

Merton Safeguarding Children Board

Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy



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1. Introduction and Demography

It is the overall intention of this strategy to mobilise partnership skills and experience to understand the risk and reality of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) to children and young people in Merton and to inform the multi-agency work undertaken to address their complex needs.

Merton has a total population of 200,543 including 47,499 children and young people aged 0-19 (Census 2011). The number of 0-19 year olds is forecast to increase by 3,180 (7%) by 2017, within which we forecast a 20% increase of children aged 5 to 9 (2,270). We have a younger population than the England average and have seen a 39% net increase of births over the last ten years (2,535 births in 2002 rising to 3,521 in 2010).

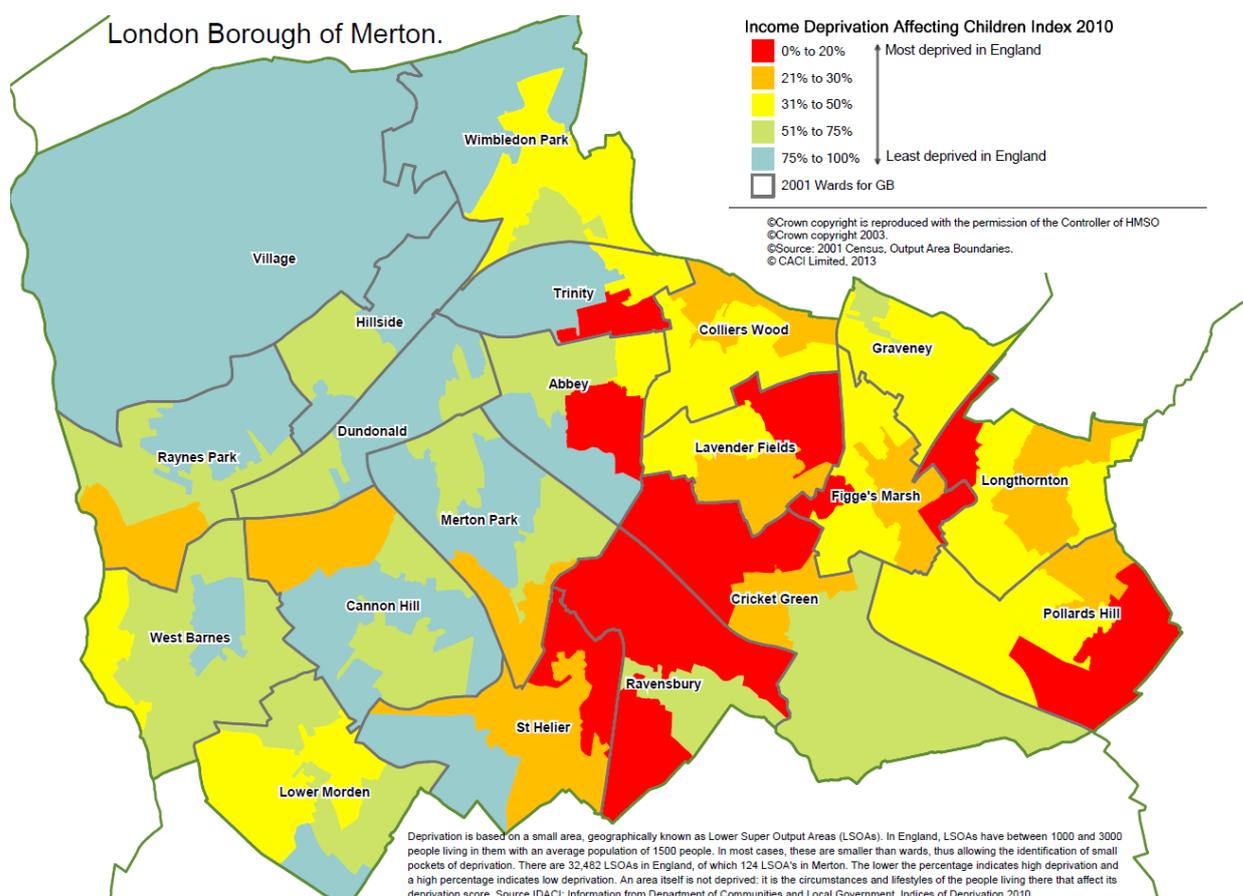
The birth rate reduced in 2012/13 and again slightly in 2013/14 suggesting that the rate is stabilising. However the last ten years alongside other demographic factors has placed additional demand on all children's services.

This highlights the need to continually scope the prevalence of CSE, evolving trends and early identification of service, resource and practice demands be able to effectively respond.

A characteristic of the borough is the difference between the more deprived east (Mitcham/Morden) and the more affluent west (Wimbledon). There are a number of pockets of deprivation within the borough mainly in the eastern wards and some smaller pockets in the central wards. These wards have multiple deprivation, with high scores on income deprivation, unemployment and limited educational attainment. Since 2010 we have seen an increase of 23% of children who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) (2010, 2881 FSM children, 2014, 3548 FSM children).

Thirty five per cent of Merton's total population is Black, Asian or Minority ethnic (BAME) this is expected to increase further to 39% by 2017. Pupils in Merton schools are more diverse still, with 66% from BAME communities, speaking over 120 languages (2014). The borough has concentrations of Urdu speaking communities, Sri Lankan, South African and Polish residents.

Table 1 below shows the deprivation indices across Merton by Ward.



This strategy sets out local multi-agency working arrangements under the Merton Safeguarding Children’s Board and the Merton Children and Young People’s Partnership. This strategy promotes a multi-agency approach to addressing CSE through a shared understanding that supports prevention through better information sharing and improved identification. The strategy also promotes a shared multi-agency response to improve effective interventions to protect those most at risk of being sexually exploited and robustly pursue the prosecution of perpetrators.

