



# Child Exploitation Strategy Document

**THE MID AND WEST WALES SAFEGUARDING BOARD**

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### **Dissemination/ Implementation**

Agencies are requested to undertake the following in order to ensure the implementation of this Policy/Procedure/Guidance

MAWWSB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place on MAWWSB website within policy section</li> <li>• Send to Partner Agencies for dissemination</li> <li>• Disseminate to partner agencies training leads for inclusion within training as appropriate</li> <li>• Update relevant training to reflect Policy/procedure/guidance</li> </ul>
All Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disseminate Policy/Procedure/Guidance to all Service Leads/ Heads of Service/Safeguarding leads/ staff via appropriate communication channels e.g. LOGs</li> <li>• Place within own website and include a link with MAWWSB Website <a href="https://www.cysur.wales/">https://www.cysur.wales/</a></li> <li>• Update in house Policies and Procedures to reflect Policy/Procedure/Guidance as appropriate.</li> <li>• Update in house training to reflect process as appropriate.</li> </ul>

### **Assurance**

Agencies will be requested to undertake the following in order to assure the MAWWSB with regards to dissemination and implementation of this policy:

<b>MAWWSB</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To seek assurance from Partner Agencies that implementation has occurred</li> </ul>
<b>Partner Agencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide MAWWSB with assurance that the above implementation have been completed</li> </ul>

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## Foreword

The child exploitation strategy sets out our priorities and makes an explicit commitment to prevent and tackle child exploitation. We recognise the serious impact which this form of abuse can have on children, their families and communities and the need to work together with communities and partner agencies to support children to develop and thrive throughout their childhood and into adulthood.

We understand that there is no single solution. The responses needed are multiple and occur across different levels of intervention requiring coordinated responses. This strategy includes a range of responses to address prevention, protection and support responses. It is based on current evidence of what effective support looks like and is underpinned by principles which are child centred and grounded in children's rights.

Service responses to child exploitation in the region have been considerably invested in over recent years. This has created strong and effective strategic and operational responses to ensure children at risk of harm are safeguarded. We understand that any child can be a victim of exploitation and no child is ever responsible for the abuse. By raising awareness across the sector and in our communities, we will promote the ethos that safeguarding is everyone's business. When children and young people are at heightened risk of exploitation, we will work with families to support and empower them to safeguard their children.

This strategy builds upon the developments currently taking place which are being overseen and driven by our strategic element of the Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings. We are committed to supporting children and young people in the region to lead safe, fulfilled lives. By committing to this strategy, we are ensuring that preventing and tackling child exploitation remains a key priority area for agencies.

We know that Child Exploitation has a long history in society. We also know that tackling child exploitation is a complex, long term challenge. However, we firmly believe that child exploitation is preventable and by working together across agencies in partnership with families, we are committed to providing meaningful and effective responses.

*"People would come and tell me off and tell me that I needed to listen".*

## Introduction

Child Exploitation is an umbrella term used to describe Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Criminal Exploitation, Child Trafficking, Gangs, Forced Servitude and Forced Marriage. This strategy will focus on Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation; however, it draws upon wider research and literature where appropriate to inform the strategy.

In recent years, high profile Child Practice, and Serious Case Reviews have highlighted the failings of agencies to protect children subjected to Child Sexual Exploitation. They identified the derogatory way in which children's lived experiences were commonly represented in the media, in policy, and through the criminal justice system which compounded a situation where Child Sexual Exploitation was poorly understood, and children were often seen as offenders or children 'making choices'. Since this time, there has been a magnified focus within all Regional Safeguarding Boards in Wales to understand the complexities of Child Sexual Exploitation and embed safe and proportionate multi-agency responses which place the child at the heart of our multi-agency safeguarding practice.

Child Criminal Exploitation is a form of child abuse; however, it is a form of abuse that has only recently gained a national definition within the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019). There is limited research and data to support an understanding of this form of abuse, and most of our current knowledge stems from a 'County Lines' perpetrator approach to Child Criminal Exploitation. A systematic map and synthesis review carried out by Cardiff University in 2019 identified continued concerns that children were being responded to as offenders, and 'making choices', rather than children who are being abused and in need of proportionate multi-agency safeguarding responses. We must strive to understand Child Criminal Exploitation in the way in which we now understand Child Sexual Exploitation to enable us to effectively work together to safeguard children who are at heightened risk or are being criminally exploited.

A world of increasing technology and sophisticated online social media platforms creates an additional complicating factor in safeguarding children from exploitation. This is mainly due to the ability of perpetrators to groom children without any physical contact, thus impacting upon the ability of families/carer(s), partner agencies and communities to identify safeguarding concerns in a timely and preventative way. Instead, there is a heightened risk of being reactive to safeguarding. The common denominator within all forms of Child Exploitation is the element of exchange. Children may not always recognise the exploitative nature of the relationship which enables the exchange, and they may feel that they have provided consent. However, children can never consent to their abuse. Whilst there are key vulnerabilities and risk indicators that can inform our practice which are reflected within this strategy, research also evidences the true reality; that Child Exploitation can, and does, occur to any child regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity or lived childhood experiences.

Like any other form of child abuse, we know that Child Exploitation can have long-lasting consequences that can impact on every part of a child's life and their future outcomes. This magnifies the need for co-production and a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to ensure that children are 'children first', and that we deliver a trauma informed response to support which promotes their safety and future wellbeing.

The Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019) emphasise the importance of children at heightened risk or being exploited, having their care and support needs fully considered in the same way as for any child. Therefore, the Procedures move away from a 'tunnelled focused child behaviour orientated risk assessment model' that has previously been used to assess mainly Child Sexual Exploitation such as the SERAF, and towards holistic assessment, care planning, intervention, and review.

