



# Children Looked After

APPROVED BY:

Date:

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## **1. Decision to Look After Child**

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### **1.1 The Decision**

A child may not come into care without the express permission of a Designated Manager (Decision to Look After). (This includes out of hours)

Any decision to look after a child made outside office hours will be communicated by telephone or email to the Director within the next working day.

### **1.2 Considerations before a Decision to Look After is made**

The decision to look after a child will only be made where those making the decision are satisfied that:

- Suitable appropriate alternatives have been fully considered;
- Appropriate consideration has been given to the necessity of Accommodation, the purpose and nature of the proposed placement;
- Whether the Accommodation provided should be via a Court Order or undertaken with Parental Consent. In considering this Children's social care should:
  - Identify whether, under the particular circumstances, it needs to share Parental Responsibility with the parent/carer;
  - Whether the parent is able to provide fully informed consent to an agreement for the child to be accommodated.
- Appropriate consultation has taken place;
- However, where the circumstances constitute an emergency, opportunities for consultation may be limited e.g. where a parent/carer is not available.

Before a decision is made to look after a child, consideration must be given to making arrangements with other extended family members or friends who might be prepared to care for the child without the need for the child to come into care.

Alternatively, the child may come within the definition of Privately Fostered after 28 days, in which case the Private Fostering Procedure will apply.

**N.B.** Any arrangements whereby the child is not regarded as Looked After would have to be agreed with the parent or a person with Parental Responsibility, and the social worker must be satisfied that such an arrangement is sufficiently secure to meet the child's needs and is supported by a Child in Need Plan.

If no such arrangement can be identified or such an arrangement would not meet the child's needs, the child's social worker, with their team manager, should consider:

- The child's immediate placement needs - including the child's views, the views of the parents, those with Parental Responsibility and any other person whose wishes and feelings the social worker should consider to be relevant - and whether a placement with a Connected Person may be possible;
- The timescales for the child's placement;
- A date for the child to return home or when the decision will be reviewed;
- The actions of support and work to be included in the Care Plan to enable the necessary change for the child to return home wherever possible.
- The obtaining of parental consent to look after the child and consent to medical care;
- Any impact on educational arrangements;
- The contact arrangements with birth parents, siblings, extended family and friends.

Where it is considered that Care Proceedings should be initiated to secure the child's placement, see also Care and Supervision Proceedings and the Public Law Outline.

**N.B.** Any decision that a child should be the subject of Care Proceedings should have regard to the requirements of the Public Law Outline, and in particular the Pre-Proceedings Checklist which is set out in the Care and Supervision Proceedings and the Public Law Outline and be agreed by the Director of CASC.

All decisions made should be recorded on the child's electronic record, including the reasons for reaching the decision (see also Recording Parental Consent).

### **1.3 Voluntary Accommodation**

There are many scenarios in which voluntary accommodation is used positively and these include situations of family support (e.g. Short Term Breaks) and where parents are unable to care for children, for whatever reason, and there are no agreed alternative family or friends to undertake this.

In accommodating a child under Section 32, it must always be borne in mind that the St Helenian Government does not have Parental Responsibility; only the parents/ those carers with Parental Responsibility can make decisions for the child. The parent/carer with Parental Responsibility can remove the child from Accommodation

at any time and any such request must be responded to promptly by children's social care, or it must otherwise take action through the court.

The parents/carers should be advised of any changes in the child's circumstances whilst the child is in St Helena Government's care.

It is therefore important to ensure that the parents/carers have full information about their continuing responsibilities as well as those of the local authority and that this is enshrined in the Care Plan and a written agreement.

### **1.3.1 Obtaining Parental Consent**

A recent Court of Appeal hearing (L B Hackney v Williams & Anor [2017] EWCA Civ 26) confirmed that 'Consent' under any of the voluntary provisions was not a statutory requirement as such. It stated that the organisation has a duty to provide accommodation for children, (subject to a parent being able to legally object and / or remove) where the person who had been caring for them was 'prevented (whether or not permanently and for whatever reason) from providing them with suitable accommodation or care'.

This, therefore, supports children's social care in its duties towards children on those occasions where 'parental consent' cannot, for a variety of reasons, be obtained at the time of a child's accommodation or parents cannot effect care of the child themselves.

