

Child Exploitation Identification Tool

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Summary of Purpose	This tool is designed for practitioners to use to assist in the identification of children who may be vulnerable to or experiencing exploitation.
Accessibility	This document can be made available in large print, or in electronic format. There are no copies currently available in other languages.
Equalities Impact Assessment	During the preparation of this policy and when considering the roles and responsibilities of all agencies, organisations and staff involved, care has been taken to promote fairness, equality, and diversity, in the services delivered regardless of disability, ethnic origin, race, gender, age, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.
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Policy Review Date	This document will be reviewed in June 2026.

1. Introduction

This tool should be read alongside the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Abused Through Exploitation Procedure.

Definitions

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE): CSE 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 using technology.

Violence, coercion and intimidation are common. Involvement in exploitative relationships is characterised by the child's or young person's limited availability of choice, because of their social, economic or emotional vulnerability. 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 themselves as a victim of exploitation.

Group Based Child Sexual Exploitation: An organised network is characterised by two or more individuals (whether identified or not) who are known to (or associated with) one another and are known to be involved in or to facilitate the sexual exploitation of children. Being involved in the sexual exploitation of children includes introducing them to other individuals for the purpose of exploitation, trafficking a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation, taking payment for sexual activities with a child or allowing their property to be used for sexual activities with a child.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE): CCE occurs when children are coerced into committing crimes, such as drug trafficking (often referred to as "county lines"), theft, or carrying weapons.

Using the tool

The tool is structured around five areas:

- Physical and emotional
- Language and behaviour
- Activity
- Social context
- Family, environment and community

Each section contains a range of indicators, set across the spectrum of concern from no/low concern to severe concern. The indicators are not exhaustive and should be considered in the broader context of push and pull factors which might exist for a child that might

increase or decrease their vulnerability to exploitation. The tool is not designed to 'score' indicators in order to direct actions, professionals should use the tool to support their professional judgement in understanding whether a child is vulnerable to or is experiencing exploitation. The indicators should also be viewed in terms of their cumulative effect on each other, when thinking about the level of concern that is held.

Practitioners should review the indicators in each section and consider what level of concern is held for each, including relevant evidence and assessment that supports your view. Your overall responses should indicate a summary as to what level of concern you have for the child, and therefore the next steps that may be required. This is outlined in the final section of the screening tool 'Summary and next steps'. It is recommended that where concerns are identified, a date is included for a review of the indicators at a timely interval (where appropriate to a practitioner's involvement with a child or family).

It should be noted that the indicators are structured in terms of level of concern specifically relating to risk of exploitation. Some indicators which may sit at level 2 or 3, might by themselves be significant concerns or indicate a general risk of harm which require a safeguarding response, but do not necessarily indicate a significant concern of exploitation. Practitioners should review the Kent Support Levels Guidance or Medway Threshold Guidance separately to consider the general risk of harm to a child.

Actions

Child exploitation is a form of child abuse. **Children cannot consent to being abused.**

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 provides that the age of consent is 16. Sections 9-13 clarify that any sexual activity involving consenting children under 16 is unlawful. Sections 9-12 cover adult defendants. Section 13 relates to child defendants. Key points:

- Consent is irrelevant.
- There is a defence of reasonable belief that the child is 16 years or over. The defence of reasonable belief does not apply if the child is under 13 years.

Legally a child under 13 is deemed to be legally incapable of consenting to sexual activity. Child sexual abuse **must be reported to the police promptly.**

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 also makes causing or inciting the sexual exploitation of a child a criminal offence. Criminal activity should be reported to the police.

In addition to considering actions for an individual child, including providing additional support or making appropriate onward referrals, where information is obtained relating to the exploitation of children or other potential criminal activity, this should be reported appropriately. The Child Exploitation Intelligence Form (or eIntel) may be an appropriate mechanism for reporting of intelligence. Where information is obtained that indicates a criminal offence has been committed, this should be reported to the police.

This toolkit does not specifically address risks regarding radicalisation, although it is recognised that exploitation is also often a factor in radicalisation of children and young

people. Where concerns are identified regarding the possible radicalisation of a child, a Prevent referral should be made.

