

Sexual Exploitation Safeguarding Policy & Guidance

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1. Foreword

The exploitation of children and young people has been identified throughout the UK, in both rural and urban areas, with children and young people who are 'looked after' being particularly vulnerable. Child Sexual Exploitation 'robs' children and young people of their childhood and can have a serious long term impact on their health, education and their lives as whole. Children & young people who are sexually exploited are the victims of sexual abuse and should be safeguarded from future harm.

Therefore this policy and guidance has been developed from The Welsh Governments '**Safeguarding Children & Young People from Exploitation**' – *Supplementary guidance to safeguard children: working together under the Children Act 2004*, in response to the potential that the children and young people who are cared for by Woodlands may have been sexually exploited or are vulnerable to exploitation.

Children / Young People who live within the organisation are vulnerable in a number of ways and which is often related to the reasons they are being 'looked after'. Particularly, children and young people who absent themselves from Woodlands care can place themselves at considerable risk. These risks may include the potential for sexual exploitation and an engagement in drugs, alcohol, violence, crime, self harm or prostitution.

The reasons for a child / young person's potential for being sexually exploited can be varied and complex, but sexual exploitation invariably involves children & young people being coerced into engaging in 'relationships' they don't believe are risky, abusive or harmful. Therefore, every episode of a young person "missing" (deemed by their risk assessment) from Woodlands care, staff should consider the potential that the young person is being, or vulnerable too, sexual exploitation. In addition, it is imperative in sharing any concerns of Child Sexual Exploitation that the professionals involved with the child / young people collaborate to ensure a consistent and coherent response is taken. Children & young people who are being sexually exploited should not be regarded as criminals and the primary law enforcement response must be directed at the perpetrators who groom children and young people for sexual exploitation.

2. Referral

- 2.1. Residential and Education staff should **always** report any incidents or concerns a child / young person is at risk or suffering harm. As with any child/young person safeguarding concerns, the Manager should refer their concerns that a child/young person is at risk of any form of Child Sexual Exploitation to Social Services following the process set out in Part 2 of the All Wales Child Protection Procedures and the organisations safeguarding procedures. The young person's Social Worker should also be informed, in addition to CIW who should be informed under Regulation 29.
- 2.2. It is essential that all information from all relevant sources (including other young people is pulled together. Any information may help to build up a full picture that the child/young person may be suffering harm.
 - 2.2.1. The Social Services lead officer for children at risk of abuse through sexual exploitation (this is often, but not always the Child Protection/Safeguarding Co-ordinator) should be informed of the referral by the person taking the referral in Social Services.
 - 2.2.2. Woodlands, the Police and Social Services should share and discuss all information received/gathered with other professionals/agencies as appropriate, and decide on the next course of action within 24 hours or without delay if there is immediate concern for the child/young person.

3. Assessment

- 3.1 In research undertaken with 30 London boroughs and two local authorities outside London, only two areas had identified Child Sexual Exploitation through disclosure by a young person. In the same research, respondents welcomed the introduction of multi-agency strategy meetings and noted the difficulty of using traditional child/young person protection processes with this form of abuse. In light of the complex and hidden nature of Child Sexual Exploitation - which children and young people rarely disclose - it is important to work on the basis of concerns rather than relying on hard evidence.

- 3.2 A sexual exploitation risk assessment framework (SERAF) (see appendix one) which includes four categories of risk has been developed for inclusion in the *All Wales Protocol*. The SERAF enables safeguarding actions to be linked to evidence of risk, facilitating both preventive action and appropriate interventions and is intended to inform appropriate responses in relation to children and young people's safeguarding needs.
- 3.3 A sexual exploitation risk assessment should be undertaken to establish if a child/young person is in need and requires protection. This should be completed by the House manager & Link Worker in consultation with the placing authority within 7 working days of the referral being placed. The risk assessment will consider all the vulnerabilities and risks and place the child/young person in one of four categories of risk: not at risk, mild risk, moderate risk or significant risk. The SERAF should also consider and identify the responses and interventions to be adopted when reducing the risks.

