

SAFEGUARDING ADOLESCENTS

STRATEGY GUIDE

Theme: Child Exploitation

Introduction

Child exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child under the age of 18.

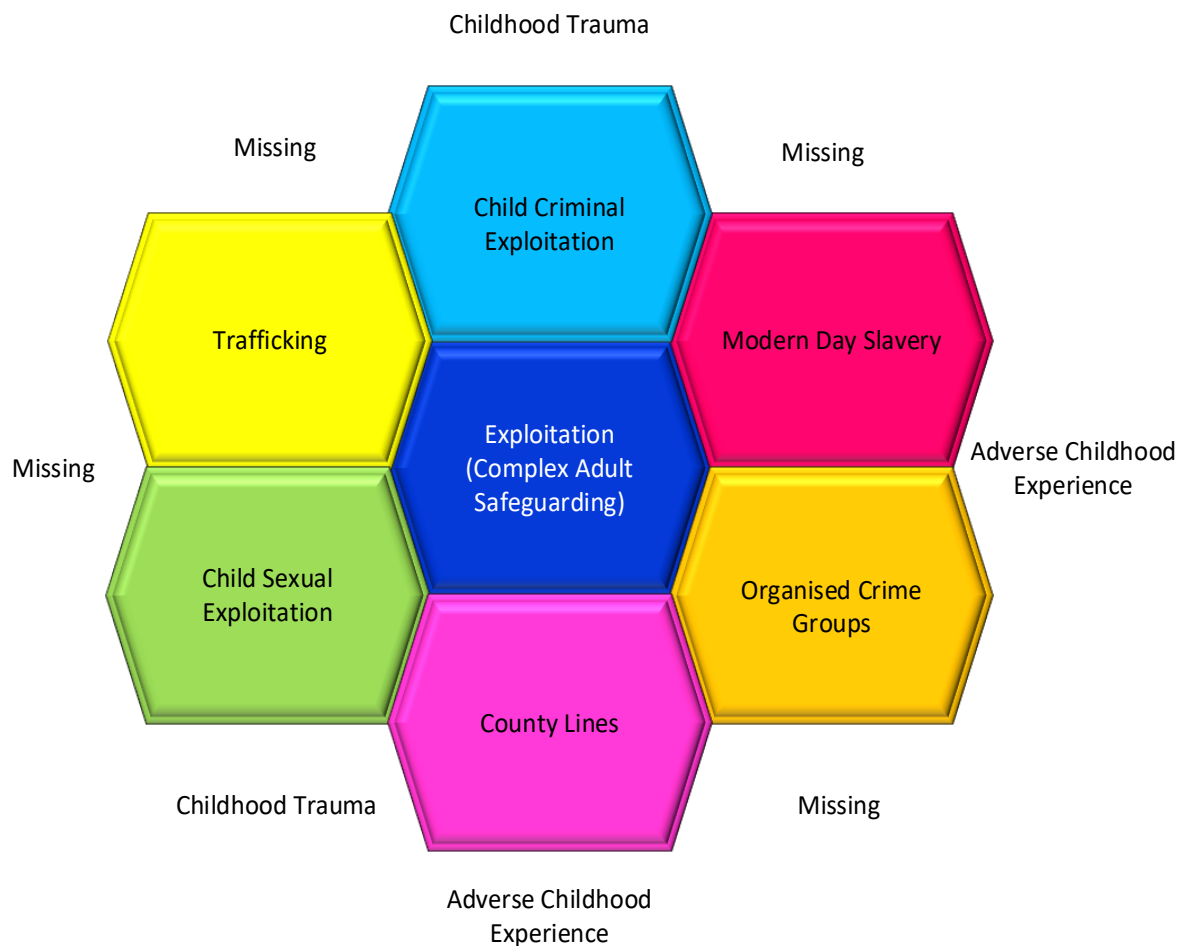
Any reference to 'exploitation' should be read to include the following risk areas:

- Missing from home or care.
- Exploitation - including child sexual exploitation (CSE), online exploitation, criminal (CCE) exploitation including County Lines, drug related harm, knife crime and serious violence; as well as other forms of exploitation that involve coercion and control such as radicalisation and extremism; forced marriage, female genital mutilation.
- Trafficking and/or Modern Slavery.

Exploitation

Exploitation involves exploitative situations, contexts, and relationships where a child (or a third person or persons) receives 'something' (e.g., food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) in return for completing a task on behalf of another individual or group of individuals; this is often of a criminal nature.