2. Definition

The sexual exploitation of children and young people (CSE) under-18 is defined as that which:

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

The Working Together 2015 notes, that Sexual Abuse also

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children¹

A local young person who has been supported with their experience of child sexual exploitation described it as:

- **Someone using or taking advantage of a young person for their own advantage and needs and wants.**
 - **Child Sexual Exploitation is when someone who is under 18 years of age is lead, influenced or forced in to doing or having sexual acts on them without actually choosing it and isn't allowed or able to say "no".**
 - **The person exploiting them has control and power and influence over them and will make the child feel they have not got any other choice.**
 - **Child Sexual Exploitation can happen anywhere in the country nice towns and not nice towns and this includes via online and social media in and out of schools**
- a. Child sexual exploitation associated with gangs**

Perpetrators of gang associated child sexual exploitation see themselves, and are seen by others, as affiliates of a named street gang with distinctive beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. Whilst child sexual exploitation may make up part of the gangs offending behaviour, it is not the reason for the gang's existence.

a (i) Definition of what a gang is

A relatively durable, predominantly street-based, social group of children, young people and, not infrequently adults who see themselves and are seen by others, as affiliates of a discrete, named group who:

- engage in a range of criminal activity and violence
- identify or lay claim to territory
- have some form of identifying structural feature
- are in conflict with similar groups.

Gangs may play a significant part in CSE as:

¹Working Together 2015, p 93, see also *London Child Protection Procedures 5th Edition, Part B3 Safeguarding Children Practice Guidance, Chapter 7 Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation* http://www.londoncpc.co.uk/chapters/sg_sex_exploit_ch.html, 2016

- Gang associated sexual violence and exploitation does not occur within a vacuum, it is influenced by: behavioural norms of the gang, wider gang environment and wider patterns of exploitation and violence.
- Young women's access to and position within the gang environment is largely determined by and through boys, young men and older males or females. It is also determined by aspects of their vulnerability (see Appendix 1).
- Many different forms of sexual violence and exploitation occur within gang environments: sexual assaults, individual or multiple rapes, distribution of sexual images.

a. (ii) Groups

Child sexual exploitation by a group involves people who come together in person or online for the purpose of setting up, co-ordinating and/or taking part in the sexual exploitation of children in either an organized or opportunistic way.

The particular focus on gang and group child exploitation is significant because the CEOP Thematic Inspection "Out of Sight, Out of Mind." (2011) found that:

The vast majority of offenders are male and disproportionately skewed towards young adults within the 18-24 age range, with almost half of the offenders being under 25 where their age is known. The relative youth of the offender population was a striking feature of the data.

Addressing gangs and potential CSE requires coordinated multi agency collaboration and effective read across of this strategy and protocol in conjunction with the Local authorities' gangs' strategy.

b. Child Sexual Exploitation, mobile technology and the Internet

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 / mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the young person 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 being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social / economic and / or emotional vulnerability."²

The development of technology and the internet creates danger for children and young people in allowing offenders and perpetrators of child sexual exploitation to remotely groom. The hidden nature of the internet increases the opportunities for perpetrators to assume false identities to best facilitate their grooming and targeting of children and young people. Without sufficient monitoring of online spaces and

² This definition arises from joint work between project members of the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People (NWG) 2008. The National Working Group is a support group for individuals and service providers working with children and young people who are at risk of or who experience sexual exploitation. The Group's membership covers voluntary and statutory services including health, education and Children's Services.

continual vigilance, this often hidden risk can allow sexual predators to target vulnerable children and young people remotely. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) has identified the common characteristics of online exploitation of children and young people (See Appendix 2) which need to be addressed in any risk assessment where possible sexual exploitation is suspected.

c. Link Between CSE Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) and Peer on Peer Sexual Exploitation

It is nationally recognised that young people are involved in peer on peer exploitation. Peer exploitation is where a “young perpetrator befriends and grooms a young person into a ‘relationship’ and then coerces or forces them into sexual activity.”

