



# Child sexual exploitation

**Definition & Guide for Professionals:**

## **Acknowledgements**

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# 1. Introduction

This work was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) and is the extended text from which the DfE document *Child Sexual Exploitation: Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation* has been drawn. This can be viewed at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

The document outlines the new civil definition of child sexual exploitation, developed by the Home Office and DfE, together with an overview of our current understanding of the issue and an evidence-informed set of principles for responding. This extended version of the guide<sup>1</sup> with further background information about child sexual exploitation and offers additional commentary around some of the complexities of practically responding to the issue.

The document should be read in conjunction with [\*Working together to safeguard children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children\*](#) (hereafter referred to as *Working Together*), that provides the statutory framework for responding to child sexual exploitation and all other forms of abuse. The content of this document does not in any way supersede the statutory provisions of *Working Together*, but rather considers some of the nuances and challenges of applying its requirements and principles to this particular form of abuse.

This extended version of the guide draws on the existing evidence base to identify issues that have proved challenging to address in practice and to draw out lessons learnt -by- addressing child sexual exploitation, but instead provides a high-level framework for building a locally informed enhanced response that concurrently addresses prevention,

Although the document focuses on child sexual exploitation, many of the principles outlined herein hold relevance for responding to other forms of exploitation, abuse and vulnerability in adolescence and readers are encouraged to consider the interconnectedness of these issues and the transferability of learning between them.

## 1.1 Who is this publication for?

Whilst local authorities play a lead role, safeguarding children and young people is

local strategic partnership. Annex A provides an overview of the strategic framework that is required to support effective practice, whilst section 5 outlines the core principles of effective practice that all professionals should follow.



copying videos or images they have created and posting on social media, for example).

Can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults. The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse.

Is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the abuse. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, intellect, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2 Distinguishing features of child sexual exploitation

The key factor that distinguishes cases of child sexual exploitation from other forms of child sexual abuse is the **presence of some form of exchange**, for the victim and/or perpetrator or facilitator.<sup>7</sup>

**If someone takes advantage of an imbalance of power to get a child/young person to engage in sexual activity, it is child sexual exploitation if:**

**(1) The child/young person receives, or believes they will receive, something they need or want (tangible or intangible gain or the avoidance of harm) in exchange for the sexual activity.<sup>8</sup>**

**AND/OR**

**(2) The perpetrator/facilitator gains financial advantage or enhanced status from the abuse.**

Where it is the victim who is offered, promised or given something they need or want, the exchange can include both tangible (money, drugs or alcohol, for example) and intangible rewards (status, protection or perceived receipt of love or affection, for example). **It is critical to remember the unequal power dynamic within which this exchange occurs and to remember that the receipt of something by a child/young person does not make them any less of a victim.** It is also important to note that the prevention of something negative can also fulfil the requirement for exchange; for example, a child who engages in sexual activity to stop someone carrying out a threat to harm his/her family.

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<sup>6</sup> Although not explicitly cited in the sexual abuse definition, it is generally accepted that all forms of child sexual abuse are typified by some form of power imbalance.

<sup>7</sup> Although both forms of child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation.

<sup>8</sup> Whilst there can be gifts or treats involved in other forms of sexual abuse (e.g a father/mother who sexually abuses their child) but also in child sexual exploitation.



Where the gain **is only for** the perpetrator/facilitator, there must be a financial gain (money, discharge of a debt or free/discounted goods or services) or increased status as a result of the abuse for it to constitute child sexual exploitation.<sup>9</sup>

If sexual gratification, or exercise of power and control, is the only gain for the perpetrator

A 15-year-old female who views a 21-year-

### **3. The nature of child sexual exploitation**

The summary below reflects what we currently know about child sexual exploitation. Knowledge and understanding continue to develop, as new learning emerges from research, inquiries, inspections and case reviews, and it is vital that we remain open to learning about new forms and patterns of the abuse, and new ways of identifying and responding to it.

