



Suffolk
Safeguarding
Partnership

Children and Young Persons at Risk of Experiencing Exploitation Strategy 2020

1. Introduction

This multi-agency strategy for safeguarding children and young people who are abused or are at risk of abuse through child exploitation and/or criminal exploitation or go missing from their home or placement, draws on Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE 2018) and the Child Sexual Exploitation definition 2017.

The definition is a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from exploitation (DfE February 2017). It defines CSE as:

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

2. Aims

To create a climate and culture that encourages agencies to listen to the voice of the child, focusing on their needs and finding ways of promoting young people's sexual and emotional safety.

3. Responsibility of the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership

Local Safeguarding Partnerships are responsible for ensuring that appropriate local procedures are in place to tackle child exploitation. All frontline practitioners in all services need to be aware of these procedures and how they relate to their own areas of responsibility. Safeguarding Partnerships and frontline practitioners should ensure that actions to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people who are exploited, be that sexually or criminally and/or who are going missing, focus on the needs of the child.

The DfE recommends that Safeguarding Partnerships develop an effective local strategy ensuring there is a coordinated multi-agency response to child exploitation, based on a robust, thorough risk assessment of the extent and nature of child exploitation locally.

The Safeguarding Partnership also has a key role in ensuring that the relevant organisations in each local area co-operate effectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. They must consider the needs of the children and young people who have been, or are at risk of being exploited and their families when:

- Planning and commissioning services
- Developing policies and procedures
- Ensuring appropriate training is in place

- Communicating and raising awareness
- Monitoring and evaluating the work that has and is being done

The four pillars on which the strategy is built are:

1. **Prepare** – providing strong leadership, effective systems and true and effective partnership working to tackle vulnerability and exploitation.
2. **Prevent** – raising awareness among young people, parents, carers, professionals, key groups and the wider community including potential perpetrators and prevent incidents/repeat incidents of exploitation.
3. **Protect** – safeguarding vulnerable children and young people and supporting victims and those professionals who seek to reduce instances of children and young people going missing and activities to exploit children and young people.
4. **Pursue** – disrupting, arresting and prosecuting offenders, ensuring a victim centred approach at all times

A multi-agency sub-group of the SSP has been established to take forward the work needed to meet this strategy. The focus of this group is on developing a multi-agency strategy for safeguarding vulnerable people who are abused or are at risk of abuse through exploitation or are susceptible to online criminal or sexual exploitation. The specific responsibilities of this group are outlined below.

The responsibilities of this group will feed into the terms of reference for the Criminal Exploitation Steering Group that is led by the Community Safety Partnership and oversees the exploitation work in Suffolk.

Responsibilities and Terms of Reference for Exploitation and Online Safety Group

1. To identify and protect those who are at risk of exploitation and ensure that effective support services are available to them.
2. To ensure that operational activity is supported by all relevant agencies with regard to intervention, disruption, and enforcement.
3. To highlight concerns, blockers, or issues to current service delivery. To work with relevant identified to overcome the issues and ensure all agencies are joined up and operating as efficiently as possible.
4. To promote a positive culture in this area and ensure that partners support but challenge each other where appropriate.
5. To develop challenging and rigorous approaches to monitoring and evaluating the impact of service provision. This will include the commissioning of audits and reality testing where necessary to satisfy the Partnership that policies & processes are effective.
6. To monitor the implementation and learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Safeguarding Adult Reviews (locally and nationally) to ensure the learning is embedded and being applied in practice.
7. To present recommendations from other area's JTAI's and Ofsted / HMIC inspections and ensure that, where necessary, our own operating models reflect national best practice.

8. To be cognizant of learning points derived from local operational de-briefs. Focusing upon developing and evolving approaches at an operational level to improve our collective service to the public.
9. To ensure information sharing is reaching the most relevant practitioners and is being used effectively thereafter.
10. To coordinate Comms between agencies when considering participation in national campaigns concerning exploitation and online safety. To monitor the communication channels across the partnership, especially when the threshold for working across the partnership is met, to ensure the channels are effective and fit for purpose.
11. To regularly review and refresh if necessary, the work being undertaken by the Exploitation and Online Safety group.

4. Strategic Intentions

A shared understanding of the threat, harm and risk associated with Exploitation through better information sharing and effective analysis

The SSP recognises the need for an informed understanding of the threat of exploitation, within Suffolk and will work to ensure that partner agencies share information. Data will be shared in order to identify the number of children who have been or are seen as at risk of being exploited in order to shape the partnership and individual organisational response in Suffolk. The sharing of this data will also allow the proactive identification of children where an intervention is needed to prevent exploitation.

