

Leeds City Council
Children and Families Services



‘Doing simple things well and building better outcomes’

Child Exploitation Practice Guidance
October 2025

About the Document	
Title	Child Exploitation Practice Guidance
Purpose	To support practitioners and managers when working with children and families who are experiencing or at risk of child exploitation
Author & Role	Rebecca Mauganai, Service Delivery Manager Updated by Hannah Dumphy, Safe Project Manager
Approved by	Farah Kenyon
Date approved	October 2025
Frequency of Review	Annually
Distribution	All Children and Families
Stored	Tri.x

Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Exploitation Definitions.....	4
3. Criminal Exploitation and County Lines.....	5
4. County Lines.....	7
4.1 What is county lines exploitation?	7
5. Modern Slavery and the National Referral Mechanism	8
5.1 What is the NRM? And Why is it Useful?	9
6. Urban Street Gangs and Serious Youth Violence	9
6.1 Urban Street Gangs	9
6.2 Serious Youth Violence.....	9
7. Financial Exploitation	10
7.1 What could financial exploitation look like?.....	10
8. Child Sexual Exploitation.....	11
8.1 Sexual Assault Referral Centre.....	12
8.2 Grooming and consent:.....	12
8.3 Language:.....	13
8.4 Areas for consideration	13
9. Best Practice – What Works?.....	13
9.1 Practice Principles.....	14
10. Themes.....	15
10.1 Adulthood:.....	15
10.2 Gender bias:.....	15
10.3 Girls and gangs	16
10.4 Drill Music and Serious Youth Violence.....	16
11. Child Exploitation Assessment	17
11.1 What is a Child Exploitation assessment?	17
11.2 Good practice within CE assessments/toolkits:	17
11.3 Timescales:	18
12. Intelligence Sharing	18
12.1 What is intelligence?	18
12.2 Intelligence Requirements	18
12.3 Recording intelligence:.....	19
13. Transitional Safeguarding	19
a. What is best practice when a child is 17 and at risk of exploitation?	19
b. Services for young people post 18:.....	20
14. Peer Group Mapping	21
14.1 What to include:.....	21
14.2 What to avoid:.....	22
15. What do I do as a practitioner? Actions and Processes	22
15.1 Disruption tactics:	23

15.2 Risk Outside of the Home (ROTH)	24
16. Project Shield	25
16.1 Project Shield Area Meetings	26
17. Radicalisation and Prevent	27
18. Resources and Training	29

1. Introduction

This document is intended to be used by practitioners and managers across Leeds who work with Children and Families. This can include but is not limited to: Children's Social Work staff, Family Practitioners, Early Help, Youth Justice Service, the Youth Service, the Police, Education, Third Sector agencies and Health workers.

This guidance has been completed following a working group led by the Safe Project Team Manager Rebecca Mauganai in 2024/2025. The group included representatives from: Health (LTHT), Police (CVET), Youth Justice Service, Basis, St Giles Trust, The A&E Navigator Service, The Youth Service, Hazlehurst SARC, Barnardo's Child Trafficking Service (ICTG), The Safe Project, Education Safeguarding and Children's Social Work service.

This guidance aims to support practitioners and managers through information and upskilling in relation to contextual harm; thereby achieving consistent practice across Leeds. This aims to help children who are at risk of exploitation receive the right support at the right time. The guidance is an overview of good practice and information. It is not intended to replace procedures or internal processes. For specific safeguarding concerns please follow your internal process and/or contact the duty and advice service.

This guidance should also be read in conjunction with:

- [One minute guide: Child criminal exploitation](#)
- [One minute guide: child sexual exploitation \(CSE\)](#)
- [One minute guide: Child trafficking](#)
- [Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Framework](#)
- [The Safe Project](#)
- [One minute guide: Return Interview Service](#)
- [Practice Standards - Children's Social Work Services](#)
- [Practitioner guide to risk outside the home-child protection process](#)
- [West Yorkshire Consortium Child Exploitation: Policy, Principals and Guidance](#)

Working with children who may be being exploited is a challenging task for any practitioner. We know that children are unlikely to see themselves as victims of exploitation and may be resistant to working openly with professionals. We also recognise the complexity of the work in that children can be victims of exploitation but also present a risk to themselves or others. At times, the work can feel crisis led and without a clear solution. Conversely, we know that children often need consistent and tenacious workers who will build their trust through relationship-based work, therefore allowing them to feel able to talk openly. Again, this can be challenging in the context of caseloads and timescales. This guidance hopes to support workers who may feel unsure about processes or best practice. It also aims to provide links to relevant research and guidance.

This guidance acknowledges the fluidity of change within services and processes. Consequently, this guidance reflects the context of Leeds at the time it is written and appreciates that this may alter over time.

Throughout this document the term child/ren will be used for all children and young people under the age of 18.

2. Exploitation Definitions

Child Exploitation is a type of abuse. When a child or young person is exploited, they're groomed by being given things, like gifts, drugs, money, status and affection. This is usually in exchange for carrying out a criminal activity, known as **Child Criminal Exploitation** or performing sexual activities, known as **Child Sexual Exploitation**.

[NYSCP](#)

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. The majority of child sexual abuse takes place within a family setting, with two thirds of all child sexual abuse reported to the police being perpetrated by a family member or somebody close to the child. Child sexual exploitation typically occurs outside of the family. 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. 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 Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is when a child under the age of 18 is encouraged, expected or required to take part in any activity that constitutes a criminal offence under British law. CCE can take many forms, including 'county lines' (where children and young people are coerced to carry drugs and weapons from one area to another to service complex drug supply chains), stealing or shoplifting to order, including perfumes, alcohol or cars, cannabis cultivation, and forced begging. Children can be exploited by individuals, who are most often external to the family, or by an organised criminal group. The internationally agreed definition of an organised criminal group is 'a structured group of three or more persons existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing crimes for financial or material benefit.' Barnardo's briefing paper | Child Exploitation: A Hidden Crisis [Child sexual exploitation definition and guide for practitioners](#)

Child exploitation is complex and often cannot be categorised neatly into one definition as many children crossover the different types of harm.

Key characteristics of child exploitation will include:

- Power imbalance (age, characteristics, emotional/physical, financial, status/influence)
- Some sort of exchange (tangible/physical items or intangible such as affection or a sense of belonging)
- The child's vulnerabilities impacting their choices
- The child being someone under the age of 18

3. Criminal Exploitation and County Lines

"Child criminal exploitation is when another person or persons manipulate, deceive, coerce or control the person to undertake activity which constitutes a criminal offence where the person is under the age of 18." [Definitions: child criminal exploitation and sexual exploitation | Barnardo's](#)

Criminal exploitation can be incredibly complex as the child is often committing a crime but is also a victim of exploitation. We must always reinforce the child as a victim. Their criminality may be through coercion and therefore is not a free choice. The child may or may not see this themselves and could feel that they have freely chosen to act. Similarly, the child is likely to be distrustful of professionals, and wary of the police as they know that they have broken the law. This creates huge barriers to open working, and it is imperative that practitioners remain open minded and persistent in building that trust with the child.

As professionals it is important that we remain trauma informed and child-centred in our approach. Children will not be able to perceive risk in the same way that professionals do, and while it's important that we educate and inform our children, we cannot expect them to be solely responsible for their own safety.

As with any risks to a child, this requires multi-agency working and working alongside the family. Parents are, in general, protective and supportive of their child. They should be treated as protective partners and included in decision making. Parents will feel worried, scared and possibly judged. Therefore, we need to remain supportive and empathic.

'CCE is a form of child abuse that often inflicts serious harm on children and young people, destroys families, ruins childhoods and can set up a vulnerable child for a life in and out of the criminal justice system. Children who are victims of CCE and gang violence are not being identified in time to save their lives and other children's lives, despite frequent opportunities to do so.' [Exploited and Criminalised report - Barnados](#)

'Through the eyes of children and young people, exploiters often don't appear to be criminals. They are seen as friends or local figures with wealth, status and influence. They offer false promises of financial gain, social standing and community protection that makes it hard for children to understand the danger they pose.' [Shattered Lives Stolen Futures Exec Summary](#) The Jay Review of Criminally Exploited Children. 2024

