



Child Sexual Exploitation/ Child Criminal Exploitation Policy

White Spire School



Written by: M Bartle

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Key Contacts

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Introduction

Exploitation Child sexual exploitation (CSE)/ Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) has devastating and long lasting results for both the victims and their families.

The purpose the policy is to:

- Inform staff, parents, volunteers and governors about the school's responsibilities for protecting children.
- Enable everyone to have a clear understanding of how these responsibilities should be carried out.

Both CCE and CSE are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in criminal or sexual activity. It may involve an exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. CCE and CSE can affect children, both male and female and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation (KCSIE 2025)

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

This can include:

- any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years, including 16 and 17 year olds who can legally consent to have sex;
- can still be abuse even if the sexual activity appears consensual;
- can include both contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity;
- can take place in person or via technology, or a combination of both;
- can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence;



- may occur without the child or young person's immediate knowledge (through others copying videos or images they have created and posting on social media, for example);
- can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults. The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse; and
- is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the abuse. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

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

Child sexual exploitation is a complex form of abuse and can be difficult to identify and assess. Indicators for child sexual exploitation can be mistaken for 'normal adolescent behaviours'.

A young person might be more susceptible to child sexual exploitation if

- prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse;
- Lack of a safe/stable home environment;
- Recent bereavement or loss;
- Social isolation or social difficulties;
- Absence of a safe environment to explore sexuality;
- Economic vulnerability;
- Homelessness or insecure accommodation status;
- Connections with other children and young people who are being sexually exploited;
- Family members or other connections involved in adult sex work;
- Having a physical or learning disability;
- Being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories); and
- Sexual identity.

Child sexual exploitation can also occur without any of these vulnerabilities being present

Any child in the community is open to child sexual exploitation, age (children between 12-15 are most at risk but children as young as 8 have been identified), gender (Most frequency observed in females but males are also at risk), ethnicity (Child sexual exploitation affects all ethnic groups) and heightened vulnerability factors.

It is important that staff remain open to the fact that child sexual exploitation can occur without any of these risk indicators being obviously present.

At White Spire School we ensure that:

- All staff are aware of and understand CSE indicators
- Pupils are taught about CSE and how to protect themselves and each other
- Pupils are taught about healthy (including sexual) relationships, peer pressure, bullying,



- online safety, gang activity and how these topics can relate to CSE.
- Pupils are made aware of where they can go for support and advice

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.

Criminal exploitation of children is broader than just county lines, and includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft.

What is county lines exploitation?

County lines is a major, cross-cutting issue involving:

- drugs
- violence
- gangs
- safeguarding
- criminal and sexual exploitation
- modern slavery
- missing persons

The UK Government defines county lines as:

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.

County lines activity and the associated violence, drug dealing and exploitation has a devastating impact on young people, vulnerable adults and local communities.

Like other forms of abuse and exploitation, county lines exploitation:

- can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years
- can affect any vulnerable adult over the age of 18 years
- can still be exploitation even if the activity appears consensual
- can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and is often accompanied by violence or threats of violence
- can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and young people or adults
- is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the exploitation



White Spire School is a school for vulnerable children/young adults. Gangs are known to target vulnerable children and adults; some of the factors that heighten a person's vulnerability include:

- having prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse
- lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past (domestic violence or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example)
- social isolation or social difficulties
- economic vulnerability
- homelessness or insecure accommodation status
- connections with other people involved in gangs
- having a physical or learning disability
- having mental health or substance misuse issues
- being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories)
- being excluded from mainstream education, in particular attending a Pupil Referral Unit

Signs

Potential indicators of county lines involvement and exploitation are the following:

- persistently going missing from school or home and / or being found out-of-area
- unexplained acquisition of money, clothes, or mobile phones
- excessive receipt of texts / phone calls and/or having multiple handsets
- relationships with controlling / older individuals or groups
- leaving home / care without explanation
- suspicion of physical assault / unexplained injuries
- parental concerns
- carrying weapons
- significant decline in school results / performance
- gang association or isolation from peers or social networks
- self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being

Staff have a duty to report any concerns in line with the Child Protection Policy. Further support (toolkits) to identify concerns can be found on the mk-together website.

Training

Ongoing staff training takes place to ensure that staff are able to identify signs and process of reporting.



This policy is to be read in conjunction with:

- Child protection policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, Dfe, 2025
- Children Missing in Education Policy

Links

CSE Indicator form

<https://www.mktogether.co.uk/resources/useful-resources-and-forms>