Child Exploitation can occur within a familial environment in which family members are the perpetrators; however, it often occurs within extra-familial circumstances in which the perpetrators are outside of the family. There may or may not be adverse childhood experiences which make a child more vulnerable to extra-familial abuse, however this does not make the parent/carer(s) responsible for their abuse. Therefore, we must work in partnership with families to support them in safeguarding their children whilst disrupting those who are harming them.

The latter is also linked to the concept of contextual safeguarding, an approach utilised to understand, and respond to older children's experiences of extra familial harm. It recognises that the different relationships that children form in their schools, peer groups, communities/neighbourhoods, society and online can feature harm beyond the knowledge and control of the child's family/carer(s). Contextual safeguarding is an approach to safeguarding which requires the same level of professional curiosity as when assessing parental capacity, children's developmental needs and family circumstances.

Every child and their circumstances are unique, and there is no one single and proven service model for supporting children at heightened risk or those currently being exploited. There are several principles which are important in informing the way in which practitioners and services identify and respond: being child centred, strengths based, promoting a trusting relationship, providing a robust collaborative response and being trauma informed.

These principles will be central in this strategy when considering our 'PPS' approach in the region; the Prevention, Protection and Support to children. The region are committed to supporting the right children, in the right way and at the earliest opportunity, and utilise the Signs of Safety (SoS) practice model to underpin this.

### **The National Context**

The National Action Plan: Identifying and responding to child sexual abuse (2019) is inclusive of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB). Currently, Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) does not have the same level of national action planning. However, the CCE All Wales Practice Guidance (2019) provides the first national definition and guidance to support the identification and proportionate safeguarding responses to children. There is further support for practitioners underway with the development of a Complex Safeguarding Wales Toolkit addressing CCE based on new research. This toolkit will be published in 2022 by CASCADE.

The key statutory guidance for CSE in Wales is Working Together to Safeguard People Volume 7 – Safeguarding Children from Child Sexual Exploitation (2021). The guidance outlines our current understanding of CSE as a form of CSA and describes the processes for responding in regard to child centred care and support planning and the disruption and prosecution of perpetrators. Further information on CSE by organised networks has recently been published by ICCSA (2022). This focuses on 6 study areas, which includes Swansea and involves 33 case studies and increases our understanding of this form of harm and agency responses.

There is limited quality data to nationally support a true reflection of the prevalence of all forms of Child Exploitation in their individual right, and when they are intrinsically linked. Whilst the CSA National Action Plan will support greater scrutiny of national reporting for CSE as a form of CSA, we know from Child Practice Reviews that there are complicating factors that can continue to impact on the quality of meaningful information.

Complicating Factors consist of:

- Low levels of reporting by children who may not identify themselves as being exploited whilst the abuse is happening.
- Variable levels of multi-agency awareness and confusion around the definitions of such forms of abuse.
- Differing multi-agency perceptions and understanding of consent and choice, and the impact of professional prejudice such as the 'the child is engaging in risk taking behaviour and/or choosing not to make better choices, or 'the child is gaining free drugs, can undermine recognition of the need for protection from exploitation'.
- Inconsistent recording and information sharing due to poor professional understanding as stated above.
- The impact of cross-boundary working in collating quality information. Cases of Child Exploitation frequently cross Local Authority, police force and country boundaries in terms of the movement of both perpetrators and victims.

This CE strategy aims to build upon the work already happening in the region to overcome such complicating factors and provide meaningful data across all forms of child exploitation. Regarding out of county placements, whilst there is a responsibility on the hosting Authority to manage immediate safeguarding concerns, we remain Corporate Parents for our children up to the age of 18 years old and continue to have a duty of care for care leavers up to the age of 25 years old.

The emphasis on early intervention and prevention within the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014, and The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, supports a need to build upon the resilience of individuals, families and communities to support well-being and prevent abuse. This strategy aims to further establish working links within Early Help and preventative services to support children and families.

The Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 stipulates that our practice must be underpinned by key principles such as co-production with children and families and/or their carer(s). It is an approach which promotes the sharing of power and responsibility with children and their families and/or carers. It is a strength-based approach which considers what matters to the child and their family and/or carer(s).

We recognise that key policies and procedures continue to adapt and change as research and our knowledge of Child Exploitation evolves. Our practice must evolve with it to promote the best possible outcomes for children and their families and/or carers(s). This will include greater consideration of published national statutory guidance, such as;

- Working Together to Safeguard People, Volume 7 – Statutory Guidance safeguarding children from child sexual exploitation'.
- Welsh Government guidance for education settings on peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour 2020.
- Welsh Government guidance on the Sharing of nudes and semi-nudes: responding to incidents and safeguarding children and young people.

*“Too many relationships for young people are centred primarily around their risk and their harm, and not around their happiness”.*

### **CYSUR: Mid and West Wales Children’s Safeguarding Board’s Vision Statement**

MAWWSB is committed to safeguarding children by creating communities that are harsher for perpetrators and provide non-blaming and safer environments for children.

The vision of the Mid & West Wales Safeguarding Board is that all people in the region live their lives free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation and their rights are protected. All safeguarding work is sensitive to and firmly rooted in respect for differences in race, ethnicity, culture, ability, faith and sexual orientation. Engaging with and being responsive to the needs of all stakeholders, including children, young people, adults at risk, their families, carers, service providers and the wider community, is essential to promote the Board’s vision

#### **Strategy aims - PPS:**

Our aims to safeguard children at heightened risk or children exploited will be formulated across three sections within the action plan:

- **PREVENTION**
- **PROTECTION**
- **SUPPORT**

To prevent abuse, protect children and support their meaningful outcomes we must work together, we must be collaborative and regularly communicate and embed consistent thresholds of support.

Our non-negotiables;

- The child’s behaviour is not the problem.
- The child’s voice is paramount.
- Children will always be ‘children first’ up to the age of 18 years old.
- We will identify children at the earliest opportunity and provide quality interventions.
- All children identified as at heightened risk of Child Exploitation must have their care and support needs assessed in the same way as any other child.
- We will value the power of families and/or carer(s) in safeguarding children when they are not the source of harm.
- We will provide a multi-agency and proportionate response to children and their families and/or carers.