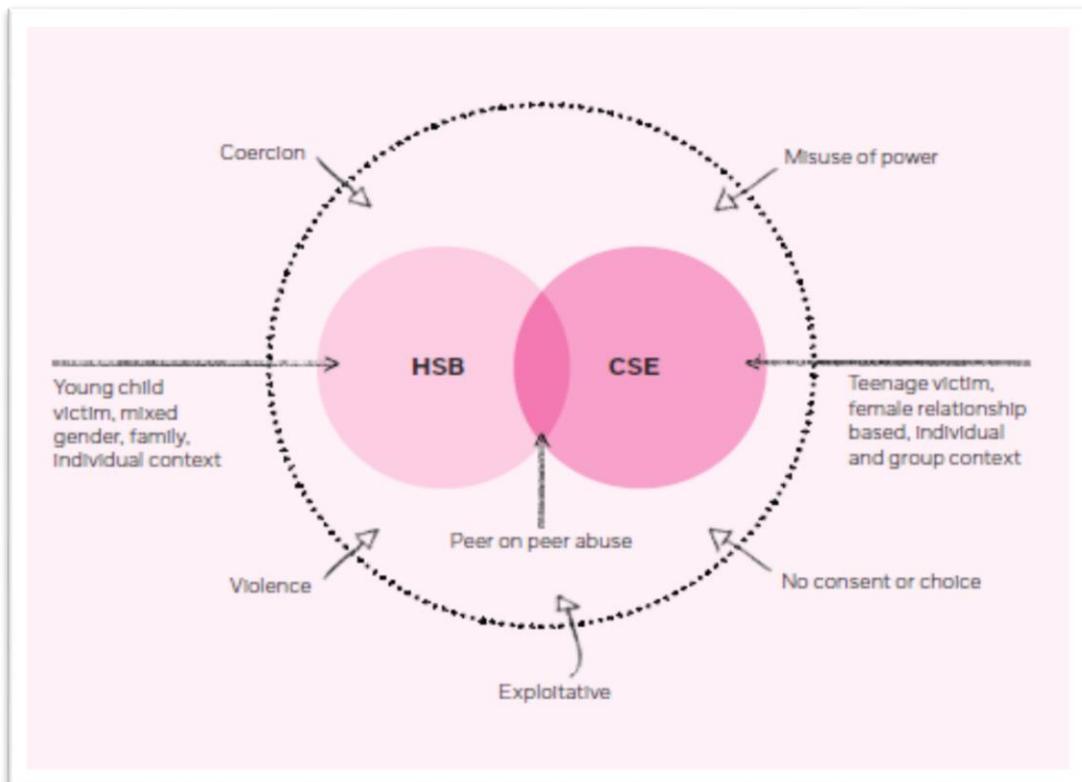


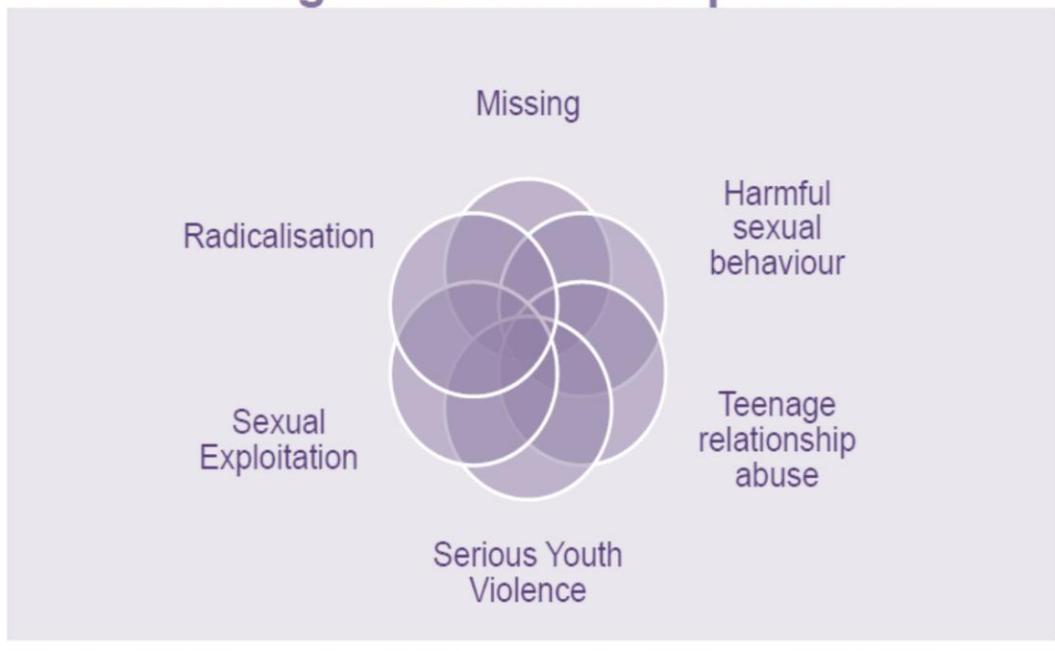
Figure 2: The fit of HSB and CSE in the context of wider child sexual abuse, from NSPCC Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework

In this context, harmful sexual behaviour may be related to child sexual exploitation and the following procedures should be adopted for the young person perceived to be the perpetrator of peer exploitation. Consideration should also be given to the fact that the young person who is deemed to be sexually exploiting, may themselves be a victim of child sexual exploitation. (Please see the MSCB’s CSE Protocol and Chapter 7 of the London Child Protection Procedures).

d. CSE and Shared Categories of Harm/exploitation

CSE is linked with a range of other forms of harm and exploitation including children going missing from home/school/care, HSB as noted above, serious youth violence including gangs and/or groups and radicalisation.

Shared categories of harm/exploitation



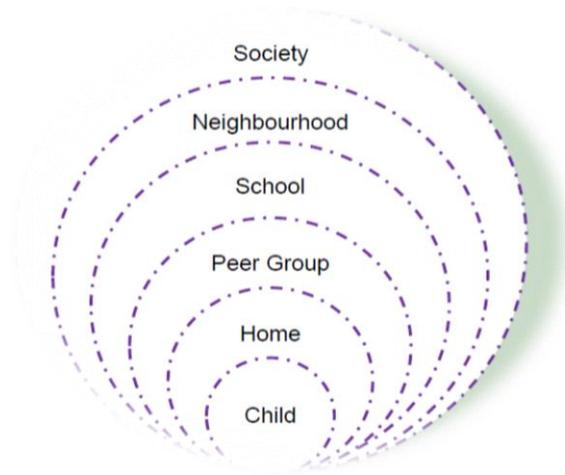
Building responses to peer-on-peer abuse: A toolkit for auditing local policy and practice, University of Bedfordshire, the International Centre Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking

e. Contextual Safeguarding

There is a growing body of research (see Firmin 2013; Firmin et al 2016) which highlights the significance of contextual safeguarding.

Contextual safeguarding promotes the idea that young people's behaviours, levels of vulnerability and levels of resilience are all informed by the social/public, as well as private, contexts in which young people spend their time. Drawing upon research into adolescent development, it recognises that as children grow they spend increasing amounts of time socialising with peers, at school and in public environments independently of parental/carer supervision. When spending time in these extra-familial contexts young people may be exposed to healthy norms which promote pro-social relationships or they may encounter harmful norms that are conducive to abusive and exploitative relationships. As a result local responses need to identify, assess, and intervene in all of the social environments where the abuse and exploitation of young people occurs – in essence to take a 'contextual' approach to safeguarding.³

³ What is Contextual Safeguarding, Contextual Safeguarding Network, 2017, <https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/about/what-is-contextual-safeguarding>,



Firmin 2013

3. Background context of CSE within Merton

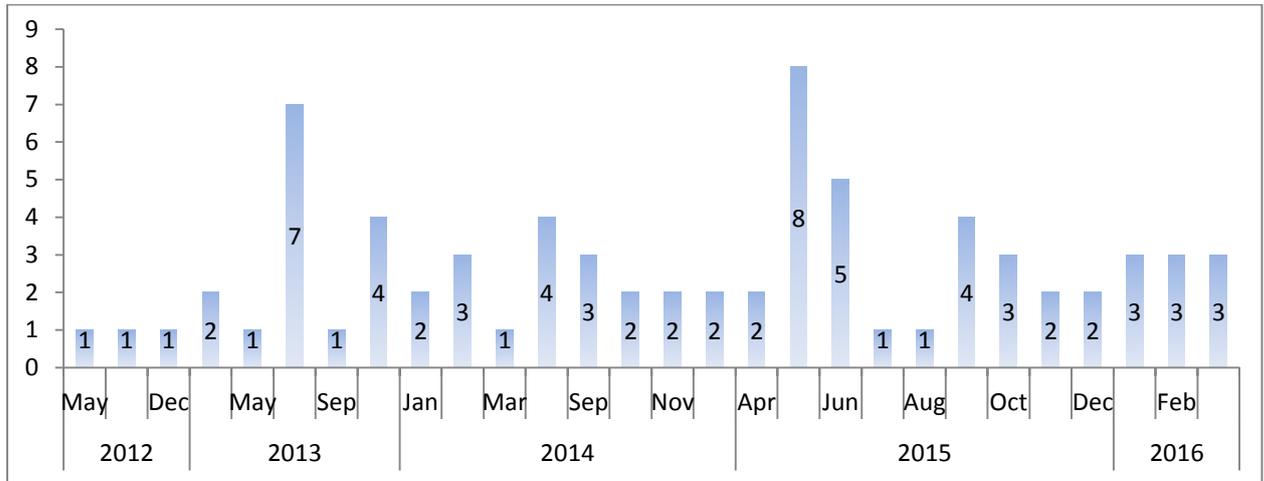
The partnership arrangements in Merton are currently working to protect our children and young people, however the relative absence of prosecutions remains an issue and reinforces the need that the full application of partner powers is needed if we are to start to tackle this issue consistently and comprehensively. It is also important to point out the need for Local authorities to more broadly utilise legal powers to deter or limit perpetrators access to potential victims such as the application of injunctions as has recently been applied in Birmingham to good effect.