2. Child exploitation identification tool

Child details		Professional details		
Name:			Name:	
Date of birth:			Agency:	
Age:		Date completed:		Date to review:

Physical & emotional					
Concern level	Level 1 - No concern	Level 2 - Emerging concern	Level 3 - Substantial concern	Level 4 - Severe concern	
Possible Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am in general good health and registered with a GP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am inappropriately dressed for my age and/or the weather My use of make-up has increased I appear unusually tired without explanation I have additional support needs which may make me more vulnerable (i.e. disability, learning difficulty, diagnosed or suspected neurodiversity) I have mental health issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am a pregnant teenager and there are serious concerns about me I have unexplained new clothing/expensive items or disposable cash My levels of hygiene and self care have changed I have significant weight change I am wearing a sexualised style of clothing Appear malnourished I have additional support needs which may make me more vulnerable (i.e. disability, learning difficulty, learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am under 16 years of age and sexually active/have an STI/am pregnant I have injuries or indications of injuries I have a tattoo or other gang branding I lack access to official documents or personal possessions I have signs of physical abuse I have experienced a delay in seeking treatment for injuries I am unwilling to discuss how injuries have occurred 	

					difficulty, diagnosed or suspected neurodiversity) and I do not have sufficient support in place			
Screening	Vulnerable to	Experiencing	Vulnerable to	Experiencing	Vulnerable to	Experiencing	Vulnerable to	Experiencing
Further comments and evidence for scoring (also consider and capture protective factors):								

Language and behaviour					
Concern level	Level 1 - No concern	Level 2 - Emerging concern	Level 3 - Substantial concern	Level 4 - Severe concern	
Possible Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no concerns about my behaviour • I understand the difference between 'safe' and 'not safe' • I am able to understand right from wrong and I can act appropriately • I risk take in a way that is appropriate to my age and stage of development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have begun using sexualised language • I have been using new slang, swearing or terminology • I discuss weapons, drugs or alcohol • I seem to idolise gang activity or hierarchy • I am reluctant to share personal information • I have low self esteem • I am being inappropriately 'adultified' • I am portraying myself in an age inappropriate way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I appear withdrawn (less positive/less smiling/laughing) • I am displaying new emotions/feelings e.g. fear, anger • I appear guarded/scared in the company of peers/adults • I am secretive/guarded – particularly with devices • I appear to have scripted or rehearsed responses • I lack memory of recent events/periods of time • I am violent towards my parents/family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have self harmed or have suicidal ideation because of my situation • I am describing situations which are clearly exploitative of me • I aspire to or actively seek to be engaged in gang activity or ethos 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am taking risks which others see as dangerous 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am being drawn into risk taking behaviours that put me in danger 			
Screening	Vulnerable to	Experiencing	Vulnerable to	Experiencing	Vulnerable to	Experiencing	Vulnerable to	Experiencing
Further comments and evidence for scoring (also consider and capture protective factors):								

Activity					
Concern level	Level 1 - No concern	Level 2 - Emerging concern	Level 3 - Substantial concern	Level 4 - Severe concern	
Possible Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My attendance at school/college/training is good My online activity and communications are appropriate to my age and stage of development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have started to go missing from school and/or from home I am missing school/ or am late home My routine activities have changed I am spending increasing amount of time online and possibly isolating from others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I regularly go missing from home or school with no explanation I am being asked to commit crimes I am vulnerable due to my drugs and/or alcohol use I am being encouraged to become engaged in a gang I am being encouraged to carry drugs and/or weapons My performance in education has significantly declined I am known to have previously been exploited I am being encouraged to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am severely absent from education I have repeatedly committed crimes I am assessed as a possible risk of harm to the community Others have significant concerns about my reliance on drugs or alcohol I am at high risk of significant harm when I go missing from home I have been involved in committing crime I have travelled unexpectedly or unusually, including out of county 	

Further comments and evidence for scoring (also consider and capture protective factors):								

Social context					
Concern level	Level 1 - No concern	Level 2 - Emerging concern	Level 3 - Substantial concern	Level 4 - Severe concern	
Possible Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have positive relationships with my peers I have positive relationships with my family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am showing early signs of associating with peers who are involved in crime and/or anti-social behaviour I have a new unknown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am in a peer group that regularly goes missing I have new older friends I describe having a significantly older boyfriend/girlfriend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am experiencing child-on-child abuse which may involve the use of/or being forced to carry weapons in a group setting Others encourage or force 	

			boyfriend or girlfriend <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am socially isolated • I am a looked after child • I am living independently 	• My relationships with my previous peer groups have broken down <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My relationships with my family have broken down • I am a looked after child who has multiple placements or breakdown of placements 	me to be frequently missing from home/school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am associating with others who are known to have been exploited or involved in exploitation • I am being asked to identify other children to join in 			
Screening	Vulnerable to	Experiencing	Vulnerable to	Experiencing	Vulnerable to	Experiencing	Vulnerable to	Experiencing
Further comments and evidence for scoring (also consider and capture protective factors):								

