



# Child Exploitation Partnership Pathway

## 1. Introduction

In this document you will find the Rotherham Partnership Child Exploitation (CE) pathway. It has been designed to help professional who works with children and their families in Rotherham to make decisions regarding referrals where CE is suspected.

The tool contained in this pathway indicator is designed to be a guide which can help you begin to make professional decisions related to the most appropriate course of action where concerns related to CE are present.

## 2. Partnership CE Pathway Guidance

This pathway indicator is to be used by any professional working with children and young people if they suspect potential CE. There are many reasons why you might suspect potential CE and the warning signs and symptoms will vary from child to child. There are various physical, emotional and/or behavioural issues that a child or young person may be exhibiting which suggest abuse and exploitation. Guidance on identifying the signs of exploitation can be found [here](#).

Nationally there are a lot of different child exploitation risk assessment tools available however research has demonstrated that there is little correlation between the risk factors highlighted on a risk assessment to the link of exploitation. We have therefore taken a slightly different approach by developing a tiered framework to guide practitioners by listing a number of factors that may indicate that a child is being exploited.

This pathway indicator does not contain an exhaustive list and practitioners will need to carefully consider the context behind any of the behaviours, as this has an important role in determination of the appropriate action you should take. Professionals should also use their experience and knowledge of safeguarding and associated risk factors to inform their decision-making process. Similarly, if you are unsure about which action to take then it is important to use this pathway as a means for compiling as much information as possible before seeking support from Rotherham MASH.

The framework is designed to help different agencies to work to the same criteria when considering possible CE. This pathway indicator can be used in two ways, either as a tick box screening tool which can be used to enable practitioners understand an individual's risk of exploitation or as supplementary guidance which allows practitioners to embed the learning into their existing assessments and plans.

The pathway indicator utilises a tiered framework for identifying potential CE; behaviours and risk factors that are well established indicators of exploitation are in the **red section**, probable risk factors and indicators in the **amber section**, and additional factors in the **yellow section**.

Similarly, there are also distinctions within risk factors, such as 'confirmed/suspected' and 'currently/previously'. While they are important distinctions, they are both significant in deciding whether an individual is at risk. Please note that 'confirmed' does not necessarily require a direct disclosure of exploitation from the individual but may include information being provided to you by other trusted (or multiple) sources, or through your own professional knowledge and experiences.

Additional vulnerability factors based on individual characteristics and socio-economic status have also been included at the end of the pathway, however, **please note that these do not indicate CE on their own**. Vulnerabilities are factors which make a child or young person less able to deploy protective capabilities when faced with a risk of exploitation, whereas risks are the threats and/or harms of CE a person may be faced with.

Specific questions should only be answered if you have a pre-existing relationship with that child or young person as they require an in-depth knowledge of that individual. If this is the first time that you have met this child or young person, please only utilise the first section of the pathway indicator.

Assessing exploitation is not an exact science however, practitioners should understand the signs that someone might be being exploited or is at risk of exploitation and look to put in a plan to build resilience or safeguard as appropriate.

There is also a section at the end of this pathway indicator where you can write down detailed notes and your professional opinion about the individual child or young person. This is used to evidence why you have initial CE concerns. We recommend using this section as you may want to refer to your notes later on or use them as part of any onward referral process you may undertake.

What your results indicate and the suggested actions/pathway you should take can be found on Pages 9 and 10.

### 3. Definitions

We have also compiled a list of key terms and provided more information and links about specific issues which will help with your decision-making process when completing the pathway.

**Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)** is common in county lines and occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. Criminal exploitation of children is broader than just county lines and includes for instance, children forced to work on cannabis farms, commit theft, and commit acts of violence. (Home Office, 2018)

**Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)** 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. (Department for Education, 2017)

**Modern Slavery** is the term used within the UK and is defined within the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The Act categorises offences of Slavery, Servitude and Forced or Compulsory Labour and Human Trafficking. These crimes include holding a person in a position of slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, or facilitating their travel with the intention of exploiting them soon after. It is possible to be a victim of modern slavery within your own country and therefore applies to UK and non-UK resident children. (Modern Slavery Act, 2015)

**Grooming** is when someone builds a relationship, trust and/or emotional connection with a child or young person so that they can exploit them. Children and young people who are groomed can be exploited, radicalised, trafficked or sexually abused. (NSPCC)

**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. (Home Office, 2018)

**Please note that people of all ages may be vulnerable to exploitation.** Exploitation does not stop once a person reaches the age of 18. Exploitation may start once the person reaches 18 but in many cases exploitation in childhood can carry on into adulthood meaning that a number of young people receiving support from children services may also need support from adult services. Where a young person is approaching the age of 18, you should consider contacting adult social care to see what support might be available.

#### **4. Process for sharing information with South Yorkshire Police (SYP):**

Partner agencies (statutory and voluntary) are encouraged to report information to the police if they believe that the information may relate to potential issues concerning sexual exploitation of children or adults. For example this may include information such as:

- Vehicle details including registration/make/model/colour etc.
- Details of any addresses or localities where the child may have been hanging about such as the use of a particular off-licence by young people to obtain alcohol, or premises/venues where they go to consume it.
- Details/descriptions, including names/nicknames, of suspected perpetrators.
- A Facebook page of concern or other social media post, image or message of concern.

The information will be assessed as to whether action needs to be taken to safeguard others, and whether it provides valuable information to the wider 'jigsaw'. Your concerns and suspicions will always be taken seriously. When providing information, always give as much detail as possible, including where the information came from, how recent or how old it is, names, dates of births, addresses, vehicle details etc: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

If you would like to provide information about possible Child Exploitation activity to SYP you will need to complete [this form](#) and send it to [Force.intell@southyorks.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Force.intell@southyorks.pnn.police.uk).