## **The Wales Safeguarding Procedures Key Definitions and Learning**

### **Child Sexual Exploitation(CSE)**

A form of child sexual abuse that can include sex or any form of sexual activity with a child; the production of indecent images and/or any other indecent material involving children. It involves a child up to the age of 18 years old. It involves some form of exchange. There may be a facilitator who receives something in addition to or instead of the child who is exploited.

We must remember that Child Sexual Exploitation is not a catch all category for all forms of sexual abuse in older children.

#### **The Law:**

The age of sexual consent in the UK is 16 years old. The laws are there to protect children. They are not there to prosecute under-16s who have mutually consenting sexual activity but will be used if there is abuse or exploitation involved. To help protect younger children the law says anyone under the age of 13 can never legally give consent to sexual acts. The law also gives extra protection to young people who are 16 to 17 years old.

It is illegal to;

Take, show, or distribute indecent photographs. Pay for or arrange sexual services.

For a person in a position of trust (for example teachers or care workers) to engage in sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18.

#### **Conditions of consent:**

Part of the reason why CSE has not historically been considered a form of abuse is because of societal views that children appeared to be consenting to participate in sexual acts in order to receive something or so that someone else would receive something. Children cannot consent to their own abuse. However, it is important to recognise that children may believe that they are consenting or may appear to consent and the concept of 'conditions of consent' can assist us in understanding this.

#### **Peer-on-Peer Abuse**

Peer on Peer abuse can be recognised in various forms, and include within 'gangs', domestic abuse, CSE, CCE, harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), and/or gender-based violence. We must always recognise and respond to all children as child first and in need of protection and support.

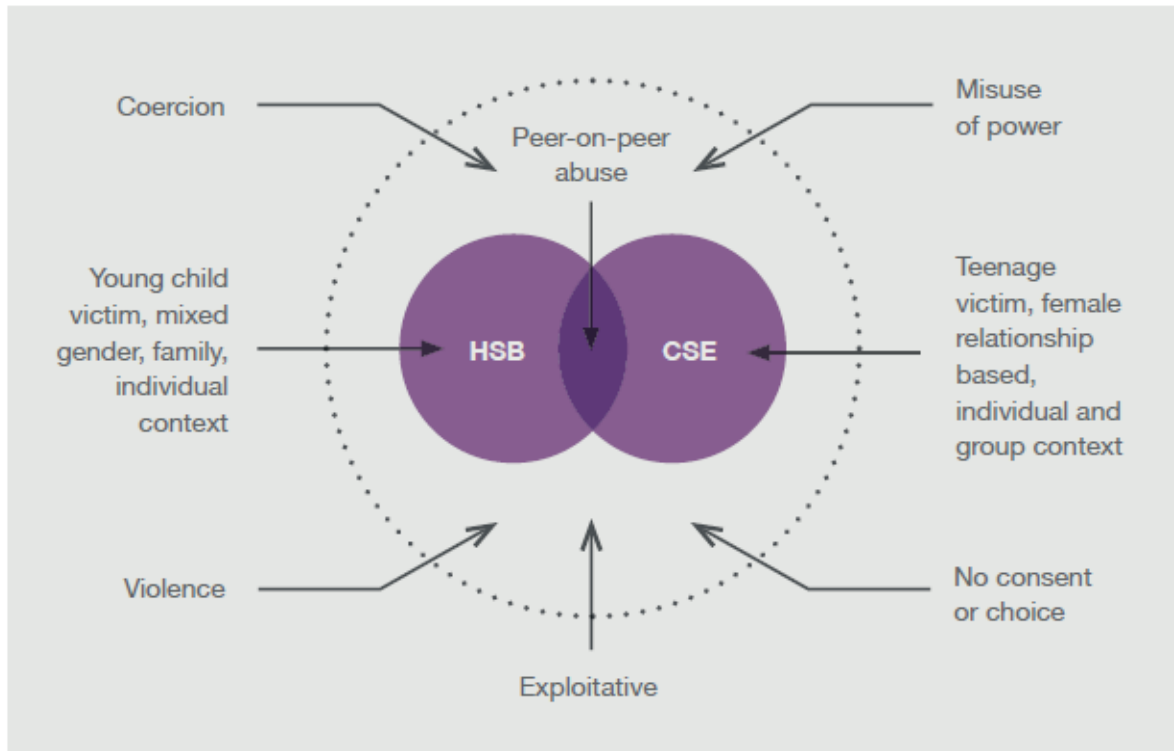
#### **Harmful Sexual Behaviour**

Harmful sexual behaviours (HSB) can be defined as the sexual behaviours expressed by children under the age of 18 years that is harmful towards themselves or others. HSB includes both contact and non-contact behaviours. Hackett (2010) has proposed a continuum model to demonstrate the range of sexual behaviours presented by children to support professionals to identify which behaviours are potentially harmful and which represent healthy sexual development. Hackett, S (2010). Children, young people and sexual violence.

Diagram 1 reflects how coercion, misuse of power, violence and a lack of consent and choice can overlap between children who display HSB and CSE. The diagram suggests that CSE is more likely to be represented by sexual violence towards older children, often in a relational context, and frequently where

young women are sexually exploited by either individuals or group (adults and/or children). HSB is envisaged as abuse that more often involves children harming younger pre-pubescent victims of both sexes in family or community contexts.

Diagram 1



(Hackett et al 2016)

### Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

CCE has been defined within the All Wales Safeguarding practice guide as a form of child abuse which requires a proportionate safeguarding response. It involves a child up to the age of 18 years old.

It involves exchange, and methods of coercion and control utilised by perpetrators to exploit children within criminal activities such as movement of drugs or money, drug cultivation, street crime, benefit fraud and immigration fraud.