4. Internal Strategy Discussions

Following completion of a Child Sexual Exploitation risk assessment, it may be decided that an internal strategy discussion is required. A strategy discussion should always take place where a child/young person is assessed as at mild, moderate or significant risk of sexual exploitation. The internal strategy meeting should involve key members of the team who have relevant information or concerns a young person is either vulnerable to exploitation or being exploited, home manager, Link Worker, Therapist and if appropriate Co Director. The strategy meeting should formulate the safety plan for the young person, which includes interventions and responses commensurate with the level of risk identified in the SERAF. Internal strategy discussions do not replace the external processes of referral, assessment and multi strategy meetings, but are organised to run in conjunction with the external processes, in order to consider the SERAF, safety plan, responses and interventions to the concerns and risks identified.

4.1 Multi-Agency Strategy Meetings

- 4.1.1 Multi-agency strategy meetings for children at risk of sexual exploitation should be conducted as set out in All Wales Child Protection Procedures, but the following additional measures should also be considered.
- 4.1.2 A strategy discussion will, in most cases, agree that a multi-agency strategy meeting should be held and should always be convened for children at moderate or significant risk of Child Sexual Exploitation.
- 4.1.3 The meeting should be chaired by a Social Services manager with lead responsibility for Child Sexual Exploitation and be attended by:
- The referrer, if a professional;

- lead officers for Child Sexual Exploitation from Education and Health;
- Child/young person's social worker;
- identified police officer from the Police Public Protection Team;
- Representative from any specialist Child Sexual Exploitation service;
- any other relevant person who can assist in the planning process for the child/young person protection enquiries and in formulating a multi-agency safeguarding plan e.g. residential key worker/manager, YOT worker, designated child/young person protection/LAC nurse;
- Representative from Probation Service working with any identified perpetrators.

4.1.4 The meeting should:

- share and clarify information;
- identify all risks (including those in SERAF) and agree on action and make recommendations to address each risk;
- consider the likelihood of prosecution of relevant adults and where prosecution is not likely; consider the range of alternate action against perpetrators;
- develop a written plan to safeguard the child/young person or young person;
- agree a date to review the plan within the next three months and be clear where individual responsibilities lie;
- decide who will undertake direct work with the child/young person or young person to enable recovery.

4.1.5 Following a multi-agency strategy meeting, category 3 and 4 cases will require the child / young person's safety plan to be updated and amended.

4.1.6 Implementing an effective child/young person in need or child/young person safety plan for a child/young person at risk of sexual exploitation may require professionals to be extremely persistent in continuing to offer support and services. The therapist and manager will act as the point of contact for the child/young person, family and professionals and to co-ordinate the safety plans. Safety Plans should address each identified risk and the agreed interventions.

4.1.7 While ensuring the welfare of the child/young person is paramount, the priority for the Police is the investigation and prosecution of offenders who have been involved in abusing the child/young person through Child Sexual Exploitation. Sections 47 to 51 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 deal with the sexual exploitation of children/young people. The Act creates a number of offences that

apply to Child Sexual Exploitation but the role of the Police should be undertaken in accordance with the principle of multi-agency co-operation to safeguard children/young people.

- 4.1.8 Child Sexual Exploitation is a particularly hidden form of abuse and disclosure by the child/young person is extremely rare. It may not always be appropriate to interview the child/young person in a formal manner, particularly where a child/young person does not believe they are being sexually exploited. Evidence shows that a relationship with a protective, nurturing adult who over time challenges the perceptions of the young person can lead to an increase in the awareness of the child/young person in relation to risks and experiences. Information may be most effectively gathered over time, by practitioners who have gained the trust of the child/young person or young person in a manner that does not alienate, but rather involves them in the process, contributing to their own safety.
- 4.1.9 Where there may be limited evidence in relation to perpetrators, for example, the absence of a statement, action may still be taken in relation to particular concerns such as reports of internal trafficking or that an address or vehicle is being used for the purposes of Child Sexual Exploitation. All intelligence should be recorded and collated. Police should consider using the range of powers at their disposal.
- 4.1.10 The Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) provides a national framework for the assessment and management of risk posed by sexual and violent offenders. This includes individuals who are considered to pose a risk or potential risk of harm to child/young person. The arrangements impose statutory requirements on the Police and Probation Services to make these arrangements under Section 325 of the Criminal Justice Act of 2003. Offenders are referred to the MAPPA process following conviction for a relevant offence. MAPPA are set out in detail in the All Wales Child Protection Procedures.

