



**LEEDS  
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD  
POLICY AND PROCEDURES  
GUIDANCE**

**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG  
PEOPLE FROM CHILD SEXUAL  
EXPLOITATION**

To be read in conjunction with

Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation:2009:  
Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children

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## 1. Introduction.

- 1.1 This chapter is based on and summarises the document **Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation** which was issued by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in June 2009. This guidance was issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 and Section 16 of the Children Act 2004 and LSCBs, local authorities and their Board partners are required to act under its general guidance unless there are exceptional reasons not to.
- 1.2 The guidance provides information about sexual exploitation, the roles and responsibilities of relevant agencies and the procedures practitioners should follow to ensure the safety and well-being of children and young people who it is suspected have been sexually exploited.

1.3 Annex D of the guidance provides details about Resources and Other Information.

1.4 **OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS:**

**Chapter 8: Working Together to Safeguard Children**

**Safeguarding Children who may have been Trafficked**

**1.5 Key Principles**

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1.5.1 Sexual exploitation of children and young people has been identified throughout the UK, in both rural and urban areas, and in all parts of the world. It affects boys and young men as well as girls and young women. It is a form of Sexual Abuse and can have a serious impact on every aspect of the lives of children involved.

1.5.2 It is a crime that knows no borders and, as indicated above, can be global in nature. Cross border cooperation is therefore crucial as it is possible that activity in one area may push perpetrators across a border together with young victims.

1.5.3 Whilst it is not known how prevalent it is. Sexual exploitation has become increasingly recognisable as practitioners gain more understanding of grooming and other methods of sexual exploitation and begin to take a proactive and coordinated approach to deal with it.

1.5.4 The sexual exploitation of children is described in the guidance document as “involving exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive ‘something’ (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money, mobile phones) as a result of their performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. It can occur through the use of technology without the child’s immediate recognition; e.g. being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other

resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.”

1.5.6 Children involved in any form of sexual exploitation should be treated primarily as the victims of abuse and their needs carefully assessed; the aim should be to protect them from further harm and they should not be treated as criminals. The primary law enforcement response should be directed at perpetrators who groom children for sexual exploitation.

1.5.7 The government guidance requires agencies to work together to:

- i. Develop local prevention strategies;
- ii. Identify those at risk of sexual exploitation
- iii. Take action to safeguard and promote the welfare of particular children and young people who may be sexually exploited: and
- iv. Take action against those intent on abusing and exploiting children and young people in this way

1.5.8 In doing so, the key principles should be:

- i. **A child-centred approach.** Action should be focussed on the child's needs, including consideration of children with particular needs or sensitivities, and the fact that children do not always acknowledge what may be an exploitative or abusive situation
- ii. **A proactive approach.** This should be focussed on prevention, early identification and intervention as well as disrupting activity and prosecuting perpetrators
- iii. **Parenting, family life, and services.** Taking account of family circumstances in deciding how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people

- iv. **The rights of children and young people.** Children and young people are entitled to be safeguarded from sexual exploitation just as agencies have duties in respect of safeguarding and promoting welfare
- v. **Responsibility for criminal acts.** Sexual exploitation of children and young people should not be regarded as criminal behaviour on the part of the child or young person, but as child sexual abuse. The responsibility for the sexual exploitation of children lies with the abuser and the focus of police investigations should be on those who coerce, exploit and abuse children and young people
- vi. **An integrated approach.** Working Together to Safeguard Children sets out a tiered approach to safeguarding: universal, targeted and responsive. Within this, sexual exploitation requires a three-pronged approach tackling prevention, protection and prosecution
- vii. **A shared responsibility.** The need for effective joint working between different agencies and professionals underpinned by a strong commitment from managers, a shared understanding of the problem of sexual exploitation and effective coordination by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

## 2. The Child

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- 2.1 Any child or young person may be at risk of sexual exploitation, regardless of their family background or other circumstances.
- 2.2 Sexual exploitation results in children and young people suffering harm, and causes significant damage to their physical and mental health. It can also have profound and damaging consequences for the child's family. Parents and carers are often traumatised and under severe stress. Siblings can feel alienated and their self-esteem affected. Family members can themselves suffer serious threats of abuse, intimidation and assault at the hands of perpetrators.

