



Kent and Medway

Safeguarding Children Abused through Sexual Exploitation

Strategy Document

2016 - 2018

Version 4

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Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Boards

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Strategy

1. Definition

*'Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.'*¹

2. Role of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs)

LSCBs have the key responsibility for ensuring that the relevant organisations in each local area co-operate effectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation*² statutory guidance emphasised the importance of LSCBs ensuring that the needs of children and young people who have been, or may be, sexually exploited and their families are considered as they plan and commission services; develop policies and procedures; ensure that appropriate training is in place; communicate and raise awareness and monitor and evaluate the work that is being done.

3. Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Board Policy Statements

- a. Child Sexual Exploitation is completely unacceptable; the only effective way to tackle sexual exploitation of children is via effective multi agency and partnership working. Kent and Medway LSCB work in partnership with local and national organisations and networks to speak up for young people who are sexually exploited and to share knowledge and good practice. This area of work remains one of our most important challenges.
- b. We recognise that sexual exploitation can have serious long term impact on every aspect of a child or young person's life, health and education. It can damage the lives of families and carers and can lead to family break ups.
- c. It is our collective multi-agency responsibility to identify those children and young people at risk of exploitation and our joint responsibility to protect them and safeguard them from further risk of harm. It is also our joint responsibility to prevent children becoming victims of this form of abuse and reassure our communities we can perform our duties effectively.

¹ *The National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People 2012. This definition of child sexual exploitation is now used by government and other organisation.*

² *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation. Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children DCSF 2009*

- d. As safeguarding children boards, we reaffirm our commitment to continually raise the profile of child sexual exploitation in order to protect and safeguard children from harm. We shall achieve this aim by developing and maintaining effective local responses and through the delivery of an effective multi-agency strategy identified and delivered by key partners.

4. Principles which underpin multi-agency responses in Kent and Medway

- Sexual exploitation incorporates sexual, physical and emotional abuse, as well as, in some cases, neglect;
- Children under 18 years do not make informed choices to enter or remain in sexual exploitation. Rather, they do so from coercion, enticement, manipulation or desperation;
- Children under 16 years old cannot consent to sexual activity; sexual activity with children under the age of 13 is statutory rape ;
- Sexually exploited children should be treated as victims of abuse, not as offenders. Children under 16 will always be dealt with as actual or potential victims.
- For young people from 16 to 18 years old, consideration may be given, *in limited circumstances* and where all other options have failed, to the use of criminal justice action;
- Many sexually exploited children have difficulty distinguishing between their own choices around sex and sexuality and the sexual activities into which they are coerced. This potential confusion needs to be handled with care and sensitivity by the adults working to protect them from harm.
- The primary law enforcement effort must be against the coercers and sex abusers who may be adult, but could also be the child's peers or young people who are older than the child.

5. Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Boards Procedures

These will be regularly updated in line with statutory guidance, local and national research and emerging trends.

6. Outline Strategy 2016 - 2018

6.1. Raising Awareness:

It is important that all young people develop the knowledge and skills they need to make safe and healthy choices about relationships and sexual health. This will help them to avoid situations that put them at risk of sexual exploitation and to know who to turn to if they need advice and support. The need for information also goes wider ... to raise the awareness of communities, parents and all adults who work with or on behalf of children and young people.

KSCB and MSCB will therefore;

1. Continue to provide information for the local community, including awareness raising activities for young people and publicity for sources of help for those at risk
2. ensure that awareness raising and training programmes are in place for adults who work with children and young people.

6.2. Identification:

Robust and reliable risk assessments by KSCB and MSCB of the nature and extent of child sexual exploitation in each area are fundamental to tackling this problem. Gathering and assessing data on levels and risks of child sexual exploitation is fundamental to understanding the profile of exploitation, and guiding the response.

KSCB and MSCB will therefore:

3. undertake a review of the local response to child sexual exploitation following the guidance on Safeguarding Children and Young people from Sexual Exploitation
4. assess the prevalence and types of child sexual exploitation in local areas
5. develop systems to monitor cases of child sexual exploitation
6. use the lead professionals in key agencies within the Child Sexual Exploitation Team and the multi-agency CSE Champions as coordinator roles to provide routes for supporting staff when referring concerns
7. provide specialist training for all key professionals

6.3. Engagement and Intervention:

It is essential that there is an effective response from services when child sexual exploitation is identified. Victims need a helpful, swift, understanding and supportive response, coordinated across partners and need to understand how they will be helped now and in the future.

KSCB and MSCB will therefore;

8. improve our multi-agency systems which identify and respond to local cases of exploitation.
9. co-ordinate multi-agency resources across Kent and Medway to ensure that a safe, responsive and effective service is provided to children and young people who experience Child Sexual Exploitation

6.4. Support:

Children at higher risk will benefit most from direct intensive support from agencies or multi-agency teams with specialist expertise. Those at medium or lower risk will benefit from having guidance on keeping safe and being reviewed at least once to check whether they require additional support.

KSCB and MSCB will therefore:

10. build in consideration of the needs of children and young people who may be sexually exploited when planning and commissioning local services
11. ensure the provision of good quality specialist services to provide the necessary ongoing support , including during and beyond any investigation and potentially in to adult hood.

6.5. Disruption:

Disruption techniques are a key part of any strategy to combat the sexual exploitation of children and young people. KSCB and MSCB will have an agreed multi-agency disruption plan delivered by local partners for responding to child sexual exploitation. Disruption techniques will be used more comprehensively to protect young people and children from further abuse.

KSCB and MSCB will therefore:

12. ensure procedures cover the dual aim of protecting young people at risk and proactively investigating their exploiters.

6.6. Prosecution:

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 introduced a range of new offences that recognise the grooming, coercion and control of children. Despite the introduction of these offences, there have been very few successful prosecutions, so they do not reflect the true scale of the issue and the number of children affected. Latest figures show that the number convicted and sentenced remains very low. There is an urgent need to improve data on the prevalence of child sexual exploitation, to strengthen the evidence base and to support professionals to appropriately share information.

KSCB and MSCB will therefore:

13. specify in local procedures the role of professionals in gathering evidence and intelligence of child sexual exploitation.
14. use this information to support police and multi-agency action
15. ensure that young people are properly safeguarded in the course of any criminal proceedings.

7. Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Boards Action Plan for CSE

KSCB and MSCB recognise that its action plan will be effective in tackling child sexual exploitation only to the extent that the actions in it are implemented. The actions in the plan need to make a difference, helping to prevent child sexual exploitation occurring and, where that is not possible, disrupting the activities of offenders and helping victims to cut free from the exploitation and recover. As indicated above, it is also very important that justice is obtained for victims and their families and that the processes involved are as supportive to the young people involved as is possible.

8. Review and Evaluation

This document will be reviewed in August 2018. The attached Action Plan will however be monitored on a quarterly basis by the KSCB Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) Group to ensure that progress is being maintained and any changes lead to better outcomes for children and young people.