Nevertheless, with regard to previous court judgments on 'consent', it reflected that they were, 'in short, good practice guidance and a description of the process that the family court expects to be followed'.

Therefore, obtaining Parental Consent as a matter of good practice remains an essential part of Accommodating a child under this part of the Welfare of Children Ordinance . A number of court decisions have been particularly critical of UK local authorities' actions with regard to consent and great care needs to be undertaken to ensure parents have the appropriate capacity to do this.

Voluntary agreements are not valid unless the parent giving consent has capacity to do so, (in cases where the father also has Parental Responsibility, the consent of both parents should be sought). The consent needs to be properly informed and fairly obtained. Willingness to consent cannot be inferred from silence, submission or acquiescence - it is a positive action.

Detailed guidance on the obtaining of parental consent was given by the High Court in the case of *Re CA (A Baby)* (2012):

- The social worker must first be satisfied that the parent giving consent does not lack the mental Capacity to do so. Under the Mental Capacity Act 2005, a person is unable to make a decision if they are unable:
  - To understand the information relevant to the decision;
  - To retain that information;
  - To use or weigh that information as part of the process of making the decision; or
  - To communicate their decision.

The High Court in Re S (Child as parent: Adoption: Consent) [2017] EWHC 2729 (Fam) set out the relevant information that a parent would need to be able to understand, retain and weigh up in order to have competency to consent to the accommodation of a child:

- i. That the child will be staying with someone chosen by the local authority, probably a foster carer;
  - ii. That the parent can change their mind about the arrangements, and request the child back from accommodation at any time;
  - iii. That the parent will be able to see the child.
- If there is doubt about Capacity, no further attempts to obtain consent should be made at that time, and advice should be sought from a manager;
- If satisfied that the parent has Capacity, the social worker must be satisfied that the consent is fully informed:
  - Does the parent fully understand the consequences of giving such a consent?
  - Does the parent fully appreciate the range of choice available and the consequences of refusal as well as giving consent?
  - Is the parent in possession of all the facts and issues material to the giving of consent?
- If not satisfied that the consent is fully informed, no further attempt should be made to obtain consent on that occasion and advice should be sought from a manager and legal advice sought if thought necessary;

- If satisfied that the consent is fully informed, then it is necessary to be satisfied that the giving of such consent and the subsequent removal of the child from the parent is both fair and proportionate:
  - What is the current physical and psychological state of the parent?
  - If they have a solicitor, have they been encouraged to seek legal advice and/or advice from family or friends?
  - Is it necessary for the safety of the child for them to be removed at this time?
  - Would it be fairer in this case for this matter to be the subject of a court order rather than an agreement?

Whether a person has capacity can sometimes be difficult to determine, as some individuals have a learning disability or mental health problem but can present as being more 'able' than in fact they are. Equally, within the context of 'assessing capacity', social workers should approach with great care relying on voluntary accommodation agreements from mothers after giving birth, (especially where there is no immediate danger to the child and where probably no order would be made).

Where there is any concern about a parent / carer's capacity, the social worker should ensure they discuss this issue with their team manager, or that the parent has information from a legal adviser or professional advice

### **1.3.2 Recording Parental Consent**

In *Re N (Children) (Adoption: Jurisdiction)* [2015] EWCA Civ 1112 good practice the President of the Family Division, Sir James Munby sets out his view in respect of good practice in the recording of parental consent to voluntary accommodation agreement:

- Wherever possible the agreement of a parent to the voluntary accommodation of their child, should be properly recorded in writing and evidenced by the parent's signature;
- The written document should be clear and precise as to its terms, drafted in simple and straight-forward language that the particular parent can readily understand;

- The written document should spell out, following the language, that the parent can 'remove the child' from St Helenian Government accommodation 'at any time';
- The written document should not seek to impose any fetters on the exercise of the parent's rights. Where the parent is not fluent in English, the written document should be translated into the parent's own language and the parent should sign the foreign language text, adding, in the parent's language, words to the effect that 'I have read this document and I agree to its terms'.

