



**OWNER**

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**VERSION**

V 1.0

**DATE**

November 2019

**REVIEW DATE**

October 2020

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Brighter Futures for Children:  
Fostering Service registration,  
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## 1. Child sexual exploitation and raising the profile of children and young people vulnerable to it

BFFC's IFA foster carers and staff will continue to receive ongoing training with regard to child exploitation. Carers will also receive the Pan Berkshire Child Exploitation simple screening tool currently used by the agency to assess risk.

### Standards and regulations

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011:

- [Standard 4 – Safeguarding children.](#)
- [Standard 6 - Promoting Health and Wellbeing.](#)
- [Standard 21 - Supervision and Support of Foster Carers.](#)

[Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:](#)

- Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.

## 2. 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.

See also [Child Sexual Exploitation: Definition and Guide for Practitioners \(DfE 2017\)](#). This advice is non-statutory, and has been produced to help practitioners to identify child sexual exploitation and take appropriate action in response. This advice includes the management, disruption and prosecution of perpetrators.

Child sexual exploitation takes different forms - from a seemingly 'consensual' relationship where sex is exchanged for attention, affection, accommodation or gifts, to serious organised crime and child trafficking. Child sexual exploitation involves differing degrees of abusive activities, including coercion, intimidation or enticement, unwanted pressure from peers to have sex, sexual bullying (including cyber bullying), and grooming for sexual activity. There is increasing concern about the role of technology in sexual abuse, including via social networking and other internet sites and mobile phones. The key issue in relation to child sexual exploitation is the imbalance of power within the 'relationship'. The perpetrator always has power over the victim, increasing the dependence of the victim as the exploitative relationship develops.

Many children and young people are groomed into sexually exploitative relationships but other forms of entry exist. Some young people are engaged in informal economies that incorporate the exchange of sex for rewards such as drugs, alcohol, money or gifts. Others exchange sex for accommodation or money as a result of homelessness and experiences of poverty. Some young people have been bullied and threatened into sexual activities by peers or gangs which is then used against them as a form of extortion and to keep them compliant.

Children and young people may have already been sexually exploited before they became looked after; others may become targets of perpetrators during their time in foster care. They are often the focus of perpetrators of sexual abuse due to their vulnerability. We encourage our foster carers to create an environment which educates children and young people about child sexual exploitation and where possible encourage them to discuss any concerns they might have.

### 3. Indicators of Possible Sexual Exploitation

You should be aware of the key indicators of sexual exploitation.

They include:

#### Health

- Physical symptoms (bruising suggestive of either physical or sexual assault);
- Chronic fatigue;
- Recurring or multiple sexually transmitted infections;
- Pregnancy and/or seeking an abortion;
- Evidence of drug, alcohol or other substance misuse;
- Sexually risky behaviour
- Recurring urinary infections and tummy upsets.

#### Education

- Truancy/disengagement with education or considerable drop in performance at school.

#### Emotional and Behavioural Issues

- Volatile behaviour exhibiting extreme array of mood swings or use of abusive language;
- Involvement in petty crime such as shoplifting, stealing;
- Secretive behaviour;
- Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults;
- Reports of being repeatedly seen in venues or places that are out of character.

#### Identity

- Low self-image, low self-esteem, self-harming behaviour, e.g. cutting, overdosing, eating disorder, promiscuity.

#### Relationships

- Hostility in relationships with foster carers, family members, friends, school and/or significant others;
- Physical aggression;
- Placement breakdown;
- Reports from reliable sources (e.g. family, friends or other professionals) suggesting the likelihood of involvement in sexual exploitation;
- Detachment from age-appropriate activities;
- Associating with other young people who are known to be sexually exploited;
- Known to be sexually active;
- Sexual relationship with a significantly older person, or younger person who is suspected of being abusive;
- Unexplained relationships with older adults;

- Possible inappropriate use of the Internet and forming relationships, particularly with adults, via the Internet;
- Phone calls, text messages or letters from unknown adults;
- Adults or older youths loitering outside the home;
- Persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation;
- Returning after having been missing, looking well cared for in spite of having no known home base and/or having unexplained large sums of money or new items
- Missing for long periods, with no known home base;
- Going missing and being found in areas where they have no known links.

### **Social Presentation**

- Change in appearance;
- Leaving the foster home in clothing unusual for them (inappropriate for age, borrowing clothing from older young people);
- Having more than one mobile phone, which may often be kept secret
- Having keys to premises other than those known about

### **Family and Environmental Factors**

- History of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse; neglect; domestic violence; parental difficulties.

### **Income**


- Possession of large amounts of money with no plausible explanation;
- Acquisition of expensive clothes, mobile phones or other possessions without plausible explanation;
- Accounts of social activities with no plausible explanation of the source of necessary funding.

This list is not exhaustive.

You should be aware that many children and young people who are sexually exploited do not see themselves as victims. In such situations, discussions with them about your concerns should be handled with great sensitivity. Where you are concerned that a child or young person is involved in, or at risk of, sexual exploitation, you should discuss your concerns with your supervising social worker and the child's social worker or contact out of hours support. This may include contacting the local Police regarding possible criminal offences.

In assessing whether a child or young person is a victim of sexual exploitation, or at risk, careful consideration should be given to the issue of consent. It is important to bear in mind that:

- A child under the age of 13 is not legally capable of consenting to sex (it is statutory rape) or any other type of sexual touching;
- Sexual activity with a child under 16 is also an offence;
- It is an offence for a person to have a sexual relationship with a 16 or 17 year old if they hold a position of trust or authority in relation to them;
- Where sexual activity with a 16 or 17 year old does not result in an offence being committed, it may still result in harm, or the likelihood of harm being suffered;
- Non-consensual sex is rape whatever the age of the victim; and

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- If the victim is incapacitated through drink or drugs, or the victim or his or her family has been subject to violence or the threat of it, they cannot be considered to have given true consent; therefore offences may have been committed;
  - Child sexual exploitation is therefore potentially a child protection issue for all children under the age of 18 years and not just those in a specific age group.

You should record any concerns you have and seek advice as soon as possible from your Social worker or the child's social worker.

#### **Relevant Information and Guidance**

- [Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre \(CEOP\)](#)
- [Child Sexual Exploitation: Definition and Guide for Practitioners \(DfE February 2017\)](#)
- [Child Sexual Abuse - The Children's Commissioner](#)