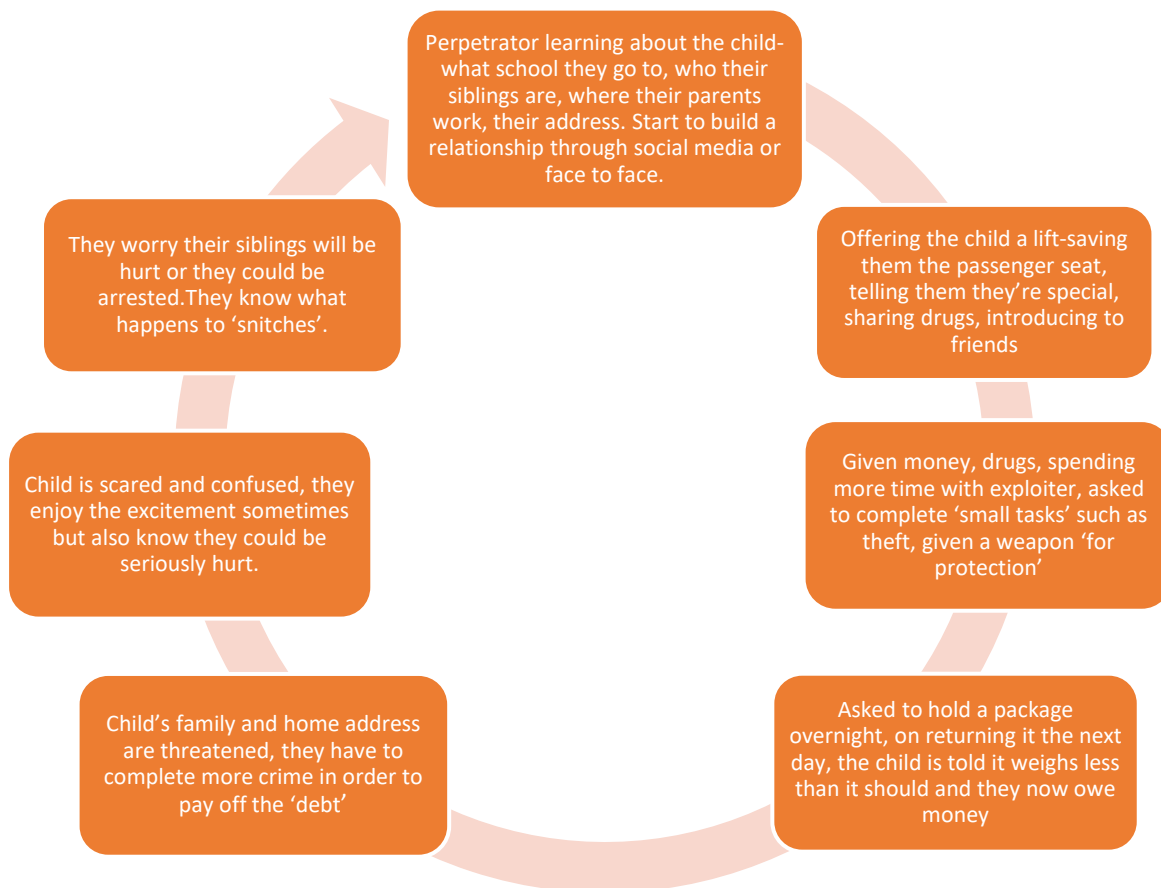
Children who are criminally exploited are groomed, this is likely to fall into the pattern described below and the child will probably be unaware of what is happening. They will most likely see their abusers as friends and people who look out for them.

The below diagram can be used to help parents/carers and children understand the complexity of grooming and how this could apply to them or their loved ones.

A hypothetical example is described below.



Please find an example of what the grooming process could look like:



4.County Lines

4.1 What is county lines exploitation?

"County lines" is a violent and exploitative form of drug distribution. A common feature of county lines is the exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults who are instructed to deliver and/or store drugs, and associated money or weapons, to dealers or drug users, locally or in other counties.

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 Programme overview](#)

If a child is found in a location away for their home, or a property that seems unconnected to them, we need to consider the risks around county lines.

Practice Example:

Boy aged 14 reported missing from home in Leeds on Saturday afternoon and located by the police on Sunday night in a flat in a suburb of Chester. Boy was in possession of 20 wraps of heroin. In the property were knives, weighing scales and rolls of cash.

We need to ask:

How did he travel there, how was this funded, who organised this?

How are these people in contact with him? Has he got a second phone?

What are the consequences of him having drugs and money confiscated by the police? Will he be in debt bondage, could his home address be targeted?

Has a child exploitation risk assessment been completed?

What is he saying? Does he have injuries? Has he been made to carry drugs in his person?

Given the risk of significant harm, a strategy meeting should be held.

Complete a National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

County lines gangs use a range of tactics to minimise the risk of being identified and arrested, including the use of children and young and vulnerable people to service the drugs lines (see the [County Lines typology](#)). These young or vulnerable people are often trafficked away from their homes and can be the victims of other violent crimes committed to ensure there is control over the gang. This can include debt bondage (by staged robberies or aggravated burglaries of the houses which the drug runners are staying), general violence or sexual assault in order to instil fear and ensure submission to the gang's demands. The drugs runners face severe penalties, including injury by stabbing and shooting, potentially including death, if they are suspected of assisting the police or a rival gang. Alternatively, some runners may work for multiple Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) and are treated as a commodity.

- When we are concerned about county lines we can include the British Transport Police, Railway children and use Catch 22 resources. [Child exploitation | Catch22](#) and [Protecting children in the UK | Railway Children](#)
- Please complete a NRM for any child who may have been involved in county lines.

5. Modern Slavery and the National Referral Mechanism

When we are working with a child and who may be being exploited, we should always consider completing an NRM (National Referral Mechanism). This is a process that must be completed by a first responder (police, local authority worker, some recognised charities). Under Section 52 of [Modern Slavery Act 2015](#), if there are signs or indicators of Modern Slavery then practitioners must submit an NRM referral. On consideration of whether a child has been trafficked there should be a multi-agency discussion and the first responder should use this to inform the NRM.

A child does not need to consent to a NRM referral but if they are still in the process when they turn 18, they must consent to remain in the process. The benefits of the NRM are that it allows for a central agency to collate data on where the risks are, and the number of children affected. This can in turn contribute towards resource allocation and research. Additionally, by referring a child we are supporting the process of them being seen as a victim and in need of protection and support. The NRM can provide a Section 45 defence against some crimes committed as part of exploitation such as theft, drug possession etc. This again helps to protect the child from being criminalised through their exploitation.

If you think a child is being exploited, and they are likely to have been trafficked as part of that exploitation (movement from one place to another) then you should complete an NRM.

Best practice would be for this to be discussed within a multi-agency meeting or case discussion, and to include the views of school, police, health, and social care. However, this should not create delay.

NRMs are completed by **First Responders** this includes any local authority worker, the police and certain charities.

5.1 What is the NRM? And Why is it Useful?

What is the NRM?

- Framework to identify potential victims of modern slavery in the UK
- A process to ensure that victims receive appropriate support and protection
- A tool that allows us to monitor and record the scale of modern slavery (that we know about!) as well as to map themes and trends in

Why is it useful?

The NRM allows for the child to be seen within the context of exploitation, and as vulnerable.

The NRM can provide a defence against some crimes committed whilst being trafficked/exploited.

The NRM allows for other agencies to see the child as someone who is at risk.

The NRM, for consenting adults, can provide accommodation and support.

[National referral mechanism guidance: adult \(England and Wales\)](#)

Top tips for the NRM:

- Give details of peers where relevant
- Be succinct and be aware of the importance of the language that you use
- What, how, why
- Do not attach lots of meeting notes etc
- Include addresses, locations, and intel on perpetrator (nicknames etc)
- Learning needs/vulnerabilities
- Get a copy of the Reasonable Grounds Decision (RGD) you will need the details!
- Update all relevant professionals when the RGD is received
- A child is entitled to the same response with a positive RGD as they are with a positive conclusive grounds decision.
- Update the Single Competent Authority (SCA) with all relevant information including missing episodes and court dates if applicable
- Use the NRM reference in all correspondence with the SCA
- [ICTG service referral form | Barnardo's](#)

6. Urban Street Gangs and Serious Youth Violence

6.1 Urban Street Gangs

The definition for Urban Street Gangs is “Groups of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity.” [Criminal exploitation and gangs | NSPCC](#)

The term “Gang” does not have a precise definition. [Section 34\(5\)](#) of the Policing and Crime Act 2009, as amended by the Serious Crime Act 2015, provides that something is ‘gang related’ if it occurs in the course of, or is otherwise related to, the activities of a group that:

- Consists of at least three people; and
- Has one or more characteristics that enable its members to be identified by others as a group.
- Urban street gangs and many other gangs may evolve into organised crime groups (OCG). Urban street gangs tend to be less organised than OCGs and more concerned with perpetuating a threat of violence or harm across a geographical area related to the gang’s main activities. These types of gangs can be involved in varied forms of serious criminality that can have a significant impact on local communities

6.2 Serious Youth Violence

Refers to anyone up to the age of 24 who is potentially at risk of being impacted by violence happening away from the family home; this might be related to gang involvement, the carrying of weapons, being involved in violent robberies,

or having expressed fears about reprisals from others. The child or young adult may be considered as being involved as a victim, an offender, or a witness (although from experience we understand that these distinctions are often inaccurate or unhelpful)

While crime has fallen rapidly over the last 20 years, serious youth violence (hereafter referred to as SYV) is a growing concern in England and Wales. SYV – defined by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) as ‘*any drug, robbery or violence against the person offence that has a gravity score of five or more*’ – has been rising with figures showing that both perpetrators and victims of these offences are getting younger. Indeed, despite a substantial reduction in violent crime since the mid-1990s, levels of serious violence between children and young people remains ‘stubbornly high’.

