

# Merseyside Child Sexual Exploitation

## Multi-Agency Strategy 2016/2017



The Safeguarding Children's Boards of Merseyside (Liverpool, Sefton, Knowsley, St Helens and Wirral) have identified tackling the sexual exploitation of children as a key strategic priority. Child sexual exploitation is child abuse and is completely unacceptable. The Safeguarding Children's Boards of Merseyside are committed to combating the sexual exploitation of children via effective multi agency and partnership working.

Children who are subjected to sexual exploitation can have serious long term issues effecting their physical and mental health and their overall well being. Although young people aged 16, 17 and 18 are able to consent to sexual activity, they can still be subjected to exploitation and the exploitation can continue through to adulthood. The Safeguarding Children's Boards of Merseyside will therefore work closely with the Safeguarding Adult's Boards of Merseyside to ensure children and young people continue to receive support through the transition phase from childhood to adulthood. Child sexual exploitation can also effect the lives of the child or young persons family and carers and can lead to relationship breakdown.

Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 will normally, but not exclusively, involve an adult developing a relationship with the child or young person, groom or utilise violence, coercion and intimidation to sexually exploit the child or young person.

All agencies have a responsibility to help identify those children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation; agencies also have responsibility both individually and collectively for ensuring that the child or young person is protected from any further risk of harm.

All agencies have a responsibility to do what they can to prevent children and young people becoming victims of child sexual exploitation. There are a number of ways this can be achieved including ensuring that our communities, especially the children and young people of Merseyside are aware of and understand the issues and risks involved in child sexual exploitation.

The aim of this strategy is to prevent and safeguard **all** children from child sexual exploitation and to prevent and safeguard individual children who are identified as at risk, or victims of child sexual exploitation.

[Safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation is everyone's business.](#)

The purpose of the strategy is;

- To focus and co-ordinate multi agency resources in tackling child sexual exploitation.
- To ensure that children and young people and the wider community across Merseyside, in particular with parents and carers, are aware of child sexual exploitation and its effects.
- To enhance training for professionals.
- To ensure that young people and the community are made aware of the issues around exploitation.
- To bring to justice the perpetrators of Child Sexual Exploitation and to ensure that young people are properly safeguarded in the course of any criminal proceedings.

Our shared key strategic priorities are:

- Self Assessment / Prepare
- Prevention / Prevent
- Safeguarding / Protect
- Bringing Offenders to Justice / Pursue
- Governance / Prepare

## **Self Assessment / Prepare**

What are we going to do?

Each Local Safeguarding Children Board will undertake a self-assessment to review the local response to child sexual exploitation. This review will involve;

### **Profiling**

Assess the awareness and levels of understanding of professionals in relation to child sexual exploitation.

Identify the prevalence and models of child sexual exploitation in the area

### **Service Provision**

Map the availability of services for supporting sexually exploited children and young people, ensuring agencies, when planning and commissioning services, focus on the needs of children and young people who may be sexually exploited.

## **Prevention**

What are we going to do?

There are three key features in preventing children and young people becoming subjected to sexual exploitation, they are awareness, training and disruption.

### **Awareness:**

#### **Awareness Raising with Children and Families**

It is extremely important to ensure that we focus on raising children and young people's awareness of sexual exploitation. Schools and youth services are key agencies and have a very important role to play in awareness raising and safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation.

Any work on raising the awareness of children and young people must be supported by work with parents and carers to supplement and reinforce that awareness.

Agencies who work with children need to;

- Engage with children and young people to ensure they have an understanding of the issues surrounding CSE,
- Develop activities which will dissuade children and young people becoming involved in CSE

## **Awareness Raising in Communities / Community Engagement**

Development of community intelligence is very important in preventing child sexual exploitation.

Raising awareness of targeted groups / organisations, for example, taxi, hotel and leisure organisations, is another key feature of prevention.

We will engage with our local communities and raise awareness of CSE and how it affects individuals.

We will undertake proactive communication with the media

### **Training**

A review is to be undertaken of all single and multi-agency training for professionals in terms of content and targeted delivery.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board will ensure the provision of appropriate multi agency training.

