



Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Boards

Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy: 2016-2020

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INTRODUCTION

This document outlines Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Safeguarding Children Boards strategy for preventing, identifying and tackling child sexual exploitation (CSE). It has been developed using the knowledge gained from local needs analysis and research evidence in respect of CSE across both areas and has drawn upon national policy and guidance about effective practice.

This strategy should be read in the context of the significant work already undertaken by partner agencies across the city of Stoke-on-Trent and the county of Staffordshire in developing a pan coordinated approach to local child sexual abuse and exploitation through a joint Child Sexual Abuse Forum (CSAF). A multi-agency strategic approach has enabled partner agencies to share intelligence, develop innovated approaches to operational activity, pool expertise and resources into shared preventative and targeted communication and training ventures; and to learn together as a partnership to help improve outcomes for children and young people at risk of, or experiencing CSE in our communities.

This strategy advocates that the best way to tackle the sexual exploitation of children and young people is through an effective co-ordinated interagency approach and by working to a clear and coherent plan to do everything possible to prevent child sexual exploitation. We also need to help ensure that there is a swift and proportionate response with tailored support provided to children and young people who are the unfortunate victims of this abuse; and listen to their voice so we can learn from their experiences. An important part of this strategy is working with children and young people and communities to inform them about the dangers of child sexual exploitation and the early warning signs to look for. We have children and young people in relationships which they themselves do not recognise as exploitation and abuse; we want to help to change this and to equip all children and young people with the knowledge and confidence to understand how they can keep themselves safer, as well as where to go to if they need help.

In recent years we believe that we have made good progress in helping to raise awareness and achieve this aim, but there is much more work to be done. This strategy builds on what we have learned, both locally and more widely and sets out how the LSCBs and all our partners across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent intend to continuously improve our effectiveness in tackling child sexual exploitation. It confirms how we continue our vitally important awareness raising with children and young people as well as parents, carers, education settings, sections of the business community, our local communities and the wider multi-agency workforce. It outlines how agencies will work together to deal with specific cases when potential child sexual exploitation concerns are reported and our continuing plans to disrupt this kind of activity. This includes prosecuting the people who perpetrate this crime.

The LSCBs will be publishing an Annual Report that will provide the details of how this strategy has been implemented and what has been achieved. I look forward in due course to reporting on the good work that has been done to protect the children at risk of harm from sexual exploitation.

John Wood QPM

Independent Chair, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent LSCBs

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Children Act 2004 (sections 13 and 14) requires each Local Authority to establish an LSCB to co-ordinate the actions of connected partners with whom they work and help ensure the effectiveness of the safeguarding children arrangements. Our LSCBs have a range of roles, responsibilities and statutory functions as set out in the Children Act and Regulations 5 and 6 of the Local Safeguarding Children Board Regulations 2006. Those relevant to this strategy are summarised below:

- Participating in the planning of services for children and young people in the area of the local authority;
- Developing policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people;
- Monitoring the effectiveness of what is done to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people;
- Delivering effective multi-agency safeguarding training;
- Undertaking serious case reviews;
- Communicating the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people,
- Publishing an Annual Report on the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people

At a joint meeting of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Boards in September 2014 it was agreed that the strategic priorities for 2015-2018 would be common to and owned by both LSCBs. The development sessions held by the partnership Boards and their Executive Groups to examine and assess the national and local drivers set out within the Single Improvement Plan, identified the need to tackle child sexual abuse and exploitation as a priority. This strategic priority for has been developed following self-assessments, external scrutiny and evaluation.

High profile national serious case reviews have identified child sexual exploitation as a significant risk factor for children and young people regardless of where they live in the country and it is known that children and young people who are missing from home or from residential care settings are particularly vulnerable to the risk of internal trafficking and exploitation. This risk of exploitation has been recognised by the Government as a national threat and in March 2015 they introduced an expectation that all LSCBs would conduct regular local assessments on the effectiveness of local responses to CSE and publish those assessments through their annual reports.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) continues to be recognised as a national, regional and local issue of concern. In 2015, the Children's Society calculated there were more than 40,000 reported crimes of a sexual nature in England and Wales against children in the previous year. The crimes ranged from grooming to CSE and sexual assault and the report suggested that there was an estimated 16,500 children in England and Wales who are considered to be at high risk of sexual exploitation. At a regional level, police figures indicate that over 2,000 children and young people at risk of or experiencing CSE and locally, across the City and County, there were a total of 1103 sexual offences against children during 2015.

