



**Wigan Safeguarding Children Board  
Joint Working Protocol  
'Safeguarding Children and Young People who are at risk  
from Sexual Exploitation'  
Including Wigan Shield Partnership Protocol and Procedures**

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This Wigan Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) Joint Working Protocol covers Children and Young People who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation by adults or older young people.

## **Aims**

It is the intention of WSCB that this Joint Working Protocol helps all those who work with children and young people and the wider community within the Wigan Borough, to rise to the particular challenge of identifying those who are at risk through sexual exploitation, taking measures to protect them and action against the perpetrators. This will enable the WSCB to meet its objective that all children and young people within the Wigan Borough are safeguarded from sexual exploitation.

This Joint Working Protocol reinforces that children/young people who are sexually exploited should be treated as victims of child abuse. It is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people where there are concerns that they are at risk of abuse through sexual exploitation. Whilst encouraging the investigation and prosecution of those who perpetrate this form of abuse.

## **Definition**

‘Sexual exploitation of children and young people takes different forms, from young people being involved in sexually exploitative relationships and receiving money, drugs or accommodation in exchange for sex with one or more adults, to being exploited in more ‘formal’ prostitution. In all cases those exploiting the young people have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, physical strength, or economic or other resources, such as access to drugs. While some element of coercion is common, the involvement in exploitative relationships is most significantly characterised by the lack of choices for, borne out of the social, emotional and economic vulnerability of the young person.’  
Effective Work with Sexually Exploited Children and Young People –  
Barnardo’s 2008

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) for the purpose of this protocol includes:

- abuse through exchange of sexual activity for some form of payment.
- abuse through the production of indecent images and/or any other indecent material involving children whether photographs, films or other technologies.
- abuse through grooming whether via direct contact or the use of technologies such as mobile phones and the internet.
- abuse through trafficking for sexual purposes.

The guidance applies to male and female children/young people up to the age of 18 years old, irrespective of whether they are living independently, at home, with carers or a residential setting.

Most people under the age of 18 will have an interest in sex and sexual relationships. When a professional working with a young person under the age of 16 becomes aware that the young person is engaged in sexual activity, clear procedures should be in place to assist accurate assessment of the risk of significant harm in order to protect the welfare of the child or young person. As a minimum the professional should take advice from the nominated safeguarding professional within their organisation. Young people should not routinely be referred to CYPS but the following guidelines should be followed.

All young people, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, who are involved in sexual activity, must have their needs for health, education, support and/or protection assessed by the agency involved. In order to determine if the relationship presents a risk to the young person, the following factors, which are not exhaustive, may need to be considered:

- the age of the young person – sexual activity at a young age is a very strong indicator of risks to the welfare of the young person (boy or girl) and, possibly, others;
- whether the young person is competent to understand and consent to the sexual activity in which he or she is involved;
- whether the young person's own behaviour, for example, through misuse of substances, including alcohol, places them in a position where they are unable to make an informed choice about the activity ;

It is considered good practice for workers to follow the Fraser guidelines when discussing personal or sexual matters with a young person under 16. The Fraser guidelines give guidance on providing advice and treatment to young people under 16 years of age. These hold that sexual health services can be offered without parental consent providing that:

- the young person understands the advice that is being given;
- the young person cannot be persuaded to inform or seek support from their parents and will not allow the worker to inform the parents that contraception/protection, for example, condom advice, is being given;
- the young person is likely to begin or continue to have sex without the provision of contraception or protection by a barrier method such as a condom;
- it is in the young person's best interests to receive contraceptive/safe sex advice and treatment without parental consent and the young person's physical or mental health is likely to suffer unless he or she receives contraceptive advice or treatment.

In working with young people, it must always be made clear to them that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and that there will be some circumstances where the needs and best interests of the young person can only be safeguarded by sharing information with others.

Child sexual exploitation is not under age peer sexual relationships and in the event of this situation it should be dealt within the child protection arena.

## **Information Sharing**

Professionals can only work together to safeguard children if there is an exchange of relevant information between them. Whenever possible, consent should be obtained before sharing personal information with third parties. However, in some circumstances, consent may not be possible or appropriate but the safety of a child may dictate the information must be shared. (Safeguarding Children: Working Together under the Children Act 2004).

