

Greengairs Primary School



Safe Guarding Policy Sexual Exploitation

Introduction:

This policy has been developed in response to growing concerns about the scale of sexual exploitation and the recognition that any child might be targeted for grooming and exploitation.

Policy aims:

The aims of this policy are to:

- demonstrate our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils.
- raise awareness about sexual exploitation and grooming.
- help staff to identify warning signs and vulnerable children.
- explain the school's procedures to be followed if sexual exploitation and grooming are suspected.
- stress the importance of multi-agency cooperation.

Everyone must take responsibility for protecting children from abuse and that means not only knowing your role, but also understanding the roles of other agencies and individuals.

What is child sexual exploitation?

The sexual exploitation of children and young people is an often hidden form of child sexual abuse. A number of different definitions have been developed through the work of researchers and practitioners, although the concepts of exploitation and exchange are central to each. Child sexual exploitation is defined in s.572-584 of The National Guidance 8 for Child Protection in Scotland (2014) and Scotland's National Action Plan to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation.

Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse, in which a young person is manipulated or forced into taking part in a sexual act. This could be as part of a seemingly consensual relationship or in return for attention, affection, money, drugs, alcohol or somewhere to stay. The young person may think that their abuser is their friend, or even their boyfriend or girlfriend, but they will put them into dangerous situations, forcing the young person to do things they do not want to do.

The abuser may be male or female; they may threaten the young person physically or verbally, or be violent towards them. They will control and manipulate them, and try to isolate them from friends and family.

Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology, without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet or on a mobile phone, without immediate payment or gain.

In all cases, those exploiting the child or young person will have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources.

Violence, coercion and intimidation are common. Involvement in exploitative relationships is characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited choice, resulting from their social, economic and emotional vulnerabilities.

Who does it affect?

Young people from any background can be exploited for sex in this way. Boys and young men are abused, as well as girls and young women. The grooming and abuse can happen in person or online, and although most abusers are adults, some victims are exploited by their peers. There is often a misconception that only children from disadvantaged or chaotic backgrounds can be drawn into sexual exploitation because of their existing vulnerabilities. Whilst these children may be more at risk, abusers are very clever in the way they manipulate and take advantage of the children they abuse. Any child or young person can be taken in by their deception, no matter their background.

How does it happen?

There are numerous routes into sexual exploitation, many of which involve grooming. There is a growing understanding within agencies responsible for child protection that grooming plays an integral part in the sexual exploitation of children and young people. This is recognised within Section 1 of the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005, which makes it a criminal offence to groom a person under the age of 16.

Many young people are groomed by an abusing adult who befriends the young person and makes them feel special by buying gifts or giving them attention. In most cases, the abuser will have power of some kind over the young person. It may be that the abuser is older or more emotionally mature, physically stronger, or that they are in a position where they are able to control the young person.

There are some situations that can make young people more vulnerable to exploitation. For example young people who are having difficulties at home, who go missing regularly, or who have experienced care may be particularly vulnerable.

There are distinct models of abuse, which staff may find helpful in understanding how perpetrators operate:

Inappropriate relationships: this usually involves just one abuser who has power – physical, emotional or financial; or control over a young person. The young person may believe they have a genuine friendship or loving relationship with their abuser.

Boyfriend: the abuser grooms the victim by striking up a normal relationship with them, giving them gifts and meeting them. A seemingly consensual sexual relationship develops, but later turns abusive.

Organised exploitation and trafficking: victims are trafficked through criminal networks, often between towns and cities, and can be forced or coerced into sex with multiple men. They may also be used to recruit new victims. This serious organised activity can involve the buying and selling of young people.

Technology: young people's access to the internet makes traditional protective factors more difficult to apply. Protection messages for children and young people on the safe use of technology should include reference to raising awareness on child sexual exploitation and the appropriate response if they are concerned about their own safety or that of others. All young people may be at risk, whether due to a lack of confidence and experience in the online world, or high exposure due to increased accessibility.

Where does the risk come from?

Content – children and young people accessing pornographic material or being exposed to unwelcome sexual content.

Contact – being targeted by a stranger who develops a relationship with the intent of sexually exploiting the child/young person.

Conduct – children and young people creating, uploading or seeking out sexually inappropriate material.

Combinations – content, contact and conduct are intrinsically linked and young people can be exposed to different risks at different times.

Identification and Prevention

Child sexual exploitation is a hidden form of abuse and is not visible until we recognise some of the signs and begin to enquire further. Therefore staff should apply professional curiosity when there is any indication of a child or young person being exploited.