We know that child sexual exploitation and its associated risks continue to not be recognised, are hidden from view and are unreported to statutory agencies; this strategy sets out our unwavering determination and firm commitment to help to change this locally in order to make a difference to the lives of our children and young people.

VISION FOR SAFEGUARDING IN STAFFORDSHIRE AND STOKE-ON-TRENT

Children and young people are kept safe by agencies working together effectively to provide the right help to families at the right time.

Our vision recognises that protecting and safeguarding children and young people is about the development of a culture that promotes good practice and continuous improvement within services, raises public and practitioner awareness that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, responds effectively and swiftly when sexual abuse has been alleged or occurs, seeks to learn when things have gone wrong, is sensitive to the issues of cultural diversity and puts the young person at the centre of planning to meet their support needs and ensure they are safe in their communities.

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION – A DESCRIPTION OF WHAT IT IS

CSE is child sexual abuse, in which a person exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity and facing significant risks to their physical, emotional and psychological health and wellbeing. A common feature of CSE is that the child or young person does not recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and does not see himself or herself as a victim of exploitation. Any child or young person under the age of eighteen, male or female, can be a victim of CSE, including those who can legally consent to sex. The abuse most frequently upon those of a post-primary school age and can be perpetrated by adults or peers on an individual or group basis. Perpetrators of CSE can also be from within or from outside a child or young person's family.

The sexual exploitation involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where the child, young person (or third person/s) receives 'something' (e.g., food, accommodation, protection, feeling valued, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts and / or money) as a result of them performing and /or other performing on them, sexual activities. CSE can also be perpetrated through violence, aggression, control and intimidation in which the victim complies with the abuse through fear of humiliation or of physical violence to themselves or their family. The gain for those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse can include financial benefit, status or control. Involvement in exploitative relationships is characterised by the child's or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social, economic or emotional vulnerability.

CSE can take place in person, or using technology through mobile phones and on-line and involve both contact and non-contact sexual activities, including the production and distribution of sexual images or exposure to such images. Although CSE is not a specific criminal offence in itself, different manifestations of CSE incorporate different criminal sexual and other offences.

CSE can be difficult to identify. Many children, young people and also professionals can misinterpret abusive experiences as being consensual and fail to recognise the exploitation involved. This can contribute to misplaced feelings of loyalty or shame on the part of the victims, many of whom will consequently not self-disclose, and a potential failure to identify the abuse situations on the part of the professionals. The fact that such scenarios are typified by a power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the abuse and there is some form of vulnerability or limited availability of choice on the part of the child or young person, clearly distinguishes the experiences as abusive. (Christie C, 2014).

CSE also needs to be placed firmly in the context of abusive relationships and specifically the impact that domestic abuse can have on how a child or young person views relationships. For a child or young person growing up in such an environment, the impact of their experiences can create limited and limiting expectations with regards to what constitutes a healthy relationship; this can consequently increase their susceptibility to exploitation in the future.

It is also important to note that some young people who have been targeted and groomed or who have experienced sexual exploitation, may also become facilitators or perpetrators of abuse; this may be as a result of grooming or coercion, or to prevent further sexual exploitation. It is recognised that more still needs to be understood about this dynamic in order to put in place effective preventative and targeted strategies.

PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

This strategy sets out the vision, commitment and approach of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LSCBs to ensure the effectiveness and promote a consistent local approach in respect of the arrangements to safeguard children from child sexual exploitation. Whilst much has already been done to address CSE locally, partners have agreed this multi-agency strategy will drive a coordinated vision to further address strategic and operational CSE activity.

This strategy advocates that the best way to tackle the sexual exploitation of children is through effective co-ordinated inter agency and partnership working. We want to do everything possible to prevent exploitation; to help ensure there is a swift and proportionate response to protect children and young people; to provide tailored support to victims of CSE; and to prosecute those who commit these crimes against children and young people.

It is our collective multi-agency responsibility to identify those children and young people at risk of abuse and our joint responsibility to protect them and safeguard them from further risk of harm and reassure our communities we can perform our duties effectively. To that end the LSCBs have a key role in promoting and facilitating local and cross border co-operation and collaboration. It is the responsibility of the police to focus on the detection, disruption and prosecution of perpetrators.

The CSE strategy and its accompanying action plans have been produced to reflect both the current approaches taken by our partner agencies in tackling CSE across the city and county. It outlines the type of approach that agencies envisage taking to address CSE in the future and illustrates the steps that will be taken to realise our strategic vision. Our overarching aim is to promote a culture whereby nobody tolerates or ignores CSE; and where both professionals and communities across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent understand what is required to identify, prevent and protect children and young people from CSE and do this successfully.