4.2 Intervention

- 4.2.1 Within the four categories of the SERAF, a different response is required in relation to each level of risk. Each of the four categories of risk has associated safeguarding actions.

4.3 Category 1 – Not at risk of sexual exploitation

- 4.3.1 Children and young people in Category 1 do not have indicators of risk in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation.
- 4.3.2 Children and young people assessed as being in this category need access to basic information that will enable them to develop

an awareness of the risks that can lead to a situation in which they may be exposed to Child Sexual Exploitation. They need access to information that will equip them to avoid risk situations and to protect themselves.

- 4.3.3 Residential staff are well placed to deliver such information as part of their inter-action with the child/young person and children/young people with who they are in contact.
- 4.3.4 The Personal and Social Education (PSE) curriculum provides a sound platform through which to deliver basic safeguarding information, to explore ideas around 'healthy' sexual relationships. This also needs to include opportunities for children and young people to understand the very real risks involved in going missing from school, home or care.
- 4.3.5 Health professionals such as school health nurses, practitioners in young persons' advisory/sexual health clinics and GPs have a role in promoting the young person's health which includes identification of immediate and on-going health needs (including sexual health needs and emotional needs). As a universal service, health is well placed to offer support, counselling and information to enable young people to understand the risks and develop strategies for staying safe.

4.4 Category 2 – Mild Risk

- 4.4.1 A child/young person identified at mild risk is likely to have multiple vulnerabilities such as problematic parenting and childhood experiences present. One or two risk indicators might be present. These vulnerabilities increase the risk of such children and young people being groomed for Child Sexual Exploitation. Early intervention and preventative work is needed to protect children and young people who have multiple vulnerabilities present.
- 4.4.2 A practitioner or organisational view that a child/young person is at mild risk (Category 2) may be inaccurate and sharing information about that child/young person may reveal them to be at moderate or significant risk – and in need of protection. Interventions to interrupt abuse through sexual exploitation and support children to recover a healthy lifestyle are more likely to be successful if a child/young person who is at risk can be identified, and information about concerns shared within a multi-agency support network, as early as possible.
- 4.4.3 A multi-agency meeting to ensure all information is shared and agree a child/young person in need plan to address risk and need

should be convened if possible. The plan should include a programme of direct work with the child/young person to raise awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation and to provide tools for the child/young person to self protect. The programme should raise risk awareness, provide information on keeping safe and address specific identified issues that pose a threat to safety. It should be delivered by a practitioner who has a good working relationship with the child/young person. It should include opportunities for the child/young person to understand the very real risks involved in activities such as going missing from the home.

- 4.4.4 Risk needs to be reassessed regularly as part of the planned work undertaken with a child/young person. Any significant change in circumstances which might increase vulnerability, or any incidence of behaviour associated with risk, should result in an immediate reassessment of risk using the Child Sexual Exploitation risk assessment.

