gangs and groups and/or going missing, focus on the needs of the child.

The DfE recommends that LSCBs develop an effective local strategy ensuring there is a coordinated multi-agency response to child exploitation, based on a robust, thorough risk assessment of the extent and nature of child exploitation locally;

The LSCB also has the key responsibility for ensuring that the relevant organisations in each local area co-operate effectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. They must consider the needs of the children and young persons who have been, or are at risk of being exploited and their families when:

- Planning and commissioning services
- Developing policies and procedures
- Ensuring appropriate training is in place

- Communicating and raising awareness
- Monitoring and evaluating the work that has and is being done

The four pillars on which the strategy is built are:

1. **Prepare** – providing strong leadership, effective systems and true and effective partnership working to tackle vulnerability and exploitation;
2. **Prevent** – raising awareness among young people, parents, carers, professionals, key groups and the wider community including potential perpetrators to discourage recruitment to Gangs and Groups and prevent incidents/repeat incidents of CSE.
3. **Protect** – safeguarding vulnerable children and young people and supporting victims and those professionals who seek to reduce instances of children and young people going missing, Gangs and Groups and/or CSE
4. **Pursue** – disrupting, arresting and prosecuting offenders, ensuring a victim centred approach at all times

To support these four areas the LSCB will focus on:

- a. Provide leadership and coordinate the multi-agency response to Exploitation, including CSE. (**Prepare**)
- b. A shared understanding of the threat, harm and risk associated with Exploitation through better information sharing and effective analysis. (**Prepare**)
- c. Raising awareness of what CSE is and what the risk factors that may indicate a child or person is being abused or at risk of abuse/exploitation. (**Prevent**)
- d. Effective identification of those children and young persons at risk and of those individuals who present a risk of abusing/exploiting children and young persons. (**Protect**)
- e. Protecting those who are at risk of exploitation and providing effective support to them. (**Protect**)
- f. Effective intervention, disruption and prosecutions of those who sexually abuse children or young people. (**Pursue**)

A multi-agency sub-group of the LSCB has been established to take forward the work needed to meet this strategy. This sub-group focusses on the three inter-linked areas of **child sexual exploitation, missing children and gangs and groups**. The focus of this group is prevention and protection.

## 4. Strategic Intentions

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### **A shared understanding of the threat, harm and risk associated with Exploitation through better information sharing and effective analysis**

The LSCB recognises the need for an informed understanding of the threat of Exploitation, including CSE, within Suffolk and will work to ensure that partner agencies share information. Data will be shared in order to identify the number of children who have been or are seen as at risk of being exploited in order to shape the partnership and individual organisational response in Suffolk. The sharing of this data will also allow the proactive identification of children where an intervention is needed to prevent CSE or other forms of exploitation.

The LSCB recognises the central role of the Suffolk MASH in leading on this information sharing, victim identification and coordination of response.

The LSCB will ensure that there is a profile of CSE and of Gang and Group activity across Suffolk and that this shared with commissioners to support commissioning decisions and priorities.

The LSCB will:

1. Support the development of analytical capability within the MASH in order that hotspots, potential victims, perpetrators, emerging issues and the scale of CSE are identified and used to ensure appropriate responses.
2. Support the development of a local-problem profile based on multi-agency information.
3. Report on the prevalence and scale of Exploitation, including CSE, in Suffolk and ensure this information is provided to inform commission decisions and priorities.

### **Raising awareness of Exploitation and the risk factors that may indicate a child or person is being abused or at risk of abuse**

Raising awareness across Suffolk as to what is CSE and what the indicators that might suggest a child or young person is being or is at risk of being exploited are central to preventing and protecting children and young people. The LSCB will lead on and coordinate awareness raising across the county.

It is important that children and young people develop the knowledge and the skills so that they can make informed, safe and healthy choices about relationships and sexual health and so help them avoid situations that put them at risk of sexual exploitation. It is also important that they know who to turn to for help and support, including the pressure to join a Gang or Group. The LSCB recognises the crucial roles that schools and colleges play in providing this knowledge and advice.

In the same way parents, carers, professionals, those interacting with children and young people and the wider communities of Suffolk also need to understand what is meant by Exploitation and how to identify where a child may be being exploited or may be at risk of being exploited and what actions they should take.

The LSCB recognises the need for a consistent approach to awareness raising across partners and across Suffolk to ensure strength and consistency of message. This should not however be a barrier to innovation and the need to address local problems.

### **Effective identification of those children and young persons at risk and of those individuals who present a risk of abusing children and young persons**

There is cross over with (A) and (B) above; more effective information sharing is key to identifying those who are being exploited and those who are at risk of so being exploited and in identifying abusers; greater awareness raising will also lead to a better understanding of both these issues.

The LSCB will continue to support the implementation of a risk identification and assessment process (toolkit) in order that, where a child is believed to be being or at risk of being exploited, a consistent assessment of the risk can be made based on the best multi-agency information available at that time leading to an effective and proportionate response. This toolkit is available to all front-line staff of all agencies and for all staff who interact with families and children, by using the one model this will enhance a consistent approach to identification.

A process for tasking and coordination of referrals linked to CSE will be managed within the MASH environment, there should be a clear link to missing children and the work centred on gangs and groups.

### **Protecting those who are at risk of sexual exploitation and providing effective support to them**

There is a need for an effective response from all services when the sexual exploitation of children is identified. There must be a timely and supportive response, tailored to the need of the child or young person that understands the emotions facing the individual at that time. The response must be coordinated across all partners and must consider the present and the future.

The 'Signs of Safety' model should be used to ensure a child centred approach.

There are cross-overs between this intention and that relating to awareness raising ; the best form of protection being prevention and the LSCB recognises the part that schools have to play in both prevention and protection.

There is a need to ensure that children and young people who are being or who are at risk of being exploited are able to access the service that is right for them and the LSCB recognises the contribution that the Make a Change Team, working in close liaison with the Constabulary Human Trafficking and Exploitation Team, can make.

### **Effective intervention, disruption and prosecutions of those who sexually abuse children or young people**

Where individuals are identified who are exploiting children then there will be a strong partnership approach to ensuring that all appropriate actions is taken against them. The

LSCB will expect partner organisations to work closely together to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people.

Whilst early intervention will always be the preferred option the LSCB recognises that disruption and prosecution are key elements of any response to CSE and as such agencies must be prepared to undertake these responses.

Whilst any prosecution will be led by the Constabulary and Crown Prosecution Service there is the responsibility on all partners to support and assist any such approach

### **Providing leadership and coordinate the multi-agency response to the Exploitation of Children and Young People**

The LSCB recognises its role and responsibility to lead and coordinate the development and implementation of the Children and Young People at risk Exploitation strategy and action plan and to monitor the outcomes. In addition to this the LSCB will ensure that CSE is championed within individual organisations and that the issue of CSE is addressed and the action plan implemented.