- 2.3 There are strong links between children involved in sexual exploitation and other behaviours such as running away from home or care, bullying, self-harm, teenage pregnancy, truancy and substance misuse. In addition, some children are particularly vulnerable, for example, children with special needs, those in residential or foster care, those leaving care, migrant children, unaccompanied asylum seeking children, victims of forced marriage and those involved in gangs.
- 2.4 The majority of sexually exploited children are hidden from public view. They are unlikely to be loitering or soliciting on the streets. Research and practice has helped to move the understanding away from a narrow view of seeing sexual exploitation as a young person standing on a street corner selling sex.
- 2.5 There is also often a presumption that children are sexually exploited by people they do not know. However evidence shows that this is often not the case and children are often sexually exploited by people with whom they feel they have a relationship, e.g. a boyfriend/girlfriend, Children are often persuaded that the boyfriend/girlfriend is their only true form of support and encouraged to withdraw from their friends and family and to place their trust only within the relationship.
- 2.6 Due to the nature of the grooming methods used by their abusers, it is very common for children and young people who are sexually exploited not to recognise that they are being abused. Practitioners should be aware that particularly young people aged 16 and 17 may believe themselves to be acting voluntarily and will need practitioners to work with them so they can recognise that they are being sexually exploited.

### **3. Important Information about Sexual Exploitation**

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- 3.1 Sexual exploitation can take many forms from the seemingly 'consensual' relationship where sex is exchanged for attention, accommodation or gifts, to serious organised crime and child trafficking.

- 3.2 What marks out exploitation is an imbalance of power within the relationship. The perpetrator always holds some kind of power over the victim, increasing the dependence of the victim as the exploitative relationship develops.
- 3.3 Technology can play a part in sexual abuse, for example, through its use to record abuse and share it with other like-minded individuals or as a medium to access children and young people in order to groom them. A common factor in all cases is the lack of free economic or moral choice.
- 3.4 Sexual exploitation has strong links with other forms of 'crime', for example, domestic violence, online and offline grooming, the distribution of abusive images of children and child trafficking. Many adults involved in prostitution describe difficult childhood experiences that include domestic violence, neglect, emotional abuse, disrupted schooling and low educational attainment.
- 3.5 The perpetrators of sexual exploitation are often well organised and use sophisticated tactics. They are known to target areas where children and young people gather without much adult supervision, e.g. parks or shopping centres or sites on the Internet.

#### **4. Roles and Responsibilities of Local Safeguarding Children Boards and Individual Organisations**

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- 4.1 Work to tackle sexual exploitation should follow the same principles as addressing other forms of abuse or neglect.
- 4.2 The Government Guidance requires that all Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) should ensure their policies and procedures regarding sexual exploitation reflect their local areas. Particular procedures should specify:
- i. How to identify signs of sexual exploitation
  - ii. How professionals can seek help and advice on this issue

- iii. How professionals should share information within government guidelines
  - iv. The establishment of Lead Professionals in the key agencies, the routes for referring concerns and how concerns about sexual exploitation relate to thresholds for referral to Children's Social Care
  - v. How professionals can work together to deliver disruption plans
  - vi. How professionals can gather and preserve the integrity of evidence about perpetrators of sexual exploitation
  - vii. The process and possible responses for supporting children and young people identified at being at risk of sexual exploitation
  - viii. How to work with other local authority areas where children who have been sexually exploited are thought to have lived
  - ix. How to deal with issues relating to migrant children in situations which make them vulnerable to sexual exploitation
  - x. How to manage situations of sexual exploitation through the use of technology such as the internet
- 4.3 LSCBs should ensure there is a dedicated lead person in each partner organisation with responsibility for implementing the government guidance and that work in its area with children and young people who have been or are likely to be sexually exploited is coordinated.
- 4.4 All organisations that provide services for, or work with children, need to have arrangements in place which fulfil their commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children by ensuring that:
- i. Safeguarding training and refresher training includes an awareness of sexual exploitation, how to identify the warning signs, together with the recording and retention of information and gathering evidence

- ii. Their policies for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people are compatible with the LSCB policies and procedures
  - iii. Information sharing protocols are in place and working well so that relevant information is shared where this is in the best interest of the child
- 4.5 The specific roles and responsibilities of individual agencies in implementing the government guidance are set out in Chapter 4 of the guidance.