### **1.3.3 The use of voluntary accommodation prior to Court Proceedings**

High Court Judgements have considered that in circumstances where the threshold criteria (for Care/ Supervision Orders) are met, (i.e. where a child is at risk of significant harm, or the likelihood of significant harm), then care proceedings should be issued without delay.

Nevertheless, voluntary accommodation may, in an appropriate case, have a proper role to play as a short-term measure pending the commencement of care proceedings, but the Courts have strongly advised that this should not lead to an unnecessary delay in the issuing of proceedings and plans for children must not be allowed to drift, (including those cases when children are placed with relatives under a voluntary accommodation agreement). Proceedings still need to be issued in a timely fashion.

Even where a parent/carer's legal adviser has established an agreement regarding the use of voluntary accommodation prior to either issuing Proceedings or progressing a timely plan and timetable of work for further assessment, these should be carefully adhered to by all parties. Any plan should be based on the child's welfare needs and avoid delay.

All such agreements should be undertaken in conjunction with the Children's social care Legal Services and include a clear (written) agreement and Care Plan with the outcome considered at an Our Children's Review to which the parents have been invited.

Where it is highly likely that proceedings will be required to determine a factual issue, or where complex medical evidence may become involved it is better for proceedings to be issued promptly allowing the court to manage the timetable of the court case and the parents to be able to access effective legal advice.

### **1.4 Actions required after a Decision to Look After is made**



In relation to children where Care Proceedings are being considered to secure the child's placement,

In all cases, if it is agreed that the child should become Looked After, the child's social worker will draw up a draft Care Plan with clear timescales and a statement as to whether the child's needs would best be met in a family placement or residential care.

If a foster or residential placement is required, the relevant procedure to be followed, including the need to hold a Placement Planning Meeting

Where a decision is made to pursue a Looked After placement with a relative or friend (or the child's placement with a relative or friend is judged to be a Looked After placement), an immediate assessment of the relative/friend must be undertaken.

## **2. The Care Plan**

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### **2.1 The Care Plan - Contents**

In all circumstances where a decision is made to look after a child, the child must have a Care Plan completed by the social worker and signed by the team manager, the contents of which include:

- The child's Placement Plan (setting out why the placement was chosen and how the placement will contribute to meeting the child's needs);
- The child's Permanence Plan (setting out the long term plans for the child's upbringing including timescales);
- The Pathway Plan (where appropriate, for young people leaving care);
- The child's Health Plan;
- The child's Personal Education Plan;
- The contingency plan;
- The date of the child's first Our Children's Review (**within 20 working days**);
- The name of the Independent chair.

#### **2.1.1 The Care Plan Where the Matter is Before the Court**

In addition to the above, a Care Plan should reflect that the court is required to consider the 'permanence provisions' of the Care Plan for the child:

- a. The provisions setting out the long-term plan for the upbringing of the child - to live with a parent/family member/family friend; adoption; or other long-term care; and
- b. The plan's provisions in relation to any of the following:
  - i. The impact on the child concerned of any harm that he or she suffered or was likely to suffer;
  - ii. The current and future needs of the child (including needs arising out of that impact);
  - iii. The way in which the long-term plan for the upbringing of the child would meet those current and future needs.

## **2.2 The Care Plan - Process**

Where there is no recent Assessment in relation to the child, the Care Plan must provide for an Assessment to be completed.

The child's social worker is responsible for drawing up and updating the Care Plan in consultation with:

- a. The child;
- b. The child's parents and those with Parental Responsibility;
- c. Anyone who is not a parent but has been caring for or looking after the child;
- d. Other members of the child's family network who are significant to the child;
- e. The child's school or the education service;
- f. Health;
- g. Probation, if the child is known to them;
- h. Any other agency involved with the child's care.

The social worker should ensure that the child, those with Parental Responsibility and the carer understand the Care Plan and their role in contributing to its implementation.

One of the key functions of the Care Plan is to ensure that each child has a Permanence Plan by the time of the second LAC REVIEW. The Care Plan is subject to scrutiny at each Our Children's Review.