It is fundamental that practitioners and agencies treat children as 'children first' and must look beyond the possible presenting behaviour in order to achieve this. The Wales Safeguarding Procedures now aligns CCE with all other forms of child abuse, meaning that children identified at heightened risk or children exploited must have their care and support needs met in the same way as for any child. The conditions of consent that we understand for CSE are transferable to CCE. Part of the reason why CCE has not been historically considered a form of abuse is because of societal views that children appeared to be consenting to participate in criminal acts in order to receive something or so that someone else would receive something. As with CSE, we know that perpetrators will utilise differing methods to enable their abuse to take place, for example one form of CCE is County Lines.

We know that CCE can be interlinked with other forms of abuse, for example children may experience CCE whilst also being sexually exploited. CCE may therefore be one part of the child's complex experience of interrelated abuse.

## **County Lines**

County Lines is a model utilised by perpetrators to criminally exploit children, it is a term used to describe organised gangs who exploit children to export illegal drugs into one or more importing areas using dedicated mobile phone lines or other forms of "deal lines" across county boundaries often from urban to rural areas. Children can also be exploited to store items such as drugs and money. We are committed to initiating safeguarding procedures to support any child who is located within the region with no plausible and safe explanation.

## **Online Abuse**

Online abuse, often referred to as technology assisted abuse, is any type of abuse that is facilitated through technology. This strategy will focus upon online CSE and CCE, however online abuse is an umbrella term for other forms of abuse including other forms of exploitation such as child radicalisation.

The quick changing nature of online platforms and perpetrator behaviour can mean that information about online abuse becomes quickly dated. The CEOPS, 'Think you Know' provides easily accessible up to date information to support knowledge and practice. <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

Online CSE and CCE can occur through any form of technology, such as social networking, chat rooms, instant messaging, gaming, dating sites and many more platforms. As with contact forms of exploitation, the child may not identify that they are being abused.

Online abuse is not separate from contact abuse, and the impact of harm should not be considered as less serious.

Why do perpetrators use technology within their abuse?

Grooming online can be far easier than offline. Games, social media, live streaming platforms, and chat rooms facilitate a perpetrator secretly being able to contact children. Perpetrators can create multiple online identities and can pretend to be children to support in achieving their abuse.

Perpetrators can find out a lot about individual children before they make contact to support the grooming of the child. There can be less parental controls. In many cases, perpetrators will use technology to facilitate or escalate their abuse.

## **Understanding 'Gangs'**

The Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019) provide guidance on what organised 'gangs' can look like, however, there is no National definition to support a mutual understanding and/or assist in understanding the different interplay of dynamics. In society peers getting together can be referred to as a 'gang.' However, in the region we recognise the importance of peer connections

and being a part of a peer group in the community.

We believe that a 'gang' should be considered when dynamics are more organised and there is evidence of power imbalance, coercion and control. It is a method utilised to perpetrate criminality and abuse, and therefore if there are concerns that a child may be at risk of harm as a consequence of gang activity they are in need of protection and support.

Research informs us that children can be at risk of child criminal exploitation within 'gangs' and there could be elements of peer-on-peer abuse. However, we must be hyper vigilant to the heightened risk of CSE within 'gangs' to ALL genders. Perpetrators can use CSE to:

- Exert power and control over members
- Initiate new children into the gang
- For status in the gang
- Control by sexually exploiting others that are meaningful to them i.e. peers or family members
- Inflict sexual acts as a weapon of control in conflict with rivalry 'gangs'.

Child Trafficking is a form of Modern Day Slavery and Child Exploitation. Many children are trafficked into the UK from other countries; however, Child Trafficking also includes children being moved within the same country, between Local Authority boundaries or even movement within the same postcode.

### Child Trafficking

Children are trafficked for the abusive gains of perpetrators, and it is a form of child exploitation. It can include, but is not exhaustive of:

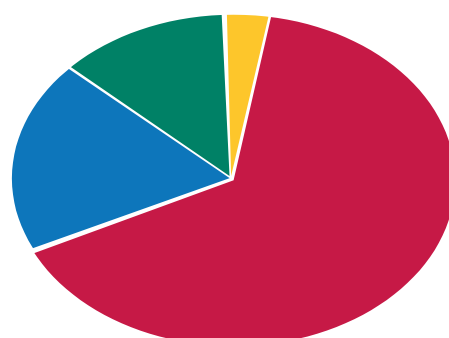
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Child Criminal Exploitation
- Forced marriage
- Domestic servitude
- Illegal cultivations
- Illegal adoption
- Forced labour

Child Trafficking is interconnected and must be understood in the context of the child's abuse.

Child Trafficking, UK 2018: Exploitation

Type

- Labour
- Sexual
- Domestic Servitude



 Unknown

 Organ Harvesting

## National Referral Mechanism Statistics

Child Trafficking consists of three components,

Action: Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt, of a child which includes an element of movement from one place to another.

Exploitation: There is evidence or reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering abuse through sexual, criminal, forced labor or domestic servitude, slavery, financial exploitation, illegal adoption, or the illegal removal of organs of the child.

It involves a child: It occurs to those up to the age of 18 years old.

### **The National Referral Mechanism (NRM)**

The NRM is the UK's identification and support system for potential victims of Modern Day Slavery. All children and Identified as potentially trafficked must be referred to the NRM by a 'first responder'. It is the same referral process for adults, however we will focus on children within this CE Strategy. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referral must be completed at the point the three components of Child Trafficking have been identified by a First Responder.

The NRM must be regularly updated by the first responder to support an initial and conclusive grounds decision being made. The NRM never supersedes the Local Authorities safeguarding responsibilities, instead they work together to provide wrap-around levels of safety and support to children

The NRM referral must be completed online at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-modern-slavery-as-a-first-responder>

In Wales, a further referral to the Regional Independent Child Trafficking Service is required. They can work directly with trafficked children to help them build a positive future, support children to navigate the criminal justice system, provide practical, emotional and psychological support and also train professionals to spot the signs and provide trauma informed responses to trafficked children.