#### **3.1 The prevalence of child sexual exploitation**

The hidden nature of child sexual exploitation makes it very difficult to offer any reliable prevalence data. Children and young people rarely report their experiences of this abuse and professional identification levels vary considerably across the country. As a result, entation of what is actually going on.

ethnic communities. As a result, although we know that cases have been recorded across all ethnic groupings, the existing data does

**Figure 1: The inter-connected conditions for CSE (Beckett, 2011)**

### **3.3 Patterns of perpetration**

Knowledge about who perpetrates child sexual exploitation is partial, but growing. In terms of where the abuse occurs it tells us that:

Perpetrators are operating in all parts of the country, in cities, towns and rural areas in a range of locations including schools, neighbourhoods, parks, houses, hotels, takeaways, retail and entertainment outlets.<sup>13</sup>

Child sexual exploitation is also happening online, through a wide range of online access points including social media forums, dating websites, escort websites, chat rooms and gaming sites. In some cases the subsequent abuse occurs within these, or other, online spaces; in others, online introductions are a precursor to contact abuse. There is increasing crossover between the online and offline environments as technology continues to develop and ease of access to it increases.

In terms of who is perpetrating the abuse, the evidence indicates that:

Perpetrators operate as both sole and group offenders.  
Peer perpetration is an issue of increasing concern,<sup>15</sup> with victim/perpetrator overlap occurring within this.

### **3.4 The impact of child sexual exploitation**

The impacts of child sexual exploitation are wide-ranging, and can be profound and long-lasting. This is particularly true when victims do not receive appropriate immediate and ongoing support.

Victims can suffer from a range of health impacts including physical injuries, sexually transmitted infections and longer-term gynaecological consequences for females. They can experience emotional trauma and mental illness such as depression, self-harm, suicidal ideation, post-traumatic stress disorder and drug or alcohol problems. An experience of child sexual exploitation also impacts longer-term life chances, being associated with higher rates of youth offending, poor educational prospects, involvement in adult sex work, isolation from family and friends, negative future relationships and increased risk of other forms of violence or abuse. B0(o)-3(race)aongce

## 4. The complexities of child sexual exploitation

Professionals can find child sexual exploitation difficult to identify and respond to. Inquiries, serious case reviews and other investigations have highlighted the need for a more nuanced understanding and enhanced response to both online and offline forms of the abuse. Some of the key challenges and critical points of learning are outlined below.

### 4.1 Low levels of disclosure and engagement

Few victims of child sexual exploitation directly report their experiences of abuse, although many may signify something is wrong through their behaviours and actions, often hoping someone will ask them what is wrong.

*I was throwing hints to people an*

There can be many different reasons for these low levels of verbal disclosure by victims, including:

- not realising that what they are experiencing is abusive
- emotional ties or loyalty to the perpetrator, particularly if they believe they have some kind of relationship with the perpetrator or have been groomed into the abuse
- feelings of guilt or shame, or feeling in some way complicit in the abuse
- feeling trapped, or being threatened or blackmailed
- not knowing where to go for help
- |
- negative experiences)
- fear of being judged or not being believed
- not wanting to lose what they are gaining (money, drugs/alcohol, perceived receipt of love, affection, protection, etc) as part of the abuse
- fear of family or community reactions, including risk of forced marriage or honour-based violence for some.

Victims may be resistant to intervention for the same reasons. Some may maintain links with their abusers (online or in person) even after significant professional and family attempts to protect them. **It is important that continued contact is not misinterpreted**

deviance or defiance, rather than being recognised as potential indications of underlying vulnerability or harm.

exploitation such as secrecy, drug or alcohol use, or changes in behaviour or emotional wellbeing



## 4.4 Understanding the importance of context

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explored in section 8 and annex B, a participative partnership approach is also required with victims themselves, working with them to achieve meaningful change rather than enforced compliance.

