

Child Exploitation Process

Anyone who spends time with children may notice changes in behaviour, mood, or physical health that could indicate exploitation or harm. Along with other possible indicators of potential exploitation such as being reported missing, increase in drug or alcohol use, use of more than one phone or secretive phone use.

Child Exploitation (CE) can take many forms, including sexual or criminal exploitation, peer-on-peer abuse, or online exploitation, and may occur individually, in peer groups, or as part of organised networks such as gangs.

Early recognition and intervention greatly improve the chances of keeping children safe.

For full guidance, see the [CE policy and procedure](#)

Pathways for Reporting Suspected Child Exploitation

If you suspect that a child may be at risk of CE, there are three main pathways:

1. Young person NOT open to Children's Services

- Complete a Single Contact Form and return it to the Multi-Agency Children's Hub (MACH), including the Vulnerability Checklist.
- The Multi agency children's hub will screen the referral and contact the Complex Safeguarding Team to determine whether a CE assessment or initial CE meeting is required.

2. Young person open to Children's Services

- The child's Social Worker refers via the LCS system and completes the Vulnerability Checklist.
- The referral is reviewed by the Complex Safeguarding Team, who decide if an initial CE meeting is needed or if consultation with the social worker is sufficient.

3. Child Looked After placed into Westmorland and Furness by another Local Authority

- The Police are notified via the Philomena Protocol and information shared via MACE.
- Any children placed into Westmorland & Furness where CE risks are identified and there are links in the area this will be discussed at MACE meetings.

Review Meetings

Once exploitation concerns are identified, regular review meetings are held based on the level of concern:

- **Low concern** every 12 weeks

- **Medium concern** every 8 weeks
- **High concern** every 4 weeks

These meetings are chaired by the Complex Safeguarding Team and ensure that actions are monitored, disruption explored, and risks are managed to safeguarded children effectively.

MACE (Multi-Agency Child Exploitation) Meetings

MACE meetings are held monthly and bring together representatives from key agencies including police, children's services, education, health and other relevant partners. The purpose of MACE is to:

- Identify emerging themes and trends in child exploitation within the local area
- Highlight hotspots and locations of concern
- Discuss known or suspected perpetrators and patterns of behaviour
- Coordinate preventative and disruptive actions across agencies
- Support strategic decision-making to safeguard children effectively

MACE ensures that all relevant agencies are working together to protect children and young people and that information is shared appropriately to prevent exploitation and agree disruption that can be in place.

For any concerns or advice about child exploitation contact:

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