- Deprivation and poverty leaves young people more vulnerable to childhood adversity and poor mental health, key risk factors for violence
- Living in poverty is making the fast money achieved via crime considerably more attractive, aligning young people to an inherently violent business
- Much of the *trauma* experienced by young people in West Yorkshire was being passed down through families, potentially exacerbated by service provision which is ill-equipped to deal with intergenerational health inequalities

What works (from Violence Reduction Unit 2022-2023)

- Good multi-agency working (with meaningful engagement and shared responsibility)
- Clear shared vision with a focus on relationship building
- Development of analytical capacity and improved data analysis
- Engagement with communities and young people
- Development of high impact interventions
- Culture shift:
 - Thinking about harm outside the home
 - Thinking about the contexts that harm happens in
 - Developing effective welfare responses and learning about what works
 - Working with parents as 'protective partners'
 - Building trusting relationships with third sector partners and non-traditional agencies

'it's easy to criticise a choice without knowing what they had to choose from...'
[Safer London](#)

7. Financial Exploitation

A growing concern across the country involves criminals approaching children and young people online through gaming and social media platforms, and in places like shops and cashpoints with offers of quick cash and fake job opportunities, only to use and control their bank accounts to commit fraud and launder money from organised crime.

- Children are being targeted and their bank accounts or online wallets are being used to launder money by individuals or criminal groups exposing children and young people to great risk, physically, emotionally and within the criminal justice system
- Child Financial Exploitation is a form of Child Criminal Exploitation
- **Financial Exploitation is child abuse**

[#LookCloser To Spot Exploitation | The Children's Society](#)

7.1 What could financial exploitation look like?

Squaring: Squaring, money laundering or being a money mule. It might sound harmless and an easy way to make a bit of cash, but it could be linked to serious crime and could have real consequences for the future. Criminals who make

money through crime such as drugs, guns, human trafficking and fraud, often use people to hold or move their money for them as a way of hiding the crime. They will tell the child that there is nothing wrong with doing this and that they're just doing them a favour.

Signs to look out for: bank cards being blocked, child withdrawing money from cash machines or in branch, unusual spending activity.

Fraudulent returns: Receiving high-cost goods and claiming they have not been received to get a refund.

Benefit fraud: Child may be entitled to universal credit, but this may be used by someone else.

Online gambling or gaming: Children can receive funds through online gaming platforms or online gambling. This could be in exchange for sexual or criminal activity. It could also be another means of money laundering.

Extortion: a child may be being black mailed into sending money this could be through the threat of sharing images. For example, an image generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) could be used as 'sextortion' to get money from a child.

8. Child Sexual Exploitation

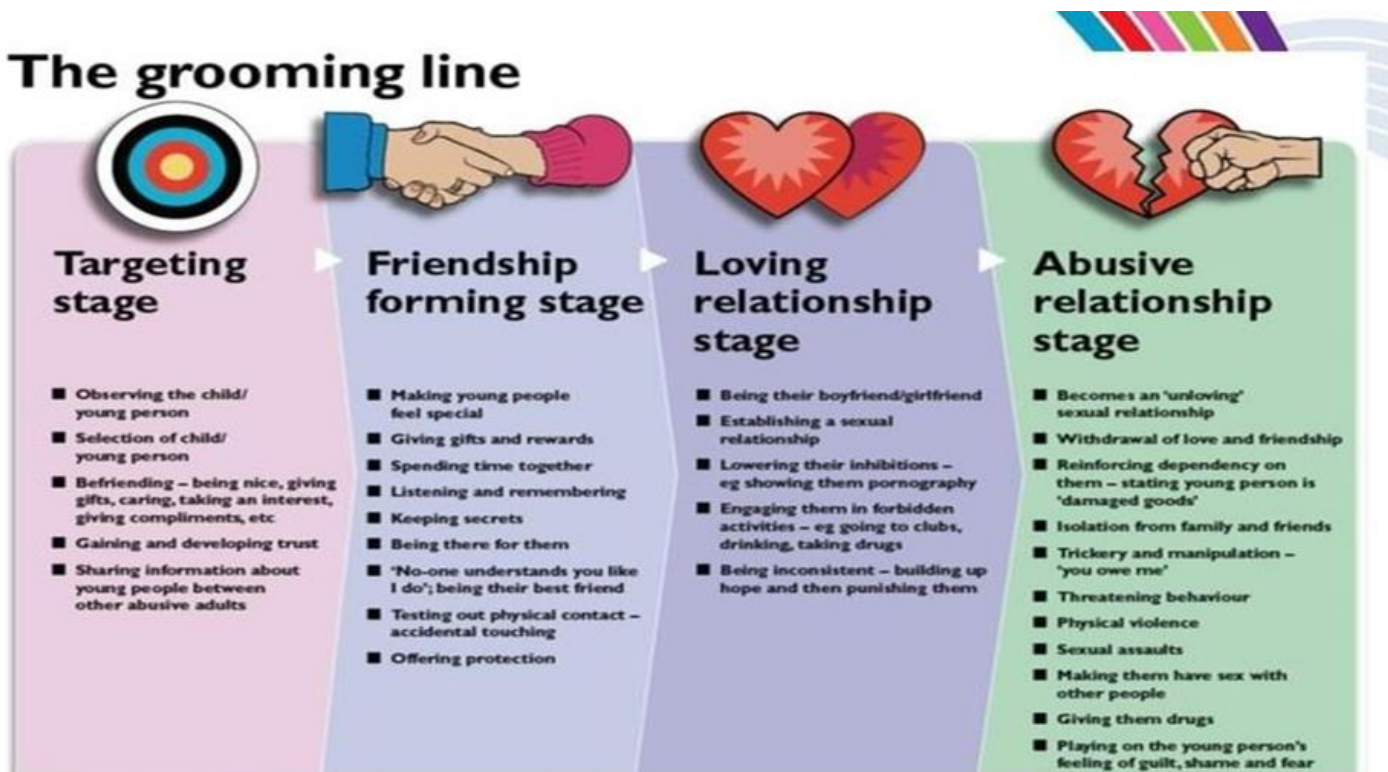
Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Like all forms of child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation:

- can affect 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, for example using Artificial Intelligence programmes)
- can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults.
- 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.

[Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners - gov.uk](#)

The grooming line



8.1 Sexual Assault Referral Centre

When a child may have been sexually assaulted, we always need to consider the role of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC).

For Leeds this is Hazlehurst Centre: hazlehurstcentre.paediatric@nhs.net www.hazlehurstcentre.org

- invite SARC to strategy meetings
- be conscious of language and understand the child did not have a choice
- consider the coercion and control
- 16/17 year olds will be seen within the SARC by an adult service (same place)
- examination is not just forensic, it can be for non-recent incidents
- allow for choice in examination
- using leaflets and storyboards to help inform the young person
- Children, young people, and their families must show a great deal of bravery to attend the SARC and the staff at SARC want to make their time in the service as relaxed and positive as possible

Leaflets for Adults and Young People: [Adult and young person leaflet \(16+\)](#)

Leaflets for PEADS - Parent and Carers: [Children 0 - 15 years leaflet](#)

Comic guide for children visiting SARC: [Visiting Our SARC: A guide for children](#)

8.2 Grooming and consent:

Sexual exploitation is sexual abuse and we always need to focus on the fact that this is never the child's fault.

It is important to understand a child's perception of consent and healthy relationships. Consider learning needs/neurodiversity.

The grooming cycle is powerful for a child and will often make them feel as if they have consented to the sexual activity. Children can also presume that rape is only ever violent and may not believe that what happened to them is classed as rape.

Be trauma informed-remember 'fight, flight, freeze, flop/feint'. Children will not always fight back when scared, this does not imply consent.

8.3 Language:

Be conscious of the words and terms we use as professionals. Sometimes we can unintentionally use victim blaming phrases such as 'lifestyle choice' or 'putting themselves at risk'

Are boys seen as more resilient when it comes to exploitation? Be conscious of gender stereotyping and assumptions. The term engaging – link it to trauma informed approach- consider why we have we not been able to build a relationship.

Thinking about the terms 'choice' and 'risk taking behaviours'. These are victim blaming.

Children cannot be sex workers. Children cannot consent to exploitation.

Please find guidance for practitioners in relation to language when working with children who have experienced or are at risk of exploitation: [Child Exploitation Appropriate Language Guide](#) (The Children's Society, 2022)

8.4 Areas for consideration

Intersectionality:

Intersectionality refers to added layers of vulnerability. We need to be aware that someone's needs won't just stem from sexuality or gender but can be linked to ethnicity and other parts of their identity such as neurodiversity. For example a 13 year old girl who is mixed race, LGBTQ and has ADHD, will need an approach that addresses all aspects of her identity. Services need a holistic approach. It is difficult to support people when different services respond differently in what they can offer which will result in a lot of professional involvement.

Online sexual exploitation:

Sexual exploitation can occur online and this is complex.

