



*South Gloucestershire
Safeguarding Children Board*



Strategy to Address Child Exploitation:

Sexual Exploitation

Missing

Trafficking

Criminal Exploitation

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Introduction

This strategy has previously focused on tackling the sexual exploitation of children in South Gloucestershire.

The strategy has been updated to include tackling all forms of child exploitation, such as trafficking, criminal exploitation and children who go missing.

This wider focus mirrors the agreed wider focus of the Child Exploitation and Missing Subgroup of the South Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board (SGSCB).

A contextual safeguarding approach requires all agencies to consider whether wider environmental factors present in a child's life are a threat to their safety and/or welfare and work together to tackle these (DfE, 2018).

Children can be vulnerable to multiple threats external to their family including exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups, such as county lines, trafficking and online abuse. Partners of the SGSCB recognise that responding effectively to risks external to the family requires a timely multi-agency response.

The partners of South Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board are committed to ensuring effective and proactive partnership working across South Gloucestershire to prevent, identify and tackle all forms of child exploitation.

The SGSCB recognise that all forms of Child Exploitation have a devastating impact upon children and young people as well as on their families.

No single agency can address child exploitation alone or in isolation from other related safeguarding issues. SGSCB has a significant role in ensuring that the work of all agencies is coordinated, confirming unique and shared roles and functions to ensure that children and young people are protected and in addressing the exploitation of children.

SGSCB has identified Child Exploitation as a priority and is committed to ensuring a strategic, shared approach to tackle all forms of exploitation of children.

This strategy should be read alongside the Child Exploitation and Missing Subgroup Action Plan to Tackle Child Exploitation.

Definitions

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. (DfE, 2017)

Child Criminal Exploitation

Child Criminal Exploitation is common in county lines and 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. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (Home Office, 2018)

County Lines

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons. (Home Office, 2018)

Cuckooing

Cuckooing is a form of crime in which drug dealers take over the home of a vulnerable person in order to use it as a base for drug dealing. (NCA, 2017)

Trafficking

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child, for the purpose of exploitation. Any child transported for exploitative reasons is considered to be a trafficking victim, whether or

not they have been forced or deceived – this is because a child cannot consent to their own exploitation. Children can be trafficked into, within and out of the UK. (DfE and Home Office, 2011)

Missing child

A person under the age of 18 whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located, and their well-being or otherwise confirmed. (College of Policing, 2018)

Because of the vulnerabilities of care leavers and the need to address the issue of exploitation and abuse holistically, this strategy also addresses our role, in liaison with other agencies, to tackle exploitation of vulnerable young adults up to the age of 25.

Key principles in addressing the exploitation of children in South Gloucestershire

- Children who have been exploited are the victims of crime and abuse.
- All children who are exploited should be safeguarded from further harm.
- All children who are exploited should be supported to exit exploitation and receive longer term support for their experiences.
- Exploited children should not be regarded as criminals and the primary law enforcement response must be directed at perpetrators who groom children for exploitation, whether by disrupting them or prosecuting them.
- To effectively tackle the exploitation of children there must be a focus on disrupting the activities of perpetrators and seeking the prosecution of perpetrators of child exploitation.
- Children and young people should be at the heart of planning and delivery of services.
- Children and young peoples' voices should be heard.
- In order to respond effectively to children at risk of exploitation or who have been exploited a proactive, co-ordinated, focused and timely multi agency response based on a shared understanding of risk is required.
- Parents and carers can play the most important role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of their children. Parents are often the first to notice something is wrong. We must work collaboratively with parents and carers to address exploitation when it is appropriate to do so.
- Raised awareness amongst parents, children and young people, carers, professionals across the system and the wider public, of the nature and the indicators of exploitation is essential to both preventing the risk and ending the ongoing grooming and exploitation of children.
- In order for professionals to have knowledge and understanding about exploitation they need access to high quality training and access to practice experts.