# 5. Practice considerations



# 6. Prevention

## 6.1 Professional awareness

All professionals working with children and young people, whether in specialist or universal roles, should:

- Ensure they are aware of local protocols in relation to child sexual exploitation. Recognise learning and development around this as an essential part of their role.
- Discuss learning needs in relation to child sexual exploitation with their supervisor or manager.
- Identify and access training opportunities that reflect their professional role (annex A provides an overview of key messages that training should cover).
- Reflect on learning from training and other activity with their manager, and consider how it will impact on practice.
- Review their learning needs over time, striving to continuously improve their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Actively engage in supervision and use it as an opportunity to test out thinking, have practice constructively challenged and discuss support needs.

## 6.2 Educating children and young people

Although there is not as yet any proven blueprint for the most effective means of communicating messages around child sexual exploitation to children and young people, the evidence base highlights some important principles:

**The need for early and continuous education:** We are increasingly learning about cases of child sexual exploitation that involve younger children, particularly in the online sphere. If we do not educate children and young people about the risk of child sexual exploitation (and other forms of sexual abuse) before perpetrators approach them, we leave them unprotected. Education should start at primary school level and expand in line with increasing age and developmental understanding. It should be accompanied by wider resilience-building work that enhances protective capacity within and around the child or young person (see section 6.5 below).

**Use all potential avenues of communication:** Schools, colleges and other educational settings have a critical role to play. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons are an obvious route for educating children and young people about the risks of child sexual exploitation and other forms of harm, as are pastoral services and school nurse services. Consideration should also be given to how messages can be delivered outside mainstream education; for example, in youth clubs, community settings or the family home.

**Adopt a holistic approach:** Risk of child sexual exploitation should be addressed as part of a wider programme of work on sexuality and sexual development, choice and consent, healthy relationships, harmful social norms, abusive behaviours and online safety. This should build on existing initiatives (around online safety, for example) and ensure messages dov







# 7. Identification and assessment of need

should also remember that risk assessments only capture risk at the point of assessment and that levels of risk vary over time.

making decisions about sharing personal information; this includes the seven golden rules for sharing information effectively.

### 7.3 Assessment

Where an early help assessment is the appropriate route (see *Working Together*, 2015, page 13), it should be undertaken with the agreement of the child or young person (and their parents/carers where appropriate) and support their involvement in the process. If the child or young person (or their parents/carers if the child is not old enough or lacks capacity) does not consent to an assessment, then the lead professional should make a

ial care may be necessary.

Where child protection concerns emerge (that is, reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm) local authority social care services must make enquiries and decide if any action should be taken under section 47 of the *Children Act 1989*

Ensuring that the right children and young people receive the right help at the right time requires professionals to be skilled at identifying risk and assessing need. Professionals should draw on evidence and research as well as support from their supervisors/ managers, apply professional judgement and be supported to critically reflect on the information gathered. Above all, professionals should listen to children and young people and strive to see the world through their eyes, w0(e)-g 8lref3(. )6(A6-g 8(g)6( t))4(n)-3(d)-3/4484heir e

## 8. Working with children and young people affected by child sexual exploitation

*. [and the professional] staying strong, staying tough and going along the roller-coaster ride with the  
The worker needs to always be there to support you whenever you need*



**Understanding the perspective of the child/young person:** As highlighted previously, the complexities of child sexual exploitation can mean that children and young people do not see themselves as victims of abuse; they see themselves as being in control, have strong feelings for the perpetrator and/or feel in some way responsible for the abuse they have experienced. While not endorsing such a perspective (and in the long term helping them to reach an alternative understanding), it is vital that we try to understand how the child or young person views their situation, their complex feelings around this and how these might impact on their reaction to intervention or support. Failure to do so, or insensitive dismissal meaningful engagement and change difficult to achieve.