Whilst there is some understanding of hot spots, victim profile and trends within Merton not enough is known around the totality of the number and profile of perpetrators and more operational and strategic link needs to be formalised with the MAPPA and MARAC and YOMP panels to better understand the local picture.

Given the absence of a unique CSE referral stream into the MASH and a dedicated intervention team, developing a consistent approach to recording the number of young people at risk and the numbers of associated perpetrators has been a challenge and there is a need for effective local and regional benchmarking to establish a more dependable profile.

In the CIN census of 2014/15 92 Children were tagged as being at risk of CSE or part of a family where the risk of CSE has been identified. This data was recorded at the end of an assessment. During 2015/16 82 young people were identified by the MASH and First Response service as being at risk of CSE following assessment. Many of the young people who were identified showed some of the indicators that might place them at risk of CSE, others were referred on to the MASE and others may simply have been younger siblings of older young people who were at risk.

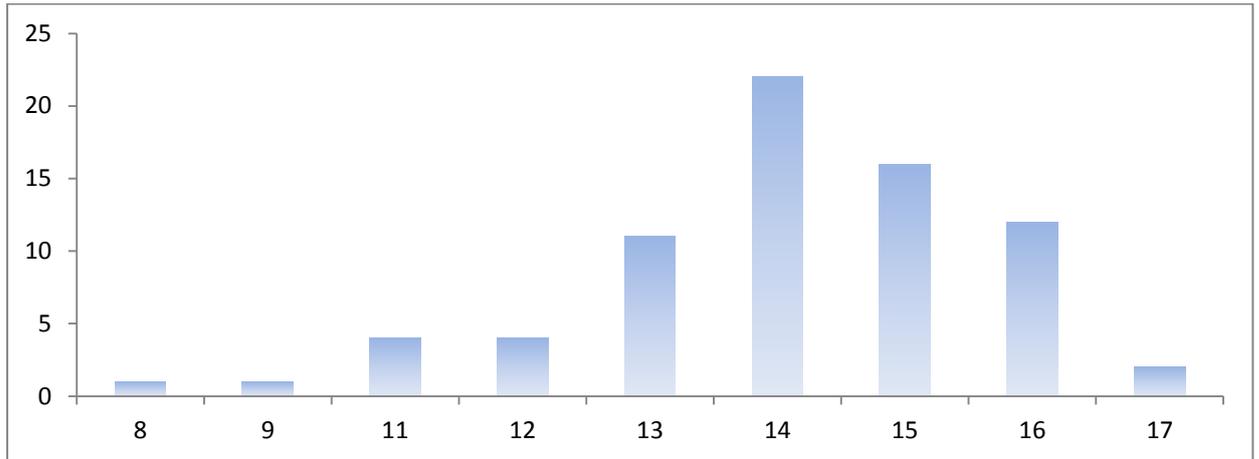
Graph 1 - Referral to MASE Panel 2012-2016:



We had 25 referrals to our Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Panel on average in the past 3 years. There has been a year on year increase to MASE following significant awareness raising activity. In 2015-16 37 young people were referred to panel compared to the same number in the 3 previous years. The majority of those referred are children/young people aged 13 to 16 girls (with a concentration on the 14 and 15 year olds) and White British. Merton MASE manages oversight of a small yet complex cohort of children; we have identified an overlap between children at risk/subject to sexual exploitation and those missing from home and care. Although the correlation with Children Missing From Education is not so evident there are still some young people in both cohorts.

As can be seen from Graph 1 above the number of referrals to MASE has increased over the past 3 years as awareness has been raised of CSE and the operation of the panel. As at the 31st March 2016 there were 25 children open to the PPYP/MASE panel, 3 of which were judged to be high risk. At the most recent MASE meeting of these 25 young people 3 were considered to be high risk, 6 medium and 16 low. The remaining 'on ice' cases represents those cases having been previously judged at risk of CSE that show no current indication but are scheduled for review before being considered for closure. There are currently 50 cases 'on ice'. The most recent dashboard of March 31st 2016 shows the high numbers of 14 and 15 year olds at risk of CSE and the prevalence of White/British victims.

Graph 2 - Age Profile of Young People referred to MASE Panel 2012-2015:



Of the 75 children open to MASE since 2012 16 have been LAC during the period they were open and 8 subject to Child Protection plans.

All 25 children open to MASE are or have been open to CSC&YI at some stage. Of those currently open to MASE 3 of the children were male. 4 children are subject to a child protection plan and 6 young people are looked after young people. 1 child is both Looked After and currently also subject to a Child protection Plan. The ethnicity shows a prominence of White/British or White background. The age distribution shows 7 or 28% of young people referred for possible sexual exploitation are aged 13 and under currently and this is a concern. Many of the young people including this younger cohort have been identified because of concerns around use of social media and the internet. The majority at 10 or 40% were aged 14 at the time of referral.

(a) Looked After Children

We have several young people who are in the at risk cohort who may be missing from care and the CSE and Missing project, commissioned to Catch22 from April 17 now works with these young people. The project will also work with a small number of young people who are Merton LAC but placed outside of the borough. At present there are two children who are being worked with in this way. Furthermore we have also offered Return Home Interviews to 51 individuals, relating to 89 missing episodes to young people who are at risk through running away who are placed in Merton but may be looked after by another local authority. In 2015/16 interviews were taken up by 5 young people and further support offered to two of these individuals. Currently there are 6 out of 25 (16 out of 50 on ice) cases that are or have been LAC.

