

**Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)** occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18, and involve them in criminal activity.

The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual.

Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Criminal exploitation of children can include, for instance, children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft.

**County lines:** is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”.

They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

**Trafficking** can be within the city, UK or abroad. Any child who is recruited, transported, transferred, harboured or received for the purposes of exploitation is considered to be a trafficking victim, whether or not they have been forced or deceived.

## Vulnerabilities of victim:

- Past or current abuse & neglect
- Social isolation, mental health issues, substance misuse
- Excluded from mainstream education
- Economic vulnerability
- Unstable home life or homelessness
- Being in care
- Gang connections
- Physical or learning disability
- Foreign exchange student
- Class A drug user
- Up to 15-16 years old, white British, male or female
- Unsafe social media use
- Parents with domestic abuse, substance misuse, mental health issues, criminality

**A key factor of Child Criminal Exploitation is some form of exchange i.e. carrying out the criminal activity in return for something:**

- **Tangible:** money, drugs or clothes, or
- **Intangible:** status, protection, affection, perceived friendship, or
- The prevention of something **negative** e.g. a child who engages in criminal activity to stop a threat to harm their family.

This exchange does not make the child or young person any less of a victim.

**Power imbalance factors include** age, gender, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, access to economic or other resources.

CCE can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, young people or adults.

## Indicators:

- Persistently missing from school or home and/or being found out-of-area
- Unexplained money, clothes, or mobile phones
- Excessive texts, phone calls; multiple handsets
- Relationships with controlling or older individuals or groups
- Leaving home or care without explanation
- Suspected physical assault, unexplained injuries
- Parental concerns
- Carrying weapons
- Decline in school results & performance
- Self-harm & changes in emotional well-being

## Protective factors for a child include:

- Enjoying & participating in learning, good home/school links
- Engaged in education, employment, training, planning future career
- Good physical & mental health, development,
- Age-appropriate sexual activity, no drug/alcohol misuse
- Positive boundaries, guidance, services, activities & peers
- Parental warmth, support, physical care, safety network

### What to do:

- Tell your Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy (DSL/D) immediately if you are concerned about any individual, group or community issue involving or suspecting child exploitation, trafficking, etc.
- The DSL/D will use the screening tool (link below) to consider what is happening and ring either the child's social worker or the **Sheffield Safeguarding Hub (tel. 0114 2734855)**
- If you are concerned about a group or community you or your DSL/D can ring 101
- If someone is in immediate danger ring 999
- If you are concerned about the behaviour of a person who works (paid or unpaid) with children, the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** should be informed via a [LADO Request form](#).

### Educating children and young people – some important principles:

- **The need for early and continuous education:** students need effective, age-appropriate education across key stages about all forms of exploitation before perpetrators approach them, accompanied by wider resilience-building work.
- **Use all potential avenues of communication:** Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHE) lessons, pastoral services and school nursing services alongside youth clubs, community settings or the family
- **Adopt a holistic approach:** incorporate into e.g. relationships and sex education about consent, healthy relationships, harmful social norms, abusive behaviours and online safety.
- **Contextual considerations:** deliver in a safe non-judgmental environment, with credible individuals who are confident discussing the issues and able to challenge unhelpful perceptions.

Accessible and appropriate support should be immediately available should any issues of concern be identified during education activity.

The **Amber Project** is a new Sheffield service provided through Sheffield futures and Sheffield City Council.

The project works with other multi-agency services to help to address issues of child criminal and sexual exploitation and contextual safeguarding i.e. children and young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families.

The project works with young people, their families and other professionals to provide educate and support to those identified as having a high risk of (or are already involved in) exploitation, organised crime, grooming and violence.

Practitioners cannot refer directly to this service; you must make referrals through the child's current social worker or by ringing the Hub directly – see above.

### Useful Web-links:

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education, DfE 2019](#)
- [County Lines Guidance, Home Office](#)
- [Counting Lives Report, The Children's Society](#)
- [Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership Safeguarding & Child Protection Procedures \(Gang Activity\)](#)
- [Safeguarding Children who may have been trafficked, DfE & Home Office](#)
- [The National Referral Mechanism](#) identifying & supporting victims of human trafficking or modern slavery
- [Sheffield Child Exploitation Screening Tool](#) to help professionals to recognise the signs, indicators and protective factors in relation to child exploitation