*What I want is staff who sit down and talk to you calmly and they don't want someone to understand why you did what you did... (Quote from youth consultation event)*

*Instead of shouting at me and saying why did you do it? letting you get your point across first, then putting their point across and about how they see it differently, instead of just saying that was wrong. (Young person cited in Warrington, 2013)*

**Engaging children and young people in decision-making processes:** Children and young people often report a loss of control when services become involved in their lives. This can inadvertently replicate the dynamics of the abuse. It is important that we take active steps to redress this by ensuring that children and young people's views inform decision-making processes and by supporting them, wherever possible, to gain more control over their lives and circumstances. Children and young people want professionals to work with and alongside them, rather than have safeguarding and welfare processes imposed upon them without consultation or explanation. This is important for a number of reasons including redressing the silencing and disempowerment of abuse, maximising likelihood of engagement, promoting self-efficacy which is critical to resilience and ensuring change will be sustainable.

*(Quote from youth consultation event)*

*t making*



trauma-informed approach. Experience of child sexual exploitation can involve traumatic physical, emotional and sexual abuse. It is important that we recognise the impact of these traumatic experiences, both in terms of how the victim may act and in

*Withdrawing the service suddenly can make us feel rejected and powerless after building  
Make sure there is a clear exit strategy that will help us  
transition to independence. (Young person cited in Hagell, 2013)*

## 9. Disruption and prosecution of perpetrators

A comprehensive response to child sexual exploitation requires a proactive focus on those perpetrating the abuse. Culpability for abuse firmly rests with perpetrators and our response should reflect this fact. We should seek both to disrupt perpetrator activity and to hold perpetrators to account for their actions. Failure to do so sends unhelpful messages about the seriousness of the abuse and can result in prolonged experiences of harm for victims. It also places other children and young people at risk of future harm.

An effective response to perpetrators should include:

- Preventative work to reduce the likelihood of perpetration in the first place.

- Proactive intelligence gathering by the police, including the development of problem and subject profiles and network analysis. This process can and should be supported by a range of other professionals who can provide police with critical information about risks to individual children and wider patterns of harm and risk (see below).

- Proactive use of disruption techniques, and civil orders, to disrupt perpetrator contact with (potential) victims (see section 9.1).

- Proactive pursuit of criminal prosecutions (see section 9.2).

- Consideration of the complexities of peer perpetration and the potential for victim/perpetrator overlap within this (see section 9.4).

Although criminal justice agencies will lead disruption and prosecution efforts, all professionals hav





individually based response and wider work to address harmful social norms or power dynamics that enable the abuse to occur.

We also know that children and young people who experience child sexual exploitation can be manipulated by their abusers to become involved in other forms of illegal activity such as shoplifting or drug dealing, for example. This can be part of a purposeful strategy on the part of perpetrators to control their victims and to ensure they have something to hold over them should they think of reporting their abuse, and any subsequent offending should be viewed in light of this.



Provides a response to children and young people with harmful sexual behaviour that recognises their vulnerabilities and needs, is holistic and provides early help and specialist services to these children and young people and their parents/carers.

Provides a system for flagging or applying appropriate markers onto systems in order to ensure effective record keeping and retrieval and assist information sharing (NB. Home Office direction states that this should be based on the policy definition of child sexual exploitation and not just the criminal offences of that name).

Recent learning indicates that there is still some way to go to ensure that these and other key principles are consistently applied in relation to child sexual exploitation. Key considerations for strategic leaders include:

**Systemic development:** The traditional child protection framework does not always offer adequate protection, or sufficiently flexible responses, to child sexual exploitation. This is related to who is perpetrating the abuse (often non-familial), where it occurs (often online or outside the family home), and the population affected (predominantly adolescents, whose lives are increasingly independent of adult influence). A more contextual and flexible safeguarding model would be better able to:

- Differentiate between risk and actuality of child sexual exploitation.

- Identify and address risk and harm in both online and offline spaces.

- Work collaboratively to minimise harm in non-familial contexts.