Our Strategy is built on a holistic approach to addressing CSE and comprises of initiatives under the headings set out below:

Prepare – Provide strong leadership, effective systems and work with partners to tackle CSE.

Prevention – Raising awareness of CSE amongst young people, parents, carers the community and potential perpetrators (young people and adults); and provide help at the earliest opportunity. This includes building resilience with families and partners to understand and act together in preventing this form of abuse and help to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people.

Protection – Safeguard children and young people by providing targeted support in order to achieve good outcomes for those who are at risk of or already victims of exploitation and support professionals to do so.

Pursue – partners will disrupt, arrest and prosecute CSE offenders wherever possible and appropriate.

It covers the needs and actions of potential victims, victims, potential perpetrators (adults and young people), perpetrators (adults and young people), parents and carers, community members, businesses and professionals. This is underpinned by intelligence, data sharing and a strong sense of joined-up partnership action.

The strategy is designed to inform targeted action to improve the response to CSE; the ultimate goal being to help parents, carers, communities, voluntary organisations, businesses and statutory agencies address CSE as effectively as possible.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

Child sexual exploitation is completely unacceptable. National and local high profile cases reported in the media make it clear that CSE is prevalent in the UK and we know that it is happening across the city and county. The impact of this abuse can have a serious long term impact on every aspect of a child or young person's life, particularly on their health, education and emotional needs that can endure into adulthood.

The consistent findings from research highlight that the adverse consequences include acute feelings of betrayal, powerlessness, stigmatisation, guilt and traumatic sexualisation, physical and mental health problems, as well as difficulties forming and maintaining relationships. Abuse often has wider impacts and damages the lives of families and carers and can lead to family break ups.

The child or young person must always be the focus of what safeguarding partners do. It is important that we not only listen, but also truly hear what is said; we need to actively engage with children and young people, their families and carers and the wider community and use their experiences to understand local need and what we need to do as partners to improve our services.

This multi-agency strategy for safeguarding children who are abused or at risk of sexual exploitation draws on:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE 2015),
- Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation (DCSF, 2009),
- Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan (DfE, 2011)
- *'I thought I was the only one. The only one in the world'*: The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups, (OCC 2012).

RISK FACTORS AND VULNERABILITIES – OUR FOCUS

CSE can happen to any child or young person, regardless of their background, age, ethnicity or gender. All children and young people under the age of 18 years old can be subject to CSE. Although CSE happens to both boys and girls in significant numbers, the vast majority of current known victims are girls and there is a believed substantial under-reporting of CSE experiences from boys and young men.

Additionally, some aspects of a child's or young person's historical or current circumstances may make them more vulnerable to targeting and grooming for sexual exploitation and to virtual dangers due to social isolation. These include but is not exhaustive of children and young people who live in care, regularly go missing, have a history of abuse or neglect, have a difficult family life or reduced contact with family and friends, experience a poor mother-daughter relationship, are being bullied, are involved or associated with gangs, have low self-esteem, have a disability, or have experienced bereavement.

Research also indicates that children and young people from black, minority ethnic communities, faith groups, children and young people seeking asylum, refugees and lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender young people may also be vulnerable. For more details about vulnerability and risk, please use the following links to the CSE Risk Factor Matrix:

- For Staffordshire: [www.staffsscb.org.uk/CSE Risk Factor Matrix](http://www.staffsscb.org.uk/CSE%20Risk%20Factor%20Matrix)
- For Stoke-on-Trent: [www.safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk/CSE Risk Factor Matrix](http://www.safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk/CSE%20Risk%20Factor%20Matrix)

There are also a number of known protective factors which help to increase children and young people's resilience in relation to CSE; such as having an understanding of healthy relationships, being helped to understand what exploitation can look like and giving children and young people the skills and knowledge to become more aware of how they can keep themselves and their friends safer. Raising awareness with parents, carers, professionals and members of the community helps to provide additional protective factors. This strategy acknowledges the risk factors facing children and young people and partners are committed to working together to help increase known protective factors.

OUTCOMES

Our strategy comprises three overarching strategic objectives:

- Children and young people are not victims of CSE
- Children and young people are protected from CSE by parents / carers, communities, professionals and businesses
- Children, young people and adults are not perpetrators of CSE

The strategic objectives are supported by operational outcomes concerning prevention (building resilience and education and awareness), identification and information sharing, interventions and service commissioning.

The Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire has provided additional support to help develop a local CSE Outcome Framework with partner agencies. This framework supports the strategic objectives set out above and provides subsets of operational outcomes that are linked to the CSE strategy and framework's four over-arching themes of Prepare, Prevent, Protect and Pursue.

