



St Helena
Government



MULTI AGENCY EXPLOITATION PROTOCOL

Introduction

This document sets out good practice procedures for safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children from Child Exploitation. It outlines how through partnerships we assess, challenge and provide an enhanced, effective service to reduce the risks and to ensure that interventions are focussed, co-ordinated and have a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people.

This document sits under the St Helena Safeguarding Children and Adult Safeguarding Board. It sets out operational expectations and direction for all practitioners who are involved with children and young people who are vulnerable to, or at risk of exploitation, and those who are being exploited.

Within this protocol we have included the following pathways as we recognise that they all have significance when considering and responding to children and young people who may be at risk of exploitation.

- Children and young people who go missing
- Children and young people who are at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation
- Children and young people who are at risk of Criminal Exploitation
- Children and young people who have been Trafficked for the purposes of exploitation (no current legislation)

This protocol is a multi-agency document and staff should be familiar with and refer to the following guidance, albeit UK guidance will help all professionals in tackling exploitation:

- Home Office [Child exploitation disruption toolkit](#) April 2019
- Child Exploitation Assessment Toolkit Jan 2020

Definitions

Child Exploitation

“Child Exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.” (Home Office, 2017)

The below nationally agreed definitions will be utilised across St Helena:

Child Sexual Exploitation

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. (Home Office 2017)



Child Criminal Exploitation

Child Criminal Exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of a person under the age of 18 and may coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under that age into any criminal 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 and/or
- c) Through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may be exploited even if the activity appears consensual (i.e. moving drugs or the proceeds of drugs from one place to another).

Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (Home Office 2018)



Human Trafficking:

If the person arranges or facilitates the travel of another person to exploit them. It is irrelevant whether the exploited person, adult or child, consents to the travel. A person may, in particular, arrange or facilitate another person's travel by recruiting, transporting or transferring, harboring or receiving them, or transferring or exchanging control over them. 'Travel' means arriving in, or entering, any country; departing from any country and travelling within any country. Despite there being no current legislation in place on St Helena in relation to Human Trafficking, moving a child or vulnerable adult from one place to another in order to exploit them would have to be considered under the existing legislation in relation to exploitation and harm.

In determining whether or not a child is a victim of trafficking, their consent to being trafficked is irrelevant and how they are trafficked is also irrelevant. Only the act and the purpose need to be present. It is not necessary to prove coercion or any other inducement.

Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual safeguarding which includes child sexual exploitation, peer on peer violence and abuse (including gangs), modern day slavery, harmful sexual behaviour, criminal exploitation, and going missing should not be seen in isolation as they often overlap, creating a complex set of harmful circumstances and experience for children, young people, families and communities.

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighborhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts.

Organised Crime Groups and Gangs

Organised crime group means a group that:

- a) Has as its purpose the carrying on of criminal activities, and
- b) Consists of three or more persons who act, or agree to act, together to further that purpose

Gang related violence and drug dealing activity is defined as gang related if it occurs in the course of, or is otherwise related to, the activities of a group that:

- a) Consists of at least three people, and
- b) Has one or more characteristics that enable its members to be identified by others as a group. (Serious Crime Act 2015)

Albeit there is no evidence of organised crime groups or gangs on St Helena the education of professionals and those working with children and young people in relation to this area of risk and the recognition of risk remains the priority.

Tackling and Preventing Child Exploitation Guidance

Key Principles

The principles underpinning a multi-agency response to child criminal exploitation include:

- Recognition that Criminal Exploitation can include sexual, physical and emotional abuse, as well as, in some cases, neglect.
- Recognition that children do not make informed choices to enter or remain in exploitative relationships, but do so from coercion, intimidation, violence, enticement, manipulation or desperation.
- Recognition that CE covers a range of vulnerabilities which will need differing responses from a range of agencies; it is a multi-causal issue that needs to be addressed within a multi-agency approach.
- Agreed that a multi-agency network or risk assessment and management meeting/discussion should take place for all children and young people considered at risk of Child Exploitation.

- Requirement that Child Protection Procedures should always be followed where:
 - The child or young person is at risk of significant harm and/or has other additional vulnerabilities.
 - There is concern that the criminal exploitation is being facilitated by the child/young person's parent/carer.
- If there is immediate harm to the child, Police should be informed immediately.