- Recognise the range of social areas in which harm can occur and the connections between them.

- Move beyond a reactive approach (one that removes the individual from harm) to one that also addresses the existence of harm and



**Engaging with diversity:** The evidence base demonstrates that some cohorts of children and young people – males, children with disabilities, LGBTQ and BME children, for example – may be less likely to have their abuse identified or responded to. Local areas should ensure responses are accessible, relevant and sensitive to the needs of all children and young people.

**Cross-area working:** Cases of child sexual exploitation frequently cross local authority, police force and even country boundaries in terms of the movement of both perpetrators and victims. A singular area focus cannot, therefore, adequately capture patterns of harm and risk. Inter-country working is very important in relation to online abuse and trafficking.

**Inter-agency working:** While significant progress has been made here, challenges remain. Important areas for improvement include:

- the practical implementation of information sharing guidance<sup>23</sup>
- common risk assessment processes that are: evidence-based; consider vulnerability, risk and resilience; prioritise professional judgement; and do not rely on simplistic scoring
- clarity about professional roles and thresholds across universal, targeted and specialist services
- more effective sharing and recording of intelligence
- better co-ordination of statutory and voluntary sector services
- more streamlined management of m victims and their families.

**Readiness of the professional workforce:** *Working Together* recognises that everyone who works with children services professionals, adult services professionals, teachers and other school staff, GPs, CAMHS practitioners, nurses (including school nurses), midwives, health visitors, early years professionals, youth workers, youth justice professionals, the police, A&E staff, paediatricians, and voluntary and community workers has a responsibility for keeping them safe. Local safeguarding arrangements should provide high-quality training and other learning and developmental activities that are rooted in evidence, tailored to different professional groups and respons(7)10(o)-3(ro)-3(n)-3(s(7)1

maintain focus on the child or young person  
test the evidence base for assessment and intervention  
address the emotional impact of the work on the practitioner  
support reflective practice and help practitioners recognise where personal values and attitudes might be leading

**Openness to learning and improvement:** There has been considerable learning in recent years around how better to identify and respond to child sexual exploitation. It

parents/carers and other supporting adults) are central to that process. It is also vital, as *Working Together* observes, that such processes be marked by transparency and accountability and that appropriate action and monitoring ensues to ensure that improvement is realised and sustained.

### **A.III Educating and enabling the professional workforce**

Professional training and local protocols should clearly outline the roles and

# Annex B: Adolescent development

## B.I Introduction

Adolescence is one of the most dramatic stages of development. With puberty come bodily changes (such as spurts in growth and development of the sexual organs) as well as changes in the neurobiological system, focused on emotions and social interaction. These latter changes can have a number of impacts, including heightened sensitivity to emotional cues (such as rewards and threats) in comparison to older and younger age ranges. Alongside this, the neural systems that underlie the complex cognitive abilities involved in control and regulation develop very differently, maturing gradually over the course of adolescence into young adulthood. This accounts for the gradual gain in the -ordination of thoughts and behaviours. Skills in this repertoire include working memory (the ability to hold information in mind and apply it to current tasks), impulse control, selective attention and planning ahead.

## B.II Transitions

Adolescence shares common characteristics with other periods of transition. These include:

- anticipation of the future
- a sense of loss or regret for the stage that has been lost
- a sense of anxiety about what is unknown (worrying about the future)
- a major psychological adjustment due to multiple domain changes relationships, education, employment and home
- a degree of status ambiguity during the transition period for example, with neither the adult world nor the individual being sure whether they should be treated as a child or an adult.

The changes experienced during adolescence include:

**Physical change:** puberty including sexual maturation, growth and hormonal changes; brain development; alterations in sleeping patterns.

**Psychological change:** development of new intellectual skills; the psychological and emotional impact of puberty; identity change and development a changing sense of self.

**Social change:** friends appear to become more important; the establishment of a wider network; some individuals become more open to peer influence; the growing influence of the digital world with associated risks and opportunities.

