



"To be at the heart of safeguarding excellence"

Factsheet –By Marisa de Jager

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Introduction

1.1 DEFINITION (DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION 2012)

THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (CSE) UNDER 18 IS DEFINED AS THAT WHICH:

'INVOLVES 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) AS A RESULT OF THEM PERFORMING, AND/OR ANOTHER OR OTHERS PERFORMING ON THEM, SEXUAL ACTIVITIES. CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION CAN OCCUR THROUGH THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY WITHOUT THE CHILD'S IMMEDIATE RECOGNITION; FOR EXAMPLE BEING PERSUADED TO POST SEXUAL IMAGES ON THE INTERNET/MOBILE PHONES WITHOUT IMMEDIATE PAYMENT OR GAIN. IN ALL CASES, THOSE EXPLOITING THE CHILD/YOUNG PERSON 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 OR YOUNG PERSON'S LIMITED AVAILABILITY OF CHOICE RESULTING FROM THEIR SOCIAL/ECONOMIC AND/OR EMOTIONAL VULNERABILITY'

This formal definition can be summarised as:

"Children and young people receiving something e.g. accommodation, drugs, gifts or affection as a result of them performing sexual activities or having others perform sexual activities on them".

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

1.3 By way of summary, sexual exploitation occurs when an offender procures sexual acts from a vulnerable person by offering a benefit in kind. Some warning signs and vulnerabilities include:

- Frequently missing from care or home (and not explaining where they have been)
- Changes in behaviour, including being withdrawn and secretive
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Change in physical appearance
- Gifts, especially phones from unknown sources
- Involvement in offending
- History of abuse
- Living in care, B&B, hostel or foyer (supported accommodation)
- Vulnerability, including mental health, homelessness, bereavement/loss, low self-esteem/confidence
- Estranged from family
- Self-harm/suicidal thoughts
- Absent from school
- Physical injuries, sexually-transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations.

1.4 Victims often do not see themselves as such and may actually defend their abuser. Some will avoid contact with the police and can be the hardest victims to gain the confidence of and protect.

If a child or a young person presents with an indicator of CSE, action is required; the earlier the intervention, the better the chances for success.

2. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Learning Points and Considerations

The below information is based on information obtained through learning achieved in live CSE investigations across the Country, many of which have culminated in successful prosecutions and identify themes around best practice. It also represents points that have been raised by victims that have experienced CSE in a variety of formats.

4.1 What is CSE?

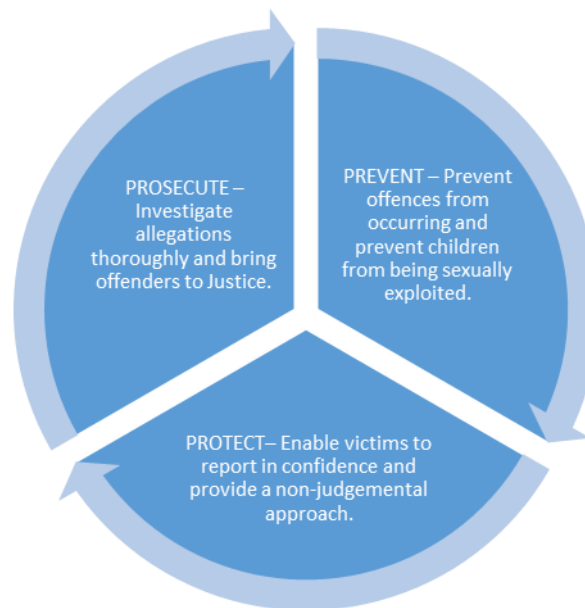
The formal definition of CSE is long and encompasses almost every conceivable form of relationship a child may have with another person, however in short it can be summarised as;

- “Children and young people receiving something e.g. accommodation, drugs, gifts or affection as a result of them performing sexual activities or having others perform sexual activities on them”.

2.2 Why tackle CSE?

- CSE victims have their childhood stolen, they will never get that time back and the damage done may impact upon them for the rest of their lives.

- If we don't protect our children what's the value of our society? **What are the Priorities?**



4.3 How do I identify it?

The three main categories of CSE have been defined as;

- Inappropriate relationships;
- 'Boyfriend' model of exploitation and peer exploitation; and
- Organised/networked sexual exploitation or trafficking.

What marks out exploitation is the 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.

4.4 CEOP are looking at four strands within CSE:

- CSE (usually involving grooming in person and contact offences),
- online CSE,
- Indecent Images of Children (IIOC) and
- Travelling Sex Offenders (TSOs) i.e. local offenders who travel abroad to commit offences against children.