- Children and young people who are the victims of sexual exploitation often do not recognise that they are being exploited. This makes it very hard to identify victims. It is therefore essential that we are able to recognise the signs and provide an appropriate response or intervention.
- Children at risk of sexual exploitation may find themselves in high risk situations, isolated from protective, nurturing adults. Of particular relevance is the impact of those who may have groomed and conditioned children in order to coerce and abuse them.
- Children may be under very strong pressure, intimidated, afraid or dependent on those who have exploited them, especially where substance misuse is a factor.
- Children may therefore reject offers of help and support, and we need to work creatively with them to address this.

Signs of CSE

There are a number of signs that a child may be being groomed for sexual exploitation. Practitioners who have regular contact with children and young people have a key role in understanding the connections between these behaviours and the wider context of the young person's life. Practitioners should exercise professional curiosity. If it is believed that there is any indication, however slight, that a child could be at risk, action should be taken and information should be shared.

Child sexual exploitation is widespread and can affect all young people, but there are certain vulnerabilities, which can make a young person more susceptible to exploitation. **Vulnerability Factors include:**

- A disrupted family life: young people who get drawn into child sexual exploitation often have a chaotic or disrupted home life. This can include parental breakdown or separation and being looked after by the local authority.
- A history of abuse and disadvantage: this can include emotional, physical and sexual abuse as well as neglect.

- Problematic parenting: an evaluation of several child sexual exploitation services in the UK found that there was a huge deficit in the parenting capabilities of many parents of children who were exploited sexually. Fathers were often absent. Some young people move into adult life prematurely.
- Disengagement from education: school plays an important safeguarding role in a young person's life; if they disengage from education, they can be left vulnerable. They may become disconnected from their peers and lose sense of a regular routine.
- Learning difficulties: a young person with learning disabilities may be less able to recognise the risky situations they may be getting themselves into and they may be more susceptible to exploitation.
- Going missing: many young people have a history of going missing from home or care for various reasons. This leaves them susceptible to exploitative adults who may offer them a place to stay or somewhere to pass the time.
- Poor health and well-being: low self-esteem in adolescence may leave some young people vulnerable to older people who compliment them and make them feel good about themselves by offering them gifts and giving them attention.
- Drug and alcohol misuse: alcohol and drugs are frequently used in the grooming process. For young people who already have problems with substance misuse, this makes them easier targets for exploitation. They are more likely to be lured into risky situations by the incentive of drink or drugs. In the evaluation of several child sexual exploitation services in the UK, substance misuse was a key factor in approximately three quarters of cases.

Understanding prevalence

Child sexual exploitation is a hidden issue. There is no central system for recording cases, meaning that it can be difficult to get an accurate picture of the number of young people at risk. However, without systems in place to monitor local levels of risk, young people who are experiencing exploitation are all the more likely to go unnoticed and unprotected.

Accessing specialist support

Child sexual exploitation is a child protection concern and support will always be available from the core agencies, alongside any other specialist supports, where available. It is vital that the right specialist support is available to help young people exit and recover from exploitative situations, and that there are clearly determined pathways from universal to specialist services.

Concerns about CSE

Any concerns that a child is at risk of sexual exploitation should be raised with the Head teacher or in his absence, the Principal Teacher. They will share that information with social work immediately, in line with the school's child protection procedures.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff within Greengairs Primary school and nursery are in a position to support children to reduce vulnerability and risk of sexual exploitation.

- School staff should be alert and competent to identify and act upon concerns that a child is vulnerable to, at risk of, or experiencing abuse through child sexual exploitation.
- Staff should be aware of the importance of sharing any concerns related to children and young people who go missing during the school day. All registers should be updated first thing in the morning and the afternoon to ensure all pupils are present and any absences recorded and passed to SMT and the school office to follow up with parents and carers straight away.
- Any concerns about CSE should be passed to the HT or PT immediately for child protection procedures to be actioned. We will monitor information to identify when more than one child in the school or community may be being targeted for child sexual exploitation.
- All staff will receive appropriate training annually to ensure they can identify risk factors of when a child may be vulnerable to child sexual exploitation and act accordingly as part of Child Protection Procedures in Greengairs Primary School.

**Please note that this Policy should be read in conjunction with the
Greengairs Primary School Child Protection Policy.**

Contact Information

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Review Schedule

Policy Update	September 2025
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