Due to our concerns about a cohort of children who go missing who are other local authorities LAC we have established a process with the Police to review this under our new joint protocol. Where our concerns are particularly acute we write to the Local Authority concerned. Data from our missing children dataset indicate that there are a small number of children who go missing regularly. In 2015-16 this has mainly been from Croydon, Sutton and Wandsworth who are neighbouring boroughs. We are currently working with the provider to improve equity of service to Merton young people placed out of borough and to ensure young people placed in Merton by other local authorities can access appropriate support.

It is clear that more work is needed within Merton given the under-represented nature of boys and young men and similarly more work is needed within Merton to engage

with communities to reduce barriers and build trust to improve the identification and support of vulnerable children to gain a more accurate reflection of the current CSE problem profile. The spike in young people at risk at the age of 15 would reiterate the need to target prevention work for young people from key stage 2 onwards.

Research has indicated that when boys and young men (but not exclusively) are at risk of child sexual exploitation, one of the risk indicators could be offending behaviour and therefore may be dealt with by the youth justice system. This potential criminalisation of victims needs to be addressed through collaborative work with Merton's Youth Offending Service

A recent self evaluation (March 2016) and audit within Merton has identified trends with regards to CSE:

- Professionals were clear around associated risk where the risk has been identified as medium to high, however more work is needed to identify those needing prevention and early intervention services;
- High levels of multi-agency work and the effective use of the voluntary sector;
- Some opportunities missed with regards to sharing information around perpetrators where a prosecution cannot be secured, such as the use of civil law (injunctions) and Abduction notices;
- Intimidation of young people on social media sites where other young people have used images of a naked young person, not always of the victim, stating that the images are of the victim and threatening to use these images.
- Young people having difficulty in understanding what consent is, what the law says regarding sexual activity and consent. Even when it is clear that a young person understands the law, vulnerable young people still do not have the confidence to say no and to steer away from unwanted sexual contact.
- It would appear that young people are not aware of the possible consequences in terms of the law when involved in sexual acts particularly on line.
- The use of alcohol and substance misuse of children and young people; for example some young people have spoken about the common use of the 'legal high' called Spice and not aware of the risks in taking this substance.
- Girls being targeted for online grooming by males aged 16-18 years old.
- Children with learning difficulties or with ASD are increasingly common amongst the referrals we are receiving from Merton. The level of resource required to engage a victim of CSE is intensive and a continued pro-active approach is required to re-engage young people;
- The use of the voluntary sector proved crucial in engagement and risk management.
- The high number of episodes of going missing from home / school;
- A fragmented relationship between young people and their family and carers including those who are currently looked after;
- An increasing number of referrals in relation to boys and young men at risk of grooming into child sexual exploitation. For the boys that we have worked with they have been targeted due to their need to explore their sexuality. As they are unsure how to do this safely, they have been vulnerable to being groomed.
- An increase of young people with additional vulnerabilities, learning disabilities, and issues with their sexuality and gender.

Key to safeguarding potential victims is preventing child sexual exploitation through raising awareness with children, young people, families, professionals, businesses and the wider community. Much work has been undertaken within universal services

such as schools as part of the PSHE agenda but the process of engagement with communities is underdeveloped around this issue and requires strategic leadership and coordination with Merton Voluntary Services Council and the inter faith Forum.

The Metropolitan police and Waltham Forest LA have developed *Operation Makesafe* to raise awareness among businesses and local commerce to be rolled out across all London Boroughs. It is planned to launch this in Merton in the New Year.

Voluntary sector agencies within Merton remain key stakeholders in tackling the problem of child sexual exploitation. The commitment of these agencies is reflected in their level of expertise and experience, awareness raising campaigns, training, and their direct work with children, young people and families. These agencies have supported victims throughout the recovery process and have been key stakeholders in the development of strategic planning and the operational response.

For the victims and recovering survivors of grooming and child sexual exploitation, there should be clear and coordinated multi-agency planning and review which puts the needs of the children, young people and their families at the centre of the plan. Children, young people and their families are key to that planning and their voice should be clearly heard and acted upon, recognising that with support, young people, families and carers are the largest protective factor in safeguarding themselves.

The need to target, prosecute and disrupt those sexual predators who are responsible for the grooming and exploitation of children and young people is paramount. Given the under reported nature of child sexual exploitation, it is crucial that young people, families and carers, professionals and the community share intelligence on perpetrators, no matter how insignificant the information may seem.

4. Key Principles

The principles underpinning Merton multi-agency responses to the sexual exploitation of children and young people are:

- The primary concern of anyone who comes into contact with a child or young person who has been or is at risk of being sexually exploited must be to **safeguard** and **promote the welfare** of the child;
- It is important that the child or young person is assisted to **participate** as fully as possible in all decisions that are made in respect of them. Parents or carers should also be as fully involved as possible in the work.
- Children and young people do not make informed choices to enter or continue to be sexually exploited, but do so from coercion, enticement manipulation or desperation. They may have difficulty distinguishing between their own choices around sex and sexuality and the sexual activities into which they are being coerced. Their experiences and circumstances mean that they have **constrained choices**.
- Sexually exploited children and young people should be treated as **victims of abuse**.
- Children and young people should be enabled to make realistic choices and whenever possible be supported with effective provision for **“exiting”** from the circumstances where they are being sexually exploited.
- The professionals involved in making judgements on the levels or risk should be clear on **the basis of those judgements** and the sources of information and should make those assessments as part of a multi-agency approach.

- There should be equal importance given to the issues of **prevention, protection and prosecution**. Legal action should be taken against the perpetrators of sexual exploitation, but where prosecution is unlikely, disruption strategies should be employed.
- Where the police are considering criminal action against children and young people and the final decision rests with the police, **they should consult with partner agencies** through the CSE meetings to ensure that all alternative and appropriate actions have been considered for that child or young person in line with ensuring adherence to ACPO guidance in relation to not criminalising young people where possible.
- Professionals involved in working with children and young people subject to sexual exploitation will need to show **professional resilience** and be prepared to take a pro-active approach in engaging the child or young person as they do not always engage easily.