Single agency training needs to;

- Ensure staff working with or in contact with children are able to identify those children and young people at risk of CSE.
- Ensure staff working with or in contact with children are able to identify activities employed by offenders / abusers
- Ensure staff know what interventions are appropriate and how to implement and or signpost to appropriate agencies / services

Agencies must consider the provision of training for their agency that should be delivered in line with the role of the professional and the level of detail they require.

### **Disruption**

Disruption of perpetrator activity is an important tool in preventing child sexual exploitation. All agencies need to work together to develop appropriate disruption tactics. Individual agencies must consider how they can contribute to disrupting perpetrator behaviour.

## **Safeguarding / Protect**

What are we going to do?

Research and experience suggest that early intervention and a coordinated response by all agencies is a key factor in making a difference and safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation. The Local Safeguarding Children Board will;

- Develop and implement a Pan Merseyside Child Sexual Exploitation protocol, which sets out the standards and provides guidance for multi agency working in tackling child sexual exploitation.

- Ensure that responses to concerns about Child Sexual Exploitation are managed via a multi-agency process and in accordance with this protocol.
- Ensure information is shared appropriately and especially with children's services and the Police.
- Expect individual agencies to develop their own policies and procedures which sets standards relating to how that agency responds to / works towards tackling child sexual exploitation. This will be monitored by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- Ensure agencies work together in recording and monitoring the prevalence of child sexual exploitation
- Evaluate the effectiveness of service provision and identify and fill any gaps in service provision in supporting children and their families
- Provide ongoing scrutiny and governance of policy, procedure and practice in service delivery.

## **Bringing Offenders to Justice / Pursue**

What are we going to do?

Ensuring abusers are brought to justice is an effective and appropriate way to safeguard children and young people. Offenders must be held to account for their behaviour.

A clear understanding needs to be developed and agreed about the balance between the welfare of the child and the criminal justice considerations.

All agencies should;

- Ensure workers co-operate with Police investigations in relation to the detection and prosecution of crime.
- Ensure appropriate information is shared with the police, information and intelligence sharing is a crucial part of the investigation process.

The police should;

- Ensure that victims of CSE are appropriately supported through the investigation and court process.
- Ensure offenders are identified / targeted.
- Ensure children involved in sexual exploitation are treated as victims and the focus of the investigation is on the abusers.

## Governance / Prepare

What are we going to do?

- The Local Safeguarding Children Board will nominate a member of the board who will act as the 'lead professional'. Each agency of the Local Safeguarding Children Board will also nominate a lead professional, who will act as the agencies single point of contact for all matters relating to child sexual exploitation and will also be responsible for providing advice and support to their agencies workers.
- This protocol will form part of the Pan Merseyside Safeguarding Children Procedures.
- The relevant Local Safeguarding Children's Board is responsible for co-ordinating the activities of member agencies in relation to the effective implementation of this protocol.
- The Local Safeguarding Children Board lead professional for child sexual exploitation will, on behalf of the Local safeguarding Children's Board organise a quarterly multi agency meeting. The purpose of this meeting will be;
  - To review performance in relation to the response of member agencies
  - To review the local implementation of the protocol
  - To identify areas of concern
  - To identify any patterns and trends in reports of child sexual exploitation
  - To develop local strategies / plans to address concerns / patterns / trends.
- A regular Strategic Multi Agency Merseyside meeting will take place with strategic representatives from the Local Safeguarding Children's Boards, the Local Authorities and the Police. Other professionals may be co-opted on to the group depending upon strategic needs. The purpose of this meeting will be;
  - To review the implementation of the protocol on a Pan Merseyside basis;
  - To consider the provision of services for children missing from both local authority care and home;
  - To identify any patterns and trends in running / missing episodes and any cross border issues
  - To consider the provision of training for those responsible for management of, and services to, children missing from both local authority care and home;
  - To monitor on a Pan Merseyside basis the provision of single and multi-agency data collation and information sharing processes.
- The meeting will be arranged and chaired by the police.
- The representatives from the relevant Local Safeguarding Children's Boards will be responsible for ensuring updating their respective Board with any Merseyside issues or areas for concern.