4.5 Category 3 – Moderate Risk

- 4.5.1 A child/young person identified at moderate risk is likely to have multiple vulnerabilities present as well as one or more indicators of risk. Children and young people at moderate risk may be groomed or targeted for opportunistic abuse and/or exploitative relationships by abusing adults.
- 4.5.2 It is in this category that any omitted information can have the greatest effect on accuracy of assessment and information sharing. A multi-agency strategy meeting for children/young people at risk of abuse through Child Sexual Exploitation should always be convened in relation to the child/young person assessed as at moderate risk. Multi-agency strategy meetings enable the effective exchange of information between representatives of key agencies. The meetings should include the individual who has identified risk or raised concerns in relation to the child/young person, i.e. the Home Manager or Head Teacher and representatives of Social Services, Police, Health, Education, Placements and any specialist Child Sexual Exploitation services. Multi-agency strategy meetings should respond to the needs of children/young people for whom risk of Child Sexual Exploitation is indicated but not known, as well as responding to cases where evidence of sexual exploitation is available.
- 4.5.3 The multi-agency strategy meeting should agree a safeguarding plan and action to include direct work with the individual child/young person. The focus of any safeguarding plan and of direct interventions should be the reduction of specific risks which are causing concern. In particular where going missing from the

home is identified, these should be addressed as a priority. The safeguarding implications of going missing should not be underestimated by any agencies. The length of intervention required will be different in each case and is reliant on the specific circumstances of the child/young person and the nature of the risks which are being addressed. Individual children/young people may respond to intervention in different ways and this will also impact on the length of that intervention.

- 4.5.4 At least one review meeting by the multi-agency strategy group should be conducted to ensure that actions have been taken, assess progress, consider the impact of interventions, share further information and reassess the level of risk. Risks should be carefully monitored and reviewed over time in relation to the child/young person for whom there have been concerns as part of the assessment and planning processes.
- 4.5.5 Risk needs to be reassessed regularly as part of the planned work undertaken with a child/young person. Any significant change in circumstances which might increase vulnerability or any incidence of behaviour associated with risk should result in an immediate reassessment of risk using the Child Sexual Exploitation risk assessment.
- 4.5.6 The approach to working with children/young people at significant risk of or abused through Child Sexual Exploitation set out below can also be applied to children/young people in Category 3.

4.6 Category 4 – Significant Risk

- 4.6.1 Where a child/young person is assessed as being in category 4, there is a clear indication that they are at significant risk of sexual exploitation or that they are already being abused through Child Sexual Exploitation. This is likely to include cases where abuse is habitual, denied, and where coercion and control is implicit.
- 4.6.2 A multi-agency strategy meeting for the child/young person at risk of abuse through Child Sexual Exploitation should always be convened in relation to a child/young person assessed as at significant risk. As with Category 3, multi-agency strategy meetings should ensure the effective exchange of information between representatives of key agencies. The meetings should include the individual who has identified risk or raised concerns in relation to the child/young person and representatives of Social Services, Police, Health, Education, Placements and any specialist Child Sexual Exploitation services. Participants of the meeting should agree a safeguarding plan and action to include long-term

intensive direct work with the individual children/young people. Review meetings should be conducted regularly to ensure that agreed actions are implemented, and to assess the progress and impact of agreed interventions. Risk should be closely monitored and regularly reassessed as part of the risk reduction process.

- 4.6.3 All agencies involved in working with the child/young person should address issues of Child Sexual Exploitation whether in relation to, for example, placements, offending behaviour, work with the child or young person's family, education or sexual health as part of their work with that child/young person. A coordinated and synchronised approach by all agencies maximises the effectiveness of interventions and the impact of planned actions. All agencies should agree and adopt a consistent approach that does not shy away from, or collude with risky behaviour. All agencies and professionals need to be aware of the intensive and long-term nature of the approach required. The presence of multiple vulnerabilities and risks in the lives of children/young people at significant risk often means that they are difficult to engage and that positive outcomes take time.
- 4.6.4 The use of the sexual exploitation risk assessment framework should allow for the identification of vulnerability and risk in relation to the majority of children/young people at an earlier stage. Over time, routine assessment, early identification and appropriate interventions should reduce the numbers of children/young people who are exposed to significant risk of sexual exploitation.

