Responding to Child Exploitation Procedure

# Professional Initial Response to a Victim of Child Exploitation

Child Exploitation, whether Sexual, Criminal, or Modern Day Slavery, is Child Abuse and should be responded to as such. Professionals should develop and implement strategies with the child and their family to address their needs and help them move on from the exploitative situation. This could include:

* Help with drug use;
* Assisting with returning or engaging with education or employment;
* Securing appropriate health services;
* Pursuing leisure activities;
* Developing positive networks of friends and relatives;
* Emotional support including understanding of self-identity and coping strategies;
* Planning for relapse prevention.

This may mean completing an Early Help Assessment or referring to Children’s Services when appropriate.

# Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Screening Tool

In the event of an agency or individual having concerns that exploitation is taking place, the level, nature and extent of these concerns should be established. This should be done using the [**LSCP Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Screening Tool**](https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/safeguarding/lscp/8) and accompanying guidance. The tool helps to gather the information required to make a decision about risk and vulnerability. The screening tool can be completed in relation to a child being exploited or a person or location of concern.

Screening Tool: Concerns about a Child Being Exploited

It is best practice to complete the form with the child or young person unless it is unsafe to do so. The screening tool is for use with children up to the age of 18 (up to and including those aged 24 years with additional needs) irrespective of whether they are living independently, at home, with carers or in a residential setting. It can be used with Care Leavers up to the age of 21(or 24 if in full time education).

All agencies and practitioners must be aware that a child under the age of 13 years old and/or any child with significant learning disabilities cannot be considered to be at low risk. There is also local evidence that Looked After children and adopted children, as well as those with a diagnosis of ADHD, Autism and/or ASD can be particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Care also needs to be taken when working with children who are experiencing emotional distress and trauma.

Where screening identifies vulnerabilities or other factors that could be increasing risk, the first step should be to consider how these might be addressed through early help or existing work/interventions with the child, family, peer group, or school setting. Early intervention to reduce vulnerability factors for children and young people should also be considered: this should include life mapping and referrals for psychological support where applicable.

Screening Tool: Person of Concern

If concerned about a person being involved in the exploitation of others, the screening tool should be completed. Whilst not all details may be known, the screening tool should still be completed as it may offer further information for a person already known.

Screening Tool: Location of Concern

When children experience abuse and violence, it is often associated with locations outside the home, such as a park, street, stairwell, business etc.  It is therefore important that locations and neighbourhoods feature within the process of assessment and intervention in order for disruption to take place in these locations. These areas of concern are identified through the screening tool.

# Multi-agency Child Exploitation Meeting (MACE)

It is the role of MACE to draw together information from screening tools and other information and intelligence to explore what options are available to disrupt exploitation in the community.

Cases should be referred to MACE if screening or other intelligence identifies that:

* The child has links to a known or suspected perpetrator of exploitation; or
* There is a risk of exploitation to the child from an unknown perpetrator; or
* An area of concerns needs plans for disruption.

If it is decided to share this information at MACE the submitter of the screening tool is required to inform the child and family/carers.

The completion of a screening tool and/or a referral to MACE does not replace statutory safeguarding duties under Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

If a child is believed to be at immediate risk of exploitation, safeguarding action should be taken. Refer directly to the Children's Services Customer Service Centre on 01522 782111. If there are immediate risks to the child/young person's safety, then this must be reported without delay to the Police. For emergencies use 999. For non-urgent reporting use 101.

If professional judgement identifies a significant risk of exploitation then it is likely that there will be serious or complex needs or Child Protection concerns requiring an immediate referral to Children's Services (see [**Safeguarding Referrals Procedure**](https://lincolnshirescb.proceduresonline.com/p_refer_proce.html)). Children's Services must hold a Strategy Discussion whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer Significant Harm whether or not it appears that a criminal offence against a child has been committed.

This may be following a referral and the completion of a Child and Family Assessment, or at any time where a child is receiving support services and concerns about Significant Harm to the child emerge. If there is any doubt about whether Section 47 applies, agencies should steer on the side of caution and hold a Strategy Discussion meeting.

# Partnership Information Report – Operation Insignia

"Information sharing is an essential way in which organisations can bring together knowledge to support vulnerable people and tackle offenders of abuse. The Partnership Information Report (Operation Insignia) in Lincolnshire is a simple and straightforward way in which agencies can submit this information to the Police. While it may not appear significant enough to ring 101 or 999, the information can be extremely valuable, be that about a location a person is at, their lifestyle changes, or associates and contact they have. This information is submitted into the Police intelligence system and can form part of a larger picture of vulnerability and exploitation (both criminal and sexual), County Lines, human trafficking or modern day slavery. Submitting the information can make a real difference."

Types of information to share:

* Sightings of individuals (children and adults, victims or offenders) with other high risk individuals;
* Places and premises visited by those at risk– especially those locations which are thought to be linked to criminality or arouse your suspicion due to the number of vulnerable people visiting or other persons associated to it;
* Vehicles that appear suspicious which children hang around or get into;
* Telephone numbers used by high risk individuals – victims or offenders;
* Disclosures from vulnerable persons.

Operation Insignia should not be used for routine crime reporting. This is for intelligence purposes only as there can be a delay in processing the information. 101 or 999 should be used to report all crimes even the ones where the young person is not supporting an investigation.

All information should be kept where possible brief and to the point as this enables the intelligence to be processed more effectively.

On receipt, the information will be graded by Lincolnshire police based on its reliability, accuracy and where it has come from.

Please submit the form by clicking on the following link: [**LSCP Partnership Information Report**](https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/safeguarding/lscp/8?documentId=258&categoryId=20076).