## **5. Preventing Sexual Exploitation**

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- 5.1 The effects of sexual exploitation are harmful and far reaching and Chapter 5 of the Government Guidance looks at measures that may assist a local prevention strategy.
- 5.2 Prevention means that the risk that children and young people will become victims of sexual exploitation is reduced by:
- i. Reducing their vulnerability
  - ii. Improving their resilience
  - iii. Disrupting and preventing the activities of perpetrators
  - iv. Reducing tolerance of exploitative behaviour
  - v. Prosecuting abusers
- 5.3 Prevention measures will include the development of education and awareness raising programmes for children and young people so that they can make safe and healthy choices about relationships and sexual health, as well as for parents and carers (particularly those responsible for children living away from home) and people whose work places them in a position where they would notice and could report worrying behaviours (e.g. shopkeepers, park attendants and hostel managers) who are not traditionally regarded as part of the safeguarding community.

## 6. Managing Individual Cases

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### 6.1 Identification of Risk and Possible Indicators

- 6.1.1 Anyone who has regular contact with children is in a good position to notice changes in behaviour and physical signs that may indicate involvement in sexual exploitation.
- 6.1.2 They should also know how to monitor online spaces and be prepared to request access reports where they are suspicious that a child is being groomed online.
- 6.1.3 The fact that a young person is 16 or 17 years old should not be taken as a sign they are no longer at risk of sexual exploitation.
- 6.1.4 The factors below are recognised as factors linked to sexual exploitation. It is not an exhaustive list and each indicator is not in itself proof of involvement. Concerns should increase the more indicators that are present. They are:
- i. **Health** – physical symptoms e.g. bruising, chronic fatigue, recurring or multiple sexually transmitted diseases; pregnancy and/or seeking an abortion; evidence of drug, alcohol or substance misuse; sexually risky behaviour
  - ii. **Education** – truancy; disengagement with education; considerable change in performance at school
  - iii. **Emotional and behavioural development** – volatile behaviour exhibiting extreme array of mood swings or use of abusive language; involvement in petty crime; secretive behaviour; entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults
  - iv. **Identity** – low self-image; low self-esteem; self-harm; eating disorder; promiscuity
  - v. **Family and social relationships** – hostility in relationship with parents, carers and/or other family members; physical aggressions towards parents, siblings, pets, teachers or peers; placement breakdown; detachment from age appropriate

activities; association with other young people who are known to be sexually exploited; sexual relationship with a significantly older person; unexplained relationships with older adults (e.g. through letters, texts, internet links); staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation; persistently missing or missing with no known home base; returning after having been missing looking well cared for with no known home base; going missing and being found in an area where the child has no known links

- vi. **Social presentation** – change in appearance; leaving home in clothing unusual for the child e.g. inappropriate for age
- vii. **Parental capacity** – family history of parental neglect or abuse
- viii. **Family and environmental factors** – family history of domestic violence; pattern of homelessness
- ix. **Income** - possession of large amounts of money with no plausible explanation; acquisition of expensive clothes, mobile phones or other possessions without plausible explanation; accounts of social activities with no plausible explanation of the source of necessary funding
- x. **Family's social integration** – reports that the child has been seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation
- xi. Possible indicators specific to boys and young men are:
- xii. **Health** – physical symptoms (e.g. bruising or sexually transmitted infections); drug or alcohol misuse; self-harm or eating disorders
- xiii. **Education** – truancy, deterioration of school work or part-time timetable
- xiv. **Emotional and behavioural development** – secretive e.g. about internet use; anti-social behaviour; sexualised language; sexually offending behaviour

- xv. **Family and social relationships** – associating with other children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation; missing from home or staying out late; getting into cars of unknown people; contact with adults outside normal social group
- xvi. **Identity** – low self-esteem, poor self-image or lack of confidence
- xvii. **Social presentation** – wearing an unusual amount of clothing
- xviii. **Income** – social activities with no explanation of how funded; possession of abnormal amounts of money, gifts, new mobile phones, credit on mobile phone, number of SIM cards
- xix. **Social integration** – frequenting known high-risk areas or going to addresses of concern; seen at public toilets known for cottaging; seen at adult venues

6.1.5 The Risk Assessment and reporting form attached at Appendix ii and detailing the above factors should be completed for any child or young person where there are concerns that a child is at risk of sexual exploitation. Additional factors apply in relation to boys and young men. The completed form must be attached to a referral to any other agency.

6.1.6 Concerns that a child may be at risk of sexual exploitation should be discussed with a manager and/or designated professional for safeguarding and a decision made as to whether there should be a referral to Children's Social Care.

6.1.6 The wishes and feelings of the child or young person should be obtained when deciding how to proceed but practitioners should be aware that perpetrators may have groomed the child's responses and that the child may be denying what is happening.