4.7 Working with those at significant risk of or abused through Child Sexual Exploitation

- 4.7.1 By the time, in a child/young person's life, where they are at significant risk of, or are experiencing Child Sexual Exploitation they are subject to a complex pattern of life experiences which might impact negatively on each dimension of their life. Because of this they can present to agencies such as the Police as 'streetwise' or 'problematic' rather than in need of support. Information, training, tools for assessment and risk identification, protocols and procedures should all lead to a plan of intervention. Intervention, support and action should be based upon the child/young person's individual needs and be delivered by a trusted practitioner in conjunction with a protective network of appropriate agencies.
- 4.7.2 Working with children/young people for whom Child Sexual Exploitation is an issue requires a holistic approach through investment of time and resources in long term intervention. An important aspect of the work can be maintaining contact with and being available to children/young people until they reach a point

where they are ready to think about their situations and accept support. The process and effort spent by a practitioner on relationship building can be an important factor in bringing them to that point. These windows of opportunity, when they present, should be fully capitalised upon, with the right kind of support being made available at the time that it is required by the child/young person. This can only be achieved through the co-operation and joint working of an established network of appropriate agencies.

- 4.7.3 Establishing a positive trusting relationship with such vulnerable children/young people takes time. A relationship needs to be developed which offers something tangible to the child/young person. At the same time it is important to acknowledge that practitioners are not providing a friendship and that there are inescapable power differentials. Change needs to happen at a pace that is set by the child/young person and which provides real choices and promotes a sense of positive control for the individual. Working with children/young people who are exposed to risky situations and experiences of Child Sexual Exploitation requires an approach that is non-judgemental and where staff are 'unshockable'. There is a need to be consistently honest and to listen to and respect the views of the child/young person:
- Intervention should begin with relationship building, and assessment of risks and vulnerabilities with the child/young person;
 - honest discussions and inclusion in assessment and planning processes will assist the child/young person in feeling included, and create a sense of ownership and connection with the plan;
 - The safety plan should address each of the identified areas of risk.
- 4.7.4 Workers need to be realistic about expectations and to understand that this is long term, intensive work, where progress will not always go forwards, and where some level of regression is likely.
- 4.7.5 Staff need to take positive action to clarify and record any concerns and minimise the child/young person's involvement in Child Sexual Exploitation. If suspicions are confirmed the following steps should be taken.
- 4.7.6 The child/young person's behaviour and attitude may be extremely challenging, and carers and staff will require ongoing support, advice and training in knowing how to respond. These needs must be considered and resources identified by the manager of the home.

5. Contacts:

- Safeguarding Service Manager – Francine Salem - 01978 295409
- Safeguarding Team Leader – Jayne Belton – 01352 701000

6. Appendix One

Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF) SERAF

Category of risk	Indicators of risk	Description	Associated actions
Category 1 Not at risk	No risk indicators but may have one or more vulnerabilities present.	A child or young person who may be 'in need' but who is not currently at risk of being groomed for sexual exploitation.	Educate to stay safe. Review risk following any significant change in circumstances.
Category 2 Mild risk	Multiple vulnerabilities. One or two risk indicators may also be present.	A vulnerable child or young person who may be at risk of being groomed for sexual exploitation.	Consider multi-agency meeting to share information and agree a plan to address risk and/or need. Work on risk awareness and staying safe should be undertaken with this child/young person. Review risk following any significant change in circumstances.
Category 3 Moderate risk	Multiple vulnerabilities and risk indicators present.	A child or young person who may be targeted for opportunistic abuse through exchange of sex for drugs, and goods etc.	Convene multi-agency meeting under protocol for sexually exploited children and young people to ensure effective exchange of information with multi-agency colleagues and agree safety plan. At least one review meeting to be convened.
Category 4 Significant risk	Multiple vulnerabilities and risk indicators. One or more significant risk indicators also likely.	Indication that a child or young person is at significant risk of or is already being sexually exploited. Sexual exploitation is likely to be habitual, often self-denied and coercion/control is implicit.	Convene multi-agency meeting under protocol for sexually exploited children and young people to ensure effective exchange of information with multi-agency colleagues and agree safety plan, including regular review meetings.

7. Appendix Two