(a) Working with children and young people affected by child sexual exploitation⁴

Beckett, Homes and Walker (2017) highlight the need to work effectively with young people affected by CSE. This practice guidance which is research informed and evidenced based and is presented as part of this strategy.

When specific concerns are identified about child sexual exploitation, it is critical that children and young people receive the services they need, delivered in a way that recognises the complexity of their situation and maximises the likelihood of engagement.

What this looks like will differ according to the individual child/young person, whether the work is preventative or recovery-based and the support and intervention they require. However, common to all should be a commitment to:

- **Working in the absence of a formal disclosure:** The evidence base suggests that many victims may not reach a point of formal disclosure without the provision of (long-term) professional support. It is therefore critical that support is not dependent on disclosure and that children and young people are not pressured to disclose before they are ready.
- **Inclusive and accessible non-discriminatory practice** for all children and young people. This involves consideration of the full range of equality issues to ensure that information is accessible and relevant and that any barriers to accessing services (needing an interpreter, communication aid or wheelchair accessible venue, for example) are addressed. It also involves recognising specific vulnerabilities, risks and strengths and ensuring that these are appropriately addressed in any preventative or recovery-based work.
- **Empathetic and non-judgemental practice:** Any suggestion of judgement or blame will quickly alienate a child or young person and undermine our protective efforts. We should constantly check ourselves for unconscious judgements and be mindful of how our language and actions may be understood by others. Supervision and reflective practice are important ways of helping professionals to develop these skills and awareness. If we talk about a child/young person placing themselves at risk, for example, what that

⁴ Beckett H (lead author), Holmes D and Walker J, (2017) *Child Sexual Exploitation: Extended text of DfE (2017) Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation* pp. 30-33, University of Bedfordshire and Research in Practice,

can say to them is 'you put yourself at risk therefore you are responsible for what has happened to you'. This can compound existing feelings of shame or responsibility and result in them disengaging from services.

- **Unconditional support:** The message that care and attention can be provided without an expectation of anything in return is particularly important in the context of child sexual exploitation, which is characterised by commodification and exchange. Children and young people need to be able to access services without feeling they have to give anything in return.
- **A consistent approach to build trusting relationships:** A key component of effective safeguarding practice is the presence of safe and trusting relationships within which victims feel valued, are supported to communicate, feel listened to and feel part of identifying solutions. Building such trusting relationships takes time and skill, and relies on continuity of professionals and persistent commitment to the child or young person, even when they may resist attempts at engagement. When working in multi-agency contexts, professionals should identify which individual or individuals are best placed to develop such relationships (where possible in consultation with the child or young person). This may mean the role of other professionals includes advising or supporting this individual's engagement with the child/young person.
- **A resilience and strengths-based approach:** Children and young people highlight the importance of their existing resources and strengths being mobilised within the recovery process. They want support which encourages hope and doesn't solely focus on risk and deficits, or limit their identity to that of 'a victim of child sexual exploitation'. The evidence suggests that this is critical for building engagement and resilience to support safety and wellbeing in the longer term.
- **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 of their perspective, can increase the child or young person's distress and make meaningful engagement and change difficult to achieve.
- **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.
- **Engaging parents and carers as protective partners:** As long as they are not a source of risk, parents and carers (and children and young people's wider support networks) offer a very important protective resource.

Professionals should seek to engage them as safeguarding partners, educating them about how to support and protect their child and working with them to enhance protective factors around the child or young person. For this to work effectively, parents and carers need to feel they are not being judged for what has happened to their child. They also need to receive support to deal with their own feelings and support needs, as well as those of their child.

- **An understanding of the impact of trauma upon a victim:** Evidence around addressing child sexual exploitation increasingly highlights the importance of a 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 terms of how we work with them. We should also recognise the importance of prioritising safety and trust post-trauma, and the importance of accessing mental health support where required.
- **A recognition of the long-term and non-linear nature of recovery:** Both the effects of abuse, and the connections to abusive individuals or contexts, can have long-term detrimental impacts. Unravelling these connections and addressing these impacts require long-term investment in victims. Recovery is not always a linear process and so children and young people who have experienced this abuse require us to demonstrate a commitment to ongoing support.
- **Working with risk:** Meaningfully engaging children and young people in their protection and recovery can be challenging. It requires careful judgement and a nuanced understanding of how to balance the need for protection alongside the need to facilitate the child/young person's need and desire to exercise control over their own life. If we are to help them come to an alternative understanding of their situation, and thereby secure longer-term meaningful change rather than just enforced compliance, we need to accept that this may mean working with them while they continue to experience harm. It may mean seeking to minimise risk rather than assuming it is possible (or necessarily helpful) to immediately eradicate this risk. Professionals need the support of skilled supervisors and managers to ensure that judgements and decisions are made in the best interests of the child or young person, to help navigate systemic challenges around this and to help them manage the emotional impact and complexity of the work.
- **An understanding of the impact of engagement in criminal justice processes and provision of support around this:** Children and young people repeatedly report how difficult and potentially traumatic it is to engage in criminal justice processes, highlighting the need for specific support around this. This is needed both during the process, and afterwards when children, young people and their families can feel particularly vulnerable and isolated, and may be left with a deep sense of injustice and frustration.
- **An understanding of the importance of endings:** While children and young people recognise that services can't work with them indefinitely, they highlight the need for this withdrawal to occur in a gradual and planned manner. Where endings are determined by systemic requirements (for example, service provision ending once a child turns 18), rather than reflecting a victim's decreased need for support, it is critical that alternative support structures are put in place before support is withdrawn. Transitions need to be carefully planned and managed in partnership with children and young people, as far in advance as possible.

5. Referral and Consultation

Professionals in all agencies should be alert to the possibility that a child/young person they are working with may be being sexually exploited. The professional may already have concerns about the child/young person e.g. missing school, missing from home, self-harming. When considering possible exploitation any professional should first discuss the concerns with their agency's designated safeguarding lead and refer to CSE indicators in the screening tool and risk assessment (See CSE Protocol http://www.merton.gov.uk/cse_protocol_-_feb_2017.pdf).

(a) Merton: A Child Sexual Exploitation Scaled Approach

Children and families are supported most effectively and efficiently when services and information sharing are planned and delivered in a coordinated way. The vision of the Merton Well Being Model (MWBM) is to deliver the right service to the right child at the right time, supported by targeted, flexible and responsible services. The children and young people partnership in Merton has set key priorities to ensure that the needs of the children and families are met at the earliest opportunity.