<b>Safeguarding concern</b> If selected immediately contact the police and social care			
<b>A</b>	Evidence of child under the age of 13 having been sexually abused (a child under the age of 13 cannot consent to any sexual activity)	Confirmed	Suspected
<b>B</b>	Evidence of being bought/sold/trafficked (i.e. found out of area whilst deemed missing)	Confirmed	Suspected
<b>Established risk factors/indicators of CE</b>			
<b>C</b>	Gang membership or associating with other known victims or perpetrators of exploitation	Confirmed	Suspected
<b>D</b>	Child or young person who deems themselves to be in a relationship with someone and there are concerns about that person's age and/or the balance of power in the relationship (5+ years difference between ages, particularly if young person is under 16)	Confirmed	Suspected
<b>E</b>	Presented with descriptions of sexual injuries (to the genitalia) or serious physical injuries inflicted by someone else	Yes	
<b>F</b>	Presenting with injuries which are unexplained/explanation implausible	Yes	
<b>G</b>	Disclosure of abuse followed by a withdrawal of allegation	Yes	
<b>Additional risk factors/indicators of potential CE</b> (May also highlight other issues unrelated to CE)			
<b>H</b>	Evidence of sexual activity under the age of 16	Confirmed	Suspected
<b>I</b>	Alcohol/substance misuse (presenting under the influence of or in possession of substances)	Confirmed	Suspected
<b>If you have an existing relationship or have access to personal records please answer the following questions:</b> Established risk factors/indicators of CE			
<b>J</b>	Child in care or you have early protection concerns (including CiC/PPP/CIN/Early Intervention Services)	Currently	Previously
<b>K</b>	Evidence of unhealthy or harmful sexual interaction (multiple STIs, UTIs, repeated pregnancy/termination)	Currently	Previously

If you have an existing relationship, please answer the following questions: Probable risk factors/indicators of CE			
L	Unaccounted money and/or goods (i.e. mobile phones, clothing etc.)	Yes	
M	Persistent absence from home, care or school	Yes	
N	Concerns about child/young person's use of online technology or that others may be using technology to access or abuse the child/young person (sexting/send videos, large amounts of unknown friends online etc.)	Confirmed	Suspected

If you have an existing relationship, please answer the following questions: Probable risk factors/indicators of CE			
O	Spending time in known CE hotspots/with friends associated with CE	Confirmed	Suspected

If you have an existing relationship please answer the following questions: Additional risk factors/indicators of potential CE (May also highlight other issues unrelated to CE)		
P	Change in physical appearance (i.e. well cared for, sudden change in hygiene or having brand new clothes despite you having no knowledge of how they might have access to this)	Yes
Q	Sudden deterioration of personal hygiene	Yes
R	Change in personal behaviour (i.e. conduct issues, regularly missing or not attending appointments etc.)	Yes
S	Low self-esteem or feelings of worth	Yes
T	Having new unknown friends	Yes
U	Reduced contact with family and/or friends	Yes
V	Becoming or remaining isolated from others	Yes
W	Suspicious behaviour with phone/smart device (i.e. constantly looking/checking it, after having looked at it leaving the room/area etc.)	Yes
X	Child or young person remaining hypervigilant, nervous or protective about discussing things with you	Yes

Additional factors which may make children and young people more vulnerable to CE Note: These on their own do not indicate CE		
1. Disabilities including SEND	2. Neglect	3. Low socio-economic Status
4. Parental substance misuse	5. Domestic abuse (including witnessing)	6. Criminality in the family
7. Homeless or in insecure housing (i.e. sofa surfing, refuge shelters etc.)	8. Alternative education provision or missing out on education	9. Known association with other C&YP who are being exploited
10. Identifying as LGBTQ+	11. Previously a victim of CE	12. Previous sexual abuse (either personally or witnessed)
13. Identifying as transgender		14. Other agency involvement (i.e. social care, EWMHS, YOT etc.)
<b>15. Poor mental health and wellbeing, including:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• anxiety</li> <li>• depression</li> <li>• low self-esteem or self-worth</li> <li>• self-harm</li> <li>• suicidal thoughts/ ideation</li> </ul> Mental health issues and/or disorders (i.e. dissociation, PTSD, multiple personality, depression etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• suicide attempts</li> <li>• sleep problems</li> <li>• ADHD/ASD diagnosis</li> <li>• eating disorders</li> </ul>		

**16. Notes:**

Once you have completed the tool, please refer to the following sections for advice on what to do next. Please also complete a feedback form using the following link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/sCriWCL5Jh>



**Serious cause for concern and/or immediate safeguarding issues**

**If the tool highlighted:**

- **Multiple confirmed/current established risk factors of CE**
- **Multiple suspected/previously established risk factors of CE**

**This indicates serious cause for concern.**

**If there are immediate safeguarding issues; contact the police and children's social care.**

**Cause for concern or suspected CE**

**If the tool highlighted:**

- **Multiple confirmed/current established risk factors of probable CE.**
- **Few suspected/previously established risk factors of CE.**

**This indicates there is cause for concern for suspected CE.**

**No immediate concerns but vulnerabilities raised**

**If the tool highlighted:**

**Few suspected/previous risk factors indicating probable CE.**

**Multiple additional risk factors of CE.**

**This does not necessarily indicate potential CE.**

**Partnership led Early Help assessment would be recommended to understand the needs of the child/young person**

