

**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM**  
**SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

Policy and procedure for all agencies

*This policy/procedure has been agreed by the Warrington Safeguarding Children Board and  
replaces previous procedures and protocols*

Date Agreed: 14 September 2005

Signed .....  
Chair, Warrington Safeguarding Children Board

Date to be reviewed: September 2008

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## Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation

### 1. Introduction

Exploitation of children abused through prostitution is not a new phenomenon. However, over recent years there has been increasing awareness of the extent and scale of abuse of children and young people who are sexually exploited. The problem falls into three key areas:

- Abuse through prostitution, both on the street and hidden forms of prostitution (family exploitation)
- Abuse through involvement in pornography, given added impetus by the development of new and sophisticated technology based on networks such as the internet, datelines and chatlines
- The trafficking of children and young people to and through the UK for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation

<b>Children abused through sexual exploitation face:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Murder</li><li>• Violence</li><li>• Rape</li><li>• Sexual Assault</li><li>• Pornography</li><li>• Mental and physical coercion</li></ul>	<b>They are also at risk of:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contracting sexually transmitted diseases</li><li>• Becoming deprived of education</li><li>• Becoming drug dependent</li><li>• Estrangement from families</li><li>• Pregnancy</li><li>• Mental health problems</li><li>• Social Exclusion</li></ul>
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For the purposes of this procedure children and young people are aged up to 18 years and 21 years in cases involving young people for whom the Local Authority has after care responsibility.

This procedure is in accordance with:

The Children Act 1989

Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution, Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2000

Sexual Offences Act 2003

Children Act 2004

Warrington Child Protection Procedures.

## 2. AIMS OF THIS PROCEDURE

The purpose of this procedure is primarily to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people abused, or at risk of abuse, through sexual exploitation and is recommended for all statutory and non-statutory organisations in Warrington which provide services to children and young people.

The procedure is designed to enable agencies to work together within established child protection policies and procedures to:

- *Recognise the problem and develop strategies for prevention*
- *Treat the child primarily as a victim of abuse*
- *Safeguard children from harm and promote their well-being*
- *Work together to provide children and young people with strategies and support to exit from exploitation*
- *Investigate, prosecute and rehabilitate those who coerce, exploit and abuse children*
- *Conduct child protection investigations into individuals who abuse children*

## 3. DEFINITIONS

### 3.1 Sexual Exploitation

'The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a fundamental violation of children's rights. It comprises sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons. The child is treated as a sexual object and as a commercial object. The commercial sexual exploitation of children constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children and amounts to forced labour and a contemporary form of slavery'. (*World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Stockholm 1996)*).

### **3.2 Prostitution**

Prostitution is defined as a sexual act in return for money or goods which may be in the form of drugs, accommodation etc. Prostitution in itself is not illegal but there are offences that make the selling or buying of sexual services on a street (soliciting) or in a public place illegal.

Many children who are involved in prostitution may not be soliciting or loitering on the streets but may be found in rooms hidden away from public view.

### **3.3 Production of Abusive Images, Including use of the Internet**

This relates to the production of images or materials as part of the sexual exploitation of children. It is important to remember that these are images of children being abused, often physically as well as sexually and, by its very nature, is emotionally abusive.

Exposure to pornography whether on video, photographs or the Internet can be part of grooming children for sexual abuse and is, in itself regarded as abusive. Video and picture 'phones have also been identified as being involved in the abuse of children.

### **3.4 Chatrooms**

The Internet can also be used to make contact with and groom children. The anonymity of the Internet allows adults, often pretending to be children, to have conversations, establish 'relationships' and sometimes arrange to meet children.

### **3.5 Trafficking**

'Trafficking' is the transporting of people from one country to another, usually for economic gain. There is evidence that this is happening on a large scale as part of organised crime. The trafficking of women and children is often associated with sexual exploitation. The trade exploits poverty and vulnerability with 'traders' often promising legitimate work and England and other European countries.

Women and children are also being moved around the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Children from Asylum Seeking backgrounds may be particularly vulnerable.