Factors and involved considerations

- Pull factors: children performing tasks for others resulting in them gaining affection, accommodation, food, gifts, status or a sense of safety, money or drugs; often the hook is through the perpetrator supplying Class B drugs such as cannabis to the child or young person.
- Push factors: children escaping from situations where their needs are neglected and there is exposure to unsafe individuals, where there is high family conflict or the absence of a primary attachment figure.
- Control: Manipulation, violence and threats of violence by those exploiting the child particularly when the child or young person is identified by the police, they are expected to take full responsibility for the offences for which they are charged – i.e. possession and supply of illegal substances.
- Many young people do not recognise that they are being exploited or that they are at risk. The majority of children who are vulnerable to criminal exploitation are male, however the possibilities of female involvement should not be dismissed.
- It is imperative that in recognising CE as a priority, it is co-considered alongside children who go missing, Child Criminal Exploitation, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and modern day slavery, as all are intrinsically linked.

N.B. It is important to note that perpetrators of CE may themselves be children who are criminally exploited and that the victims of CE may also be at risk of becoming perpetrators.

Consent

The law states that consent is only valid where children and young people make a choice and have the freedom and capacity to make that choice. If a child feels they have no other meaningful choice, are under the influence of harmful substances or fearful of what might happen if they do not comply, (all of which are common features in cases of CE) consent cannot legally be given, whatever the age of the child.

Vulnerabilities and Indicators

There are some factors that can increase the vulnerability that a child or young person will be exploited by others. In order to understand these, it is helpful to draw on the contextual safeguarding hexagon model shown below, helping to picture the child or young person's individual factors, home, peers, school and neighbourhood.

Figure 1: Contexts of Adolescent Safety and Vulnerability (Firmin 2013:47)

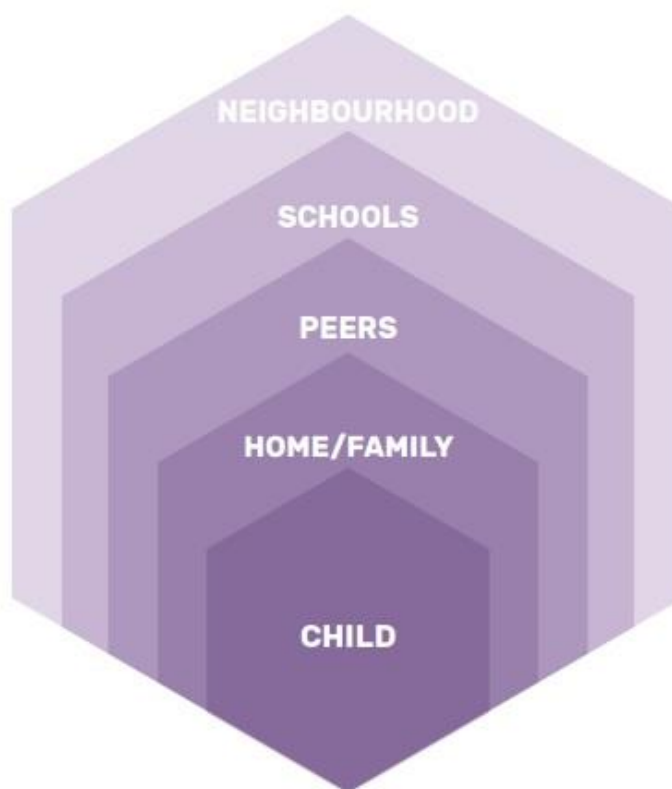


Illustration provided by the University of Bedfordshire, Contextual Safeguarding Team

The following vulnerabilities do not mean that a child or young person will be exploited, but they are factors that could increase the vulnerability that they could be exploited by someone.

CHILD/INDIVIDUAL: If a child or young person is Looked After, has learning disabilities, substance misuse issues, or mental health problems.

HOME/FAMILY: If there is neglect/abuse, exposure to or experience of violence, parental substance misuse, mental health and domestic abuse, poverty, lack of a positive relationship with a protective and nurturing adult, homelessness or insecure accommodation status.

PEERS: If the child or young person is exposed to other children and young people who are known to be exploited, or exposed to or experiencing peer on peer abuse.

SCHOOLS: If the child or young person has been excluded from school and is not in education, training or employment, or is exposed to or has experienced violent crime.

NEIGHBOURHOODS: If the child or young person has been exposed to or has experienced violent crime.

Warning Indicators

There are a number of indicators listed in the following table that could alert professionals to a child or young person being exploited.

Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frequent missing episodes and being found out of area.• Unexplained amounts of money, mobile phones, credit, clothing, jewellery, new haircuts or other items and gifts.• Being found out of area when missing.• Multiple referrals for incidents in the same location.• Returned from missing episodes with injuries, or dishevelled appearance.• Change in behaviour, i.e. more secretive, withdrawn, or isolated from peers, or not mixing with usual friends.• Unexplained absences from, or not engaged in school, college, training, or work.• Increasingly disruptive, hostile or physically aggressive at home or school, including the use of sexualised language and language in relation to drug dealing and/or violence.• Expressions around invincibility or not caring about what happens to them.• Reports of being taken to parties, people's houses, unknown areas, hotels, nightclubs, takeaways or out of area by unknown adults.• Increasing use of drugs or alcohol.• Fear of reprisal of violence from young people or adults, on themselves or their family.• Having multiple mobile phones, sim cards or use of a phone that causes concern e.g. multiple callers or more texts/pings than usual.• Possession of hotel keys/cards, or keys to unknown premises.• Disclosure of a sexual or physical assault, followed by withdrawal of the allegation.• Abduction or forced imprisonment.• Entering or leaving vehicles/cars with unknown adults. Receiving rewards of money or goods for introducing peers.• Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being.• Agencies unable to engage with the child or young person.• New peer groups and/or relationships.• Relationships with controlling or older individuals or groups.

Language agencies should use to describe a child's behaviour

Inappropriate language	Appropriate language
'Child is being offered drugs and alcohol in return for sex'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child is being sexually exploited. – Concerns that the child has been raped. – Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child. – The child is being sexually abused. – The child's vulnerability regarding drug use is being used by others to abuse them. – The perpetrators have a hold over the child due to the fact that they are drug dependant.
'Involved in CSE'	<p>This implies that there is a level of choice regarding the child being abused. A better term would be that the child is vulnerable to being sexually exploited or they are being sexually exploited. A five year old would never be referred to as being involved in sexual abuse for the same reasons.</p>
'Promiscuous'	<p>This puts the blame on the child and implies the child knows what may be happening and is therefore not viewed by practitioners as exploitative and abusive. This phrase is often used to describe the behaviour of females. This language should not be used for children.</p>
'Prostituting themselves'	<p>This completely misses that the child is being manipulated and controlled. Changes in legislation have meant that child prostitution is no longer an acceptable term and should never be used.</p>
'Boyfriend/Girlfriend'	<p>Children have been challenged in court with practitioner's recordings where their practitioner has referred to the perpetrator as the child's boyfriend/girlfriend. This language should not be used.</p>
'Putting themselves at risk'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child may have been groomed. – The child is at an increased vulnerability to being abused/exploited. – A perpetrator may exploit the child's increased vulnerability. – Situation could reduce the child's safety. – Location/situation could increase a perpetrators opportunity to abuse the child. – Child not in a protective environment. – The location is dangerous to children. – Not clear if the child may be being sexually abused. – It is unclear why the child is getting into cars. – Concern that there is a power imbalance forcing the child to act in this way. – Concerns regarding other's influences on the child.

'Sexual activity with...'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – They have been sexually abused. – They have been raped. – Allegation of sexual abuse. – Child has described sexual activity, however concerns exist that the child may have been groomed/coerced.
'Sexually active since (aged under 13)'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Raped. – Concerns exist that the child may have been coerced, exploited or sexually abused. – Child may have been sexually abused.
'Drug running He/she is drug running'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child criminal exploitation (CCE). – The child is being trafficked for purpose of criminal exploitation.
'Recruit/run/work'	<p>This implies there is a level of choice / control by the child regarding their exploitation and does not take into consideration the grooming. Coercion, threats or intimidation. A more appropriate description would be that the child is being criminally exploited.</p>
'He/she is choosing this lifestyle'	<p>Again, this implies that there is a level of choice or control by the child regarding their exploitation and does not take into account the grooming, coercion, threats or intimidation. A more appropriate description would be that the child is being criminally exploited.</p>
'Spending time/associating with 'elders''	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The young person says that they are friends with a person and there are concerns about the person's age, imbalance of power, exploitation, offending. – The young person has been groomed, exploited, controlled. – If the 'elder' is under the age of 18 years – this will need to be considered using child protection processes.

*'When I think about that time,
even now I feel very scared.
It was a very hard time.
I felt I had no choices'.*

Young male

HOW WE WILL DO IT

Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action. For CSC to be able to understand the concerns raised for a child fully, they will need to liaise with other agencies involved in the life of the child. There is an expectation that agencies will collaborate to gain the best view of a child's lived experience.