Family, environment and community					
Concern level	Level 1 - No concern	Level 2 - Emerging concern	Level 3 - Substantial concern	Level 4 - Severe concern	
Possible Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no concerns about my life at home, in school or in my neighbourhood • I am safe at home, online and outside in my community • I am home educated and receiving suitable education and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may be at risk due to unsafe and/or harmful content, conduct, commerce or contact risks online • I am living in a home environment which exposes me to domestic abuse or substance misuse • I am living in a home environment which may 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am at risk due to unsafe/and or harmful content or contact online • I am engaged with harmful online communities • I have financial debts • I appear to be overwhelmed or worries about money or debts • I am attending new locations • I am at risk of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have been kicked out of home/ I have left home • I am at risk due to my family being trafficked/subject to modern day slavery • Someone is using money or debts to control or influence me • My parents may be benefitting from the risks to me outside my home 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make me feel unsafe I am living in a home environment where I have a lack of parental/carer supervision I am living in a placement which I do not have a sense of belonging in I am exposed to or have criminal environment/activities normalised through my parents/carers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> homelessness I have multiple or new phones or regularly change my phone number I have been excluded from education I am home educated but am not receiving suitable education or support My parents/carers are at risk of or are being exploited, or they do not have the capacity to protect me from harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am being trafficked I am at high risk due to illegal, unsafe or harmful content or contact online I have been present in locations of concern I have felt unable to leave a place or situation because of fear or threats I am home educated but am spending the majority of time outside of the home or education 				
Screening	Vulnerable to	Experiencing	Vulnerable to	Experiencing	Vulnerable to	Experiencing	Vulnerable to	Experiencing
Further comments and evidence for scoring (also consider and capture protective factors):								

Summary and next steps				
Overall concern rating	No concerns – there are no concerns that I am experiencing or am vulnerable to exploitation.	Emerging concerns – there are some indications I may be vulnerable to exploitation.	Substantial concerns – there are several indications that I am experiencing exploitation or evidence that I am significantly vulnerable to exploitation.	Severe concerns – there are indications that I am experiencing exploitation. I am experiencing harm or am highly likely to experience harm as a result.
Next steps to consider	No further action needed.	Concern should be discussed with the family, offering advice	Concerns should be discussed with the family, offering advice and proposed action steps, unless this would put a child at further risk of	

		<p>on areas which require improvement.</p> <p>Early Help support to be offered.</p> <p>Document your conversation and outcome.</p> <p>If the family are already open to Early Help/Children's Social Care, your concerns should be shared with the named worker.</p> <p>Consider using the Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit.</p>	<p>harm.</p> <p><u>Reporting to Kent Police</u></p> <p>If evidence or concern is held that a crime has been committed (for example, child sexual abuse or child sexual exploitation) it must be reported to Kent Police. If a child under 13 is pregnant or sexual activity is reported, this must be immediately reported to Kent Police. If information has been received which identifies an individual person who may pose a risk to children, this must be reported to Kent Police. Report a crime online or telephone 111.</p> <p><u>Referral to Children's Social Care</u></p> <p>Concerns should be reviewed against the Kent Support Levels Guidance or Medway Threshold Guidance to determine if there is a need for a referral¹ to Children's Social Care. Parent or carers consent for a referral should be sought, however non-consent does not prevent a referral being made where there is a need to safeguard a child. Where a referral is made without consent, the reasons for this should be included.</p> <p>If the family are already open to Children's Social Care, your concerns should be shared with the named worker.</p> <p>Any referral or sharing of information should be done in a timely manner, at least within 5 working days of concerns being identified.</p> <p>If the child is felt to be at immediate risk of significant harm, do not delay and submit an urgent referral to Children's Social Care.</p> <p>Kent: Make a Request for Support Medway: Report a child safeguarding concern</p> <p><u>National Referral Mechanism</u></p> <p>If the information obtained indicates that a child (or other person) may be a victim of modern slavery, a referral should be made to the National Referral Mechanism.</p>
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¹ Referral is used to mean a Request for Support in Kent or referral to Children's Social Care in Medway

			A potential victim of modern slavery is a potential victim of a crime. All NRM referrals should be referred to the police – either on the victim's behalf if they give consent, or as a third-party referral if they don't give consent (provided this does not breach any obligation of confidence under the common law). Consider using the Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit.
Action to be taken	<i>Include a summary of what action you will take and by when, as well as details of actions agreed to be undertaken by others.</i>		

3. Supporting resources

[Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Abused Through Exploitation Procedure](#)

[Kent Support Levels Guidance](#)

[Medway Threshold Guidance](#)

[Kent Police: Report a crime](#)

[Kent Child Exploitation Intelligence Form \(eintel\)](#)

[Home Office: Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit](#)

[Sexual Offences Guideline: Offences where the victim is a child - Ministry of Justice - Citizen Space](#)

[Kent and Medway Working with Children who are Sexually Active or Displaying Harmful Sexual Behaviour](#)