#### 4. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 Children are protected by a comprehensive framework of powers and responsibilities set out in the **Children Act 1989**, its associated regulations and inter-agency guidance, **Working Together to Safeguard Children; the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families; The Children Act 2004**, together with the **Sexual Offences Act 2003**.
- 4.2 Paragraph 5.6 of **Working Together to Safeguard Children** makes it clear that 'if somebody believes that a child may be suffering, or may be at risk of suffering significant harm, s/he should *always* refer concerns to the Local Authority Children's Social Care'.
- 4.3 **Working Together to Safeguard Children** provides guidance on the *sharing of information*. Paragraph 7.27 states 'research and experience have shown repeatedly that keeping children safe from harm requires professionals and others to share information..'
- 4.4 Paragraph 7.32 states 'personal information about a child held by professionals and agencies is subject to a legal duty of confidence and should not normally be disclosed without the consent of the subject. However, the law permits disclosure of confidential information necessary to safeguard children. Disclosure should be justifiable in each case and legal advice should be sought in cases of any doubt.
- 4.5 Paragraph 7.33 states 'Children are entitled to the same duty of confidence as adults, provided that in the case of those under 16, they have the ability to understand the choices and their consequences relating to any treatment. In exceptional circumstances, it may be believed that a child seeking advice, for example on sexual matters, is being exploited or abused. In such cases, confidentiality may be breached, following discussion with the child'.
- 4.6 The Sexual Offences Act 2003 (sections 45-60) addresses the issue of sexual exploitation of children through prostitution, pornography, trafficking and grooming. Section 74 defines consent as 'a person consents if he agrees by choice and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice' making clear that submission is not consent. Sections 5 -8 provide for a number of offences specifically designed

to protect children under 13 and make clear that sexual activity with a child under 13 is never acceptable.

## **5. WHY DO CHILDREN BECOME INVOLVED?**

- 5.1 The most common issues are vulnerability and low self-esteem. These may result from a multitude of factors, including difficult or abusive childhood experiences or educational under achievement linked to wider problems of poverty, family conflict and breakdown, domestic violence and homelessness. Other factors may include pressure from peers or others (including family members) or drug/alcohol use. Absence from school frequently or for protracted periods, through truancy or exclusion, may make children especially vulnerable.
- 5.2 Vulnerability is identified and targeted by coercers, whether a child is living with their own family, looked after away from home or has run away. Young people who run away from home are recognised as being much more likely to be involved in sexual exploitation. Children are coerced, enticed or are desperate, it is not a free economic or moral choice. Sexual exploitation takes away childhood and exposes the child/young person to great danger.
- 5.3 Young people may be physically and emotionally dependent upon the coercer despite the violence endured, for the sake of 'love'. Although the young person may claim to be acting voluntarily, in reality this is not voluntary or consenting behaviour. When working with young people, all agencies must recognise the strength of this attachment and the time and difficulty there may be in breaking it and helping the young person to attach to appropriate adults.

## **6. IDENTIFYING CHILDREN WHO MAY BE INVOLVED OR AT RISK FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

- 6.1 **A parent or carer** may become aware of and concerned about a child's relationship with an older person and/or frequent absences from home/school. These concerns should always be taken seriously and the possibility considered that this pattern of behaviour could be part of a grooming process.
- 6.2 **Staff working in residential settings** may become aware that children are being picked up regularly by unauthorised people in cars or that individuals are loitering outside the establishment to meet

children. These people and events should always be reported to a senior manager responsible and to the Police.

**6.3 The Police** may have concerns about a child/young person during the course of investigations for example drug related offences, or in the execution of search warrants. In these circumstances, the Police should be aware of the need to take immediate steps to safeguard the child if necessary and to initiate these procedures.

**6.4 Health** professionals have an important role to play in identifying children who may be at risk, for example those who have relevant physical symptoms, eg sexually transmitted infections or who may seek advice regarding contraception or termination of pregnancy. Professionals working in genito-urinary medicine, sexual health and pregnancy advisory services must be vigilant to possible sexual exploitation and proactive when treating children, where necessary, working within ACPC procedures.

Professionals in **CAMHS** are also likely to identify instances where a child is being abused or is at risk of sexual exploitation. For health professionals in all these services it will be important always to make an holistic assessment of the needs of the child and to consult with Children's Services where necessary.

