

Child Sexual Exploitation – A Practice Perspective

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Introduction

- ▶ Child Sexual Exploitation is child abuse and is widespread
- ▶ It is against the law
- ▶ A multi-agency response is essential
- ▶ Child Safeguarding procedures should always be used
- ▶ A full picture of what is happening should be sought
- ▶ An assessment of risk must be undertaken

The Young People

- ▶ Age, gender and ethnicity are variable
- ▶ Young people are vulnerable and have suffered historical trauma
- ▶ They have had inconsistent parenting, neglect, significant losses and are isolated
- ▶ On reaching adolescence their behaviour becomes increasingly chaotic and risky
- ▶ Some young people have suffered all categories of abuse

The Young People

- ▶ Domestic violence had been a feature during childhood
- ▶ Alcohol/drug misuse
- ▶ A number had experienced bereavement
- ▶ Parental separation
- ▶ Missing from home/school
- ▶ Disruptive and challenging behaviour in school

The Young People

- ▶ Anti-social behaviour coming to the attention of the Police
- ▶ Poor self image
- ▶ Self harm
- ▶ A small number are in care
- ▶ They are sexually active
- ▶ They are hard to engage

The Perpetrators

- ▶ Grooming behaviour on the basis that they are 'boyfriends'
- ▶ Organised abuse, they know each other
- ▶ They choose young people on an opportunistic basis
- ▶ They use drugs and alcohol and other 'treats' to groom/abuse
- ▶ They isolate the young people
- ▶ Use of mobile phones
- ▶ Use of coercion and threats

Key issues

- ▶ Taking action to safeguard children and disrupt and prosecute offenders is complex
- ▶ Early multi-agency planning is key
- ▶ Early recognition of vulnerability can make a difference
- ▶ Investigations of complex and organised abuse have significant resource implications for all agencies
- ▶ The coercion and grooming by perpetrators should not be underestimated

Key issues (cont)

- ▶ Use of mobile technologies are significant
- ▶ The capacity and consent issues should be explicitly considered. Children cannot consent.
- ▶ Understanding protective factors within families is essential
- ▶ Training for staff to recognise and act must be provided

What can we do?

- ▶ Take seriously any information that a young person is being exploited
- ▶ Look beyond their presenting behaviour
- ▶ Gather all information, however insignificant it seems
- ▶ Use Safeguarding procedures
- ▶ Share information with other agencies, especially the Police
- ▶ Use escalation procedures if your concerns are not being heard

BASW concerns for the future

- ▶ Revised Working Together
- ▶ Training for all professionals
- ▶ Spending Review & Cuts
- ▶ Supportive services
- ▶ Time to complete good assessments