KEY PRINCIPLES

The *'Final Report of The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (CSEGG)'* (November, 2013) outlines the *'See Me, Hear Me Framework'* for action, which sets out the functions, processes, proposed structure and underpinning principles that need to be in place to help ensure that children and young people are seen, heard and made safe. The overarching aim of this framework is that child sexual exploitation is responded to as a child protection and safeguarding issue in accordance with the supplementary guidance to Working Together *'Safeguarding Children and Children and young people from Sexual Exploitation'* (DCSF, 2009), *'Working To Safeguard Children'* (HM Government, 2015) and key learning from national child sexual exploitation enquiries.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent LSCBs have adopted the following *'See Me, Hear Me Framework'* principles; all of these principles are seen as being of equal importance:

1. The child's best interests must be the top priority

The best interests of children and young people and their rights to protection must drive all decision making. The paramountcy principle as outlined in the Children Act 1989 must be adhered to where applicable. All sexually exploited children and young people should be treated as victims of abuse, not as offenders. Children and young people being abused or at risk of being abused need to be **seen** (in the context of their lives at home and outside of their home), **heard** (we need to take the time to listen to what children and young people are saying) and **helped** (by professionals remaining professionally curious and by developing imaginative solutions that help children and young people).

2. Participation of children and children and young people

Both LSCBs need to learn from children's experiences and capture their voice in the development, implementation and review of the effectiveness of local services.

This participation should include working with parents, carers and communities to help them to keep their children and young people safe. Service providers also need to involve children and young people when decisions are being made about their care, protection and on-going support and kept informed on any issues that affect them throughout.

3. Enduring relationships and support

Support must be tailored to meet the needs of the child, according to their age, identity, ethnicity, belief, sexual orientation, disability, language, and stage of development. Children and young people tell us that having a consistent support worker throughout the whole period of their protection and on-going care is crucial to their recovery.

4. Comprehensive problem-profiling

A joint Strategic Needs Analysis should be compiled with the oversight of the LSCB and shared with key partners to inform the development of evidence based multi-agency strategy and action plans, the commissioning of services and the delivery of training and awareness-raising activity to support local practitioners. The strategic profiling of risk and vulnerability led by Staffordshire police should inform the prioritisation of operational activity.

5. Effective information-sharing within and between agencies

Each area should have a cross sector information-sharing protocol. All relevant agencies and services should be signatories and it should clearly state what information should be shared, by whom and the process for doing this. There should be effective communication, information and intelligence sharing within and between agencies. There should also be a range of appropriate interventions and support available to those children and young people who need it.

6. Supervision, support and training of staff

Services should invest in the development and support of staff including providing regular supervision and the opportunities for them to reflect on practice. Those practitioners who offer direct support to sexually exploited children and young people may require further specialist training and need regular opportunities to reflect on their practice with a suitably skilled supervisor. This includes the importance of staff knowing about their role in early help and intervention.

7. Evaluation and review

Evaluations and regular reviews of the effectiveness of the child sexual exploitation strategy and the supporting action plan is necessary to ensure services and interventions are achieving their intended outcomes and meeting the needs of children and young people.

Children who are at risk of, or are known to have been sexually abused and exploited are children in need of services under the Children Act 1989 and 2004 and are also children in need of protection. A multi-agency planning meeting / discussion should take place for all children considered at risk of sexual exploitation. Formal child protection procedures should always be followed where any child is at suspected or known to be at risk of significant harm.

ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY

Our LSCBs have resolved to develop and coordinate a cross agency approach to increase effectiveness in tackling child sexual exploitation in respect of four key elements.

PREPARE - strong leadership, effective systems and working with partners

Why it is important

It is widely acknowledged and agreed that only a clearly defined child focused, proactive and co-ordinated, multi-agency approach will be effective in preventing and disrupting child sexual exploitation and bringing perpetrators to justice. Safeguarding partners have demonstrated a strong commitment by signing up to working together to meet the strategic aims and principles set out within this strategy.

What we will do

The Safeguarding Boards have formed a joint LSCB Child Sexual Abuse Forum (CSAF) which coordinates local partnership activity in respect of all forms of child sexual abuse. The governance structure for this forum is set out in the CSAF Child Sexual Abuse Strategy which can be found by going to ADD. Appendix 1 on page 21 provides a visual diagram of the forums strategic and operational cycle. The key purpose of this multi-agency forum is to share information, initiate action to coordinate the CSE strategy, challenge each other and all key agencies and drive the strategic and operational aims and objectives of the child sexual exploitation strategy to ensure that this very important matter is given continual priority. The CSAF reports to the respective LSCBs and to the respective local authorities Scrutiny Committees.