The referral can be located at;

<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/protecting-children/trafficked-children/ICTG-service-referral-form>.

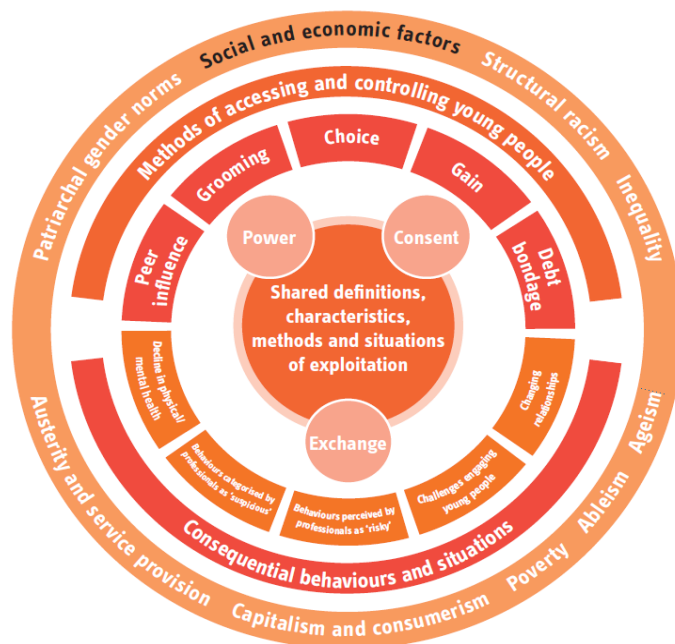
### **Addressing the commonalities in Child Exploitation**

Practitioners must be alert to the sophisticated, and forever changing perpetrator profiles which can make perpetrators difficult to identify and disrupt. However, the main denominator in all forms of Child Exploitation is exchange.

The involvement of exchange is what makes exploitation distinct from other forms of child abuse. Exchange can be the giving and/or withdrawing of something and it can vary in context, for

example the exchange could be tangible, and/or may involve the meeting of an emotional need, or the need to be free from physical violence or threats to someone that the child cares about. The pattern of abuse can include a power imbalance, coercion, and a lack of control.

Diagram 2 demonstrates that different forms of exploitation often occur simultaneously and share characteristics, methods and associated behaviour which can pose barriers to identification, prevention and responding appropriately.



(Firmin et al, 2019)

Historically CSE was often perceived amongst professionals as the young person’s fault, a result of their ‘risky behaviour’.

A Parliamentary group have acknowledged that in some areas of the UK a similar culture still exists around CCE, suggesting a degree of child choice within their criminality. (The All-Party Parliamentary Group, 2016, Missing children and Adults, Report).

### What do perpetrators look like?

The media can portray certain perpetrator characteristics and profiles which shape the public’s views, and misleads communities. The below categorisations can assist in identifying perpetrator profiles;

- Individuals who abuse individual children for their own sexual gratification/financial/ other gain

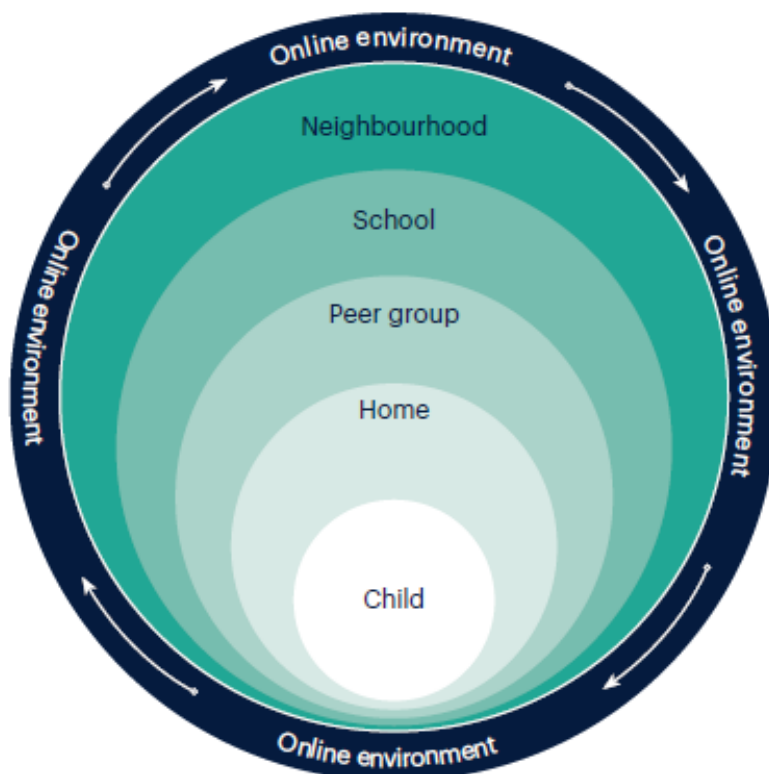
- Individuals who abuse groups of children for their own sexual gratification/financial/ other gain
- Loosely connected individuals who act in groups to abuse children for their own sexual gratification/financial/othergain
- Organised groups of individuals who abuse children for their own sexual gratification/ financial/other gain

It is important to note that there is no typical description of what a perpetrator can look like. Those who exploit others are a diverse group and will be represented across both sexes, social classes and ethnicities.

We must understand the child's contextual circumstance within a holistic approach which analyses the child and families individual care and support needs.

### Contextual Safeguarding

The Contextual Safeguarding network describes Contextual Safeguarding as an approach to understanding and responding to children's experiences of significant harm outside of families and can be beyond their control.