Perpetrators will try and move conversations with the child to different platforms such as snapchat and WhatsApp where it is easier to avoid detection.

It is important to always try and get as much detail as possible, screenshots/photos of that platform, usernames etc We need to try and understand a child's internet and social media use. What apps/platforms are they on and what this means to them. Removing a child's phone may be the only safe option, but remember this can seem like a punishment for the child being exploited.

Peer on peer exploitation:

This can be hard to address from a police perspective

There are possibly two victims, we need to be conscious of gender assumptions.

This needs exploration and professional curiosity to fully understand dynamics of relationships.

Trauma Bonds:

Many children who are exploited form a 'trauma bond' with their abuser, whom they can feel a deep sense of loyalty towards. Trauma bonds occur when a person feels threatened and receives harsh treatment together with small acts of kindness, they also feel isolated and believe there is no escape. This occurs in exploitative relationships, so the child or young person may show support for their abuser, feel negative towards those trying to rescue them and have an inability to engage in ways to detach themselves from abusers.

9. Best Practice – What Works?

- Taking time to build trusting relationships with young people
- Identifying who the child feels most comfortable with
- Discuss consent with the child, unpick what they understand by that
- Support the child to feel believed
- Work with systems around the child to improve safety
- The professional network having a shared understanding of CE and language
- Harm reduction-access to sexual health services, SARC, substance use services etc
- Safety planning with the family and the child
- Partnership working, speaking to each other, sharing information
- Submitting INTEL to the police through Partnership Intelligence Platform

- Asking open questions and get detailed answers from children
- Recording information including the small details in order to build a bigger picture
- Use of language around exploitation – being wary of victim blaming language and appropriately challenging others if needed
- Professional curiosity
- Timely response with regards to safety planning
- Following timescales on multi-agency meetings and having the right professionals at meetings
- Using the systems that are in place such as **MACE meetings, VRMP meetings (social work led), Risk Management Panels (Youth Justice), Area Project Shield SYV (Serious Youth Violence) meetings, Guiding a New Generation meetings, peer mapping**
- Avoid duplication of processes where possible
- Focus on disruption, look at the risk contextually
- Do not be disclosure dependant-children cannot always see their exploitation and therefore can't disclose what they don't know
- Understand additional needs-what does that mean for the child, how does it impact on their ability to consent?
- Do not underestimate the impact of positive activities for a child; these can create safety, confidence and resilience, as well as helping to disrupt exploitation
- Consider a National Referral Mechanism

9.1 Practice Principles

Research in Practice have created practice principles for working with children at risk of exploitation. These principles are aligned with the Leeds Practice model and ensure that families receive a trauma informed and restorative approach.

The eight Practice Principles are evidence-informed, which means they draw on the expertise of children, young people, parents, carers and professionals and on what we know from research. Taken together, they promote a holistic response to child exploitation and extra-familial harm that recognises the potential presence of different and multiple forms of harm in children and young people's lives.



To support partnerships, agencies and professionals to shape how they respond to this context, the Practice Principles:

- **Offer a compass** to help navigate a complex landscape, rather than a detailed map for every individual situation, as no one set of circumstances or local context is the same as another, and there is no single answer for how to respond to these types of harms.
- **Are high-level** to support a coherent approach across local partnerships and to support multi-agency working.
- **Focus on behaviours and culture** to help direct work with children, young people, and families, operational management and strategic leadership to align.
- **Complement existing and forthcoming guidance** and are broad enough to sustain utility over time and to fit within diverse local working arrangements.

[Multi-agency Practice Principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm](#)

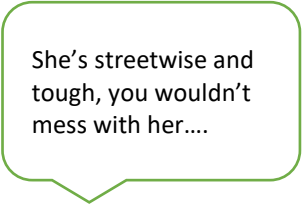
10. Themes

The below themes have been identified as areas for workers to consider in relation to values and approaches with children.

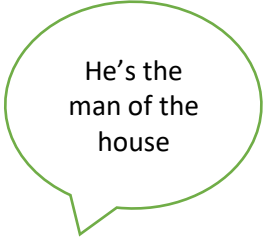
10.1 Adultification:

- Adultification is a type of bias which skews the perception of certain children, leading to others – including professionals – viewing them as more ‘grown up’ or, ‘adult’. This can then lead to lapses in appropriate safeguarding
- ‘..When **notions of innocence and vulnerability are not afforded to certain children.**’ (Davis and Marsh, 2020)
- They confirm that when this happens outside the home, it is **always grounded in bias and discrimination.** Certain aspects of that child’s personal characteristics, socio-economic situation or lived experiences are met with discriminatory responses. This means that, rather than being seen as children experiencing abuse, they are viewed as either responsible in some way, or as more resilient and able to withstand maltreatment.
- Black children are much more likely to be subject to adultification bias. Black boys and girls are often perceived through the lens of racialised stereotypes
- Whilst the roots may be historic, Davis (2022) points out that Black children are still seen as more ‘adult’, with Black boys often viewed as ‘angry or aggressive’ and Black girls ‘hyper sexual ..., strong, loud and rude’. These attitudes mean that Black children experiencing, or at risk of, harm may not be seen as vulnerable or in need of safeguarding in the same way as their non-Black counterparts
- [What is Adultification? | Guidance on Child Protection](#)
- Adultification can lead to a more punitive response than a safeguarding one. For example, a teenager found to be criminally exploited to sell drugs may be seen more as a culpable individual that needs to be penalised, rather than a child who needs to be protected from those seeking to exploit them

He's 15 but have you seen the size of him?



She's streetwise and tough, you wouldn't mess with her...



He's the man of the house

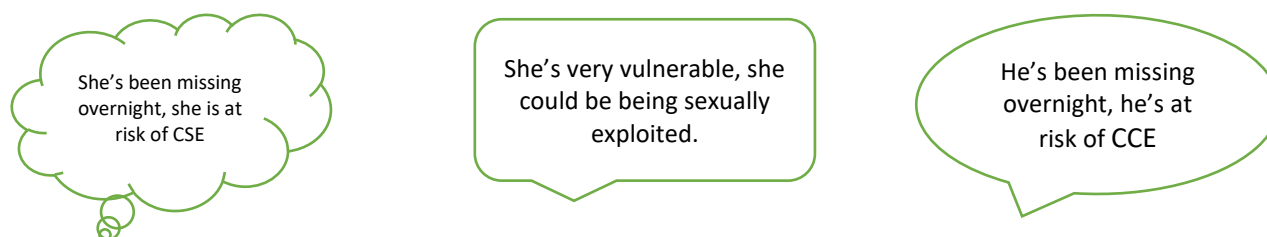
10.2 Gender bias:

- In recent years, there has been notable progress in recognising that boys can experience exploitation in

criminal contexts – for example, how boys and young men are exploited to hold and move drugs around the country as part of county lines operations. But despite this, boys' experiences of sexual abuse are still rarely discussed or understood. Research is limited and there are growing concerns that boys are underrepresented within official data because male sexual abuse often goes unreported (Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (CSA centre))

- There is, however, growing evidence that boys experiencing criminal exploitation may also be sexually abused, with this abuse used to coerce and control them. Perpetrators film sexual acts and then extort their victims into further exploitation and criminality. Like other young people, boys are also forced to carry drugs internally, including anally
- Similarly, when professionals view girls as victims, there is an assumption that their experiences are sexual. We don't talk as much about girls being criminally exploited. But it happens. In fact, it may happen because we don't talk about it

[Gender and Exploitation | The Children's Society](#)



10.3 Girls and gangs

- In the same way that boys are often seen as more aligned to CCE and girls more so to CSE; girls are often not linked to gangs. There is often a lack of curiosity regarding girls being in relationships with boys involved in gangs, attending parties with gang members or having siblings involved in gangs. Similarly, girls may be active gang members themselves. Neither of these scenarios would preclude the fact that they could be being exploited, either criminally, sexually or both
- Research tells us that there is no uniform experience of girls in gangs, but the research distinguishes girls in 'credit' and those in 'deficit'
- Girls living in the care of the local authority and / or with a personal history of trauma were especially vulnerable to gang involvement
- Girls were found to be actively recruited from settings traditionally used for a managed transition to independence, this includes cuckooing
- Young women's' roles in gangs has historically been more narrowly defined (eg girls seen as 'hooks' or 'honeytraps' or exploited primarily for sexual purposes)
- **Honey trapping** involves girls being asked to encourage someone to meet her in a location where they will then be attacked/robbed. This can lead to prosecution through joint enterprise.
- Gangs have recognised the 'invisibility' of girls (by professionals) in the fields of crime and justice and so they can travel and be active while remaining relatively undetected
- From the girls' perspective the most reported reason for involvement was that a gang provided a sense of protection – linked to community belonging
- [Street gangs and coercive control: The gendered exploitation of young women and girls in county lines](#)
- [Girls involved in youth violence: Key findings and recommendations | Local Government Association](#)

10.4 Drill Music and Serious Youth Violence.

Gangs are increasingly using drill music and social media to promote gang culture, glamorise the gang lifestyle and the use of weapons. They may post videos online that seek to taunt rivals, incite violence, or glamorise criminality. The videos often show the brandishing of weapons, include incendiary remarks about recent incidents of young people

being killed or seriously injured, and threats to stab or shoot specific individuals and members of rival groups. The instant nature of social media means that plans develop rapidly, disputes can escalate very quickly and are seen by a large audience, which increases the need to retaliate to 'win' the dispute. If such an allegation is referred to the CPS prosecutors should consider whether a substantive offence is disclosed.