Our shared vision, as set out in this strategy, will be supported by robust governance and aligned budgets. The CSE risk assessment matrix will help identify risk and develop intelligence which, in turn, will support decision-making, prioritisation, commissioning and practice.

This will be supported by effective information sharing, as well as integrated tools, pathways and protocols to support service delivery and transitions. Data will be collected in line with the CSE Outcomes Framework and the analysis of this will support local intelligence, performance management and quality assurance processes.

How we will know that we have made a positive difference

- The LSCBs will have a sound understanding of the nature and extent of child sexual exploitation.
- The LSCBs are assessed as effective in their co-ordination of multi-agency activity to tackle child sexual exploitation.
- The evidence collated through the implementation of the CSE Outcomes framework demonstrates improvements across the three strategic objectives and four operation outcome areas.

We will demonstrate strong leadership and achieve effective systems and working together practices between agencies by:

- Having a shared strategy and vision concerning CSE.
- Having shared CSE governance structures.
- Having shared planning and commissioning structures, underpinned by aligned budgets.
- Ensuring that there are robust local procedures in place to help ensure appropriate CSE related referrals are made, received and responded to; and to effectively coordinate complex abuse cases.
- Helping to ensure that CSE related risk factors and vulnerabilities as well as potential victims and perpetrators of CSE are proactively identified and responded to.
- Commissioning CSE interventions across a range of needs and cohorts which are sensitive to local needs, underpinned by integrated referral, care pathways and joint / key worker working protocols. All relevant service specifications should appropriately reference CSE related activities and responsibilities.
- Having an agreed CSE risk matrix tool, linked to local safeguarding policies including complex case procedures so that all stakeholders are able to recognise and respond to signs of children and young people who are being targeted, groomed or sexually exploited.
- Sharing CSE-related information within agreed protocols and encouraging professionals to share information appropriately in accordance with local policy and procedures.
- Using intelligence to build CSE profiles to guide informed decision making, priorities, commissioning and practice.
- Developing effective transition policies to help ensure service continuity between children, young people and adult services; as well as enable children and adults to access a range of effective CSE related universal, targeted prevention, support and rehabilitative services.
- By recognising that the recovery process for CSE victims may need to continue into adulthood and to respond to the needs of vulnerable groups, including young people with learning disabilities and care leavers.
- Managing the delivery of the strategy and performance against agreed outcomes.

PREVENTION - raising awareness of CSE among young people, parents, carers, the wider community and potential perpetrators

Why it is important

Those who work in the prevention of child sexual exploitation know that the problem continues at an alarming rate and that much work remains to be done to prevent abuse before it happens. As safeguarding partners we know that work on prevention can be effective. We have helped to make it easier for victims to disclose and report abuse and generated increased attention to all forms of child sexual abuse and exploitation.

General awareness of child sexual exploitation and what to look for amongst key groups of professionals and community organisations is a critical protective factor for

children and families. One of the key aims of this strategy is to keep prevention of child sexual exploitation in the forefront of people's thoughts, agendas, and policy discussions in such a way that we help to ensure that all children grow up safe and free from all forms of sexual harm. The patterns and prevalence of child sexual exploitation should always be understood so that prevention strategies can be adjusted to meet specific needs.

What we will do

Our intention is for every child, parent, carer, community member and individual who make up our multi-agency workforce to understand what child sexual exploitation is and know how they can play a part in preventing it. This will help children and young people to understand the potential dangers of exploitation and abuse, make safer choices and build their resilience.

We will involve children and young people in the development and review of activities and aim to learn from those who have experienced being targeted, groomed or exploited. We will help to build resilience in children, young people and families and use intelligence to identify vulnerable children and young people, for whom targeted interventions will be delivered. We will raise awareness of children and young people, parents and carers, community members and businesses of CSE, vulnerabilities and risk factors and ensure there is access for all stakeholders to information, guidance and appropriate support across all levels of need. This will take account of the impact of the online world. In particular, we will work with schools and other education providers and we will support parents to be more confident about speaking to their children about CSE-related issues. We will identify evidence-based strategies to work with adults and young people whose behaviour is concerning or who are at risk of becoming perpetrators and facilitators.

All stakeholders will be supported to recognise and respond to signs of children and young people who are being targeted, groomed or sexually exploited and will know how to report their concerns. Training will be provided to practitioners and community members to support them in recognising and appropriately responding to CSE. This will be supported by a communications plan and campaign which considers all cohorts of stakeholders.