The Care Plan should include the arrangements made to meet the child's needs in relation to their:

- Emotional and behavioural development;
- The child's identity in relation to religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background;
- Family and social relationships; arrangements for contact with sibling(s) accommodated by SHG or any other jurisdiction; details of any previous private law order, in relation to a Looked After Child; details of any order in relation to contact with a child in care; arrangements for contact with parents/anyone with Parental Responsibility/ any other Connected Person;
- Social presentation;
- Self-care skills.

### **3. Timescales for Completion**

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A Care Plan must be prepared prior to a child's first placement, or, if it is not practicable to do so, within 10 working days of the child's first placement.

### **4. Approval of the Care Plan**

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Any final Care Plan taken before the Court within Care Proceedings must be endorsed and signed by the team manager.

All other Care Plans must be endorsed and signed by the social worker's team manager.

### **5. Circulation of Care Plan**

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The Care Plan must be circulated to the following people:

- The child;
- The parent(s);
- Providers/Carers - if no Care Plan has been drawn up prior to the child's placement, the social worker must ensure that the providers/carers understand the key objectives of the plan, and how the placement will help achieve these objectives;

- The Foster carers, where the child is in foster care. N.B. The Care Plan should be filed in the confidential section of the foster carer's file and returned to the child's social worker when the placement ends;
- The child's looked after review chair.

## **6. Other Required Plans, Documentation and Actions**

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### **6.1 Placement Plan**

The child must have a Placement Plan at the time of the placement (this includes the parent's consent to the placement (if applicable) and the child's medical treatment). It should be completed as far as possible before the child is placed or, if not reasonably practicable, within 5 working days of the start of the placement.

The information to be included in the Placement Plan will include:

1. How on a day-to-day basis the child will be cared for and the child's welfare will be safeguarded and promoted by the appropriate person;
2. Any arrangements for contact between the child and parents/anyone with Parental Responsibility/any other connected person, including, if appropriate, reasons why contact is not reasonably practicable or not consistent with the child's welfare; details of any Contact Order; the arrangements for notifying any changes in contact arrangements;
3. Arrangements for the child's health (physical, emotional and mental) and dental care, including the name and address of registered medical and dental practitioners; arrangements for giving/withholding consent to medical/dental examination/treatment;
4. Arrangements for the child's education and training, including the name and address of the child's school/other educational institution/provider and designated teacher; maintaining any Education, Health and Care Plan;
5. The arrangements for and frequency of visits by the child's social worker; and for advice, support and assistance between visits;
6. The circumstances in which the placement may be terminated;
7. The name and contact details of the Reviewing Chair, , the social worker who will be visiting the child.

The Placement Plan will be recorded in the child's record on the electronic database.

Copies of the Placement Plan must be provided to the child (if of sufficient age and understanding), the parents and must be handed to the residential staff/carers before the child is placed. Where a child is placed in a foster placement, one copy should also be kept in the confidential section of the foster carer's file and returned at the end of the placement.

At the time of the placement, the residential staff/carers should also be given any additional information about details of the child's day to day needs which are not covered by the Placement Plan but are important to ensure that the staff/carers are in the best possible position to help the child settle in the new placement, for example any particular fears at night-time or the child's favourite toys.

## **6.2 Chronology**

Whenever a new placement is made or the child moves placement, the child's Chronology should be updated.

## **6.3 Arrangement of LAC Review**

The child's social worker must organise a looked after review within 4 WEEKS

## **6.4 Health Care**

All children should have a looked after medical within 14 days of becoming a looked after.

See [Health Care Assessments and Plans Procedure](#).

In addition, the social worker should inform the carer of any medication the child is taking, and ensure that a supply of medication is provided in a clearly labelled bottle with the child's name, required dosage and the time the medication is to be given.

## **6.5 Personal Education Plan (PEP)**

The social worker should also liaise with the Designated Teacher so that a Personal Education Plan (PEP) can be completed as part of the Care Plan before the child becomes Looked After (or within 28 working days in the case of an emergency placement) and be available in time for the first Our Children's Review. See

## **6.6 Provision of Information**

The child's social worker must provide the child and parents with written information about the placement.