**6.5 Youth workers and teachers** can often identify children who are at risk because they are not receiving appropriate care within their families. Children may become isolated from their peers, which can lead to truancy and subsequently to sexual exploitation. These children are likely to be recognised as vulnerable by abusers or coercers. Teachers may become aware of older 'boyfriends' who collect girls from schools or of adult males who befriend boys. In these circumstances, they have a duty to report their concerns to the designated person for child protection in school. (*Safeguarding Children involved in prostitution: May 2000: p.17*)

**6.6 BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS** -Early intervention and good interagency working are the keys to preventing young people from becoming involved in sexual exploitation or achieving a successful early exit. It is important to be aware of the behaviour that might indicate a young person is engaged in or at risk of sexual exploitation in that appropriate action can be taken. These behaviours include:

- The acquisition of money, clothes, jewellery or goods that the young person can't account for

- Missing, especially overnight
- Truancing from school
- Collected from home/school in unknown cars
- Having an older boyfriend/girlfriend
- Having a 'relationship' with an older man/woman
- Abusive/controlling adult
- Isolation from friends
- Bruises, bites, cigarette and rope burns
- Being threatened or physically assaulted by an adult
- Concerns about sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy
- A young person using or obtaining large quantity of contraceptives
- Self-harming
- Drug/alcohol use (including 'date rape' drugs)
- Secretive use of the Internet
- Secretive use of mobile phone/landline
- Seen in risky areas/with risky peers or adults
- Sexually transmitted infections

## 7. PRINCIPLES OF INTERVENTION

- 7.1 All children and young people must be treated as individuals and account must be taken of their race, religion, culture, language, gender, sexuality and ability.
- 7.2 All children and young people under eighteen years old who are sexually exploited should be treated as 'victims' of abuse and will be regarded as children in need. It must be born in mind that the child's view might be very different from that of professionals and different again from the view of society at large:

### **Child's View**

Girl  
Boyfriend  
His friend

### **Society's View**

Prostitute  
Pimp  
Punter

### **Reality**

Abused child  
Abusing adult  
Child Sex Offender

This difference in perception can make it very difficult for professionals working with young people to persuade them that they

are victims of abuse and in need of services. Whilst being sensitive to the young person's wishes and feelings, it is important that it is made clear that if the young person is considered to be at risk concerns must be referred to the statutory agencies to ensure they are supported and protected. Assurances of confidentiality must not be given.

- 7.3 The criminal process will be directed at those who procure, control and facilitate the sexual exploitation of children. It may include considering prosecuting a young person who is procuring other children (also refer to Warrington ACPC Procedures for the Management of Children and Young People who Sexually Abuse other Children). The criminal process is subordinate to action that may be necessary to safeguard the child.
- 7.4 The focus of intervention with a young person should be on supporting them to disengage from the sexual exploitation.

## **PART TWO - (PROCEDURES)**

### **8. KEY STAGES IN RESPONDING TO CONCERNS**

- 8.1 Any professional who identifies concern that a child may be involved in sexual exploitation has a responsibility to act to ensure that:
- The young person is adequately safeguarded
  - The young person is provided with appropriate services/support as a child in need
  - Appropriate action is taken regarding the coercers behaviour
- 8.2 Professional/voluntary workers who identify concern that a child may be involved in sexual exploitation have a responsibility to ensure that they follow their agency's procedures in seeking advice from a senior manager/designated person with responsibility for child protection. (Also refer to Dept of Health publication - What to do if you're worried a child is being abused).
- 8.3 Where a decision is made to make a referral, the Warrington Community Services Service Reception Team should be contacted (page 13). The Service Reception Team will transfer the referral to the appropriate social work team so that an initial/core assessment can be completed.
- 8.4 Children's Services will inform the Police of circumstances where it is suspected or known that a young person is involved in sexual exploitation.
- 8.5 Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a young person is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm the Social Worker/Police Officer will initiate a Strategy Discussion within the same working day. This may take place at a meeting or by other means (e.g. by telephone).
- 8.6 The Strategy Discussion will include staff from Children's Services, the Police, the referring agency and other agencies as appropriate. Family members will not be invited.
- 8.7 A decision to be made in conjunction with the Safeguarding Children's Unit as to whether, in exceptional circumstances, a Child Protection conference should be convened.

- 8.8 Parents should usually be informed of the concerns at an early point, unless there is an indication they are complicit in the abuse, or to do so would place the child at risk of significant harm. The decision to involve parents and what information should be shared with them will be decided at the Strategy Meeting.
- 8.9 The purpose of the Strategy Meeting is to:
- Share available information about the concerns and about the child and family, including issues in relation to race, ethnicity or other special needs of the child, including whether the services of an interpreter or other specialist workers are necessary
  - Determine whether the child/young person is suffering or is at risk of significant harm and whether ACPC procedures should apply
  - Consider the needs of other children who may be affected
  - Plan how enquiries should be handled and by which agency, what further information is needed and how it should be obtained; who should be interviewed and by whom, for what purpose and when, or whether medical examination or treatment is needed
  - Agree what action is needed immediately to safeguard the child/young person and/or provide interim services and support
- 8.10 The Strategy Meeting will be recorded. Responsibility for completion of the documentation and circulation to all participants will be decided at individual Strategy Meetings (Appendix 1). Further meetings may be needed to monitor and review the outcome. Where no follow-up meeting is arranged, outcomes of actions identified, or reasons why these have not been completed, should be confirmed, within an agreed timescale, to the person designated at the Strategy Meeting.
- 8.11 Children's Services should inform those agencies working directly with the young person of any decision that may have a significant impact on the young person

