



7-Minute Briefing: D&G Multi-Agency Child Sexual Exploitation Guidance

1. Background

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. It is a complex and far reaching harm as a result of the means by which the abuse can take place both in the physical world and online, by individuals and by groups. Although CSE is incorporated within our local Multi-Agency Child Protection guidance, additional guidance is required for staff to ensure that we are able to recognise and respond to CSE. CSE is linked to other harms such as Criminal Exploitation of Children (CEC) and Trafficking,

2. Why it matters

CSE is a largely under-reported form of abuse that is difficult to detect and address due to:

- the sophisticated tactics of perpetrators
- the hidden nature of the abuse
- the barriers to disclosure faced by victims
- it can be linked to other forms of abuse or criminal activity

CSE can cause serious **psychological, emotional and physical harm**. Digital platforms increase risk via **grooming, coercion and sharing of images**.

7. Useful Contacts

- Social Work Single Access Point (SAP) 030 33 33 3001
- Social Work Out of Hours 030 33 33 3001
- Police Scotland 999 (in an emergency) or 101
- Clare Cowan, Public Protection Lead Officer Child Protection Clare.Cowan@dumgal.gov.uk

6. Questions to Consider

- Do you know what to do if you witness, or are told about a concern for a child?
- Do you know who to contact for help or advice if you are unsure about the steps to take?
- Have you discussed the new Dumfries and Galloway Child Exploitation Guidance with your line manager either directly or within a team meeting?

5. Policy and Legislation

Whilst CSE is not a specific criminal offence in itself, there is range of criminal and civil options that can be used to disrupt and prosecute this form of abuse. Pertinent principles from these include:

The legal age of consent to sexual activity is 16

If the child is under 13, under no circumstances can they be argued to have consented to sexual activity, nor is there any defence of believing the child was of an older age; ([Section 27 of the Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#))

It is an offence to intentionally cause a child under 16 to engage in sexual activity, even if you do not actually engage in sexual activity with them yourself; ([Sections 21 and 31 of the Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#))

3. Focus and Principles

Our local Multi-Agency Child Sexual Exploitation Guidance:

- Supports practitioners' understanding and recognition of CSE
- Explores vulnerability factors
- Outlines barriers to disclosure
- Considers practitioner barriers and challenges
- Aligns with our local Child Protection guidance and processes
- aligns with the National Guidance Child Protection Scotland (2021 updated 2023); GIRFEC; UNCRC and the Promise

4. Practice Considerations

- Practitioners should apply the **Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) National Practice Model** within an effective child protection response using local inter-agency child protection procedures,
- **Exchange** (for example gifts, affection, substances, accommodation) is a **key feature** and distinguishes CSE from other forms of sexual abuse.
- Assess **digital risks**
- Be aware of **additional risks** and **vulnerabilities**
- Explore links with **CEC** and whether the child has been coerced into crime
- Consider the role of **grooming**, including long-term or online grooming.
- Think **broadly** about perpetrators
- Assess for **trafficking indicators**