The child and parents must also be provided with information about the complaints process

**All staff to read the workplace Policies/Procedures/Protocols/Guidelines then sign below to indicate that they have understood the document and will implement to daily practice.**

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St Helena  
Government



# MULTI AGENCY CHILD EXPLOITATION PROTOCOL

APPROVED BY:

DATE: 1 / 11 / 21

Tracy Poole-Nandy Director, Children & Adult Social Care

Next Review Date: December 2021

## 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.







**All staff to read the workplace Policies/Procedures/Protocols/Guidelines then sign below to indicate that they have understood the document and will implement to daily practice.**

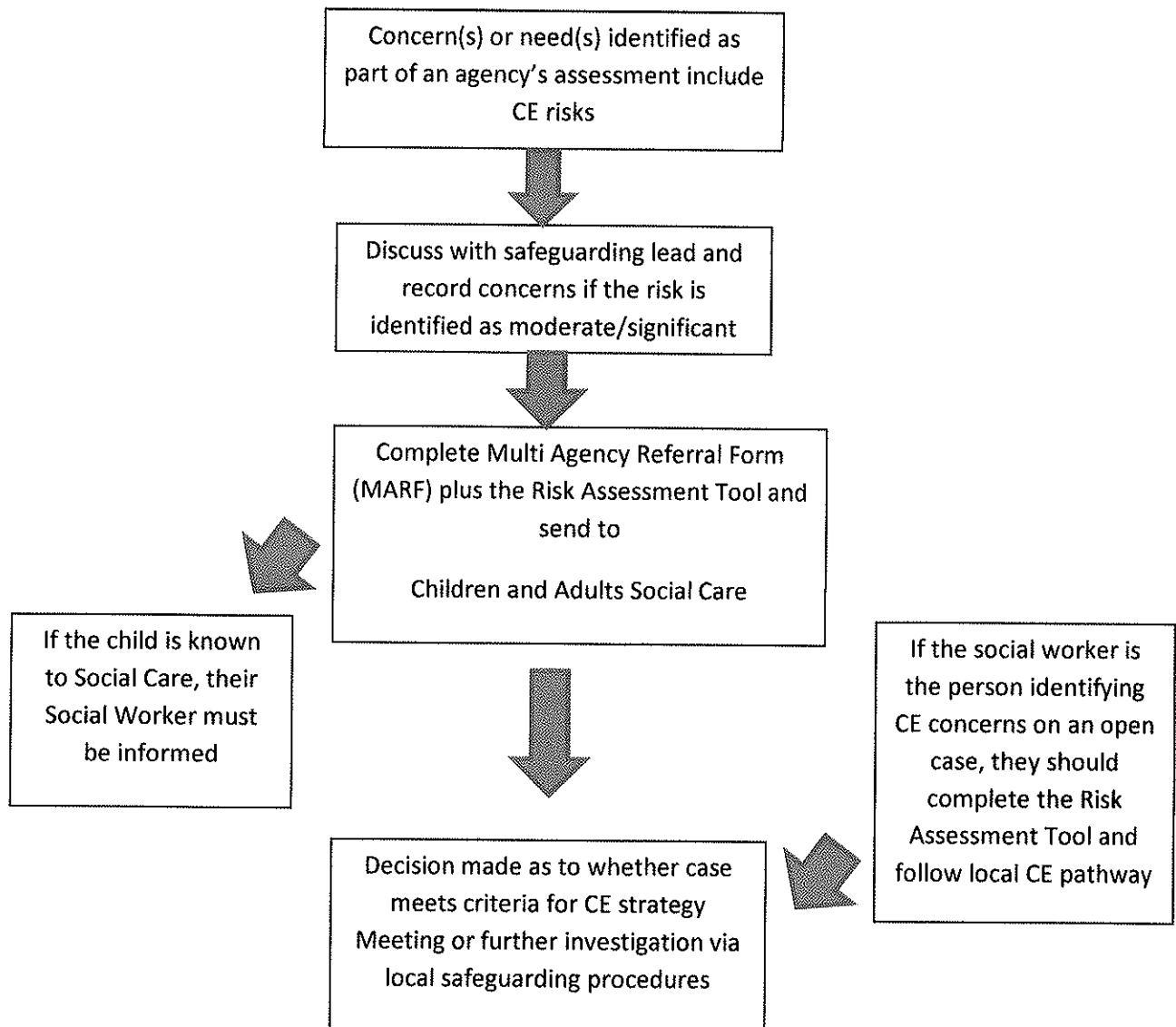
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## Referral Process

### Referral Process re: Concerns a child is being exploited



## **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**

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](mailto: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.