Aim of the Strategy

To ensure that SGSCB understands the scale and nature of the problem in South Gloucestershire. To provide a strategic response and framework to tackle the identified issues relating to child exploitation in South Gloucestershire in order to identify, reduce and where possible, eliminate child exploitation. This strategic response and the action plan will be based on local intelligence about exploitation, national and local learning about exploitation and what works well and is good practice in tackling child exploitation.

What we know about child exploitation

Child exploitation has a devastating impact upon children and young people. Victims of exploitation are often being exploited in multiple ways.

Children who have been exploited may have suffered sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

Boys and girls are vulnerable to exploitation.

Children vulnerable to exploitation come from all age ranges and ethnic groups.

Most exploited children live at home when their abuse begins.

Exploitation is under reported and is not always recognised by families or professionals.

Children who have been exploited/are at risk of exploitation may not recognise or understand they have been abused/are at risk of abuse. They may trust their abuser or be dependent on them, or too scared to talk about what is happening to them.

Children can be exploited very quickly – before parents or professionals have recognised there is an issue.

Children going missing is an indicator of vulnerability to exploitation.

Children who are not in regular education or who are missing from school are at heightened risk. They have more time on their hands and are vulnerable to abuse.

Online access to children and young people via social media provides significant opportunity to exploit children.

Children and young people involved in substance misuse can be drawn into exploitation or criminality. Part of a grooming process may be introducing them to substances to develop dependence.

Relationships between children and professionals that are based on consistency, stability and respectful communication have the most impact in supporting effective interventions with exploited children.

It is important children are not labelled as “unwilling to engage”. A child’s “resistance” needs to be understood in terms of our tried approach/approaches not working for them.

Children need professionals who are well trained, skilled, creative and persistent and who understand and recognise the risks.

Individualised, creative approaches are needed to enable disclosure and effective support, as children and young people will have been groomed, coerced and exploited in different ways and will have their individual life experiences affecting their responses. Sometimes services struggle with situations where children and young people are in need themselves, but are also seen to be perpetrating abuse on others. There needs to be scope in individualised approaches to address these dilemmas.

There is a significant and growing body of evidence that stressful experiences during childhood have a profound impact on an individual’s health, well-being and life chances. The term **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** identifies and includes those experiences that directly hurt a child and are often experienced through child exploitation (e.g. physical, sexual or emotional abuse) or affect them through the environment they live in. Children who have been exploited will have experienced significant trauma in their lives. It is imperative that professionals working with children who have been exploited are equipped to recognise the trauma that has been experienced and recognise the potential impact of this on every aspect of a child’s life now and in the future. In South Gloucestershire, we are working towards being ACE-aware. We recognise that ACEs have a profound impact on an individual’s life chances and are working in partnership to develop a holistic ACEs approach that aims to:

- Prevent ACEs in future generations
- Support and build resilience in families and children who are at risk of exposure to ACEs
- Recognise the signs and symptoms of trauma to enable appropriate early intervention
- Recognise the impact of ACEs, including being a victim of child exploitation.

South Gloucestershire Context

A problem profile was completed by Avon and Somerset Constabulary in 2016 which looked at the sexual exploitation of children across the Avon and Somerset police force area. Work is currently ongoing to create an up to date Avon and Somerset force wide problem profile.

South Gloucestershire Children's Services have captured information regarding all children at high risk of sexual exploitation or who have been sexually exploited since April 2017. More recently Children's Services have begun to capture information regarding all children at high risk of any form of exploitation in South Gloucestershire. From this information we know that children as young as 12 have been exploited or are at high risk of exploitation. Perpetrators of sexual exploitation are usually single offenders who have formed an inappropriate relationship with a child. There is less evidence of organised/ gang related exploitation in South Gloucestershire. A number of children in South Gloucestershire have been exploited in Bristol (the nearest city) or by perpetrators who reside in Bristol. The flow of information between South Gloucestershire and Bristol is very important due to this. A significant number of children in South Gloucestershire have been exploited online or the grooming process has started online. This form of exploitation can be hidden for a long time and the more common signs of exploitation/risk indicators may not be present.

