**Exploitation screening tool**

**Guidance notes**

This screening tool is designed to help all professionals working with children, young people and families identify potential harm or risk of harm though exploitation, and explain what you are worried about.

This screening tool does not contain an exhaustive list and practitioners will need to carefully consider the context behind any of the behaviours and provide details, to help determine appropriate action. Your observations of behaviours and any significant changes will be important as children and young people will often deny, or be unaware, that they are being exploited. The tool is a guide to inform your professional judgement and is not intended as a risk assessment or scoring tool; a single incident may indicate that a child or young person is being harmed through exploitation or at high risk of this occurring even if other indicators are not present.

Vulnerability factors are also included although these in themselves do not indicate that a child or young person is being exploited. All children and young people are vulnerable to being exploited and children are not abused/exploited because they are vulnerable, but because someone is prepared to take advantage of their vulnerability and at that moment there is insufficient protection around them.

The screening tool has been developed using the contextual safeguarding framework (see [About us | Contextual Safeguarding](https://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/about-us/) for further information). Contextual safeguarding is an approach to understanding and responding to children and young people’s experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the relationships that children and young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. The tool aims to help identify the contexts where the child or young person may be at risk of harm through exploitation to be able to employ interventions to disrupt this harm.

Appropriate language must be used when discussing children and young people who have been exploited or are at risk of harm through exploitation. Language implying that the child or young person is complicit in any way, or responsible for their own abuse, must be avoided. Please refer to the [Appropriate Language Guide Final (English).pdf](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-11/Appropriate%20Language%20Guide%20Final%20%28English%29.pdf) when completing the screening tool.

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| **Details** | |
| Child/young person’s name |  |
| Date of birth |  |
| Home address |  |
| Parent/care name and contact details |  |
| Professional completing tool |  |
| Relationship to the child/young person |  |
| Professional contact details |  |
| Date tool completed |  |

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| **Immediate safeguarding concerns**  If you believe that a child or young person has been harmed, is in imminent danger, or has been the victim of a crime in the community or online please ensure that this is reported to Police immediately and contact MASH/Children’s Services. Although not an exhaustive list, examples of this may include: | | |
| **Child/young person has been sexually or physically assaulted** | |  |
| **Child/young person has received threats of violence or harm** | |  |
| **Child under the age of 13 has been sexually abused (a child under the age of 13 cannot consent to any sexual activity)** | |  |
| **Child/young person has been sexually exploited online, and/or is known to have shared an indecent image of themselves (even if with another age appropriate peer)** | |  |
| Please provide Police log number**:** |  | |

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| **Indicators**  Indications that a child or young person may be being harmed or at risk of harm through exploitation. | | | |
| Indicator | Yes  (Y) | No  (N) | Un-  Known  (U) |
| Found/arrested with large quantities of drugs or weapons |  |  |  |
| Information to suggest that the child/young person is carrying drugs internally (i.e. possession of empty ‘kinder eggs’ containers/condoms/lubricants, refusing food or being physically unwell) |  |  |  |
| Travelling to or found in areas with no known connection to the child, or possessing train tickets for unusual journeys |  |  |  |
| Persistent or escalating periods of being missing (day and/or night), either reported or unreported, where the child is unwilling/unable to explain their whereabouts |  |  |  |
| Relationship/association of concern with a controlling individual, young person or group |  |  |  |
| Child/young person deems themselves to be in a relationship with someone and there are concerns about that person’s age and/or an imbalance of power |  |  |  |
| Associates known to be involved in criminality or Organised Crime Groups (OCG’s) |  |  |  |
| Has extra money/new items/‘gifts’ that cannot legitimately be accounted for/received from unknown sources |  |  |  |
| Entering/leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults |  |  |  |
| Presenting with injuries which are unexplained or without plausible explanation – these may be significant, or minor injuries issued as a threat |  |  |  |
| Disclosure of harm followed by withdrawal of allegation |  |  |  |
| Spending time in areas known for exploitation concerns |  |  |  |
| Having unexplained contact with hotels, taxi companies or fast food outlets |  |  |  |
| Recruitment of others to be exploited |  |  |  |
| Evidence of unhealthy or harmful sexual interaction (multiple STIs, UTIs, repeated pregnancy/termination) |  |  |  |
| Child/young person feels indebted to an individual or group/ is asking for or stealing money/items to pay back a debt/an individual or group are demanding money for drug debts/child |  |  |  |
| Concerns/escalation in alcohol or substance misuse – dependency, presenting as intoxicated, A&E attendance |  |  |  |
| Sudden noticeable change in school attendance, performance or behaviour |  |  |  |
| Relationship breakdown/becoming isolated from family and/or peers |  |  |  |
| Increased interest in making money and/or use of language relating to drug dealing or gang involvement |  |  |  |
| Expressions of invincibility or not caring what happens to them |  |  |  |
| Significant change in behaviour and/or emotional wellbeing, including becoming more withdrawn, self-harming, becoming more isolated or changes in peer group |  |  |  |
| Concerns about the child/young person’s use of online technology (online relationships with strangers, secretive around online use, excessive sharing of personal information, accessing sites of concern, spending increased/excessive time online) |  |  |  |
| Suspicious bank account activity e.g. unusual transactions, receiving large or unexplained amounts of cash into account |  |  |  |
| New/significant/concerning connection, or going missing, with another child or young person who is being exploited |  |  |  |
| Excessive receipt of texts/phone calls, being secretive or becoming distressed when phone is removed |  |  |  |
| Having multiple mobile phones |  |  |  |