We will raise awareness of CSE among young people, parents, carers, the wider community and potential perpetrators by:

- Promoting learning with children and young people about healthy relationships including respect, to them with making informed decisions about what is acceptable and unacceptable and to let them know where they can access support.
- Providing information for children and young people to help improve their resilience and stay safer.
- Providing information to professionals, parents, carers and communities to help them to understand potential risks, recognise the signs that a child may be vulnerable or subject to abuse, given them the confidence to talk about CSE related issues and to take appropriate action when needed.

- Recognising the importance of children, young people, parents and carers being able to easily access information, guidance and appropriate support across all of threshold framework's levels of need.
- Recognising and responding to the impact of the online world and responding to low risk cases which raise concerns about online activity (targeting, grooming and sexual exploitation).
- Developing a media and communication strategy designed to raise public awareness of child sexual exploitation. The communication strategy will be subject to regular reviews to ensure an effective response to local and national issues. The communication strategy will include:
 - Undertaking high profile communication campaigns and delivering them to different target audiences that include children, young people, parents, carers, community members and local businesses of CSE and risk factors and signs.
 - Making links with and signposting children and young people to other relevant services such as Childline, Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP).
 - Working directly with parents, carers, children and young people to obtain their views and actively use their experiences to shape the way in which we commission and deliver services to children, young people, their families and carers. We need to routinely assess the CSE risk experienced by children and young people, including those involved in gangs and groups.
- Mapping potential access points to grooming, exploiting and abusing vulnerable children and young people, to help target 'hot spot' areas where perpetrators prey on children and young people.
- Helping to ensure that children and young people who are particularly vulnerable to child sexual exploitation (i.e. looked after children, missing children) are identified early and supported by their families/carers, professionals, and their community to prevent and build resilience against exploitation.
- Identifying the developments required to prevent victims of CSE becoming facilitators and perpetrators of abuse.
- Linking vulnerable children and young people to early intervention services and provide help at the earliest opportunity where vulnerabilities or risk factors are identified, to help build resilience and reduce any potential need and risk factors.
- Managing risk at the lowest level to help prevent escalation, increase the numbers of referrals received by agencies and achieve improved welfare and safety outcomes for children and young people.
- Seeking assurances that practitioners working at all levels of need have access to expert advice and consultation, understand their duty to identify vulnerability and risk, and ensure children and young people are provided with appropriate support.
- Delivering CSE training and providing e-learning tools for practitioners, including council members.
- Working with and developing licensing policies and procedures to help reduce risk to vulnerable children and young people.
- Working with commissioners and providers of services to share key messages from local learning processes; this helps us to identify emerging trends or themes

so we can be proactive in using this knowledge within strategic development and operational practice (for example the importance of the maintenance of a positive mother/daughter relationship was identified through recent case file audit activity).

- Holding other local strategic partnerships to account for the development and coordination of consistent, universal vulnerability education across all schools, colleges, pupil referral units and alternative providers, as an integral element of PSHE. This should include targeted vulnerability education, support and diversionary interventions to young people considered more vulnerable to CSE-related issues; and
- Continually reviewing and assess 'what works' to ensure preventative strategies can respond to developing issues and changes in victim or offending patterns of behaviour.

We will know we have made a positive difference by:

- Increased public awareness of what constitutes child sexual exploitation
- Increased public awareness of how to prevent child sexual exploitation
- Increased public awareness of how to report concerns and access support about child sexual exploitation
- Children saying they understand what a healthy relationship is, are knowledgeable about CSE and report that they feel safer as a result.
- Parents and carers reporting they are more confident in talking about CSE related issues with their children.
- Professionals report that they are knowledgeable about CSE
- Positive feedback on the effectiveness of the communication methods for target community, business and councillor audiences; these audiences report that they know where to access CSE related support and information.
- Potential or known perpetrators of CSE are prevented from harming children.
- Safeguarding partners and their practitioners are knowledgeable about child sexual exploitation and able to respond appropriately when they become aware of it; and
- Having a co-ordinated approach to cross border issues.

PROTECTION- safeguarding children and young people and supporting professionals

Why it is important

Children and young people who are victims of child sexual exploitation are often distrustful of adults and may have had negative experiences of statutory services. Whilst there may be situations which require emergency interventions to protect children and young people, the best approach is to work collaboratively with the child or young person and their family.

Taking the right approach to engaging vulnerable children and young people is crucial if we are to stand any chance of supporting them to break free from abuse and exploitation. We want to improve victim's experiences of being supported, ensuring that they are listened to, respected and given choices about how they are helped. We will work with our commissioned services to ensure that they

reflect the needs of our community and work with our health colleagues around the development of longer term support for victims.