6.1.7 Where an agency is fearful of losing the engagement of a child or young person by reporting their concern to Children's Social Care, the agency should discuss this with Children's Social Care to agree a way forward. Any decision not to share information or refer a child should be fully recorded.

See also Information Sharing and Confidentiality Procedure

## **6.2 Referral**

- 6.2.1 Professionals who refer to (CSC) by telephone must submit their referral in writing within 48 hours in accordance with local referral procedures.
- 6.2.2 Children's Social Care must decide and record their proposed action in line with their local procedures normally within 24 hours. . This decision should normally follow discussion with the referrer and other involved professionals, as well as the consideration of any background information already held by Children's Social Care.
- 6.2.3 Children's Social Care will inform the Children's Safeguarding identified lead of the referral and agree the proposed action.
- 6.2.4 Where Children's Social Care decide to take no further action, this decision must be recorded and the referrer must be informed. Children's Social Care may decide with the referrer, that whilst there is no evidence of sexual exploitation, the child may still appear vulnerable and that an assessment under CAF (Common Assessment Framework) should be undertaken by the involved agencies, if one has not already been undertaken.
- 6.2.5 The outcome of the referral will be:
- i. That the child appears to be a Child in Need and there are concerns about the child's health or development or any actual or potential harm which justify an Initial Assessment (which may be very brief, where the criteria for undertaking a Section 47 Enquiry is met) and/or
  - ii. That emergency protective action should be taken to safeguard the child/ren (this will usually be determined by immediate strategy discussions) or

- iii. Where the child is already known and new information suggests the child is or may be suffering significant harm, a Section 47 and/or a new or updated Core Assessment is required or
- iv. That a referral to another agency and/or provision of advice and information and/or a CAF assessment be undertaken by a relevant agency, with no further action required by Children's Social Care
- v. Children's social Care (CSC) will inform the Children's Safeguarding Identified lead of the referral outcome.

### **6.3 Section 17 Core Assessment**

6.3.1 Where there are no substantiated concerns that the child may be suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm, but the Initial Assessment indicates that the child may be in need and vulnerable to sexual exploitation, a Core Assessment under Section 17 CA 1989 should be undertaken to more fully understand the child's needs and circumstances.

6.3.2 A child in need: meeting should be convened by (CSC). The purpose and remit of the meeting will be to agree and plan with the family and the involved agencies, what actions should be undertaken, by whom and what outcomes are required. This will include whether a plan for ensuring the child's future safety should be developed and implemented and whether services should be provided.

### **6.4. Strategy Discussion, Section 47 Enquiries and Core Assessment**

6.4.1 When a child is suspected of suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, the Local Authority is required by S47 of the Children Act to make enquiries, to enable it to decide whether it should take any action to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. (Please refer to local procedures re Section 47 enquiries and Core Assessment Procedures).

6.4.2 Children's Social Care (CSC) will discuss with the Safeguarding Identified Lead whether a Strategy Discussion or Planning Meeting is

indicated. Any Strategy Discussion must involve the Police, the referring agency and other relevant agencies. If the child is receiving hospital treatment and/or a medical examination is indicated the medical consultant must be involved.

6.4.3 If a Strategy discussion is agreed the Children's Safeguarding unit will agree the Chair and attendance list. This decision will be informed by the available evidence, the complexity of the case, the view of the Police and whether there are a number of children and young people believed to be involved, as well as the identification of the abuser/s. (Please see local Strategy Discussions Procedure).

## **6.5 The Outcome of Section 47 Enquiries and the Core Assessment**

6.5.1 The outcome of Section 47 enquires and the Core Assessment must be concluded, as set out under local Section 47 Enquiries and Core Assessment Procedure.

6.5.2 The outcome of the Section 47 must be recorded and concluded under one of the following categories:

i. **Concerns are substantiated and the child is judged to be at continuing risk of significant harm**

Where the agencies most involved judge that a child may continue to suffer, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm, CSC must convene a Child Protection Case Conference. See local Initial Child Protection Conference Procedure. If the child is already subject to a Child Protection Plan then discussions must take place about any further protective steps needed to ensure the safety of the child. The Chair of the Child Protection Conference must also be advised/consulted..

ii. **Concerns are substantiated, but the child is not judged to be at continuing risk of significant harm**

The original concerns may have been substantiated but it is agreed between the involved agencies, the child and family, that a plan for ensuring the child's future safety and welfare can be developed and implemented, without a Child Protection Case