The MWBM document for meeting the needs of children outlines the responsibilities of agencies in utilising a common and shared assessment (CASA) framework, however in the context of CSE it is essential that this is completed in conjunction with the MSCB child sexual exploitation screening tool and risk assessment. Consistent CSE screening through the "Think Family" model of family support is aimed to ensure that young people don't become victims, but that any concerns around CSE can be identified and can be addressed through early help. The outcome of this assessment is crucial to identifying the correct service, at the intensity required to support the victim, whilst encouraging disclosure, prosecuting offenders and employing disruption tactics. The scaled approach to exploitation grades the levels of response as follows:

SIGNIFICANT RISK: COMPLEX / SIGNIFICANT NEEDS

A CHILD WHO MAY BE TARGETED FOR OPPORTUNISTIC ABUSE THROUGH EXCHANGE OF SEX FOR DRUGS, ACCOMMODATION AND GOODS OR A CHILD WHO IS AT SIGNIFICANT RISK OR IS ALREADY BEING EXPLOITED. SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IS LIKELY TO BE HABITUAL, OFTEN SELF DENIED AND COERCION AND CONTROL IS IMPLICIT

Requiring a coordinated response including:

- Referral to the MASH and MASE in consultation with the CSE Lead; Case Allocated to professionals within Child in Need or Child Protection plan;
- Convene a Strategy discussion or meeting alongside joint Children's Services and Police investigation; Regular professionals network meetings to implement the plan; Participants of the meeting should agree a protection and disruption plan and action to include long term intensive direct work with the individual child and young person.
- Twin track disruption AND prosecution planning;
- Cross agency risk flags;
- Consultation with the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) / United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) where necessary;
- Harm reduction and detox intervention to be offered to the child or young person;
- Risks to be monitored and reviewed through the agreed CSE risk assessment document on at least a monthly basis.

MEDIUM RISK: ADDITIONAL NEEDS

A CHILD WHO MAY BE AT RISK OF BEING GROOMED FOR CSE

Referral to include:

- Referral to MASH and MASE teams in consultation with the CSE Lead.
- Strategy meeting
- Specialist CSE and Missing Services required to deliver a planned programme;
- Instigation of CASA within 10 days for coordinated plan, consideration of Child in Need Plan or Section 47 enquiry / Team around the Family.
- Consideration for a CSE strategy meeting in consultation with CSE Coordinator; (Lead IRO)
- Disruption tactics: S2 Abduction Warnings, Harboursing Notices, Police information sharing forms; all agencies to work together to prosecute perpetrators.

LOW RISK: UNIVERSAL SERVICES / ENHANCED SERVICES

A CHILD WHO MAY BE IN NEED WITH SUSPICION OF RISK OF BEING GROOMED FOR CSE

Multi-agency coordination in consultation with the CSE Lead including:

- Strategy meeting: Referral to MASE.
- Education to stay safe through home agency involvement, PSHE within school curriculum;
- Monitor through the CSE screening tool, changes in risk to be measured to review response;
- An escalation of risk may result in information being shared using a police information sharing form.
- Universal services available to the children, young people and families.
- Young people identified at risk through the Think Family early help and intensive support/CASA

For those children and young people currently known to Merton's Children's Services, the CSE Screening and risk assessment will be undertaken by partners in conjunction with the allocated social worker. The information will be collated and added to the CSE dataset through a referral to the CSE Coordinator from the Social Worker using the CSE screening tool and CSE risk assessment.

This is to ensure that a **consistent approach** is taken to recording, responding to and analysing the risks to victims and also to aid consistency in identifying perpetrators in order to gain a comprehensive profile of the issue in Merton.

A decision on the need for a Strategy Meeting to explore the risks of CSE will be made by the Children's Services CSE lead and SPOC at Borough police with onward referral to the MASE, jointly chaired by the CSE lead in CSF and the Borough police lead.

Consideration will be given at the strategy meeting, and the MASE around options for disruption.

Allocation of the case is dependent on the level of risk that the victim is subject to. High and medium-high (escalating risk) cases will be managed within the MASH or allocated worker if the case is open to CSC and YI.

The strategy meeting will usually include attendance by the young person and their family. Confidential information will be shared at the confidential section of the meeting. (See Information sharing guidance Appendix 5)

The data will be collated and analysed through MSCB dataset (See Appendix 8) and used to inform practice development, resource allocation and future commissioning and strategic planning.

In order to increase engagement of children, young people and their families Merton Safeguarding Children's Board has supported the implementation of the Signs of Safety model of conferencing. This promotes the involvement of children, young people and families within case conferences and independently chaired CSE Strategy Meetings and allows any planning to be young person centred. This approach makes professionals accountable for the safety planning of individual children and the actions which agencies will undertake. Revised strategy meeting templates will be implemented to reflect this. The allocated social worker will be responsible for leading the CSE strategy and incorporating this in to the Child's plan (Child in Need, Child Protection or Looked After). The CSE strategy for the young person will be scheduled for regular review at the MASE Operational meeting and the Child's plan will be reviewed in line with Regulations and Best Practice:

- Monthly for High Risk cases
- 1-3 Monthly for Medium Risk cases
- 3-6 Monthly for Low Risk Cases

The importance of disrupting potential and actual perpetrators is recognised across the partnership and there has been some successful disruption of suspected offenders and venues within Merton although as already noted there is significant room to improve in relation to this as found in common with many other local authorities. The development of a multi-agency protocol in order to set out consistent victim safety planning in light of pending and on-going prosecutions in conjunction with victim support services is essential to safeguarding victims and supporting them through the process thereby increasing the potential for successful prosecutions.

6. Sexual Exploitation and the role of the MASE Panel Meeting

The previous CSE Strategy drew on the data from the operational panel as it was then established and titled the Promote and Protect Young People Panel. In line with the Pan London Metropolitan Police protocol and to ensure consistent reference and comparison with similar panels across all London LA's the PPYP will from now on be referred to as the Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) Panel. There are scheduled monthly operational MASE meetings and this will report through the strategic Promote and Protect Young People subgroup of the MSCB (See Appendix 7).