There are particular challenges with responding to 16 and 17 year olds at high risk of exploitation as some of the legislation used to respond to child exploitation does not apply to children of this age.

Information around children at risk of criminal exploitation or trafficking has only recently started to be captured and less is known about these forms of exploitation within South Gloucestershire. This will be an area of priority in terms of understanding child exploitation within South Gloucestershire.

Six monthly multi-agency audits take place regarding children at risk of sexual exploitation and children who go missing. From December 2018 these audits will consider the multi-agency responses to children at risk of all forms of child exploitation. A report is compiled of the findings of the audit and an action plan is developed which is shared amongst the child exploitation and missing subgroup of the SGSCB. The subgroup will monitor the action plan from the audits and will have the responsibility for ensuring agreed actions are carried through by all agencies.

South Gloucestershire has a child exploitation and missing subgroup. This group meets every quarter and reports to the SGSCB.

Within South Gloucestershire there has been significant awareness raising regarding sexual exploitation for the public via social media and poster campaigns. An awareness raising training programme is available to all staff working with children. The police have also produced posters and led a social media campaign across the Avon and Somerset area. A campaign was rolled out across secondary schools in South Gloucestershire within 2018 and a separate campaign was rolled out to year 5 and year 6 pupils in 2019.

In 2018 the Local Authority implemented a pilot programme of specialist exploitation social workers who work with children at high risk of exploitation. This pilot was successful and has resulted in a permanent team.

Within South Gloucestershire the SERAF is the assessment tool used to assess and explore the risks of child sexual exploitation to an individual child. Training has been provided to staff within Children's Services in completing a SERAF and guidance and support is available to all staff via the [SGSCB website](#).

A comprehensive [multi-agency training package](#) is available to staff working with children in South Gloucestershire which is made up of an awareness raising course, a course around working with children at risk of sexual exploitation and a day on working with parents whose children are at risk of sexual exploitation.

During 2018 the police have developed a team who focus on child exploitation with a focus on disrupting perpetrators of child exploitation. Regular meetings are held to discuss investigations and high risk offenders with multi agency partners. These meetings share information regarding Bristol locations and perpetrators as well as South Gloucestershire locations and perpetrators. Avon and Somerset police have developed an intelligence reporting form which is available via their [website](#) – intelligence regarding possible child exploitation is logged and then sent through to the team focused on perpetrators of exploitation.

Barnardos Against Sexual Exploitation (BASE) are the commissioned specialist service within South Gloucestershire who provide direct support to children who are being sexually exploited or who are at high risk of exploitation. BASE also provide consultation to professionals working with children at risk of sexual exploitation and are involved in the delivery of the multi-agency training programme.

The SGSCB has a dedicated [website](#) page regarding sexual exploitation which contains guidance, support and resources for professionals.

In South Gloucestershire partners are aware that we need to develop knowledge, understanding and responses to children at risk of criminal exploitation, county lines and trafficking whilst continuing to further develop the knowledge, understanding and responses to children at risk of sexual exploitation. With regards to criminal exploitation there is a 90 minute awareness raising training provided regarding human trafficking and modern day slavery.

Children Board (SGSCB) Governance

Partners in South Gloucestershire LSCB have committed to work together to meet the key aims and principles set out within this strategy. Partners recognise that only a proactive, coordinated multi agency approach will be effective in protecting children and young people through disruption of exploitation, reducing missing episodes and the prosecuting of perpetrators. The South Gloucestershire Child Exploitation and Missing Sub Group will be responsible for the coordination of work at a strategic level to tackle child exploitation. The sub group is responsible for the implementation and review of the South Gloucestershire Tackling Child Exploitation Action Plan which is informed by this strategy.

