

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Storyboard

What is Child Sexual Exploitation?

The 2017 Department for Education definition of Child Sexual Exploitation states that:
'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.'

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of child abuse. It happens when a young person is encouraged, or forced, to take part in sexual activity in exchange for something.

The reward might be presents, money, alcohol, or simply emotional attention. It can happen to any child or young person. It might seem like a normal friendship or relationship to begin with. It can happen online or offline, and without the young person being aware of it.

It is not limited to any particular geography, ethnic or social background, but can affect any child, anytime, anywhere. CSE can be carried out by individuals, by street gangs or by groups. It can be motivated by money or by sexual gratification. But in all cases, there is an imbalance of power - vulnerable children are controlled and abused by adults or by other children.

Why is CSE a priority?

Child sexual exploitation is a crime which can have devastating consequences for its victims and their families and serious long term impact on every aspect of the child or young person's lives, health and education. It is a complex form of abuse and can be difficult for those working with children to identify and assess. Many children who are sexually exploited may have been victims of other forms of abuse; 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. The hidden nature of child sexual exploitation and the complexities involved means professional curiosity, and always being alert to the issue, is vital. It is for this reason that HSCB prioritise the prevention and protection of those vulnerable to CSE.

What is our vision and aim?

HSCB believe that it is vital that all partners work closely together to develop and implement robust, coordinated activity at all stages of a child's journey, from identification to protection to treatment. Partners must use evidence and information to understand what is happening locally, develop a strategic response, support victims and facilitate police disruption activity and prosecutions.

We want children and families to have confidence in turning to practitioners for help and protection from abuse and exploitation. This help and protection should be provided in a timely, enduring and flexible manner, and be the best it can possibly be. This requires children, parents and carers affected by child sexual exploitation to feel part of the solution and confident they will be listened to. Practitioners should work together to reduce the immediate risk of harm to children and collaborate to develop long term strategies to improve children's life chances.

We aim to work together across agencies to identify those vulnerable to sexual exploitation, build resilience, and prevent exploitation taking place by:

- enabling children and young people to make safe choices through a concerted campaign of awareness raising and education,
- providing accessible, early support, to target vulnerable groups or individuals, build resilience and prevent exploitation occurring, with development around longer term support,
- proactively work across the partner agencies, sharing intelligence and information to identify, disrupt and prosecute perpetrators of this crime, to reduce the duration of abuse and minimise the impact on the victim,
- ensure there is greater consistency of support from trusted adults, drawing on innovative practice to help young people to regain control and break free from exploitation,
- challenge each other and all key agencies to ensure that this very important issue is being given continual priority.

How do we value the child's voice?

In addition to our vision and aim, capturing the child's voice is an essential part of our work. We aim to ensure that children are listened to, that they are supported in expressing their views and that their views are taken into account and help to shape service delivery and improvements.

We do this by :

- Sending letters to all children added to the VEMT agenda for CSE; to provide opportunities for them to feedback
- Discussing the child's voice feedback at VEMT meetings
- Capturing young peoples views and issues that affect them during Barnardos CSE support sessions; which feed into session planning

How is VEMT structured?

The Tees Strategic VEMT group, which is chaired by the Detective Superintendent Head of Specialist Crime for Cleveland Police, sets the overarching strategic plan for all Tees areas. Locally, there is a VEMT strategic sub-group chaired by the Assistant Director of Children's Services, which oversees the implementation of the local plan. In addition there is a VEMT practitioners group (VPG) that reviews the plans for children that are at risk of exploitation. This group is chaired by the Head of Service for Looked-After Children and Care Leavers.

A significant amount of work has been undertaken in 2017/18 to build on the existing processes for VEMT and focussing on an improvement in quality across the workforce and on raising awareness of VEMT across all agencies.

What have we done?

VEMT Strategic Group

Risk assessment:

There is a new CSE screening tool in place for all agencies to use when they have concerns about CSE. This tool then informs assessments, decisions and next steps.

VEMT Strategic Sub-Group

Awareness raising:

A multi-agency awareness-raising task and finish group has been established to plan CSE awareness raising resources and events.

CSE posters were designed, assisted by a parents group, and distributed locally.

Communication:

The chair of the VEMT Practitioners Group (VPG) sends letters to all young people added to the VPG agenda for CSE and their parents.

Training:

A CSE conference took place for 129 multi-agency professionals across Tees. The conference was recorded to reach a wider audience through planned briefing sessions.

E-learning modules are in place for 'Trafficking, exploitation and modern slavery', 'Basic awareness of child and adult sexual exploitation' and 'Safeguarding children and young people from abuse by sexual exploitation' provided by the virtual college.

In addition, Barnardos provide Child sexual exploitation awareness sessions as part of the LSCB programme.

VEMT Audit

Co-ordinated case audits were carried out with the findings reported to VEMT Strategic sub-group and Board. Findings are cross-referenced to maintain and improve assurance.

VEMT Practitioners Group (VPG)

VPG Referrals

Between April 2017 and March 2018 there were 38 children or young people in Hartlepool that were identified as being at risk of or being sexually exploited. They were provided with a holistic support plan and targeted intervention to reduce the risk of harm.

An independent CSE worker is commissioned through Barnardos who has worked with 34 Young people.

23 children have been removed from the VPG agenda due to interventions and disruption completed, and a further 2 young people have seen a reduction in the presenting risks.

What has been the impact of this work on children?

Outcomes for children and young people:

- Increased awareness of risk/ protective behaviours
- Re-engaged in appropriate education provision
- Reduction in "missing" episodes
- Reduction in contact (frequency and duration) with coercive/abusive individuals
- Increased knowledge of positive sexual health behaviours
- Engagement (or increased engagement) in positive social/ recreational activities)
- Improvement in family relationships
- Increased self-esteem (self report: measured pre and post intervention)
- Disruption of perpetrators
- Investigation of perpetrators
- Increased parental awareness of risk/protective behaviours

Criminal Justice Outcomes

- Arrest of individuals involved in CSE
- Charging of offenders for CSE related offences
- Convictions of offenders for CSE related offences
- Identification and disruption of individuals and organised criminal networks engaged in CSE

What do we need to do?

- refine the ways in which we work together to pursue the perpetrators of this kind of criminal behaviour.
- further work with young people and communities to inform them about CSE and the key things to look for. We potentially have young people in relationships that they themselves do not recognise as exploitation; and we want to equip them with the knowledge and confidence to come forward.
- Create and provide induction packs for parents and children added to the VPG agenda to share information, raise awareness and provide further opportunities to capture their voice.

- address and continuously improve the way we are tackling CSE using an audit cycle to identify areas for further development.
- build on what we have learned about best practice, both locally and from the large number of significant reports published on this subject in the last year.
- listen to and learn from the victims, their families and friends who have been affected by these terrible experiences. It is vital that we translate what they tell us into positive action, so that we can tackle these crimes more effectively whilst ensuring that children and young people who are damaged by this experience get the professional help and support they need.
- continue to appraise the performance frameworks that are in place in light of local and national findings so that we can have a clear understanding of how prevalent child sexual exploitation is across Hartlepool and how effectively we are responding to this.

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Worried about a child?

Call: 01429 284284



**Out of hours:
01642 524552**

childrenshub@hartlepool.gcsx.gov.uk



Call 101 for Police

**If a child is in
Immediate danger
call 999**



Visit:

<http://www.teescpp.org.uk/sexually-exploited-children>

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