Things to consider:

- Importance of interpretation and understanding
- Can feed into moral panic and the criminalisation of aspects of Black culture
- Need for street literacy / social media understanding
- Challenges of safeguarding in the virtual – social media world – 'one of the most significant challenges facing police and children's services' (working together)
- We are not saying drill music is explicitly inciting violence, there can be positive aspects of drill music for young people in Leeds. However, there are examples of #Leedsdrill that do explicitly promote violence amongst rival gangs. This needs to be better understood and disrupted through engagement with the right communities

11. Child Exploitation Assessment

A child exploitation assessment or child exploitation toolkit will be completed by a professional when they are concerned that a child could be at risk of exploitation. We should be completing these at the earliest stages so we can intervene before the risk is high.

School, health, early help and other professionals will complete the toolkit that is accessible via the Leeds Safeguarding Partnership website. If the child is medium/moderate or high/significant this needs to be submitted to Duty and Advice (children's front door).

[Risk Identification Tool | Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

Children's Social Workers will complete the Child Exploitation assessment on mosaic.

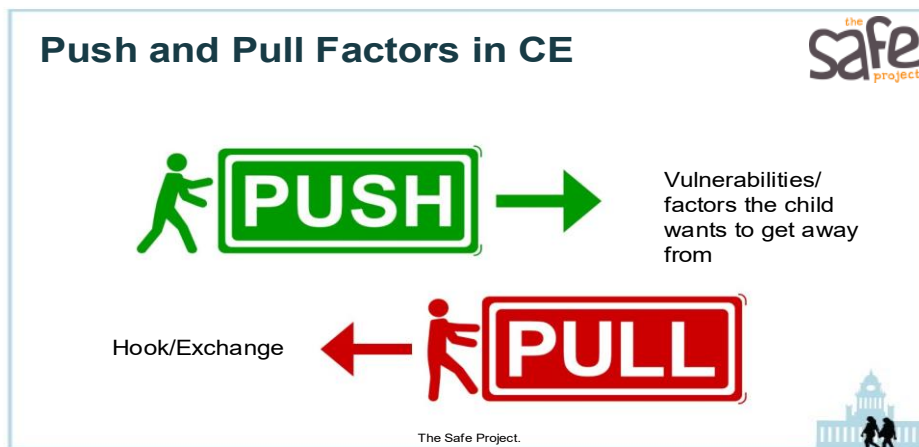
11.1 What is a Child Exploitation assessment?

- A specialist screening tool designed to help identify possible risks of child exploitation where there are identified Child Exploitation concerns or intelligence
- the assessment considers the concerns against some of the key risk factors associated with Child Exploitation within a multi-agency response
- assesses the Child Exploitation risk in a consistent manner (no risk, emerging, moderate, significant)
- Professionals are encouraged to go beyond the child's presenting behaviour e.g. missing episodes and to explore what else might be going on for this child
- Early intervention improves the chances of positive outcomes
- Disruption and prosecution of perpetrator/s is also of significant importance
- For social workers the assessment gets sent to CVET police which then allows the police to add the correct flags, this in turn allows for the sharing of intel through PIMMS

11.2 Good practice within CE assessments/toolkits:

- Language (non-victim blaming, denial of exploitation is expected)
- Child's views (Individuals who have been abused have already experienced a loss of control and the assessment process should be managed so they can meaningfully participate)
- Considers the child's unique needs and individual vulnerability to CE
- Description and analysis drawing on professional judgement
- Hypothesis-what do you think is happening-what is your professional opinion?
- Contextual factors-think about places, spaces and connections.
- Views of other agencies and family members (multi agency approach)
- Push and pull factors e.g. low emotional warmth, poverty plus promise of vapes/alcohol and being made to feel special
- Not being disclosure dependant-remember most children don't realise they are being exploited
- Protective and resilience factors-including strengths for the family and the child

- Consideration of disruption opportunities
- Be underpinned by professional curiosity and not simply rely on checklists, disclosures or what is or is not known. If something is not known, professionals should not assume that may not happening
- Consider the impact of the issues identified in the assessment of the individual and identify the support that is required to meet their needs



11.3 Timescales:

Case Type:

Significant- assessments should be undertaken every 4-6 weeks (currently mosaic assessment indicates 4 weeks but this will change to 6 weekly when then CE assessment is updated)

Emerging and Moderate - assessments should take place every 12 weeks at maximum (please update when any new information is received as the risk will fluctuate)

Remember your CE assessment is shared with the CVET police team meaning that the child has the correct flags and alerts recorded which in turn allows for the social worker to receive PIMMS intelligence.

Team Managers and Social Workers need to record a case decision when the risk has reduced, and the case will be closed. The CE workflow cannot be cancelled.

12. Intelligence Sharing

Within your role you will have a different perspective of information that may not be known to any other agencies. For this reason, it is imperative that you consider what information is shared with other agencies and recorded as intelligence.

Importantly if you are reporting intelligence, you do not have to inform the person it involves, but it may impact if there is a safeguarding concern that needs to be escalated from the intelligence. Consider how to best manage this with those you are supporting.

12.1 What is intelligence?

Intelligence is information that can be pieced together to form an understanding of offending behaviour. Intelligence comes from direct practice, word of mouth, witnessing interactions, behaviour, or relationships.

12.2 Intelligence Requirements

Important elements of intelligence related to exploitation could be:

-Identifying factors of victims or perpetrators: names, physical descriptions, clothing including uniforms or how

clothing might be used.

- Media or contact details: usernames, social media platforms, how platforms are used, email addresses, phone numbers, IP addresses, photos or content put out on social media sites
- Transport methods/routes: travel tickets, transport used such as trains, buses, airlines,
- Financial elements: bank accounts, sort codes, amounts transferred, initial contact for financial information.
- Locations: properties, parks, schools, fast food restaurants, offending happening within locations
- Behaviour: Harmful activity, sexual acts, criminal acts, weapons, substance use, contact between perpetrators and victims
- Relationships: Concerning adults or perpetrators, types of behaviour within relationships, potential connected peers or networks

12.3 Recording intelligence:

If you think you have intelligence that would support the disruption of exploitation you can record this through:

- West Yorkshire Police Partnerships Intelligence Portal: [Partnership Intelligence Portal | West Yorkshire Police](#)
- Calling 101 or using West Yorkshire Police 101 online: [Live Chat | West Yorkshire Police](#)
- Contacting Crimestoppers completely anonymously on: 0800 555 111
- You can also ask for officers you are working with to record information as intelligence.
- If there is an immediate risk or a crime is happening call 999.

13. Transitional Safeguarding

The numbers of candles on your cake does not mean you are suddenly less vulnerable.

If a child is at risk of exploitation at 17, then they can still be at risk of exploitation after their 18th birthday.

Transitional safeguarding can be complex as there are different pathways and legislation that can oversee the young person.

Children's Social Work Services and Youth Justice Service will often close as the child turns 18. Similarly, child exploitation refers to those under the age of 18 and therefore police services are likely to respond differently.

'Where young people are experiencing coercion and other forms of control and exploitation under 18, these experiences and the impact they have rarely stop when a person turns 18. Young people's brain development continues to mature cognitively and emotionally well into their twenties. This has important implications regarding, for instance, potential ongoing coercive influence of exploiters. The transitional nature of maturation after 18 requires us to take a nuanced approach to the 'age of maturity' and to take account of young adults' individual experiences and circumstances in how we protect their rights and understand their capacity to take particular decisions.'

'Whilst turning 18 means that a young person legally becomes an adult overnight, the transition to adulthood is a process not an event – and this process differs from one person to another.'

'The power imbalance between young adults who are still developing cognitively and the coercive influence of often highly sophisticated abusers is stark.'

Bridging the gap: Transitional Safeguarding and the role of social work with adults

'Binary notions of child/adulthood, victims/perpetrators, vulnerability/capacity can mean some people can 'slip through the net' or face a 'cliff-edge'. Mind the Gap. Dez Homes. RIP

a. What is best practice when a child is 17 and at risk of exploitation?

Below are a number of prompts for consideration when working with a child approaching adulthood.