(Bronfenbrenner, 1979 Firmin, 2017)

The Wales Safeguarding procedures also provide national recognition of the concept of Contextual Safeguarding which focuses on the environmental impact on children within schools, peers, neighborhood/communities and within wider society.

The Diagram above reflects that children's engagement within these extra- familial contexts can also inform, and be informed by, what is happening at home. Therefore, when children are exposed to exploitation in their school, peer group, communities, or wider society, this may fracture their family relationships and undermine the capacity of their parents/carers to keep the child safe. Likewise, if children are exposed to harm within their families this can impact their vulnerability in extra-familial settings.

The Child:

- Sometimes the impact of adverse childhood experiences is not addressed, however we also know that children do not always experience such adversity but there may be patterns of unmet need.

The Home:

- Traditional Child Protection systems may solely focus on the parent, for example attending a parenting class to improve situation, however perpetrators can disrupt familial relationships and undermine the attempts being made by parents/carers.

Schools:

School should be a place of safety for a child; however, perpetrators can target schools and can include exploiting other children as part of the perpetrators grooming process.

The Peer Group:

In older children the context of peer relationships becomes more significant and can be more influential of social norms than family. For example, in respect of youth crime and gang affiliated criminality, children often commit offences in groups which they would not have committed on their own. Peers can be a source of protection or abuse.

Neighbourhoods/ Communities:

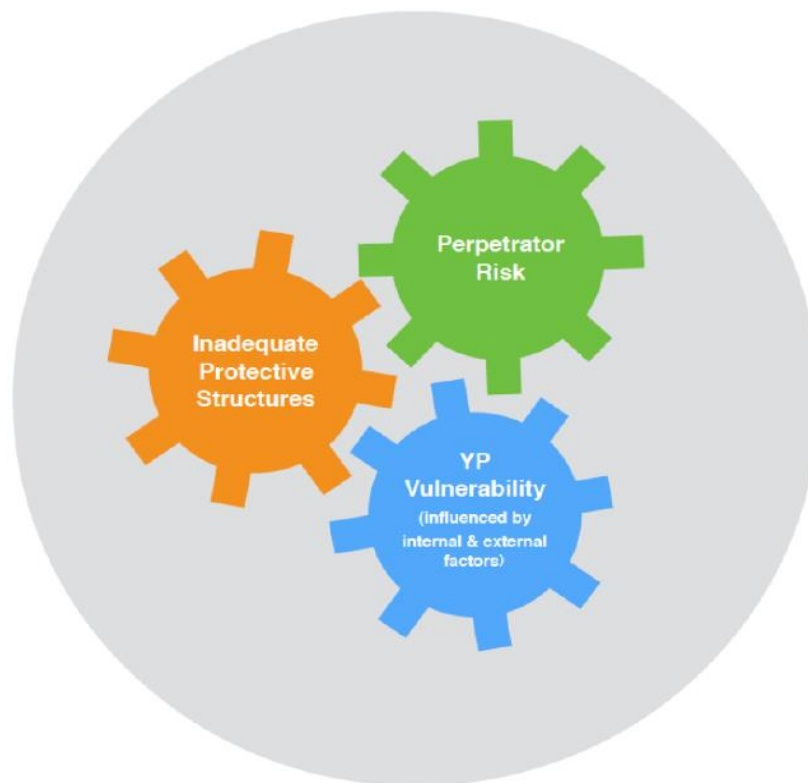
Within communities' children can be exposed to abuse, and we must consider the area's in which abuse can take place within our assessment, care planning, intervention, and the review of outcomes. Where there is evidence of heightened risk or a child being exploited, we must consider interventions to address the area as well as the child's unique care and support needs.

Considering vulnerability and risk within Assessment:

Children's vulnerabilities can heighten the risk of exploitation; however, research also tells us that it is not an automatic predictor, vulnerabilities can co-exist with abuse but are not the cause of abuse. Our knowledge of vulnerability is only useful if it forms part of a holistic assessment that considers each child's circumstances, their protective structures and focuses on disrupting perpetrators.



The Diagram below shows the interconnected conditions of abuse. It supports a holistic approach to assessment. To enable an assessment to be holistic it must consider the perpetrator, alongside the child's needs and possible vulnerability (which is influenced by internal and external factors) and the adequacy, or inadequacy, of protective structures.



(Beckett, 2011)

#### Identified factors increasing chances of CSE

- More likely being female
- Previous experience of familial sexual abuse, regardless of sex and gender.
- Emotional abuse from males.
- Number of moves in living circumstances.
- Primarily negative relationships with peers and/or no friendships.

Less likely for harm and abuse to occur:

- A positive relationship with an adult.
- Positive relationships with peers.

- High number of agencies involved. However, this must be a coordinated response that does not over-whelm the child.

It is recognised that sexual abuse and violence through CSE can occur without any vulnerabilities being present.

*Ref: 'Keeping Safe?', Cardiff University, 2019.*

#### Identified factors increasing chances of CCE

- More likely to be male, however the risk of Child Sexual Exploitation to females remains prevalent in the context of gangs.
- Exclusion from school
- Instability
- Primarily negative relationships with peers and/or no friendships

Less likely for harm to occur:

- A positive relationship with an adult
- Positive relationships with peers
- High number of agencies involved. However, this must be a coordinated response that does not overwhelm the child.

*Ref: A systematic map and synthesis review, Cardiff University, 2019.*

To ensure quality practice which supports safer outcomes for children, our 'what good looks like' is an extension to our practice non negotiables.

*What will good look like?*

The child's behaviour is not the problem. Any child can become a victim of exploitation

Risk assessments often focus on the behaviour of the child, for example professional scoring tools which conclude whether a child is at heightened risk of exploitation. Such approaches can therefore encourage professionals to focus on the child's behaviour as the 'problem' which we must work to prevent/contain.