Conference and Child Protection Plan being put in place. In these circumstances, CSC will convene a Child In Need Meeting. . This judgement requires careful consideration and can only be made by a suitable qualified social work manager, and in light of all relevant information obtained during the Section 47 enquires and a completed Core Assessment.

iii. **Concerns are not substantiated**

Section 47 enquires may not have substantiated the original concerns about the child being at risk of, or suffering, significant harm, but the child is identified as being in need and an appropriate plan and any required services put in place, to respond to any identified needs. In these circumstances, CSC will convene a Children in Need Planning Meeting.

iv. **Concerns are not substantiated**

No further action is required.

6.5.3 The Children's Safeguarding unit Identified lead must be informed of the outcome of the S47 and the Core Assessment.

6.5.4 In respect of outcomes listed under Point 2 and 3 above, a child in need meeting should be convened by CSC at the end of the Section 47 enquires and the Core Assessment, to agree what actions should be undertaken, by whom and what outcomes are required for the child's health and development. This will include, whether a plan for ensuring the child's future safety should be developed and implemented and whether services should be provided.

## **6.6 Immediate Protection**

6.6.1 Where immediate action to safeguard a child is required, it may involve removing the child from the home of a person who is exploiting them to a safe place. However, those working with children in these circumstances must never underestimate the power of perpetrators to find where the child is.

7.6.2 Such children will need placements with carers who have experience of building trusting relationships and skills at containing young people.

6.6.3 A decision to place a child or young person in secure accommodation should only be considered in extreme circumstances, when they are at grave risk of Significant Harm. In cases where the child is under the age of 13, the approval of the Secretary of State must be sought.

## **6.7 Intervention and Support**

6.7.1 Agencies should recognise that there may be a strong relationship between the child and the coercer/abuser and it may be difficult for the child to break this relationship.

6.7.2 A strategy should therefore be developed, with wherever possible the child and family, to address the child's needs and help him or her to move on from the exploitative situation. It could include specialist therapeutic support, mentoring to assist a return to education or employment, outreach work, help to secure appropriate health services, and assistance to develop a positive network of friends and relatives.

6.7.3 The particular circumstances of the child should of course be taken into account in developing the multi agency response and the plan for services should be tailored to meet their specific needs, e.g. whether they are Looked After and/or preparing to leave care, not receiving a suitable education, often missing from home or care, may have been trafficked and/or may be affected by gang activity.

6.7.4 Parents should be engaged in this process unless they are implicated in the sexual exploitation.

## **7. Identifying and Prosecuting Perpetrators**

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7.1 Identifying, disrupting and prosecuting perpetrators is a key part of work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people from sexual exploitation.

- 7.2 While the police and criminal justice agencies lead on this, the support of all partners in gathering and recording information/evidence is vital. All those involved in caring for a child who is suspected to be at risk of sexual exploitation should continually gather, record and share information, as appropriate, to this end. Parents and carers should be encouraged and supported to do so, ensuring that information is recorded in such a way that it can be used by the Crown Prosecution Service and accepted in Court.
- 7.3 The information report contained at Appendix i should be completed by all agencies to record and forward information re a child who is believed to be being sexually exploited to the police district safeguarding unit for recording and further research.
- 7.4 Where a young person wants and is able to be part of a prosecution, it is essential that they are supported through this process and after the prosecution has taken place. Many of the issues facing young victims and witnesses are addressed in a CPS 2006 Policy document on prosecuting cases involving children and young people as victims and witnesses.
- 7.5 There are a range of criminal offences that perpetrators may have committed, for example under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Immigration offences may also be relevant, as well as drugs offences, tax evasion or benefit fraud. Annex A of the Government Guidance sets out details of the legislative framework.
- 7.6 The Police National Database (PND) is a new police-led information management system. It enables an investigator in one police force to identify which other police force holds relevant information on a given individual and is available to assist in the protection of children and young people from sexual exploitation.
- 7.7 In addition the National Offender Management Service, whose focus is the management and supervision of offenders, can assist to ensure that offenders are managed so as to protect children from sexual

exploitation by maintaining awareness of the indicators set out in Section 6.1 of this chapter.