The SSP recognises the central role of the Suffolk MASH in leading on this information sharing, victim identification and coordination of response.

The SSP will ensure that there is a profile of child exploitation activity across Suffolk and that this is shared with its Partners.

The SSP will:

1. Support the development of analytical capability in order that hotspots, potential victims, perpetrators, emerging issues and the scale of child exploitation is identified and used to ensure appropriate responses.
2. Critically challenge the operational delivery of the work being led by the Community Safety Partnership and aim to evaluate the changes this work is bringing about to the lives of children, young people and families.
3. Report on the prevalence and scale of Exploitation, including CE, in Suffolk and ensure this information is provided to inform commission decisions and priorities.

Raising awareness of Exploitation and the risk factors that may indicate a child or person is being abused or at risk of abuse

Raising awareness across Suffolk as to what is child exploitation and what the indicators that might suggest a child or young person is being or is at risk of being exploited are central to preventing and protecting children and young people.

It is important that children and young people develop the knowledge and the skills so that they can make informed, safe and healthy choices about relationships and sexual health and so help them avoid situations that put them at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation. It is also important that they know who to turn to for help and support, including the pressure to join a Gang or Group. The SSP recognises the crucial roles that schools, and colleges play in providing this knowledge and advice.

In the same way parents, carers, professionals, those interacting with children and young people and the wider communities of Suffolk also need to understand what is meant by exploitation and how to identify where a child may be being exploited or may be at risk of being exploited and what actions they should take.

The SSP recognises the need for a consistent approach to awareness raising across Partners and across Suffolk to ensure strength and consistency of message. This should not however be a barrier to innovation and the need to address local problems.

The SSP will work closely with the Community Safety Partnership and all other agencies to raise awareness of exploitation across Suffolk's Communities

Effective identification of those children and young persons at risk and of those individuals who present a risk of abusing children and young persons

Effective information sharing is key to identifying those who are being exploited and those who are at risk of so being exploited and in identifying abusers; greater awareness raising will also lead to a better understanding of both these issues.

The SSP will continue to support the implementation of a risk identification and assessment process (toolkit) in order that, where a child is believed to be being or at risk of being exploited, a consistent assessment of the risk can be made based on the best multi-agency information available at that time leading to an effective and proportionate response. This toolkit is available to all front-line staff of all agencies and for all staff who interact with families and children. By using the one model this will enhance a consistent approach to identification. All toolkits can be found on the SSP website on the [Child Exploitation](#) page.

A process for tasking and coordination of referrals linked to child exploitation will be managed within the MASH environment. There should be a clear link to the following risk factors; missing children and the work centred on criminal exploitation, social media and peer association.

Protecting those who are at risk of sexual exploitation and providing effective support to them

There is a need for an effective response from all services when the sexual exploitation of children is identified. There must be a timely and supportive response, tailored to the need of the child or young person that understands the emotions facing the individual at that time. The response must be coordinated across all partners and must consider the present and the future.

The 'Signs of Safety' model should be used to ensure a child centred approach.

There are crossovers between this intention and that relating to awareness raising; the best form of protection being prevention and the SSP recognises the part that schools have to play in both prevention and protection.

There is a need to ensure that children and young people who are being or who are at risk of being exploited are able to access the service that is right for them and the SSP recognises the contribution that the Make a Change Team, working in close liaison with the Constabulary Human Trafficking and Exploitation Team, can make.

Effective intervention, disruption and prosecutions of those who sexually abuse and criminally exploit children or young people

Where individuals are identified who are exploiting children, there will be a strong partnership approach to ensuring that all appropriate actions are taken against them. The SSP will expect partner organisations to work closely together to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people. Toolkits to support are available on the SSP website [here](#).

Whilst early intervention will always be the preferred option, the SSP recognises that disruption and prosecution are key elements of any response to CE and as such agencies must be prepared to undertake these responses.

Whilst any prosecution will be led by the Constabulary and Crown Prosecution Service there is the responsibility on all partners to support and assist any such approach

Providing Oversight

The SSP recognises its role and responsibility in having oversight and to monitor and evaluate the impact of the multi-agency work being undertaken by its Partners on the strategy for safeguarding vulnerable children and young people.