We can inadvertently blame children for their abuse when we focus on the child's behaviour as the problem. We will engage and empower children, families/carers, and professionals to identify perpetrators, and spaces and places whilst providing support to children to enable their recovery utilising a holistic Wellbeing Assessment.

Children never place themselves at risk of being abused.

The child's voice is paramount.

We will always provide children with a voice and listen to them. We will strive to provide a consistent

professional network to promote trusting relationships and their co-production in their plans which focuses upon their own outcomes.

We understand that every child is unique, and we understand the way in which children see Child Exploitation will vary from child to child. We will work with children to understand their experiences from their lens, and work at their pace to reduce harm and promote their own outcomes.

We recognise the importance of a trusted relationship with a safe adult, getting to a position of trust with a child who has been let down or hurt, or both, can take time and perseverance.

Children will be 'children first' up to the age of 18 years old.

We understand that older children can be perceived as 'making choices' however exploitation is an abuse of power which takes away a child's control. A child can never consent to their abuse.

Exploitation does not stop on a child's 18th birthday and therefore we will work with service provision for adults to ensure that transition is a process as oppose to an event. We will identify children at the earliest opportunity and provide quality interventions.

We value the power of families and/or carer(s) in safeguarding children when they are not the source of abuse.

We value the participation of families and/or carer(s). We understand that exploitation can happen outside of the knowledge and/or control of a child's family and/or carer(s).

We will work with families and/or a child's carers to ensure that they do not feel alone, whilst supporting and empowering them to be able to safeguard their children.

Agencies within the region will support the training and development of its staff along with partner agencies, third sector colleagues, and communities to support early identification, assessment, intervention, care planning and improved outcomes for children.

Our Early Help Service provides a strength-based approach that supports the principles and core values of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014, and is aligned with our Signs of Safety practice model utilised across Children's Services.

We aim to safely engage children within their home and wider family networks being preventative, moving away from reactive responses to safeguard children.

All children identified as at heightened risk of Child Exploitation must have their care and support needs assessed in the same way as any other child.

Children's Services' will support children who require a statutory safeguarding response in the same way as any other child in need of protection and support.

To prevent abuse, protect children and support their meaningful outcomes we must work together, we must be collaborative and regularly communicate and embed consistent thresholds of support.

We understand that each agency has something unique to offer within the assessment, care planning, intervention and review of children's outcomes which will enable our 'PPS' approach to be achieved.

## **The Role of Agencies**

The agencies listed below relate to regional services. However, each local authority area will have its own bespoke services that is relevant to their area.

### **The Police**

Dyfed Powys Police are a lead agency in identifying and safeguarding children from exploitation.

A child can have contact with different professionals and teams within the police force simultaneously or at different times, for example:

- School Police Liaison Service
- Community Policing within neighborhoods.
- Safeguarding child victims outside of Child Exploitation.
- Safeguarding child victims of Child Exploitation
- Children who are identified as involved in criminality.
- CEOP support and identification for online sexual abuse and grooming.

The role of Dyfed Powys Police includes the disruption and prosecution of perpetrators to safeguard all victims within the community, including children from exploitation. They also have a duty of care to children to ensure that they are safe and their longer-term support needs are being promoted.

If children are placed outside of the region the police force in which the harm is occurring have a duty to safeguard the child in collaboration with the hosting and placing Authority Social Work Team.

### **Education**

Providing an educational environment across the region which takes a 'whole-school' approach including RSE, well-being support and peer on peer education to understand issues such as gender inequality, consent and healthy relationships is central within prevention, protection, and support.

There is a statutory requirement for children to be educated up to and including the year in which they turn 16, the last day of statutory school' being the last Friday in June of the year in which they turn 16. Schools provide the opportunity for children to develop relationships with professionals over pro-longed periods celebrating periods of success together and supporting children in times of crisis.

Education provisions also have an opportunity to observe and consider the dynamics of peer relationships and their influence on one another within the school environment.

Their statutory responsibility extends beyond the school environment to monitor children who are home educated.

Staff will support children's individual plans and a senior representative will attend quarterly strategic MACE meetings.

### **Post 16 non statutory education**

The statutory responsibilities for safeguarding apply to all children under 18 years of age, and

therefore post 16 providers i.e., sixth forms, colleges and training provisions continue to play a pivotal role within prevention, protection, and support to children.

Like statutory education, children have an opportunity to develop relationships with professionals over pro-longed periods celebrating periods of success together and supporting children in times of crisis. Staff have an opportunity to observe and consider the dynamics of peer relationships and their influence on one another within their educational/learning setting.

Staff will support children's individual plans and senior representatives will attend the quarterly strategic MACE meetings.

### **Powys Teaching Health Board & Hywel Dda University Health Boards**

A child may have contact with several different health practitioners in different settings. This may be simultaneously or at different times. There are numerous health practitioners within the Health Board who have a duty and responsibility in relation to the prevention, protection, and support for children.

Health practitioners will support children's individual plans and a Senior Nurse for Safeguarding will attend the quarterly strategic MACE meetings.

The Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) provides a coordinated response to children who may have suffered abuse. The service covers the region of Dyfed Powys Police, South Wales Police and Gwent Police, Swansea Bay (SB) University Health Board (UHB), Aneurin Bevan UHB, Cardiff & Vale UHB, Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) UHB, Hywel Dda UHB (HD) and Powys Teaching Health Board (THB).

Welsh Government is currently commissioning an evidence review of trauma informed interventions to inform the further development of evidenced therapeutic interventions and wider trauma informed services across Wales.

### **Foster Carers**

The Mid and West Wales Region is committed to ensure that children should not become looked after unnecessarily due to extra familial exploitation, as stated within this CE Strategy it is our aim to target perpetrators and co-produce safe and meaningful outcomes with children and their families wherever safe to do so. However, there may be circumstances in which children are already looked after and worries for their safety are identified.