The duty of confidentiality is not absolute. Where a professional believes that there is a risk to the health, safety or welfare of a child, young person or others, which is serious enough to outweigh the young persons' right to privacy, they should follow Wigan Safeguarding Board Procedures, CYPS Child Protection Procedures and information sharing protocol.

Any disclosure or decision not to disclose must be justified according to the particular facts of the case and documented accordingly. Advice should be sought in cases of doubt from lead professionals in child protection within the practitioner's own agency without delay.

In relation to children at risk of, or abused through sexual exploitation, the protective network of professionals involved in strategy meetings, child in need plans and child protection plans should agree the ongoing response to risk together, enabling individuals to feel confident that information shared will be used to enable positive outcomes for the child or young person.

## **Recognition of CSE within the Wigan Borough**

Wigan Safeguarding Board is committed to tackling the issue of CSE within the Borough at both an operational and strategic level.

Agencies involved:

- Children and Young Peoples Services
- Police
- Education
- Health Economy Services (substance misuse, Brook, CAMHS, school nurses, specialist nurses, GUM clinics, GPs, Accident and Emergency etc).
- Youth Offending Service
- Probation Service
- Voluntary Sector and Community groups
- UK Border Agency (UKBA)

Each agency should identify a Lead Officer for child sexual exploitation. In addition, each team, residential unit, school or service should identify a Lead Practitioner or Lead Manager for CSE. These lead individuals should have, or develop, a level of expertise in relation to CSE. They should be able to advise within their agency on identifying and referring a child/young person at risk of CSE. They should be invited to attend Multi Agency meetings held under this Joint Working Protocol.

## **Operational level – Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Meetings (MASE)**

These are monthly meetings attended by the appropriate leads from the agencies listed above. Such meetings will discuss any concerns that professionals have regarding a child/young person. There is also a secure 'AGMA teamsite' via which attendees can share information which aids the format of the monthly meetings.

As a practitioner it is your responsibility to identify the Lead CSE professional within your agency and discuss your concerns with them. If appropriate a MASE Referral Form should be completed and this information should be presented at the next MASE meeting by the referrer. As the initial referrer you will be invited to attend the meeting to present the referral and discuss the concerns. Failure to do this will mean that the case will be deferred to the next meeting.

The purpose of a MASE Meeting is to decide jointly if the concerns on a child/young person to jointly identify an action plan, which may include where appropriate a professional referral to CYPS Social Care Duty Team.

This protocol acknowledges that developing the necessary trust and relationship to work alongside a child/young person in assisting them to exit sexual exploitation can take considerable time. Many of these children/young people may already have a number of professionals in their life and consideration should be given who would be best placed to undertake this work. If it is agreed that a professional outside of the Shield Team will complete this work then the Barnardo's workers from Shield will offer a constancy service to that identified professional providing expertise within CSE and appropriate resources.

In addition, MASE Meetings will share information which will help in identifying 'hotspot' geographical areas, discuss strategies for disruption and support the ongoing work within the Shield Team.

- **Wigan Shield Team**

The strategic objective of the **Wigan 'Shield Team' initiative** is to support the work of the Wigan Safeguarding Children Board in ensuring that all agencies work together to safeguard and promote the safety and welfare of children/young people up to 18 years old. 'Shield' is a strategic partnership between Wigan Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), Greater Manchester Police – Wigan Division, The Brook – Wigan and Leigh and Barnardo's – Safer Futures Liverpool.

In addition the Shield initiative is to increase the awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) within Wigan through specialised WSCB Training that will be delivered to professionals, parents and young people across the borough on a regular basis.

- **Wigan YOT and YISP**

**Wigan Youth Offending Team (YOT) and Youth Inclusion and Support Programme (YISP)** may be able to offer interventions specifically to children / young people who are sexually exploiting others.

The Youth Offending Team (YOT) is a multi-agency service comprised of staff from Social Care, Education, Health, Probation and Police. The YOT is responsible for coordinating the provision of youth justice services for young people aged 10-18 and their families. This includes, for example, assessment and intervention with young people on final warnings, bail support programmes, community sentences and Detention and Training Orders.