Moving successfully from childhood to adulthood therefore involves a number of key developmental tasks:

**Physical (and sexual) maturity:** including brain and physical development as well as puberty.

**Emotional maturity:** the ability to recognise and manage the different states of

**Cognitive maturity:** thinking in a range of ways, including theorising (and seeing ideas as things that exist separately from oneself), holding ethical and moral stances, and practical problem-solving.

**Individuation and identity:** developing a clear sense of self incorporating gender, sexuality, ethnicity and usually involving the development of degrees of independence from family (strongly influenced by family, community and cultural and religious factors).

**Social maturity:** achieving the capacity to manage a range of different types of social relationships and roles such as work, intimate partnerships and parenthood.

### **B.III The importance of relationships in adolescence**

As noted above, adolescence is a time of changing social relationships. Peers become increasingly important as friends, intimate partners and prominent social groups in which  
rked out. It is therefore critical that

child sexual exploitation  
information (available from [www.beds.ac.uk/ic](http://www.beds.ac.uk/ic)).

Risk in adolescence and the salience of the peer group interact. For example, adolescents are more likely to engage in behaviours that are perceived as risky when

**Neglect:** neglect from family members including rejection and abandonment, parental mental health or substance abuse that disrupt parenting capacity and/or impose inappropriate caring responsibilities on the part of the young person; overly restrictive parenting; neglect in custody.

**Emotional abuse:**

## **B.VI Responses to risk in adolescence**

When resources are strained, those working with adolescents can sometimes feel there is a de-prioritisation of ado

be wrongly assumed that adolescents, because of their age, are more resilient than younger children or that their choices are always freely made and informed. Adolescent agency in relation to r

those risks a complex task. This may be made more challenging by working within a child protection system that is designed primarily to meet the needs of younger children maltreated within the family. Local authority spending to protect adolescents from serious risk is often geared towards solutions that involve the care system, with a high proportion

often being those for adolescents. While many placements are effective at reducing risk, some looked after children are also disproportionately vulnerable to serious risks,

... in an abusive relationship is unlikely to end the relationship, nor is it likely to encourage help-seeking recovery behaviours:

*... just as services and practitioners working with those experiencing domestic abuse now recognise the complexities of this issue, we would do well to understand that CSE is not*

*willingly leave an exploitative relationship...*

# Annex C: Guide to disruption and prosecution of perpetrators

## C.I Disruption measures

Where we do have an identifiable perpetrator, or suspicions about the same, there are numerous civil measures that can be used. These are an essential piece of the jigsaw in combating child sexual exploitation, alongside criminal processes and other child protection procedures. While they should not be viewed as a replacement for pursuit of criminal convictions which offer greater longer-term monitoring of offenders, they do offer very helpful means of disrupting perpetrator-victim contact, closing down potential locations of abuse and placing controls on suspect behaviour in the absence of a criminal prosecution.

The range of formal and informal disruption measures that can be used in cases of child sexual exploitation include:

- obtaining orders on an identified individual (see below)
- investigation of other crime types such as drugs or theft
- increased police attention on an individual (checking car tax, road worthiness of car, etc)
- increased police presence in suspected hotspots (online or offline)
- working with internet providers to address online risks
- use of licensing laws and powers to obtain guest information or close down premises associated with child sexual exploitation.<sup>24</sup>

An effective disruption strategy will use a range of these methods in conjunction with one another to both address individual perpetrator behaviour and address wider contexts of concern. Though not the focus of this guide, an effective disruption strategy will also involve work with children and young people to address the issues contributing to their vulnerability, and to provide them with alternative options.

### **Civil orders and other means of controlling individual behaviour**

#### **Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWNs)**



has been convicted or cautioned of a sexual or violent offence, where there is reasonable cause to believe that the imposition of such an order is necessary to protect an individual or the wider public from harm. Restrictions can include things like limiting their internet use, preventing them from approaching or being alone with a named child and prohibiting foreign travel. Breach of the order, without reasonable excuse, is an offence punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment.