Children who go missing

Missing children and young people may be at increased risk of Child Exploitation and should be reported as missing to police in-line with the missing guidance and flowchart in Appendix A. Once a missing child is located, it is important that they are spoken to, to identify any risks the child has been exposed to. There are two stages to the process, the Police Safe and Well Check and the Missing Return Home Interview.

Children should be informed of their rights, and encouraged to talk about the incident to someone independent of their parents/carers on their return.

The child must be offered the interview with the independent person within 72 hours of being located or returned.

If the child or young person is Looked After, the allocated social worker, as soon as they receive a Found Notification will complete a return home interview.

Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, there will be a strategy discussion/meeting. The strategy discussion/meeting will be coordinated and chaired by a Children's Social Care.

Professionals participating in strategy discussions/meetings must have their agency's information relating to the child available to be able to contribute to the discussion/meeting, and must be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their agencies. The meeting should take place within 24 hours of the missing episode wherever possible.

If there is any suggestion that a child has been the victim or perpetrator of crime, consideration must be given to the securing of evidence including forensic examination. Where an allegation of physical or sexual abuse is made or becomes evident, the Safeguarding and Children Procedures must be followed.

Police and Children's social care will meet at least once a week to discuss cases of concern at an operational level. Strategic leads will meet a minimum of bi monthly to discuss trends and cases of concern. This meeting will discuss issues with placements and care homes that seem to be not providing the appropriate service levels.

Children who are at risk of Exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation

There is a clear focus on working with partner agencies to reduce the risks of Child Sexual Exploitation through:

- Reducing children and young people's vulnerability to these risks.
- Improving their resilience.
- Disrupting and preventing the activities of perpetrators.
- Reducing tolerance of exploitative behaviours.
- Prosecuting abusers.

Any practitioner who is concerned or receives information that a child or young person is involved in sexual exploitation should complete a referral including as much detail as possible and attach the Child Exploitation Risk Assessment and send it to Childrens.Services@sainthelena.gov.sh

Response to Child Exploitation

Where exploitation of a child is suspected children's social care will then take the lead and review the CE Risk assessment. If the outcome is that the child/young person requires Early Help/Universal Services intervention, it is expected that the lead professional will ensure that the CE Risk Assessment is updated or completed and re-refer if risks have increased. For Emerging risk cases there is an expectation that the risk assessment tool will be reviewed no later than 90 days following its completion.

If the child or young person is open to Social Care, the information will be passed through to the relevant social worker for safeguarding action to be taken. The CE Risk assessment will be completed in full or updated, ensuring that all involved agencies contribute. This Risk Assessment should be sent to the Team Manager. This should inform the continued or review of the plan for the child/young person to protect and reduce risks for the child/young person. Cases that identify a Moderate Risk assessment should be reviewed no later than 60 days following completion. Cases identified as High Risk should be reviewed no later than 30 days following completion.

Criminal Exploitation including Trafficking

This is what we mean when we talk about criminal exploitation:

'We recognise that concerns exists with regard to children and young people who are used, through whatever means, to engage in criminal activity by other young people or adults who are able to coerce them to do so. The young people involved may not identify themselves as being 'exploited' as such, but it is clearly to their detriment that they are involved in this type of activity'

(Taken from Knowsley Safeguarding Board, 2017)

The safeguarding board is committed to working as partner agencies across safeguarding and Community Safety to:

- To ensure that young people are supported to safely identify ways to exit and withdraw from criminal exploitation.
- To ensure that young people are supported to carefully disclose information so perpetrators are held accountable and brought to justice.
- Where possible, to ensure that young people are not criminalised and prosecuted with such action only being used as a last resort.

It needs to be understood and acknowledged by all professionals that that young people are subjected to significant pressure and coerced into criminal activity and, as such, feel they have no choice other than to follow the instructions of those who are exploiting and therefore subjecting them to abuse.

Complex Abuse and Strategy Meetings

Complex abuse strategy meetings will be chaired by a sufficiently experienced manager and must take place within one working day of the receipt of the referral who will formally record their decision that a complex abuse strategy meeting is required and formally record the strategy meeting.

Operational Meetings (Missing and Child Exploitation - MACE)

MACE meetings review the patterns and themes in respect of children and young people who go missing and those cases where there are serious concerns regarding exploitation. Children and young people where there are significant concerns and that would benefit from a senior multi-agency review will be timetabled as part of the agenda and the relevant practitioners invited to attend the meeting and present the case.

'Everything kind of started to go wrong for me. I felt the need to just isolate myself from everyone.'

Young female

Referral Process

Referral Process re: Concerns a child is being exploited