What we will do

We want to ensure that we continually improve the way we respond to those victims brave enough to report their experiences. The local authority has a statutory responsibility and safeguarding partners have a duty (in accordance with '*Working Together to Safeguard Children*' 2015) to take protective action when a child is at risk of suffering significant harm. Depending on the context and level of vulnerability this could be in partnership with the family or by way of legal orders. Any joint actions will be proportionate and will focus on securing the best outcome for the child.

There are already robust systems in place to safeguard and support children and young people who have experienced or are at risk of sexual exploitation. We will learn from recent cases and complex abuse procedures will be strengthened. Through robust risk assessment and thorough analysis of vulnerabilities, risks and protective factors, targeted and enduring support will be provided to children and young people experiencing CSE and to their families. We will proactively identify potential and known perpetrators and geographical hotspots; and hold our partners to account for ensuring practitioners receive appropriate support and supervision.

We will listen to and learn from the victims, their families and friends who have been affected by their experiences and translate what they tell us into positive action so that they get the professional help and support that they need. We remain committed to involving parents and key family members in the assessment and planning process, and ensuring that children and young people are central to any decision making. The aim is to support and empower children and young people and their families to find solutions wherever possible.

The actions of alleged offenders or their associates in attempting to intimidate the child can be devastating for a victim. There may be direct action against the victim and family, or subtle threatening messages via social media, or to siblings and friends. Safeguarding partners are committed to deal promptly and robustly with intimidation.

We will help to safeguard children and young people by:

- Promoting the use of a multi-disciplinary assessment of the needs of the child, young person and family
- Providing targeted support for those who are at risk of / victims of exploitation and their families.
- Providing targeted support for those at risk of / perpetrators of exploitation and their families (as appropriate).
- Developing an evidence-based approach to perpetrators who are children and young people.
- Developing and implementing a CSE training framework for professionals, across all levels of interventions and cohorts (universal to targeted services).
- Ensuring relevant professionals receive safeguarding children and threshold training.

- Promoting robust policing responses to perpetrators: This includes agreeing and monitoring investigation plans to run alongside support plans developed in response to a child sexual exploitation referral.
- All agencies effectively sharing information and routinely utilising intelligence-led disruption in relation to any local businesses, individuals or groups associated with sexual exploitation in the local problem profile.
- Ensuring that there are plans of intervention and support in place to address the behaviours of young people who are assessed as presenting a sexual risk to others.

We will know we have made a positive difference by:

- Children and young people know where to access support when they need it and they receive the support they need.
- Potential CSE victims or known victims are offered appropriate support and intervention.
- Potential perpetrators and known perpetrators are offered appropriate CSE support and intervention.
- Parents and carers know where to access support when they need it and they get the support they need.
- Professionals are appropriately safeguarding children.
- The commissioning of support services for child sexual exploitation is demonstrated to be responsive to the needs of children and young people.

PURSUE - disrupting, arresting and prosecuting CSE offenders wherever possible and appropriate

Why it is important

Child sexual abuse has a devastating impact, not only on the child victim but on the whole family. Parents and carers will often want the perpetrators arrested and prosecuted. We are committed to ensuring that we do all we can to disrupt perpetrators who are sexually abusing children and young people as it is vitally important that all efforts are taken to bring perpetrators to justice.

What we will do

Pursue

Our approach to tackling perpetrators will be coordinated and proactive. Our collective aim is to target known perpetrators, disrupting their activities and initiating prosecutions as appropriate. We recognise that gathering evidence can be challenging because victims may:

- Not realise or believe they are being sexually exploited and abused
- Distrust statutory services or adults in general
- Fear of their peer group should they seek help, particularly in gang-related sexual exploitation and abuse
- Provide confused accounts of their experiences as child sexual exploitation tends

to take place in a range of settings, and can involve the use of alcohol and drugs and multiple perpetrators.

We will build on the work of committed and skilled practitioners and take a strategic approach to identifying, disrupting and prosecuting perpetrators. We will continue to develop systems to enhance information sharing and provide clear guidance to support the effective collection and recording of evidence. Police will continue their efforts to secure prosecutions and maximise opportunities to disrupt child sexual exploitation locally.

Learning from national and local experience is vital to ensure continuous improvement. We will build in regular reviews, analysis and feedback to learn from successes and failures, and disseminate this learning. The Crown Prosecution Service will work to improve the effectiveness of prosecutions; promote within its organisation examples of good practice; and work to increase the use of 'special measures' in appropriate cases.