- Think ahead-prior to the 18th birthday. What needs to happen while the child is still a child? **Planning needs to start around 17 and a half** if not before
- [Preparing for adulthood forum](#) -multi agency panel that considers the ongoing needs of children progressing into adulthood. Suitable for those with complex needs, risk of exploitation or substance use issues. We are encouraged to make referrals to this forum when a young person is approaching the age of 17.5. PreparingForAdulthoodForum@Leeds.gov.uk
- Referrals can be made to Adult Social Care anytime from a person's 17th birthday, the young person should consent to this
- Mental Capacity Act- this starts at age 16, we need to think about the principles of this. Decisions need to be

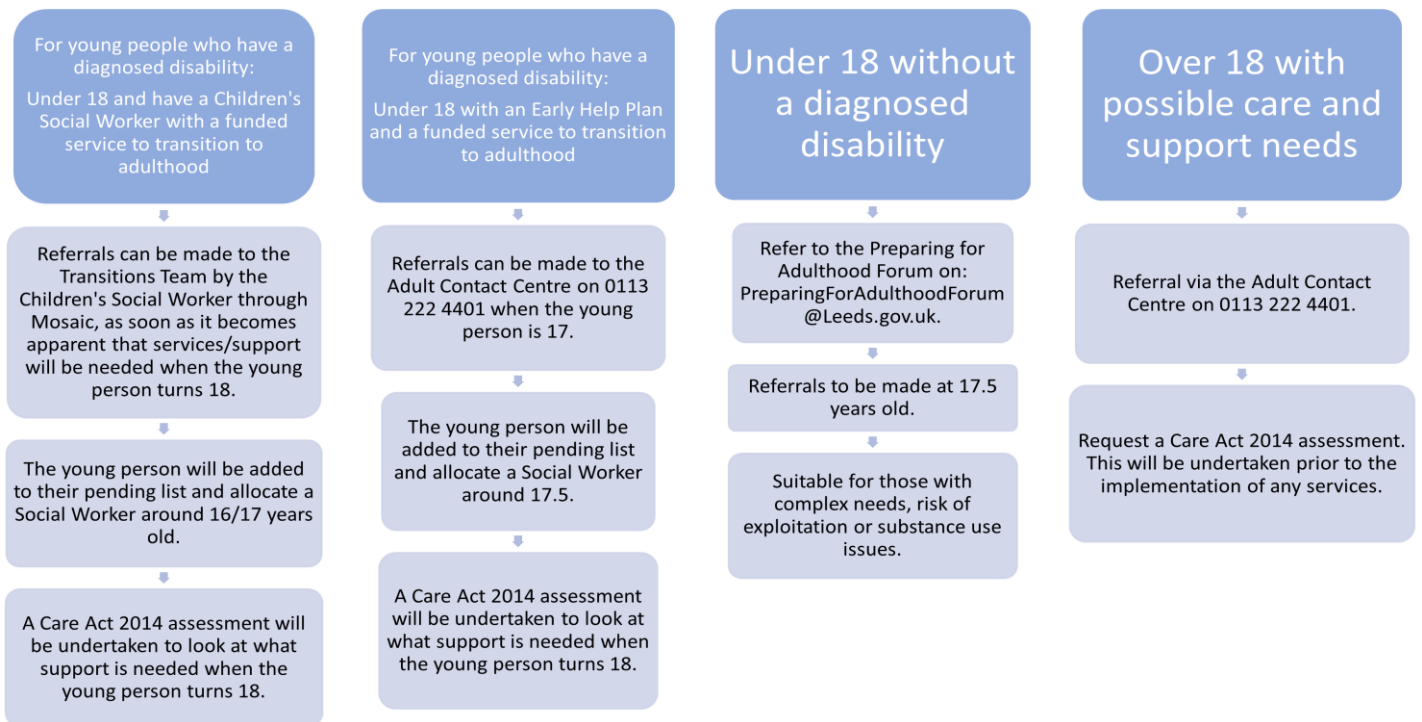
the least restrictive in the case of lacking capacity. Wishes and feelings always need to be considered

- Third sector agencies: in Leeds there are various support services that can work with young people after they turn 18. Consider services such as Basis, Forward Leeds, Getaway Girls
- Be clear around consent when promoting services with the young person-they may need encouragement.
- Know whose responsibility is what-not assuming it is someone else's role, ensuring that tasks are followed up for the young person
- **The Serious Youth Violence agenda is up to age 25.** Guiding A New Generation meetings consider young people at risk of exploitation and SYV up to age 25
- Young people with their own properties can be very vulnerable. They are likely to have had social work support that has ended once they turned 18. e.g. their service charge may have been paid by social care and now they are responsible for their own bills, service charges and their benefit claims. This is often overwhelming
- Young people are very vulnerable to cuckooing (properties being taken over by those involved in exploitation and/or drug dealing)
- Young people are also vulnerable to being used as a honey trap (arranging for someone to be at a certain place where they will be attacked/robbed)
- Knowledge is key, help the young person to recognise risks and be aware, ensure they have the right support and that professionals are curious, trauma informed and consistent
- Healthy relationships-lots of young people are vulnerable to domestic abuse, criminal exploitation and sexual exploitation. Young people with a history of trauma may not always see an abusive relationship as wrong or dangerous. Healthy relationship discussions and education is important
- Support needs to be relationship based. Be aware of when other services are pulling out so that a young person does not simultaneously lose several sources of support
- **The National Referral Mechanism**-use when appropriate and with consent if they are over 18. Once a child turns 18 any pre-existing NRM referral will need consent
- NRM-best practice guidance Children's Society 2024 [Navigating the NRM, Consent and the Transition to Adulthood](#) Good practice would be to inform a child of the NRM and the benefits of this process, then when the child is approaching 18 to discuss the NRM and gain consent. The implications and benefits of the NRM should be explained. A trusted professional should have conversations with the young person as they approach their 18th birthday. ***'When professionals do not properly enable children to make an informed decision about the NRM, those children are more likely to withdraw from the process and experience the serious consequences that can result from this'***
- Intelligence-use of the PIP-share intel with the police and other services
- Completion of keeping safe work with the young person, do they have a safety plan, do they understand consent and healthy relationships?
- Use of Contextual Mace for locations, themes and perpetrators
- West Yorkshire Financial Exploitation team (consent required) dutyofficer@wyjs.org.uk
- Leaving care eligibility
- Staying close and staying put schemes for looked after children
- Multi-agency information sharing and planning
- CE assessment (social work) and partnership exploitation tool-to be completed at 17 and to consider transitional planning
- Language-perception of young people suddenly making choices at age 18 when being exploited at age 17
- Similarly, sex work at age 16/17 is not legal-it is exploitation
- Developmental age vs chronological age

b. Services for young people post 18:

- BASIS [Basis Yorkshire](#)
- Forward Leeds young persons service [Young People and Young Adults - Forward Leeds](#)
- Getaway Girls [Getaway Girls – Empowers girls and young women](#)
- OWLS – prevention and well-being work – 16 onwards. Pre-tenancy work or risk of homelessness
- Personal Assistants – the child need to be 16 plus having been looked after for 13 weeks of care or more
- West Yorkshire financial exploitation team – have a social worker in the team.
- Staying close – new project when young people are leaving residential or custodial – PA

- Transitions team have a duty rota
- GANG AND SYV up to age of 25
- NPT and Street sex work officers
- Adult Social Care (see below)



14. Peer Group Mapping

When we need to understand more about networks, connections and places we should always consider a mapping exercise.

For further detail and research please go to [Peer mapping case studies and examples](#)

Best practice in peer mapping is to ensure conversations are had beforehand about the reason for the peer map and what the intended outcome will be.

Consider who will use the peer map and if this will be updated.

Consider who will be invited and whose responsibility it will be to facilitate, record and specify actions.

When inviting professionals consider– Housing, YJS (Youth Justice), Police, Social Workers, Education, LASBT, the Youth Service etc.

Below are some best practice prompts for how to complete a mapping.

14.1 What to include:

- Full names, level of assessed risk, professionals involved, school
- Places of concern- refer contextual MACE/PIP
- Adults of concern- refer contextual MACE/PIP
- Sibling/family links to CE concerns
- Consider girls in gangs
- Travel links-how are children getting from A to B
- Connections to children who have died through SYV/CCE
- Strengths and Vulnerabilities
- Identity/culture
- Reliability of information – where has it come from

14.2 What to avoid:

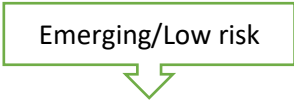
- List of names with no actions
- Initials or codes no one else will understand
- Names being used as fact by other services e.g. someone being linked to a gang member and therefore assumed as being in the gang.

15. What do I do as a practitioner? Actions and Processes

As a practitioner if you are worried about a child in relation to possible exploitation then you need to complete the Leeds Safeguarding Partnership Board (LSCP) Child Exploitation Risk tool. The LSCP website has a vast amount of information around process and guidance in relation to safeguarding children so please utilise this.