The Youth Inclusion and Support Programme (YISP) is a voluntary intervention of approximately 3-6 months duration aimed at preventing children and young people from becoming involved in anti-social and offending behaviour in the community. YISP is available for young people aged 8-18.

Young people involved with either YOT and YISP may present at higher risk of sexual exploitation. Workers in both the YOT and YISP therefore have a key role to play in identification and referral of young people at risk. Young people known to the YOT or YISP may also be involved in sexually exploiting other children &/or young people. Practitioners in these teams would be able to undertake programmes of intervention to address this behaviour. A Manager from the YOT attends the MASE Meetings and can identify when the YISP or YOT service is appropriate to offer interventions to young people presenting sexually exploiting behaviour on either a voluntary basis, or via a Statutory Order served by the Court.

### **WSCB Sexual Exploitation & Missing from Home / Care Sub Group**

WSCB has a joint Sexual Exploitation and Missing from Home / Care Sub Group, which provides the governance framework to the implementation of this Joint Working Protocol. Close links are ensured for congruent working between this Sub group, the E Safety Sub Group, Lessons Learned Sub group and Training Sub Group. WSCB should ensure that the WSCB Training includes information about how to identify the warning signs of, and vulnerabilities to sexual exploitation, covering all elements of the WSCB Sexual Exploitation Procedure.

This Sub Group operates at a strategic level and has representatives from the following agencies:-

- CYPS Social Care
- CYPS Safeguarding Unit
- Ashton Leigh and Wigan PCT
- Greater Manchester Police – Wigan Division
- CYPS – Child Support Team (Education)
- BROOK
- Barnados
- Action For Children (AFC)
- UK Border Agency (UKBA)

These meetings are currently held monthly and monitor the level of CSE across the Wigan Borough. This will involve monitoring/evaluating geographical areas in respects to CSE and perpetrators in identifying 'hotspots' within the Borough. Using this data the sub group members will jointly agree how to take forward the CSE agenda across the Borough, informing the Children's Trust, within the WSCB Annual Report as to the level of need for service delivery and commissioning to address concerns about safeguarding children and young people sexual exploitation.

In addition these meetings will monitor and evaluate the progress of the Multi Agency Shield Team in relation to CSE across the Wigan Borough.

WSCB must involve all members and communicate wider audiences including the voluntary and community sectors, Multi Agency Protection Panel Arrangements (MAPPA), other local partnerships e.g. Domestic Violence Partnership, Building Stronger Communities Partnership Violent Crime delivery Group, Teenage Pregnancy Steering Group and YOT Management Board as to how to address sexual exploitation.

WSCB has a key function in communicating and raising awareness regarding sexual exploitation including: -

- Awareness raising activities focused on young people
- Publicity for sources of help for victims
- How and where to report concerns about victims and offenders
- General public awareness safeguarding campaigns.

## **Principles**

All children/young people who have been or are involved in sexual exploitation are sexually, physically and emotionally at risk, both in the short and long term.

These children/young people do not make informed choices to enter or remain in sexual exploitation, but do so from coercion, enticement, manipulation or desperation, because they can see no alternative. In law children under the age of sixteen years old cannot consent to sexual activity, whether "voluntary" or not and that they should be treated as victims of abuse.

In order to successfully protect sexually exploited children/young people there must be a robust multi agency approach to the identification of risk, intervention, planning and prosecution. This is a multi agency document that is underpinned by a multi agency commitment responding to sexually exploited children/young people through co-ordinated inter-agency work.

All sexually exploited children and young people are deemed as children in need and require safeguarding. However, the use of formal Child Protection Procedures will not be appropriate, unless:

- the child/young person is at immediate risk of significant harm and has other additional vulnerabilities.
- there is concern that the sexual exploitation is being facilitated by the child's parent/carer.

- there is concern that the sexual exploitation is facilitated by the child's parent failing to protect.
- there is a concern that a related or unrelated adult in a position of trust or responsibility to the child is organising or encouraging the sexual exploitation.

The younger the child, the more likely it is that the use of Child Protection Procedures will be appropriate.