Foster carers are paramount within a child's support network alongside their supervising social worker, the child's social worker, their birth family, wider family network and other agencies working collaboratively to support the child's needs being met.

### **Substance Misuse Service**

The region does not condone the underage use of alcohol or illegal drugs and works with our partners to prevent such issues, however we also recognise the risks of 'peer pressure' and experimentation and whilst we cannot eradicate this, we can work to promote resilience and safety within children together. Alcohol and substances can be used by perpetrators within the grooming process to facilitate their abuse. Staff will support children's individual plans, and a senior representative will attend the quarterly strategic MACE meetings.

### **Regional Youth Justice Services**

The youth Justice service provide skillful assessment and support to children to build resilience and meet vulnerabilities or need which heighten their risk of offending/re-offending, for example this could be harm to others such as peer on peer abuse or criminality within the community. The Youth Justice Services aims to achieve its goals to prevent, protect and support by promoting well-targeted and quality interventions on a statutory and non-statutory basis with children and families.

Staff will support children's individual plans including strategy meetings, and senior representatives will attend regular MACE strategic meetings.

### **Regional Youth Services and Community Groups**

The principles underpinning Youth Work are well placed to engage children within their peer groups and within our community. The Youth Work Wales Strategy, 2019, identifies the differing opportunities for children to engage with youth workers and how youth services can aid prevention, protection, and support to children.

This strategy aims to strengthen links with Youth Services, sporting groups, dance, drama, and all other local community groups. Youth workers will support children's individual plans and a senior representative will attend quarterly MACE meetings.

### **The National Probation Service**

Youth Justice Service's work closely with probation to support the safe and meaningful transition of children who require continued post 18 support on a formal or informal basis. All adults will be supported by probation in ways which reduce risk of harm they may present through assessment, the delivery of well-targeted and quality interventions and risk management planning that identify and share factors which may pose a risk to children's safety and welfare. Probation are responsible for sharing information to safeguard children within relevant areas such as Strategy Meetings, MAPPA and MARAC. A senior representative will attend regular MACE strategic meetings.

### **The Llamau Return Home Service**

A child being missing can be both a cause and a consequence of Child Exploitation.

Llamau are the commissioned independent service to support children who have been identified as missing. The service supports early intervention to help prevent abuse, and work to protect and support children. Staff will support children's individual plans including strategy meetings, and senior representatives will attend quarterly MACE strategic meetings. We understand the link between children being missing and risk of harm. We advocate that a 'missing status' does not require being overnight as abuse takes place during all parts of everyday. Therefore, allocation is based on the child's individual circumstances and not the time of day or length of the missing period.

### **LA Licensing Teams**

Child Exploitation can happen anywhere and at any time. Regional LA Licensing Teams can support in prevention by working with licensees to encourage raising awareness across varied spaces and places such as pubs and night clubs, taxi's, restaurants, take away's, caravan sites, events, markets and events, taxi's, hotels and guest houses. Licensing can also provide invaluable support in the disruption of child exploitation in our communities as they have a range of enforcement options such as informal advice and guidance, informal written warnings, cautions, prosecutions and licensing reviews.

### **Community Safety Partnership (CSP)**

The CSP is a multi-agency partnership to tackle crime and disorder including serious violence and organised crime. All Local Authorities within Wales also have a duty to share safeguarding concerns of counter terrorism as detailed within the CONTEST agenda which is managed by the CSP. The above functions reflect the necessity of the CSP team in the prevention, protection and support to children at heightened risk of child exploitation. A manager of the CSP will attend quarterly MACE strategic meetings.

### **Housing Services**

Housing Services can support in a multitude of ways to prevent, protect and support children at heightened risk of being exploited. Their services engage with families across the area who provide invaluable understanding of community safeguarding concerns including child exploitation. They are also in a position to be able to identify risk indicators of child exploitation within properties and support disruption to reduce harm. Staff support children's individual plans as required, and a senior representative will attend quarterly MACE strategic meetings.

### **The Regional Independent Child Trafficking Guardian (R-ICTG)**

The role of an R-ICTG is outlined in s.48 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. All Local Authorities within Wales have become Early Adopter Sites of the Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship Service. The R-ICTG will work closely with Local Authority's and can offer support including multi-agency training, direct work, case consultations, attend children's strategy meetings and provide support to promote quality NRM referrals being made. The R-ICTG will attend quarterly strategic MACE meetings.

### **VAWDASV**

VAWDASV stands for Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

The Mid and West Wales (MWW) Regional 'Safer Lives, Healthier Families' VAWDASV Strategy 2019-20 outlines six key objectives with an additional three priority areas. The objectives support prevention, protection and support to children and families. There are regular opportunities for multi-agency training opportunities, interventions for children and families who have been exposed to domestic abuse, sexual violence and harassment, and gender-based violence. Specialist services will support children's individual plans and service representatives will attend quarterly MACE meeting.

### **MACE and the Child Exploitation Strategy Governance**

The CYSUR Mid and West Wales regional safeguarding board is committed to ensuring appropriate responses to tackle child exploitation through improved strategic and operational co-ordination of multi-agency efforts. This involves the continuation and regular review of the delivery of our strategic Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings. A MACE meeting occurs in each of the Mid and West Wales regions at a Local Authority level and provides information and quarterly updates to the Local Operational Group which report directly to the Mid and West Wales CYSUR regional safeguarding board.

The region's MACE key aims and objectives are:

- The monitoring of the implementation of the Child Exploitation strategy action plan which identifies areas of service development and works collaboratively to drive improvements in response to child exploitation. This will include the implementation of meaningful measures to review the value and impact of the action plan in safeguarding children.

- To facilitate information sharing and monitoring of hot spots and review of data collection on key measures which support the identification of the scale of child exploitation and disruption efforts across the region.
- To monitor the effectiveness of responses across a range of prevention, protection and support interventions and ensure services are delivered to the highest standard and are evidence informed.

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