Exploitation often occurs without the child's immediate recognition, with the child believing that they are in control of the situation. In all cases, those exploiting the child 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 features of exploitation. Involvement in exploitative relationships is often characterised by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social, economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

Children's involvement in exploitation is indicative of coercion or desperation rather than choice. Exploitation is a complex form of abuse, and it can be difficult for those working with children to identify and assess.

The indicators for exploitation can sometimes be mistaken for 'normal adolescent behaviours'. It requires knowledge, skills, professional curiosity and an assessment which analyses the risk factors and personal circumstances of individual children, to ensure that the signs and symptoms are interpreted correctly, and appropriate support is given.

The law states that consent is only valid where a child has made a choice and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice. If a child feels they have no other meaningful choice, are under the influence of harmful substances or fearful of what might happen if they do not comply (all of which are common features in cases of exploitation) consent cannot legally be given, regardless of the age of the child.

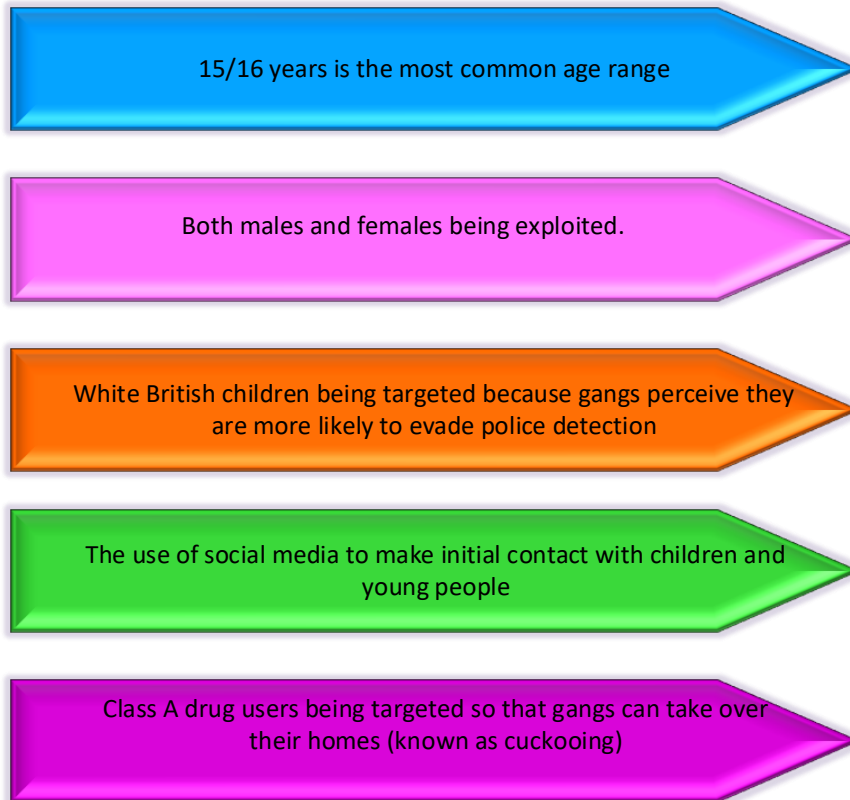
It is important to note that perpetrators of child exploitation may themselves be children who are criminally exploited and that the victims of exploitation may also be at risk of becoming perpetrators.

A child's involvement in exploitation activity might be linked to a sudden change in lifestyle. Some possible risk indicators include:

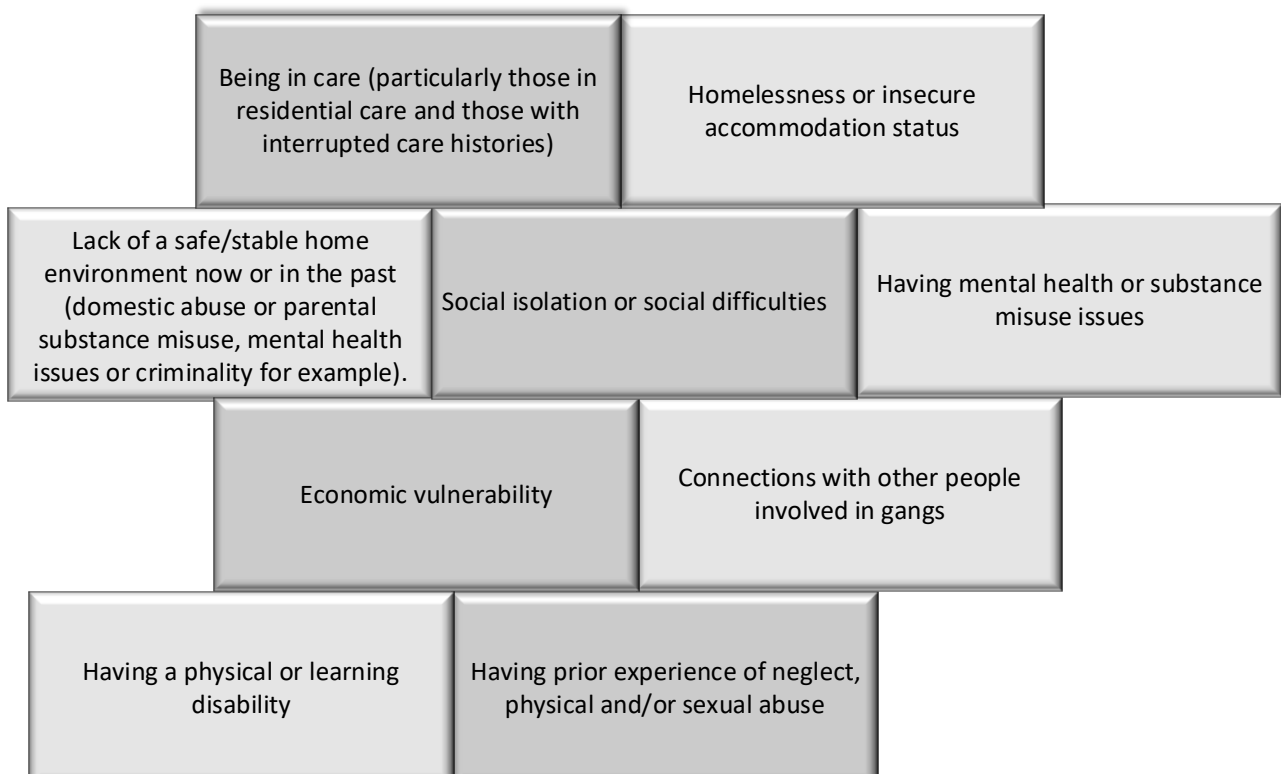


What is the impact on safeguarding adolescents?

All children are vulnerable to exploitation; however, adolescents have been identified as being particularly at risk. The national picture on child exploitation continues to develop but data on recorded cases indicates:



Gangs and groups are known to target vulnerable children and adults, some factors that heighten a person's vulnerability include:



Some children are at increased risk of being drawn into gangs, crime, going missing and being sexually exploited. Adolescence can be a confusing and challenging time for many children, their parents/carers and professionals working with them. It is essential for the multi-agency network to work closely together and alongside families, including carers, to help young people and to reduce the risk.

Risk can be increasingly external and contextual at this age. Assessing risk for children requires practitioners to think beyond the family and care situation to also focus on peer relationships, behaviour in the community and how adolescents' adverse childhood experiences impact on their ability to navigate the situations they encounter in their day-to-day life.

Social ecology influences risk-taking behaviour and its consequences. Risk factors relating to families, peer groups, school or community environments can increase the likelihood that young people will be exposed to or engage in risk-taking activities. Positive aspects of these same experiences can be engaged to build resilience and protective activities for young people.

Children and adolescents' limited ability to favour delayed rewards over immediate gains should be taken into account when considering the design of services and approaches to motivating young people to change.

Additional Resources and Information

The [Hampshire](#) and [Isle of Wight Safeguarding Partnership](#) websites and [Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton \(HIPS\) Safeguarding Children Procedures Manual](#) provide continually updated information, resources and training links.

Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP)

[Child Exploitation - Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) - Provides an overview of child exploitation in Hampshire. Includes Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Trafficking, Criminal Child Exploitation and Modern-Day Slavery.

[Breast Ironing and Honour-Based Violence - Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) - Information about Honour Based Violence.

[Hampshire SCP - Learning Management System](#) - Training offer for Hampshire professionals. Includes courses on child exploitation, Missing, Exploited and Trafficked children (MET), Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (CERAF) and modern slavery.

Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children Partnership (IOWSCP)

[Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) - Information about child exploitation.

[National Resources \(Isle of Wight Partnership\)](#) - Links to national resources.

[Training: Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) - Training offer from IOWSCP.

Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton (HIPS)

The [HIPS Safeguarding Children Procedures Manual](#) provides links to a range of resources including the [HIPS Child Exploitation Strategy](#) and [CERAF guidance](#) and form.

Particularly relevant chapters include:

[3.1 Children who are Exploited](#)

[3.8 Children and Families that go Missing](#)

[4.2 Female Genital Mutilation](#)

[4.3 Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence](#)

Hampshire Constabulary

[Hampshire Police's Safe4me Website](#) - Provides information and resources for professionals.