4.5 How are Victims Selected?



Vulnerability – Understand that is the vulnerability factors associated with delinquent juvenile conduct that will be targeted by offenders as they indicate vulnerability, susceptibility to exploitation and a propensity for the victim not to be believed.

4.6 What are the vulnerabilities?

The Warning Signs and Vulnerabilities are indicated below:

- **How are victims trapped?**

Once engaged offenders within any of the categories are likely to employ a series of sequential steps to erode the free will of the victim and trap them into a lifestyle which is not a choice but to which they can see no alternative as it has become all they know. These incremental steps may take the form of;

- Chilling. Generally associating with the subject, supplying them with drink or drugs, listening to them, making them feel good and appearing to be the only one who understands them. Commonly this phase may extend for a protracted period e.g. 12 months.

- Presents. The victim will be provided with gifts e.g. jewellery, electronic items or money.
 - Physical. The offender will begin to ask for them to enter into a sexual relationship.
 - Pestering. Whether or not they have had a sexual relationship to date the pressure to do so or to expand it will be increased.
 - Threats. To the victim and / or other people e.g. their family.
 - Orders. The victim is essentially challenged to refuse what is being demanded of them.
 - Force. Whether or not they consent the victim is physically forced to engage in sexual acts.
- **What about the victims who are old enough to consent?**

Consent has to be given freely; it is a combination of choice and the ability to make that choice of your own free will. Where the free will of the victim has been eroded by acts such as a sequential series of incremental steps as described is there true consent?

It is unlawful for a child under 16 to have sex and they cannot legally consent. Consent also implies an understanding of the situation, the risks and an aspect of free choice when we know in CSE the child is not in a position to make such choices.

Paying for the sexual services of a child under 18 years is an offence under S.47 SOA 2003.

- **What are the issues with Victim Engagement?**

- Development, Outlook and Behaviour at the relevant time of the offences will dictate the level to which the victim engages with agencies. Where the offences coincide with the investigation this means victims are unlikely to engage until at least one or more of these criteria have matured.
- Victims rarely identify themselves as such. In their heads they entered into this themselves 'voluntarily' and 'got themselves into this'- They do not see that the offender has done anything wrong.
- "Are you okay?" - Victim Care is paramount and victims that have previously engaged with police and been subject of successful prosecutions have identified that they may have engaged with police earlier if we had simply appeared to care about their welfare. It was suggested that the very simple question of; "Are you okay?" may have been enough on occasion. It was also clear that Police had missed opportunities to record and detail significant visible injuries arising from abuse because at the time there were no disclosures.
- Why do victims lie to parents and authorities? In many cases the victim will have a skewed perspective on the events that are taking place in their life based on the indoctrination process undertaken by their offender(s). This has affected their state of mind in conjunction with their development and outlook and directly influences their behaviour. They are also likely to feel loyalty to their offender as they are what they know; they are in effect their safety net.
- Believe your victim and believe in your victim but search for the truth. Build and maintain relationship with them. Offer support and outline what is expected of them and manage their expectations in turn.

- Remember that their first account may not be their best as building rapport and trust with patience and planning is what will achieve the highest level of engagement from them. Contradictions in their accounts may equally not be undermining but indicative of abuse as some things may be too sensitive for them to disclose so they may say something else to cover it up.

- **What about the Parents or Carers?**

In many cases there may be a concerned parent or carer raising the fact that the child is at risk, reporting them missing or otherwise involved in trying to keep them safe. The following advice can be given to them;

- Conduct a Soft Investigation. Advise them to keep a contemporaneous record of the child's coming and goings, the accounts they provide about the relevant absences and events as well as descriptions of associates and vehicles they are seen with / in. Detail names and index numbers, phone numbers and locations mentioned as well as reviewing internet use / access.
- Chronology is important. Keeping a contemporaneous record of events as above and recording matters in detail will negate the common issue arising from a lack of both, which is that it allows for more than explanation inviting cross examination.
- PACE. Parents against Child sexual Exploitation is a registered charity that works with parents to stop child sexual exploitation. Help, advice or information is available on 0113 240 3040 or email on info@paceuk.info. There is also a website www.paceuk.info, Twitter @paceinfouk and Facebook page.

- **What do we know about the offenders?**

The key factor here is that offenders may be single suspects, a number of linked individuals or an organised criminal enterprise. The indicator that they are a CSE offender will be their position of power within the relationship and a suggestion of, or evidence of, them abusing this. The definition of CSE allows for offenders to be of any age i.e. they do not need to be over 18.