## **PART THREE**

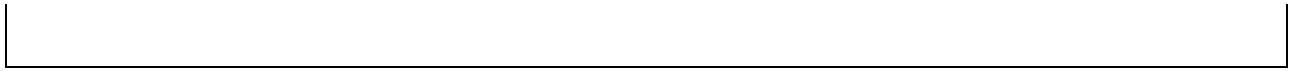
### **9. Development Work**

9.1 Key agencies, for example Health, Children's Services, Youth Services to identify systems within their own agencies and also, if necessary, set up an inter-agency working group to ensure that:

- Information is shared and collated to determine the extent of sexual exploitation of children and young people in Warrington and Halton. This would include liaising with agencies in Manchester and Liverpool, particularly Safe in the City and Barnardo's).
- Support systems are established and promoted to children, young people and their parents/carers
- Awareness in parents/carers and young people of the potential dangers of sexual exploitation is promoted through the website and leaflets

9.3 Professionals from statutory agencies and workers from voluntary agencies continue to receive training on awareness raising, developing skills and competence in working with young people who are involved in sexual exploitation and promote Warrington Safeguarding Children Board policy and procedures.





REASON FOR AND PURPOSE OF STRATEGY DISCUSSION/MEETING

DECISION(s) (Please circle)

S47 Enquiry	YES	NO	
Police to be involved	YES	NO	
Arrange a formal Investigative Planning Meeting		DATE / TIME	_____
Core Assessment and Provision of Services	YES	NO	
Referral to other Agency	YES	NO	
No further action	YES	NO	
Other (please specify)			

REASON(s) FOR DECISION(s)

--

FURTHER ACTIONS

Medical Examination required?	YES	NO	
If yes, when will this take place?		DATE / TIME	_____
Name of Medical Examiner:	_____		
Immediate child protection required?	YES	NO	Police Protection Order Emergency Protection Order
Is a further strategy discussion required?	YES	NO	
If yes, when will this take place?		DATE / TIME	_____

FURTHER ACTIONS (include any further actions required, by whom and within what time scales).

Action(s) to be taken	Person/Agency responsible	Date for completion

Name and Signature of Social Worker: _____	Date: _____
Name and Signature of Team Manager: _____	Date: _____

## **10. KEY CONTACTS & SUPPORT AGENCIES**

**Cheshire Police Referral Unit: 01244 614856**

**Warrington Borough Council:**

**Community Services Service Reception Team: 01925 444239**

**Children's Safeguarding Unit: 01925 4447013**

**Talk, Don't Walk (Warrington Runaways Project: 01925 246910**  
**(Freephone number) 0800 0852136**

**Unit M10**

**The Gateway**

**Warrington**

**WA4 1SR**

**Barnardos Merseyside Scheme: 0151 228 0903**

**Safe in the City (Manchester): 0161 275 9083**

**(Freephone Helpline for Young People): 0800 3899344**

## REFERENCES

**Children Act 1989**

**Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution – supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children**

*Dept of Health (2000)*

[www.doh.gov.uk](http://www.doh.gov.uk)

**Children Act 2004**

[www.doh.gov.uk](http://www.doh.gov.uk)

**What to Do If You're Worried a Child is Being Abused (2003)**

[www.doh.gov.uk](http://www.doh.gov.uk)

**Sex Offences Act 2003**

[www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

**Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation**

*Nottingham City Area Child Protection Committee*

[www.nottingham.gov.uk](http://www.nottingham.gov.uk)

**Children Abused Through Prostitution**

*Inter-agency policy for ACPC's of Cheshire, Halton & Warrington (June 2002)*

[www.halton.gov.uk](http://www.halton.gov.uk)

[www.warrington.gov.uk](http://www.warrington.gov.uk)

**Safeguarding Children Abused through Prostitution and Sexual Exploitation**

*Merseyside Wide ACPC Procedures (March 2004)*

**The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Young People: An Overview of key literature and data**

*Thomas Coram Research Unit*

[www.ioe.ac.uk/tcru](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/tcru)