### **Vulnerabilities/Risk Factors**

Barnardo's research has found that the following factors make a young person vulnerable to sexual exploitation; these can be historical or current. They are sometimes referred to as 'PUSH' factors

- Physical and Sexual abuse
- Neglect and Emotional abuse
- Domestic Violence
- Children of parents with a high level of vulnerabilities (drug/alcohol, mental health)
- Family breakdown/disrupted family life
- Problematic parenting – deficits in parenting capacity

#### Immediate risk factors/indicators

- Missing episodes, especially overnight
- Unexplained Income, gifts or jewellery
- Secretive behaviours including the use of mobile phones and the internet
- Isolation from family/carers/peers
- Disengaging from school
- Substance misuse
- Physical symptoms e.g. sexually transmitted infections, miscarriage, abortion, bruising or marks indicating physical or sexual assault.
- Being in care/placement breakdown
- Inappropriate relationships e.g. older males, females/peers
- Expressions of despair (self harm, overdose, eating disorder, challenging behaviour).
- The need for attention
- Associating with other young people known to be victims of exploitation.
- Engaging in criminal activity
- Being bullied
- Unsuitable/inappropriate accommodation
- Lack of positive relationships with a protective/nurturing adult
- Being collected from home or schools in unknown cars or by unknown individuals
- Living independently and failing to respond to attempts by worker to keep in touch.

Abusive adults will seek out children and young people who are perceived as being vulnerable. These adults will use grooming techniques to gain the child's/young person's attention, trust, admiration and affection. These can be referred as the PULL factors as they often feed into the child/young person's insecurities or the desire for acceptance and status. The PULL factors include:

- Being liked by someone older
- Being liked enough that a stranger ask them for their number
- Meeting someone who thinks they are special on the internet
- Receiving alcohol, drugs, money and gifts
- The excitement of doing something risky or forbidden
- Being offered somewhere to stay with no rules
- Being taken to red light or gay cruising areas
- Being given lifts, taken to new places and having adventures with a casual acquaintance

## **Wigan Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Procedure**

### **Referrals**

#### **▪ To MASE Meeting**

All CSE referrals should be referred to the MASE meetings; unless concerns are WSCB level 4 threshold of need (see below). Your concerns should first be discussed with the Lead for CSE within your agency and a MASE referral form to be completed. The MASE referral form can be found at <http://www.wiganlscb.com/Shieldteam.asp>

#### **▪ To Social Care**

However, if there is a case where the concerns are regarding child protection and compromised parenting, at WSCB Level 4 threshold of need, a Social Care Professional Referral Form should be completed and passed to Social Care. The WSCB threshold of need can be found at

<http://www.wiganlscb.com/downloads/Threshold%20Leaflet%20WSCB.pdf>

The WSCB Professional Referral Form can be found at

<http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/HealthSocialCare/ChildProtection/WSCB/ProfessionalReferralForm.htm>

### **Procedure**

Referrals to MASE re: CSE concerns will be taken by the CSE Lead from your agency to the MASE meeting. A discussion of the concerns will be held and a joint decision will be made in respects of the CSE concerns in conjunction with WSCB levels of thresholds of need.

### **Referrals to appropriate Services identified through MASE:**

The action plan agreed at the MASE meeting will identify the most appropriate service/s to work with the child/young person. The initial refer will complete the appropriate referral form to enable the young person to access the identified service/s.

If you are given an action to take forward this needs to be completed within one month. If this action is not completed within one month then the relevant services manager will be informed. Should the action not be completed one month after that then the agencies representative on the Wigan Safeguarding Board will be notified of this through the executive sub group.

### **Escalation of CSE Concerns:**

Any agency that is working directly with a child/young person who has further CSE concerns should refer back into the MASE meetings.

**Further Details on the Shield Team and this Joint Working Protocol can be found on [www.wiganlscb.com/shieldteam](http://www.wiganlscb.com/shieldteam)**

### **References:**

- Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (2009) London: DCSF – supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) London : DCSF

**Both of these documents can be downloaded from the WSCB website [http://www.wiganlscb.com/useful\\_links.asp](http://www.wiganlscb.com/useful_links.asp)**