**Sexual Risk Orders (SROs)** can also be applied for by the police or the National Crime Agency. These are similar to Sexual Harm Prevention Orders, and can include similar restrictions, but **do not require an individual to have been convicted or cautioned**. SROs can be issued when an individual has carried out an act of a sexual nature<sup>26</sup> and there is reasonable cause to believe that such an order is necessary to protect an individual or the wider public from harm. As with SHPOs, breach of the order is an offence punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment.

Both SHPOs and SROs may be used with children under 18, but recent Home Office guidance on part 2 of the *Sexual Offences Act 2003* states that the following principles should apply when considering this:

The early consultation and participation of the youth offending team in the application process.

That 14 to 17 year olds made subject to civil injunctions in relation to harmful sexual behaviour are offered appropriate interventions to reduce their harmful behaviour.

That the nature and extent of that support is based on a structured assessment that takes into account the needs of the young person and the imminent risk.

That the welfare of the child or young person is the paramount consideration, in line with local safeguarding procedures.

That the requirements of all other orders and sentences that may already be in existence are taken into account to ensure that any requirements made by these

sentences, and the combined burden of requirements is taken into account to ensure the young person has the capacity to comply.

Where there are concerns that a child has been trafficked as part of child sexual exploitation (this can include movement from one area to another within England),

**Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders** 1 487.66 312.05 Tm 0.024 Tc[, )284.49 y.69 Tm1i7 Tm



**Under 13s**

Articles 5 to 8 of the SOA 2003

## **Under 18s**

Although the legal age of consent for sexual activity is 16, the SOA recognises the continued vulnerability of 16 and 17 year olds in particular circumstances. These include:

- abuse of a position of trust (eg, sexual offences by an adult teacher or social worker the offences covered are the same as those outlined in the bulleted list above (articles 9 to 12), but extended to cover 16/17 year olds in these circumstances)
- familial child sex offences (engaging in sexual activity with a child in the family or inciting them to engage in sexual activity)
- indecent photographs of a child aged 16/17 (includes making, distributing, intent to distribute and possessing indecent photographs)
- sexual exploitation of children (see commentary below).

## **Offences of sexual exploitation**

The SOA was amended by the *Serious Crime Act 2015* to

The changes were made to the following offences:

- section 48: causing

## **Human trafficking (no age restriction)**

A sometimes overlooked avenue of criminal prosecutions is that of human trafficking<sup>27</sup>, which can be used where a child or young person (including those aged 18 or over) has been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Under this legislation, it is an offence to arrange or facilitate the travel of another person with a view to their being exploited, whether or not the victim consents to the travel.<sup>28</sup> This covers entering, departing or travelling within any country and as such can be used in cases when a child is moved from one city to another within the UK, for example.

## **Management and monitoring of offenders**

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) are designed to protect the public from serious harm by accessing and managing the risk posed by sexual and violent offenders. The system requires a multi-agency partnership to work together, share information and combine resources in order to maximise the risk management of individual offenders. More information about the MAPPA framework can be found at: <https://mappa.justice.gov.uk/connect.ti/MAPPA/view?objectId=271411>.

The multi-agency tool ViSOR has been developed to assist in the effective management of offenders. It provides a central store for up-to-date information about offenders that can be accessed and updated by the three Responsible Authority agencies - the police, the Prison Service (both public and the contracted-out estate) and Probation Trusts. The tool enables the prompt sharing of risk assessment and risk management information on individual offenders who are deemed to pose a risk of serious harm to the public.

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<sup>27</sup> In an attempt to simplify and condense human trafficking offences, the *Modern Slavery Act 2015*



-first century party people: Young people and sexual  
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### **Section 3: The nature of child sexual exploitation**

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