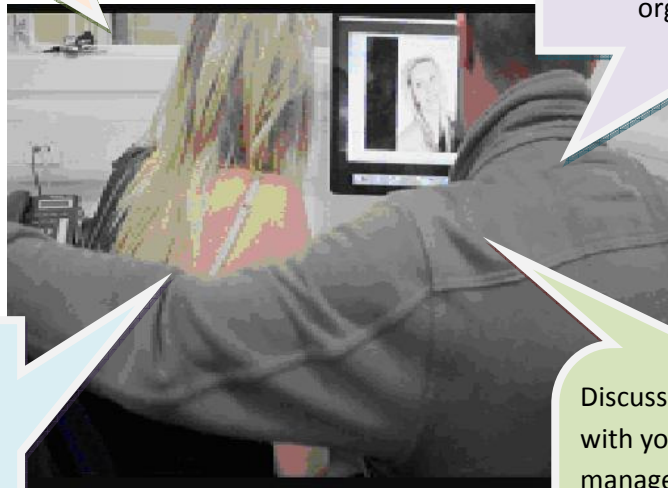


Messages for practice: Working with Child Sexual Exploitation

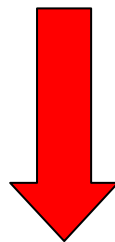
Be alert to the signs and symptoms of sexual exploitation and remember that young people will not always recognize their own exploitation or the dangers they are exposed to.

Use the Barnardo's SERAF tool (in the protocol) to assess risk of sexual exploitation and to help you organise your concerns.



Be clear about your role and responsibilities and your agency's role and responsibilities. Every agency has a lead for sexual exploitation – find out who it is!

Discuss your concerns with your line-manager/supervisor
The information you hold may be part of a much bigger picture of exploitation and abuse



'Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children who are at Risk of Abuse through Sexual Exploitation' is the All Wales Protocol. Using this consistently will ensure that we reduce the harm caused to young people.

This Briefing was prepared following outcomes from local police operations into Child Sexual Exploitation and multi-agency Practitioner Focus Groups around the protocol.

1. Signs and Symptoms of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Sexual exploitation is a hidden form of abuse. Risk indicators and vulnerability factors are set out in the protocol and can include isolation from peers, worrying use of the internet or mobile phones, going missing or unexplained 'gifts'. Disclosure of this form of abuse is very rare. There are also difficulties engaging young people where sexual exploitation is present and this means that workers have to be persistent, even when the young person is saying they don't want help. 'Closing' cases in these situations, even though a young person is resisting any intervention may not be the right thing to do. Remember that grooming, manipulation and coercion are powerful factors within the exploitation. Involving other agencies, including parents / carers may help in respect of understanding and minimising the risks that a young person is being exposed to.

2. The Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF)

The SERAF is a risk assessment tool that can be undertaken by any agency involved with a young person. It is widely used within sexual health services, but will also be helpful within schools, CAMHS, youth services or any organisations working directly with young people. Using the framework will help identify and consider the level of concern that exists so that the most appropriate response or intervention can be identified. If a referral to social services is made, a further SERAF may be undertaken from a multi-agency perspective. The SERAF tool is contained within the All Wales protocol. LSCB training events, run 4 times a year, includes further training in using the tool and responding to sexual exploitation.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Whilst everyone has a responsibility for being alert to CSE and sharing concerns we must also be clear about any specific roles and responsibilities we have as individual workers, and as agencies / organisations. Police and Social Services are the lead agencies for investigating allegations of sexual exploitation. Other organisations may need to ensure that workers know how to recognise risk and make a referral; consider how they are working to prevent CSE; contribute to multi-agency plans; help raise awareness more generally or be involved in developing self-care skills with young people. Practitioners have told us that there is a concern that lower risk young people do not get the support they need; consider how can we work together at an earlier stage to prevent risks escalating?

4. Sharing concerns

It is vitally important to share concerns around the risk of sexual exploitation, as often smaller concerns can be the 'tip of an iceberg' of complex or organised abuse. 'Soft' information / unconfirmed suspicions may help to build up an overall picture or contribute to Police intelligence and help to identify hotspots, patterns of risk and offenders. Use the lead person in your agency to discuss concerns or refer directly to the Police or Social Services.

5. The All Wales Protocol 'Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children who are at Risk of Abuse through Sexual Exploitation'

Practitioners told us that they were aware of the protocol but were not confident about it being consistently applied. The protocol will guide and inform your practice, and if consistently implemented will help keep young people safe. Ensure that the protocol is accessible within your agency. A summary of the protocol is included with this briefing.

Summary of the All Wales Protocol: Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children at Risk of Abuse through Sexual Exploitation

This national protocol, developed by Barnardos on behalf of the All Wales Child Protection Procedures Review group, applies to all children under the age of 18 and concerns abuse of children through sexual exploitation.

The aim of the protocol is to protect children at risk of this type of abuse and to encourage the prosecution of perpetrators.

The protocol should be referred to when you come across a situation in which you identify that a child is being, or at risk of being, sexually exploited.

Child Sexual Exploitation is: 'the coercion or manipulation of children and young people into taking part on 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 young person and grooming process employed by perpetrators renders them powerless to recognise the exploitative nature of relationships and unable to give informed consent.'

'Children do not volunteer to be sexually exploited and they cannot consent to their own abuse: they are forced and/or coerced'.

- Each agency should have a nominated lead person for Child Sexual Exploitation who should have or develop an expertise in this subject and be able to advise practitioners.
- All practitioners should attend training on this subject and be familiar with the risk indicators.

Risk indicators include:

- Staying out late
- Multiple callers, particularly unknown adults
- Expressions of despair (self harm, overdose, eating disorder, challenging behaviour, aggression)
- Disclosure of physical/sexual assault followed by withdrawal of allegation
- Use of a mobile phone that causes concern
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Use of the internet that causes concern
- Sexually Transmitted Infections
- Unsuitable/inappropriate accommodation (including street homelessness)
- Isolated from peers/social networks

- Lack of positive/nurturing relationship with an adult
- Exclusion from school or unexplained absences or non engagement with school/college/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/controlling adult
- Physical/emotional abuse by that older boyfriend/controlling adult
- Entering/leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults
- Unexplained amounts of money, new clothes and other items
- Frequenting areas know for sex work
- Unexplained physical injuries

Child Sexual Exploitation is a hidden form of abuse and disclosures from young people are rare. That is why it is important for practitioners to be aware of risk indicators.

If you are concerned that a child is being sexually exploited then you should discuss with your lead person and if necessary, make a referral to Children's Services in your area.

Barnardos have developed a risk assessment tool called SERAF: Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework. A copy of this can be found in the full protocol. This risk assessment tool enables practitioners to assess the risk of sexual exploitation for a child/young person. The tool includes the aforementioned risk indicators and a section on the vulnerabilities of the young person involved. Each are subscribed a score and it is the total score that will indicate if the risk is mild, moderate or significant.

Following a referral to Children's Services child protection procedures will be initiated if necessary. You will be expected to contribute to any assessment, investigation, multi agency meeting and potentially be part of implementing a plan to protect the child/young person. Please see the All Wales Child Protection Procedures for further information on the child protection process.

A copy of the full protocol and the All Wales Child Protection Procedures can be accessed at: www.awcpp.org.uk.