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| **Vulnerabilities**  Vulnerabilities are aspects of the child or young person’s current and historical circumstances that may make them more susceptible to being groomed and less able to deploy protective capabilities when faced with a risk of exploitation. Please note that these do not indicate CE on their own. | | | |
| Vulnerability | Yes  (Y) | No  (N) | Un-  Known  (U) |
| Disabilities including SEND and neurodivergence (assessed or suspected) |  |  |  |
| Alternative education provision/part-time timetable or exclusion from education |  |  |  |
| Poor mental health and wellbeing |  |  |  |
| Recent bereavement or loss |  |  |  |
| Socially isolated or social difficulties |  |  |  |
| Alcohol or substance misuse issues |  |  |  |
| Contact with the criminal justice system/involvement in offending |  |  |  |
| Absence of safe environment to explore sexuality/sexual identity |  |  |  |
| Homelessness or insecure accommodation status |  |  |  |
| Previously a victim of CE |  |  |  |
| Previous sexual abuse (either personally or witnessed) |  |  |  |
| Lack of safe/stable home environment now or in the past i.e. family history of domestic abuse, substance misuse or mental health difficulties |  |  |  |
| Criminality within the family |  |  |  |
| Economic vulnerability/poverty |  |  |  |
| Child/young person in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories) |  |  |  |
| Associations with other children who are vulnerable or at risk of harm through exploitation |  |  |  |

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| **Type of exploitation you are concerned about** | | | |
| Exploitation type | Yes  (Y) | No  (N) | Un-known  (U) |
| Child sexual exploitation |  |  |  |
| Child criminal exploitation |  |  |  |
| Both child sexual and criminal exploitation |  |  |  |

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| **Details of concerns identified and professional judgement**  Please provide further detail of all concerns and potential indicators of exploitation identified above and how this informs your understanding of how the child or young person is being exploited or at risk of harm through exploitation  Please provide details of all vulnerabilities identified and how you feel that this may impact on the child and the risk of harm in consideration of the above. |
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| **Contexts of concern/known or potential sources of exploitation risk or harm** | | | |
| Context | Yes  (Y) | No  (N) | Un-known  (U) |
| Family/home (e.g. criminality within the family potentially linked to the child/young person’s exploitation) |  |  |  |
| Peers (e.g. child friends with other children/young people who are being exploited, or there are concerns around peer exploitation or peer recruitment) |  |  |  |
| School (e.g. other pupils linked to the child’s exploitation, concerns about the child/young person’s safety within the school setting, peer exploitation or peer recruitment within school) |  |  |  |
| Neighbourhood/spaces (e.g. child/young person spending time in ‘hotspots’, street based grooming, lives in an area where there are high levels of criminality, normalisation of exploitation within communities) |  |  |  |
| Online (e.g. perpetrators may be targeting the child online) |  |  |  |

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| **Details of contexts identified**  Please provide detail of all contexts of concern/known or potential sources of exploitation risk or harm – i.e. details of peers, associates, locations, spaces or online platforms connected to the child and young person. If there are known or suspected perpetrators linked to the exploitation concerns, please provide all details known – e.g. names, aliases, physical description, car details/registration.  If through completing the tool you have gained information about potential perpetrators/crimes/concerning places, this information should also be shared with Police using the Engage information submission form. If you do not already have a copy of this, please email [engage@lancashire.police.uk](mailto:engage@lancashire.police.uk) |
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| **Strengths and protective factors**  For example: details of positive relationships with family, peers or professionals; services working with and engaging the child; support in place to address identified vulnerabilities; child’s own strengths and personal resilience; wider contextual safeguarding influences, community resources and opportunities to build safety |
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| **Child/young person’s view of the concerns** |
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| **Parents/carers view of the concerns** |
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| **Support or actions you have already put in place to address these concerns. Recommendations for what else is needed for the child/young person, their family/carers, or in relation to the context/s where they may be at risk of or experiencing harm** |
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