Disruption

A strategic overview is likely to identify particular "hotspots" where there are strong indications of abuse taking place. This might include emerging concerns about particular areas, addresses, businesses or professions, particularly those related to the night time economy. Local strategies will often be led by the police but will in some situations be more effective when planned with other agencies. Particular activities might include:

- Equipping parents and carers of children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation with simple strategies such as monitoring mobile phone and social media use, or recording details of cars belonging to suspected perpetrators
- Street operations and visible policing
- Use of specific legal orders and notices
- Use of licensing laws and powers
- Targeting particular professions or businesses
- Sharing information and intelligence in relation to highlighted locations, perpetrators or suspected perpetrators with school networks and other relevant organisations
- Prosecution including role of and links to CPS
- Multi-agency training for risk assessment and intelligence submission

Victims do not always perceive themselves to be victims and may not see that they are being abused, therefore it is vital that all agencies seek to disrupt activity in a co-ordinated manner with criminal justice partners seeking opportunities to prosecute for other offences should there be insufficient evidence for sexual offences.

Prosecution

Child sexual exploitation is not a criminal offence in itself, but the child sexual abuse associated with this exploitation is a criminal act. It is important that suspected perpetrators are investigated and where appropriate prosecuted. Publicity resulting

from prosecutions sends out a powerful message to victims that their disclosures can be effectively responded to and abusers or potential abusers are likely to become more aware of the serious implications of their behaviour.

While safeguarding children and young people is the guiding principle, many responses to child sexual exploitation focus solely on children and young people. Safeguarding partners need to be aware of the potential for children and young people sometimes to be removed from the location of the abuse without addressing the behaviour of abusers who may go on to exploit other children and young people.

It is acknowledged that prosecutions can often be difficult, due particularly to the positions of power that perpetrators tend to have over their victims. However, there have been national developments such as Child Abduction Warning Notices which do not require victim co-operation and these will be used whenever appropriate. We need to seek the early involvement of the Criminal Prosecution Service to maximise opportunities for prosecution.

Data of criminal justice outcomes should be routinely gathered and monitored including, and specifically the attrition rates for cases referred to the CPS to ensure that learning from individual cases is shared and acted upon.

We will know that we have made a positive difference by:

- The early identification of potential victims and proactive intervention against potential perpetrators.
- Offending behaviour being disrupted and offenders are arrested and prosecuted wherever possible and appropriate for CSE related activity.
- Agencies flexibly applying the full range of disruption tactics available through both criminal and civil routes to protect children and young people from CSE, including powers available in relation to licensing, health and safety, fraud, housing provision and other related legislation.
- The identification and disruption of organised criminal networks engaged in child sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Diligent, expeditious investigations by appropriately trained investigators.
- Victim focused investigations resulting in outcomes that meet the needs of the victim and are fair and firm with offenders.
- An expected increase in charges and convictions of perpetrators of child sexual abuse due to CSE related activity.
- Robust offender management strategies post-conviction and/or effective intervention strategies that reduce the risk presented by identified abusers.

MONITORING AND ASSURANCE

Each Board will monitor the effectiveness of local activity and the impact of the operational response of connected agencies to individual children and young people and their families as well as seeking to identify any unmet need or gaps in service provision. A key element in assuring effectiveness is the development of a CSE Outcomes Framework which was commissioned in 2015 and is designed to gather data to provide a rich picture of the extent to which collective multi-agency activity tackles CSE effectively.

The data from the CSE Outcomes Framework will be used to help measure progress and local intelligence, to review the strategy and inform operational practice. Please use the following link to access the Outcomes Summary profile:

<http://www.safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk/ccm/content/safeguarding-children/professionals-folder/cse-outcomes-framework.en>

The data gathered in the framework will assist strategy development and the commissioning of services to support continuous improvement in the effectiveness of the local response to CSE. It will inform as to the prevalence of CSE, the outcomes of interventions including disrupting and prosecuting perpetrators. Overall the framework will help to identify agency or system strengths and areas for development. In addition to the outcomes framework, the LSCBs will undertake a co-ordinated programme of themed case audits and will use the findings to enhance assurance.

GOVERNANCE

The CSE Strategy is jointly owned by the respective Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LSCBs. Its implementation and ongoing development will be overseen by CSAF which will provide regular progress reports to the two local LSCBs. Representatives from the city and county's Missing Children Strategic Board and Youth Justice Boards will also be represented and report into CSAF to promote more effective and coordinated local governance arrangements in respect of CSE.

This Strategy will be reviewed in one year of ratification.

APPENDIX 1: CSE STRATEGY DIAGRAM