7.8 West Yorkshire Police will:

- i. Provide training to staff at appropriate levels in recognising and responding correctly to issues of child sexual exploitation and make policy and guidance documentation available to all staff;
- ii. Identify a Divisional Champion for the management and coordination of child sexual exploitation investigations and a Divisional single point of contact (SPOC) for CSE issues and communicate this to partner agencies;
- iii. Receive, research, collate and action internal and partner intelligence ;
- iv. Share intelligence and information with partners in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Practice on the Management of Police Information 2005, the National Intelligence Model and Data protection Act 1998;
- v. Ensure that all child protection concerns are referred or notified to Children's Social Care Department in accordance with the West Yorkshire Consortium Procedures Manual;
- vi. Conduct criminal investigations into all allegations of offences committed against children, managing investigations through the appropriate departments and resources and in accordance with the West Yorkshire Child Abuse and Safeguarding Children Policy, NPIA Guidance on Investigating Child Abuse and Safeguarding Children 2009 and Force Policy in respect of Investigating Internet and Computer crime;
- vii. Participate in joint investigations where appropriate in accordance with those policies and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2009;
- viii. Implement early intervention strategies through the use of Force guidance in respect of disruption activities and the use of Court Orders;

- ix. Use the Force Harbourers of Children and Young People policy to support prosecutions under the Child Abduction Act 1984 and Children Act;
- x. Make appropriate use of child protection powers;
- xi. Ensure the use of Special Measures in accordance with the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999;
- xii. Participate in joint information sharing and action planning with partner agencies detailed in section 2 (Strategy meetings, child protection Case Conferences and interagency CSE forums);

7.8 Statutory partners to this Protocol will agree a local process to routinely meet to share and review information and intelligence on those suspected of perpetrating the sexual exploitation of children. These CSE partnership meetings will not supplant, replace or override current local statutory child protection procedures. They will collect and collate intelligence about offenders with the intention of enabling all partners to identify and secure evidence to sustain prevention, disruption and prosecution activity against those perpetrators by:

- i. Identifying children at risk of sexual exploitation;
- ii. Ensuring they are referred into and managed within formal child protection processes at the appropriate level;
- iii. Sharing information about them under the authority of the Children Act;
- iv. Identifying individuals responsible for perpetrating child sexual exploitation and networks and the links between individuals;
- v. Identifying locations where CSE is taking place;
- vi. Identifying and tasking group members with actions to achieve the overall aim of the group in relation to the children, perpetrators and locations identified.

7.8. Local None statutory groups may be invited to join the group as appropriate.

7.9 The referral form contained at Appendix i will be used to refer cases into this process and will be forwarded to all agencies attending the meeting beforehand.

## 8. **Social Media**

8.1 The use of media and technology is now a common feature of the social activity of most young people. Smart phones, laptops and iPods are used to exchange information verbally, by text, e mail and most commonly through social net working sites such as Facebook.

8.2 This presents considerable opportunities to abusers and provides powerful tools with which to groom and control victims. Grooming is defined as developing the trust of a young person or his or her family in order to engage in illegal sexual conduct. It may include:

- i. Causing a child to watch a sexual act, e.g. sending sexually themed adult content or images and videos featuring child sexual abuse to a young person;
- ii. Inciting a child to perform a sexual act, e.g. by threatening to show sexual images of a child to their peers or parents (e.g. self-produced material or even a pseudo-image of the child);
- iii. Suspicious online contact with a child, e.g. asking a young user sexual questions;
- iv. Asking a child to meet in person; befriending a child and gaining their trust, etc.
- v. Other grooming: the range in behaviours that fall into this category are widely variable but reflect the range of strategies often employed by adults to prepare a child for abuse, e.g. using schools or hobby sites such as the Scouts or Girl Guides to gather information about particular children, their location and future events where the child may be present; presenting as a minor online to deceive a child, etc.

8.3 There a number of cases in West Yorkshire where Young people have been entrapped by adults posing as teenagers to obtain sexually explicit images via web cams or making arrangements to meet the victim. Often

these individuals live some considerable distance from the victim and initially make contact through legitimate sites used by young people.

- 8.4 Local experience has also shown that Facebook is increasingly the chosen medium of communication between victim and abuser, assisted by the fact that access cannot be obtained by police or other agencies to information hidden behind 'white walls' where the child's permission is required to enter the site.
- 8.5 However, telephone and internet communication can provide excellent evidence against abusers and can assist in identifying perpetrators and unknown victims and is useful in identifying networks. It is vital that those having care of children at risk of CSE gather as much information as possible re mobile numbers, text communications and Facebook contacts and forward it to police SPOCs to assist the police in collating this evidence.