[Risk Identification Tool | Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

Emerging/Low risk



- On completion of the tool the child may be identified as low/emerging risk. If low then please consider early intervention, what support can the family benefit from? What will parents consent to? Will they agree to an early help plan and who is best to lead this? We always need to ensure full communication with parents and carers; do they understand the risks and concerns? Are they protective?
- Consider what third sector agencies would benefit the child or family e.g. Basis, St Giles, Catch, Getaway Girls.
- Also consider a referral into child focussed MACE [Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Framework](#)
- This is a multi-agency meeting which considers children vulnerable to and at risk of exploitation. The meeting will consider children regardless of whether or not they are open to services. The referral needs to be completed and sent to CHSMace@Leeds.gov.uk
- Share INTEL-as noted above it is imperative that we share information when we are concerned around a child being at risk. This can include nicknames of drugs dealers, areas children are associating in, names of buildings or businesses that children are spending time in etc.
- Best practice is that we always include family in discussions and decisions, please ensure that you share your concerns with the child's parents, include them in next steps and help them to feel empowered and supported to be as protective as possible.
- Who has the best relationship with the child? Read the Best Practice section above and consider who the child trusts and will talk to. If a relationship hasn't yet been established, then who is best placed to build this?
- Be strength focussed; every child has interests and skills, use these to tap into positive activities and relationships which will help create resilience and safety.

Medium/Moderate risk



- Consider all steps for low/emerging.
- If a child is at moderate/medium risk of exploitation then a referral into children's social work services is required.
- Following the completion of a child exploitation risk matrix, if the risk to the child is identified as medium/high, the **duty and advice team should be contacted by phone on the duty and advice professional's number- 0113 376 0336**. The team will complete a case discussion over the phone with the referrer and request a copy of the completed risk matrix in order to review the information and confirm next steps.

- Please ensure the above steps have also been explored i.e. talk to parents, consider support services and who the child will open up to.
- At the front door a social worker will explore the exploitation risk tool and whether or not this needs to be assessed by a social worker in an area team. They are likely to speak to parents and to consider what protective steps can be taken prior to statutory intervention.
- If the child is allocated a social worker then they will complete a child and family assessment alongside a child exploitation assessment. This will allow for a better understanding of risk and for safety planning to be explored.
- When children are at risk of exploitation, and supported by a social worker, there may be Vulnerability and Risk Management Meetings (VRMPs) these will be chaired by a social work Team Manager and will unpick the exploitation risks and what protective steps can be taken.

Significant/high risk



- Please consider all steps for emerging and moderate.
- If a child is assessed as high risk then this means they are actively being exploited or multiple indicators suggest they are being exploited. This amounts to risk of significant harm and therefore the child should have a social worker. If the family is not consenting to social work intervention, then a strategy meeting will need to take place.
- **CVET police (exploitation team) will allocate an officer to all high-risk cases** who will attend the VRMP meetings and be a point of contact for the child and professionals.
- If child is being exploited then we need to complete a National Referral Mechanism.

15.1 Disruption tactics:

While steps need to be taken to increase the safety of a child we should also be focussing efforts as a multi-agency group onto the perpetrators of the exploitation.

Disruption:

- For full details of legislation and legal orders available please read the [Child exploitation disruption toolkit](#)
- Do not underestimate the power of positive activities for a child. They will improve self-esteem and create new friendships
- Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWNs) can be issued by the police to disrupt contact between any potential abductor over the criminal age of responsibility and a child or young person where the child is aged under 16 years (or under 18 years if they are under local authority care)
- Gathering intelligence and sharing this with the police-either through the allocated CVET officer, through 101 or PIP
- Utilising Modern Slavery legislation
- Injunctions
- Curfews
- Buddy tags (voluntary)
- Safety planning with the family
- Tracking the child's phone/location
- Internet safety-setting restrictions, limiting time on devices
- Work with the school: **children on reduced timetables or excluded are at increased risk of exploitation**, therefore we need to promote and increase their time in education

- Referral to MACE or Serious Youth Violence Area Meetings (Project Shield)
- Identify support for the child through a third sector agency or support service e.g. The Safe Project, Chapeltown Youth Development Centre, Catch, Basis, St Giles Trust, Getaway Girls, Forward Leeds

15.2 Risk Outside of the Home (ROTH)

When a child is at significant risk of harm due to extra-familial harm such as exploitation then we can use the ROTH pathway.

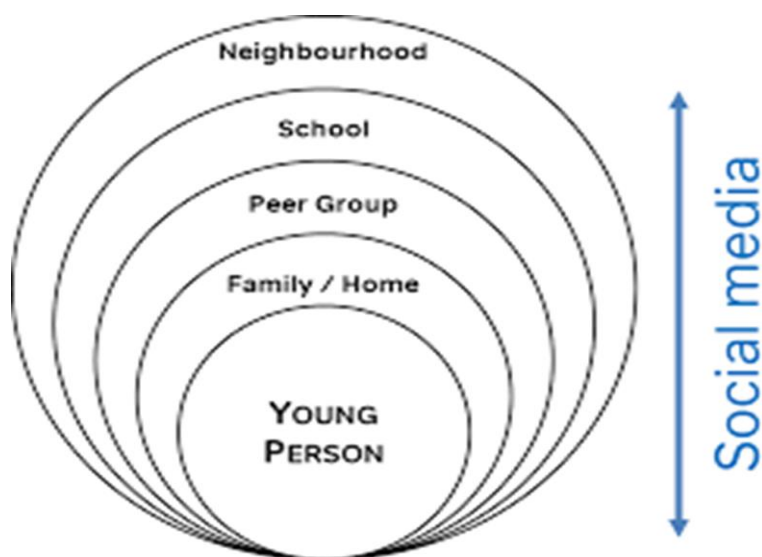
The ROTH pathway allows for a Section 47 (child protection) process to be followed in a way that addresses the contextual risks of harm to the child and therefore avoids blame and stigma on the parents/household.

A social worker and their team manager will hold a strategy meeting and Section 47 enquiries that will identify the child is at risk of harm due to exploitation. On the basis that the risk is outside of the home and parents are protective, then the risk can be addressed through an Initial Child Protection Conference through the ROTH pathway.

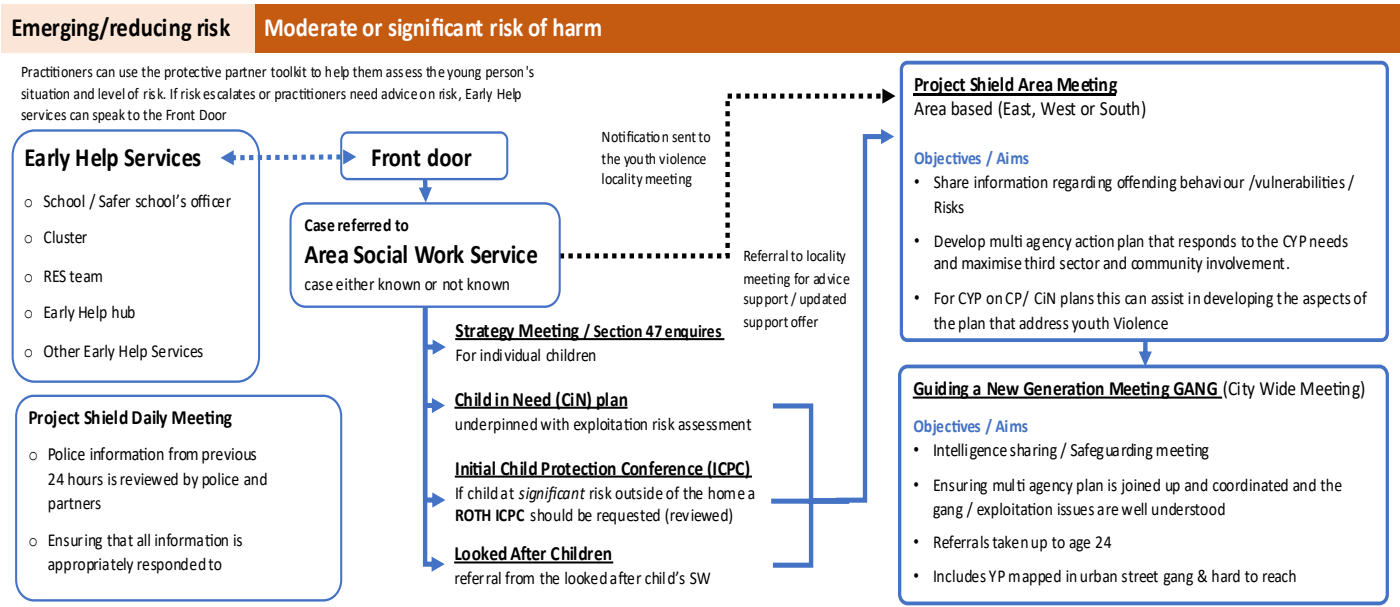
Parents are treated as Protective Partners within the ROTH meaning they can provide reports for the meeting, and they should be treated as a partner working towards reducing the risks to the child. The parent can be supported by the Safe Project to complete their Protective Partner report for the meeting.

ROTH conferences should feel different to a traditional ICPC in that they are focusing on harm away from the family home and will need to explore contextual actions to address this. This includes inviting the right people to the meeting in order to address issues within the community and/or peer groups. For Childrens Social Work Services please see:

[Practitioner guide to risk outside the home-child protection process](#)



Exploitation / Risk outside the home pathway



MACE (Child Level and Contextual)

Helps to support practitioners working with vulnerable children and young people and can be accessed at any level of risk. MACE will share information, analyse risk, consider connectivity and develop plans to assist the person making the referral.