Governance is key and SGSCB will be informed about and given the opportunity to challenge progress through quarterly reports coordinated through the exploitation and missing sub group.

SGSCB should receive sufficient information and data to be assured that:

- There is a focus on prevention and early intervention.
- The needs of children and young people who have been or may be exploited and their families are considered when planning and commissioning local services.
- Specific local procedures are in place to address and minimise the risk of exploitation of children and young people.
- A clear response is available for children and young people including the response to perpetrators and these will be developed in conjunction with young people and the partner agencies of SGSCB.
- Local safeguarding training includes information about how to identify the signs of exploitation and an understanding of how to gather evidence which can be used to bring prosecutions against abusers.
- Where exploitation is known to be prevalent local specialist training is available for key professionals.
- Systems are in place to track and monitor cases of exploitation that come to the attention of local agencies.

- Arrangements are in place to co-operate with neighbouring areas and those areas where children who have been exploited are believed to have lived or been present.
- Children/young people that are at risk or are being exploited and missing children will be tracked and reports will be produced to ensure that agencies are working collaboratively to progress work in these areas.
- Specialist support will be available to children who have been exploited.
- Management information is used to identify what specialist resources or services should be provided to children who have been or are likely to be sexually exploited and their families in the local area.

The three strategic priorities to tackling exploitation in South Gloucestershire

South Gloucestershire's approach to tackling exploitation is based on three key strands:

PREVENT

Making it more difficult to exploit children and preventing children becoming victims through education and awareness raising and assuring local communities that agencies take the issues seriously.

1. There will be work undertaken with the local community, parents, carers and young people so that they feel empowered to address issues in relation to exploitation in their local area. An Exploitation Communications Plan is currently being developed and there has been a public campaign about sexual exploitation, trafficking and county lines.
2. Process mapping needs to be undertaken and pathways developed so that there are clear workflows between the various teams within Children's Social Care and other services in a position to respond to lower level referrals about children who are vulnerable to exploitation. This is outlined more in the [CSE guidance](#) (which has been developed to cover other forms of exploitation).
3. Regular use of Victim / Service User profiling should be utilised to further understand the needs across SG and the multi-agency service response that is required.
4. The [SERAF](#) has been agreed as the sexual exploitation risk assessment tool. This needs to be used consistently by all agencies to assess and review risk when CSE is identified. Tools to support professionals can be found on the LSCB website and completing a SERAF is discussed in the multi-agency CSE training offered through the LSCB.

5. A programme of multi-agency auditing has been introduced in order to evaluate the recognition of exploitation, the effectiveness of timely service provision and outcomes for children and young people at risk of exploitation. Lessons learned are shared with the Exploitation and Missing Subgroup of the SGSCB.
6. A longer term training and awareness strategy is required in order to keep the workforce skilled and knowledgeable year on year. The current training offer will need to be developed to offer specific training around criminal exploitation, county lines and trafficking.
7. Night time economy training on child sexual exploitation is provided. Taxi drivers must complete CSE training in order to get their taxi license for South Gloucestershire.
8. Managers will oversee all individual exploitation cases.
9. Information relating to child exploitation activity will be considered quarterly as part of the performance framework - this should enable a clear understanding of how effectively agencies are responding.
10. Schools must ensure that they cross-reference absence information with risk assessments for individual children and young people.
11. Local strategies and plans should be informed by the opinions and experiences of those who have been at risk of or have suffered from child exploitation
12. Greater focus should be put upon the PHSE curriculum to ensure that local schools are effective in raising awareness and protecting children at risk of or who have suffered from exploitation. The exploitation prevention officer in the police will be providing awareness raising and support to schools in South Gloucestershire. This support is tailored to the needs of the school. It can include work with pupils and staff.
13. Ensure that every child returning from a missing episode is given a return interview by an independent person. South Gloucestershire has established a set of practice standards for these interviews and ensure that these are consistently met. Information obtained from the interviews are centrally collated and used to inform and improve future operational and strategic activity.
14. SGSCB have ensured that the core training made available to all professionals who come into contact with children and young people includes information on warning signs, and impact of child sexual exploitation, to ensure early victim identification.
15. Development of an exploitation toolkit to support professionals in assessing the risks of exploitation, working with children and their families, disrupting perpetrators activities and developing safety plans.
16. The police exploitation prevention officer will be hosting events for communities throughout South Gloucestershire to raise awareness regarding exploitation.