- Nationally the publicity has fallen on organised gangs of offenders that exploit more than one victim in what is effect a business model of offending. Research and experience at a national level indicates however that the majority of offenders are single males.
- Motivation. Identify the potential motivational drives for the offender, it may be sex, power, control or even money if they are involved in selling children for sex.
- Targeting methods. By pinpointing the methods used by the offender i.e. how and why they pick particular victims you can identify victims, understand how to protect others and establish the best way to present the evidence against them.
- Control Methods. This is how they trap their victims and will include violence, intimidation, persuasion, aggression etc By identifying the methods used and understanding how they are employed you will understand the impact of them on the victim and further identify the best way to present evidence.

The Psychology of the four steps to offending should also be considered when dealing with suspects in CSE cases;

- The Motivation to offend. The desire to offend.
- Overcoming Internal Inhibitors. Squaring it with their own conscience.
- Addressing external inhibitors. Creating opportunity.
- Ensuring victim compliance. Dealing with resistance and getting away with it.

By considering the overall Behavioural Analysis of the offender it is possible to inform the processes around;

- Intelligence development and assessment
- Covert tactics
- Victim / Witness interview strategies
- Suspect arrest and interview strategies
- Shaping future prevention strategies

- **The significance of attachment**

Attachment between the victim and offender is the key to CSE occurring and continuing and breaking that attachment is the most effective way to tackle the issue, safeguard the victim and deal with the offender.

- Attachment arises from the grooming / indoctrination process as the offender creates the cognitive distortions of the victim (the skewed thinking). They erode pre-existing relationships and bonds and replace them with their own making them the single most important person in the victim's life. In doing so they create a position whereby the victim is more likely to acquiesce to their demands and less likely to report them due to the natural processes of the brain.
- Attachment also explains why the victim will repeatedly return to the offender even after making complaints about them; refuse to pursue complaints that have been made and give false details about persons involved or acts that have occurred.

- **What tactics work for disruption?**

Force areas with existing CSE teams utilise disruption plans within their intervention strategies, these include considerations such as;

- Identifying Victim and Offender hotspots and targeting them with a visible Police Presence and / or other agency workers to establish relationships with victims.
- Prepare CSE intelligence slides for briefings processes.

- Inclusion of CSE issues on Neighbourhood Patrol Plans.
 - Information sharing with other agencies.
 - Links between centralised resources and CSE SPOC'S.
 - Use of Child Abduction Warning Notices.
 - Attendance at warrants where potential CSE offenders / victims are potentially present.
 - Subject profiles
 - Victim profiles
 - Attendance at monthly missing children panels
- **What are the Keys to investigative success?**
 - Early Identification. Recognise and record matters as CSE. Utilise the relevant markers and categorisation on systems.
 - Early Intervention – Once you have recognised that CSE is taking place take positive action to address it at the earliest opportunity.
 - Equality, Transparency and Excellence in Victim Care. The only way to secure the engagement of victims is through long term investment in their care.
 - Multi Agency teams / approach. Consider strategy meetings with other agencies such as education, health and social care.
 - Early CPS Advice. Seek advice from relevant units that will advise on CSE related matters (consult at an early stage around investigative strategies.)
 - Utilise the media and appeals. This will enable you to promote awareness of issues and obtain information around specific cases.

- Community engagement. History has proven that communities hold the key to recognising what is potentially prevalent CSE, effective engagement and building trust with communities will encourage reporting.
- Partner Briefings. Do not act alone as a Surrey partner and promote the work you do to other relevant agencies.
- Capture the evidence now for later. Medical, forensic, technical and other issues are all relevant here. Victims and / or their carers may allow evidence to be collated even where they are not ready to pursue a prosecution in the here and now. They may anticipate this will change and we should ensure that opportunities are not missed.
- Research around the victim's historical contact with agencies. Review previous allegations for supporting evidence and look for corroborating incident and intelligence reports that may have been missed at the time.

- **The views of CPS**

Current guidance on Child Abuse prosecutions which encompasses CSE indicates the following;

- Victims are central to the case. The starting point must be to believe them and we must not focus on obstacles; "The complainant's word is enough". Good victim care is essential.
- Credibility. Focus on the credibility of the allegation not the victim.
- Each case should be dealt with on a merit based approach. This means that experience with past cases and past juries should not be applied, each case should be tested as if it were a notional jury that would hear it who would apply the directions of the judge and make a decision based on one word against another.

- Myths and stereotypes. Should not be given any credence at all.
- The Presence of vulnerability factors may support the account of the victim but the absence of them is not indicative either way.
- Quality of evidential accounts is imperative and contradictions are not undermining but indicative of abuse.
- Should you tell a victim that there are other victims? There is no rule to prevent it, any disclosures should not give detail and should be after their account has been obtained.
- Previous Convictions of the child. May be indicative of vulnerability. You should look at them as a means to understand the victim and be up front about them.