There should be evidence of a graduated approach before referring to MACE, this means evidence that there has already been suitable engagement with the child/young person/family and an assessment of needs has taken place. This may be from completing either, Protective Partner toolkit or Early Help - Part 1 Me and my family.

Child level

- Children at low and emerging risk
- Social work cases where risk is not reducing

Contextual

- Referrals from anywhere or any meeting regarding geographical areas or concern or patterns of behaviour that are identified. This meeting focuses on making specific areas of the city safer'



The above flow chart helps to explain the different processes available for when a child is at risk of exploitation and/or serious youth violence.

Summary:

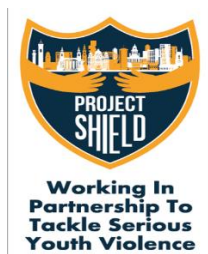
- Working with extra-familial risk is hard, there are no easy answers
- Follow your safeguarding processes and complete the exploitation assessment/toolkit
- Be open minded and take time to build a relationship with the child
- Include parents
- **Remember the processes in Leeds:**
consider a MACE referral, consider the Area Youth Violence meetings through Project Shield, VRMP meetings for cases open to a social worker, ROTH for children at significant risk of extra familial harm
- Contextual MACE is for themes, locations and perpetrators
- Disruption of the perpetrators groups and locations needs to be pursued by the multi-agency group
- Always consider a National Referral Mechanism (NRM)
- Relationship based working and being open minded is the way forwards
- Be tenacious, consistent, trauma informed, and child focussed
- Do not underestimate the importance of positive activities for the child
- Ensure your CE assessment/toolkit is up to date and has been shared with the right people
- Share intelligence when appropriate [Partnership Intelligence Portal | West Yorkshire Police](#)
- Social workers can request a consultation with the Safe Project to explore exploitation issues
- Access training through the LSCP website and PALS
- Always follow your internal safeguarding processes

16. Project Shield

Our vision is that Project Shield will be an effective platform to continue to deliver youth informed partnership work, focusing our efforts on identifying and protecting those most vulnerable to being at risk from Serious

Youth Violence. Its aims are to engage young people in positive and constructive dialogue, whilst raising awareness of the dangers and consequences of becoming involved in serious youth violence.

The Branding was developed in consultation with children and young people across Leeds. The logo design was created by three young people in Leeds that participated in a competition across schools and youth settings and was launched in February 2024.



As part of Project Shield there are daily meetings Monday to Friday which are led by the police, currently chaired by Project Shield Partnership Sergeant Katie Earnshaw. The meetings are attended by a broad range of agencies including Children's Social Work Service, Youth Justice Service, Liaison and Diversion, A&E Navigators and Education. The meeting will share information regarding children in custody or linked to intelligence around serious youth violence and exploitation. These meetings are not designed to make case decisions but rather to share key information in a timely and efficient way, ensuring that referrals are made to duty and advice as appropriate and that key professionals are informed.

16.1 Project Shield Area Meetings

To enhance the effectiveness of our work with young people involved in serious youth violence each of the three Leeds areas are now running a multi-agency 'Serious Youth Violence area meeting'. Each meeting will run every 6 weeks (so there is one meeting every two weeks: East, South and West). The partners attending this meeting are from both statutory and third sector organisations that have current local knowledge and up to date intelligence, as well as some clear ideas of potential support to enhance the existing plans that are in place for these young people. The meetings are chaired by the Project Shield Partnership Sergeant

Who will be referred to the area meeting?

Anyone who has potential gang involvement, who has been carrying weapons, involved in violent robberies, or expressing fears about reprisals from others that are potentially gang affiliated. They may be involved as a victim, offender, or a witness. They will all need to have an allocated social worker and will have been assessed as being at significant (High) or moderate (Medium) risk of harm.

How do I refer?

Once a case is open to CSWS the allocated Social Worker can refer into the Area meeting. This is only where the risk includes serious youth violence.

Email sent to appropriate NPT mailbox

innersouth@westyorkshire.police.uk

innereast@westyorkshire.police.uk

innerwest@westyorkshire.police.uk

Email needs to be sent as specified with the following information:

Subject: Youth Violence Area meetings (East/ South/ West) Referral

Child's information

Forename (s)

Surname

Date of birth
Address
MOSAIC reference
Lead Professional/ Social Worker name

Guiding A New Generation Meeting (G.A.N.G)

The (GANG) meeting works with young people under 18 who are moderate and significant risk, associated with urban street gangs, or those difficult to engage. The meeting also supports young people aged 18-24 years. Referrals for over 18's will come directly from referring agencies or, for those children approaching 18 from the area youth violence meetings.

Referrals for over 18's are currently being sent via email to mark.rothery@westyorkshire.police.uk

17. Radicalisation and Prevent

The process of radicalisation is very similar to grooming into exploitation and can often impact children who have additional vulnerabilities. While the process of radicalisation is not to be confused with exploitation, it is a risk that we need to be wary of as some of the vulnerabilities and indicators overlap.

Please read this alongside the One Minute Guide and the information available on Insite.

[One minute guide: radicalisation and preventing extremism](#)
[InSite - Prevent](#)

The below information is taken from: [Radicalisation and child protection | NSPCC Learning](#)

How does radicalisation happen?

The process of radicalisation may involve:

- being groomed online or in person
- exploitation, including sexual exploitation
- psychological manipulation
- exposure to violent material and other inappropriate information
- the risk of physical harm or death through extremist acts
- It happens gradually so children and young people who are affected may not realise what it is that they are being drawn into

Vulnerability factors

Anyone can be radicalised but there are some factors which may make a young person more vulnerable. These include:

- being easily influenced or impressionable
- having low self-esteem or being isolated
- feeling that rejection, discrimination or injustice is taking place in society
- experiencing community tension amongst different groups
- being disrespectful or angry towards family and peers
- having a strong need for acceptance or belonging
- experiencing grief such as loss of a loved one
- These factors will not always lead to radicalisation

Indicators of radicalisation

If a child or young person is being radicalised their day-to-day behaviour may become increasingly centred around an extremist ideology, group or cause. For example, they may:

- spend increasing amounts of time talking to people with extreme views (this includes online and offline communication)
- change their style of dress or personal appearance
- lose interest in friends and activities that are not associated with the extremist ideology, group or cause
- have material or symbols associated with an extreme cause
- try to recruit others to join the cause

Concerns around radicalisation should be raised through your safeguarding processes. A referral can be made into duty and advice for children's social work support.

A referral should also be made to Prevent so the child can be considered for Channel meetings and support under the Prevent agenda.

To make a referral to Prevent or for any other questions or queries contact the Leeds Prevent Team on 0113 535 0810 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm) or alternatively email prevent@leeds.gov.uk

18. Resources and Training

Training through Leeds Safeguarding Children's Partnership is available through the website below.
<https://www.leedsscp.org.uk/training>

There is a regular newsletter from the LSCP that shares updates and relevant events:
Newsletter: <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKLEEDS/signup/32325>

Training for Leeds City Council employees is available through PALs:
[Child Exploitation and an Understanding of Contextual Safeguarding](#)
[Criminal Exploitation & Gangs](#)
[Child Exploitation – Understanding, Identifying, Assessing and Managing Risk](#)
[First Responder - Referring potential victims of modern slavery into the National Referral Mechanism](#)

The Children's Society Look Closer Programme
[Information for professionals | The Children's Society](#)

Basis Yorkshire CSE training
[Training Courses - Basis](#)

Alright Charlie-video and workbook CSE and grooming Alright Charlie – CSE Primary School Resource - Basis (basisyorkshire.org.uk)	The Real Story-booklet CCE and other exploitation resources. CSE, CCE & Sexual Abuse Archives - Page 2 of 3 - Free Social Work Tools and Resources: SocialWorkersToolbox.com	VR headsets-knifecrime (Leeds VRU)	Public resource library-drugs and beer goggles (Tech North)
Brave Space- Knife crime resource	Cut Short: Fighting Against Knives in the North - Tell Studio	Resources Contextual Safeguarding	Catch-On-Parents-Pack.pdf (d1mdc3nx9zxiu4.cloudfront.net)
Practice principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm (researchinpractice.org.uk)	Film Session – Alfie's Story – Not In Our Community – Protection against exploitation	5e-peer-group-mapping-guidance.pdf (contextualsafeguarding.org.uk)	Voice of child 'Mash Up' - Event on Vimeo
Child Exploitation Language Guide The Children's Society (childrenssociety.org.uk)	Low risk pack-CSE and CCE-Safe Project	Breck Resources Breck Foundation	Advice for you - Life Or Knife - The choice is yours (west-midlands.police.uk)
Save Me film and handbook Safeguarding Enfield			

The Safe Project can offer advice around resources to social workers through a consultation, you can request this through a referral to safeprojectteamvm@leeds.gov.uk