PROTECT AND SUPPORT

The best approach is to work in partnership with the young person and their family. The aim is to support and empower young people and their families to find solutions themselves wherever possible.

1. Ensure that all partners routinely follow Child Protection, CIN and SAFeh procedures for all children and young people at risk of or who have been exploited.
2. The local authority, as corporate parent for Looked After Children, to provide the SGSCB with assurance that Looked After Children and Young People placed out-of-area who go missing receive timely return home interviews which contribute to risk assessments and safety plans. This is achieved via quarterly reports to the Board.
3. Ensure that sufficient appropriate therapeutic support is available to meet the needs of local young people at risk of or who have suffered from exploitation, including care leavers.
4. Enable professionals to build stable, trusting and lasting relationships with children and young people at risk of or suffering from child exploitation.
5. A needs assessment and mapping exercise should be undertaken in relation to the provision of post exploitation support utilising existing commissioning frameworks.
6. All partners will know when and how to refer to the NRM.
7. The specialist commissioned service will work with other professionals providing advice, support and guidance which enables and empowers professionals to work to support victims where a referral to the commissioned service isn't applicable or appropriate.
The specialist commissioned service will work alongside the Local Authority to develop knowledge and information about CSE in South Gloucestershire.

PURSUE AND PROSECUTE

We are committed to ensuring that we will do all we can to disrupt perpetrators who are exploiting children and young people and where possible prosecute them.

1. Ensure that information and intelligence is shared proactively across the partnership to improve the protection of children in their area and increase the rate of prosecutions.
2. Disruption tactics such as Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWNs) will be discussed between multi agency partners and agreements made about the use of such tactics in relation to perpetrators.

3. The police will work with partner agencies, including third sector specialist organisations, to log information on the young people (we have seen boys and transgender young people exploited through this model) linked to gang members and then risk-assess these young people for exploitation.
4. Avon and Somerset Constabulary have developed a system of obtaining and recording local multi-agency intelligence and existing information to proactively identify perpetrators of exploitation.
5. Avon and Somerset Constabulary will use multi-agency intelligence to proactively profile local risk, as well as to direct enforcement and disruption activity.
6. Strategy meetings, professionals meetings, complex strategy meetings and regular multi agency police led meetings should be used to plan disruption responses and consideration given at all stages of the process to identify and disrupt perpetrators.
7. Regular police led meetings to be used as a forum to share intelligence regarding the exploitation of children.

References

College of Policing (2018), *Missing Persons*.

Department for Education and Home Office (2011), *Safeguarding Children who may have been Trafficked: Practice Guidance*.

Department for Education (2017), *Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation*.

Department for Education (2018), *Working Together to Safeguard Children*.

Home Office (2018), *Guidance for Frontline Professionals on Dealing with County Lines, Part of the Government's Approach to Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation*.

National Crime Agency (2017), *County Lines Violence, Exploitation and Drug Supply. National Briefing Report*

Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (2018) *Protecting children from criminal exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery: an addendum*.

Links

CSE Guidance

Cuckooing Guide

Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit

Children's Society Criminal Exploitation Toolkit

Missing Children Guidance

EVALUATION OF THIS STRATEGY

This strategy will be reviewed and operated by SGSCB, the exploitation and missing sub group and agencies involved with the sub group will be committed to ensure that the strategy is effectively implemented.

This strategy will be reviewed in 2020.