# 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.



'Sexual activity with...'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– They have been sexually abused.</li> <li>– They have been raped.</li> <li>– Allegation of sexual abuse.</li> <li>– Child has described sexual activity, however concerns exist that the child may have been groomed/coerced.</li> </ul>
'Sexually active since (aged under 13)'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Raped.</li> <li>– Concerns exist that the child may have been coerced, exploited or sexually abused.</li> <li>– Child may have been sexually abused.</li> </ul>
'Drug running He/she is drug running'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Child criminal exploitation (CCE).</li> <li>– The child is being trafficked for purpose of criminal exploitation.</li> </ul>
'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.</p> <p>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"> <li>– 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.</li> <li>– The young person has been groomed, exploited, controlled.</li> <li>– If the 'elder' is under the age of 18 years – this will need to be considered using child protection processes.</li> </ul>

*'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**

## 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"> <li>– Child is being sexually exploited.</li> <li>– Concerns that the child has been raped.</li> <li>– Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child.</li> <li>– The child is being sexually abused.</li> <li>– The child's vulnerability regarding drug use is being used by others to abuse them.</li> <li>– The perpetrators have a hold over the child due to the fact that they are drug dependant.</li> </ul>
'Involved in CSE'	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.
'Promiscuous'	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 <b>not</b> be used for children.
'Prostituting themselves'	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 <b>never</b> be used.
'Boyfriend/Girlfriend'	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 <b>not</b> be used.
'Putting themselves at risk'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Child may have been groomed.</li> <li>– The child is at an increased vulnerability to being abused/exploited.</li> <li>– A perpetrator may exploit the child's increased vulnerability.</li> <li>– Situation could reduce the child's safety.</li> <li>– Location/situation could increase a perpetrators opportunity to abuse the child.</li> <li>– Child not in a protective environment.</li> <li>– The location is dangerous to children.</li> <li>– Not clear if the child may be being sexually abused.</li> <li>– It is unclear why the child is getting into cars.</li> <li>– Concern that there is a power imbalance forcing the child to act in this way.</li> <li>– Concerns regarding other's influences on the child.</li> </ul>

**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

- 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.

## 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)

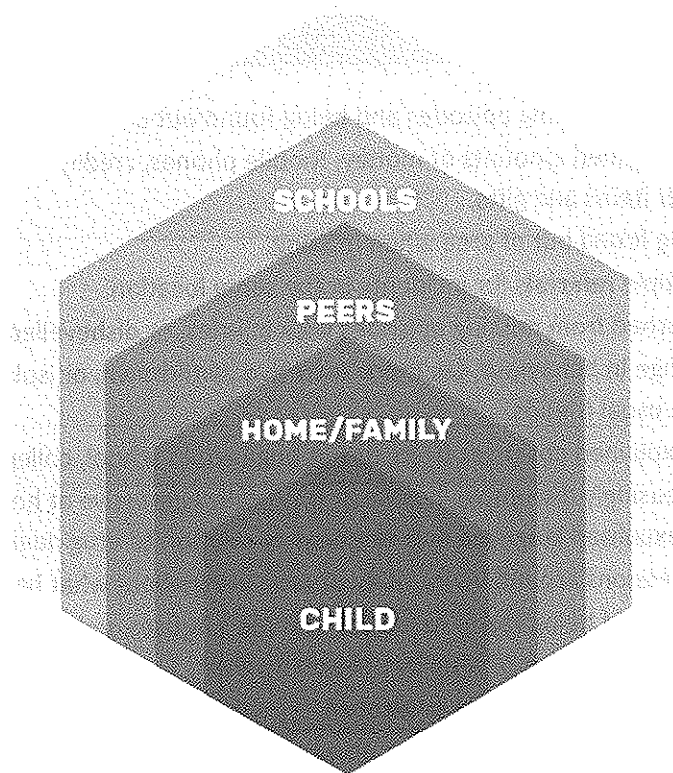


Illustration provided by the University of Bedfordshire, Contextual Safeguarding Team

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.