The MASE panels are attended by a core group of professionals from Children's Services and all relevant Sexual Exploitation operational and practice leads from

- Police,
- Quality Assurance & Practice Development,
- Health,
- Education, Youth Services,
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS),
- Youth Justice/Offending Team (YOT) and
- Important partners in the independent and voluntary sector e.g. Housing and Catch22.

All referrals to the MASE Meeting will usually have already had a strategy meeting to discuss the risks of CSE. The lead professional must complete a risk screening and assessment prior to the strategy meeting and copy it to the Merton Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) cse.referrals@merton.gov.uk. The chair of the strategy meeting must then forward the agreed multi agency action plan to the MASE meeting. The strategy meeting will establish the level of risk ascribed to the case and the lead professional will be given a time slot to present at the next MASE Meeting. All new referrals to the MASE panel will therefore also be supported by the lead Independent Reviewing Officer/Independent Chair the strategy meetings.

The MASE Meeting group will consider the actions put forward for the case and any additional multi-agency involvement and confirm or adjust the risk assessment grading based on the most contemporary data.

(a) Purpose of MASE Meeting

- Share and clarify information across all agencies (See Appendix 5).
- Establish exact nature of concerns.
- Establish risks and protective factors for the child/young person.
- Establish risks and protective factors for any other children/young people, including siblings.
- Systematically gather information regarding links with known or suspected offenders and young people to support cross-referencing of associates and show relationships between groups of people on a borough wide and cross-borough basis.
- Consider any action to support the likelihood of prosecution alongside the impact on the child of any possible criminal proceedings.
- Agree on action and make recommendations to address the concerns and risks.
- Develop a multi-agency support plan for the child/young person and parent/carer and keep this under review.
- Ensure coordination with the MASH.

- Ensure there is effective cross border liaison with other LSCB's and CSE leads.
- Ensure effective liaison with: Central CSE Team, Borough Police, CAIT and Sapphire.
- Ensure effective liaison with MAPPA and other panels such as YOMP and MARAC.

(b) Implementation Monitoring and Review

The MASE Meeting will report to the MSCB on a regular basis in line with the schedule agreed by the Board. The Joint Chairs will attend MSCB and the Promote and Project sub group as required. There will be cross representation between members of the MASE, Missing, YOMP and CME panels to ensure integrated awareness and action planning (See Appendix 6).

The MASE Meeting will take into account current and emerging guidance/research into child sexual exploitation and its impact on children and young people ensuring the Board and its members are sighted on relevant trends and developments.

(c) Links to other areas of Safeguarding

The MASE Panel arrangements incorporate the Missing, Sexually Exploited and Trafficked (MSET) agenda within one operational multi- agency meeting.

Those children who run away or go missing from home, care or school are vulnerable to being targeted for child sexual exploitation. Some children and young people are at risk of being exploited after going missing, however not all missing children are exploited.

Child sexual exploitation sometimes includes the “movement” of children and young people between houses and / or premises, hotels, locations, towns and cities. When concerns for such movement arise, there will need to be a response that addresses the issue of internal / domestic trafficking as well as child sexual exploitation. This may include a referral to the UK Human Trafficking Centre and is included within the MSCB and Pan London procedures. The geographical location, as well as the road, rail and air infrastructure in Merton would suggest that any CSE risk assessment take into account the likelihood or risk of trafficking and MSCB procedures followed.

7. Agency Roles and Responsibilities

Merton is committed to developing it's response to concerns of Child Sexual Exploitation in line with local, regional and national examples of Best Practice and is an active participant in the National Working Group for CSE. The forum shares information on initiatives and developments in this area of work.

(a) Police

There are various police teams who may become involved with a young person who is at risk of being sexually exploited. This includes Child Abuse Investigation Team, Sapphire Team, Missing Persons Unit, Criminal Investigation Department, MASH, Child Sexual Exploitation Team and Safer Neighbourhood Teams. Police coordination of a Safeguarding/Disruption Plan towards targeted and identified individuals relies upon effective information sharing and reference to the Pan London Child Sexual Exploitation Operating Protocol.

Whenever a young person is the subject of a strategy meeting the details will be recorded on the appropriate Police indices alerting officers to their vulnerability. This allows any information regarding that young person to be collated, enabling any links between the young person and suspected offenders and other young people to be identified.

If the young person is found with an offender or potential offender, this will be entered as an intelligence record. Incidents of concern at the address to which the young person goes missing can be collated and addresses can be recorded systematically for the police to check if the young person goes missing again. If the young person is able to make a formal complaint/allegation a statement/ABE interview will take place. This will usually only be achieved through joint work with other agencies to establish a young persons safety, trust and support.

The young person's situation will be monitored and prior to any review meetings being held a report will be forwarded to the relevant professionals. Police schools officers are particularly well placed to gather and share this intelligence.

The police can also use Restraining Orders, Anti Social Behaviour Orders, Child Abduction Notices (The Child Abduction Act 1984, Section (2) to disrupt incidents and concerns of sexual exploitation. The police will assume primary responsibility for collating and mapping all intelligence on potential and actual suspects in CSE cases within and between Boroughs ensuring partner agencies are routinely informed and are so able to appropriately risk assess and manage cases in the MASE meeting.

(b) Children Schools and Families

The operational activity already undertaken in a case will be supported by the MASE Meeting, and ongoing the case will be supported either by a Team Around the Child/Family (TAC/F) approach with an agreed and identified lead professional or where appropriate the current or newly allocated social worker will complete a Single Assessment which will lead to either an Initial Child Protection Conference; a Child in Need Plan; a Looked After care plan or referral for enhanced services under a CASA.

Under a CASA a TAC meeting should be convened to agree:

- The development of a Child's Plan which meets the young person's developmental needs and develops a strategy to support the young person in avoiding potential sexual exploitation. The Child's Plan will be informed by the multi-agency assessment (Common and Shared Assessment)
- Services necessary to support the young person and address any further needs he/she may have.

Where identified concerns do not meet the threshold for Children's Social Care (CSC) involvement, the TAC should be coordinated by the agreed lead professional for the child/young person

If the young person remains at risk of significant harm because of continuing involvement in sexual exploitation the MASE Panel will support the multi agency response led by the allocated social worker under either a Child in Need plan; Child

Protection Plan; or Looked After Care Plan in line with the Pan London Child Protection Procedures, Working Together 2015 and Statutory Regulations.

(c) Children Looked After

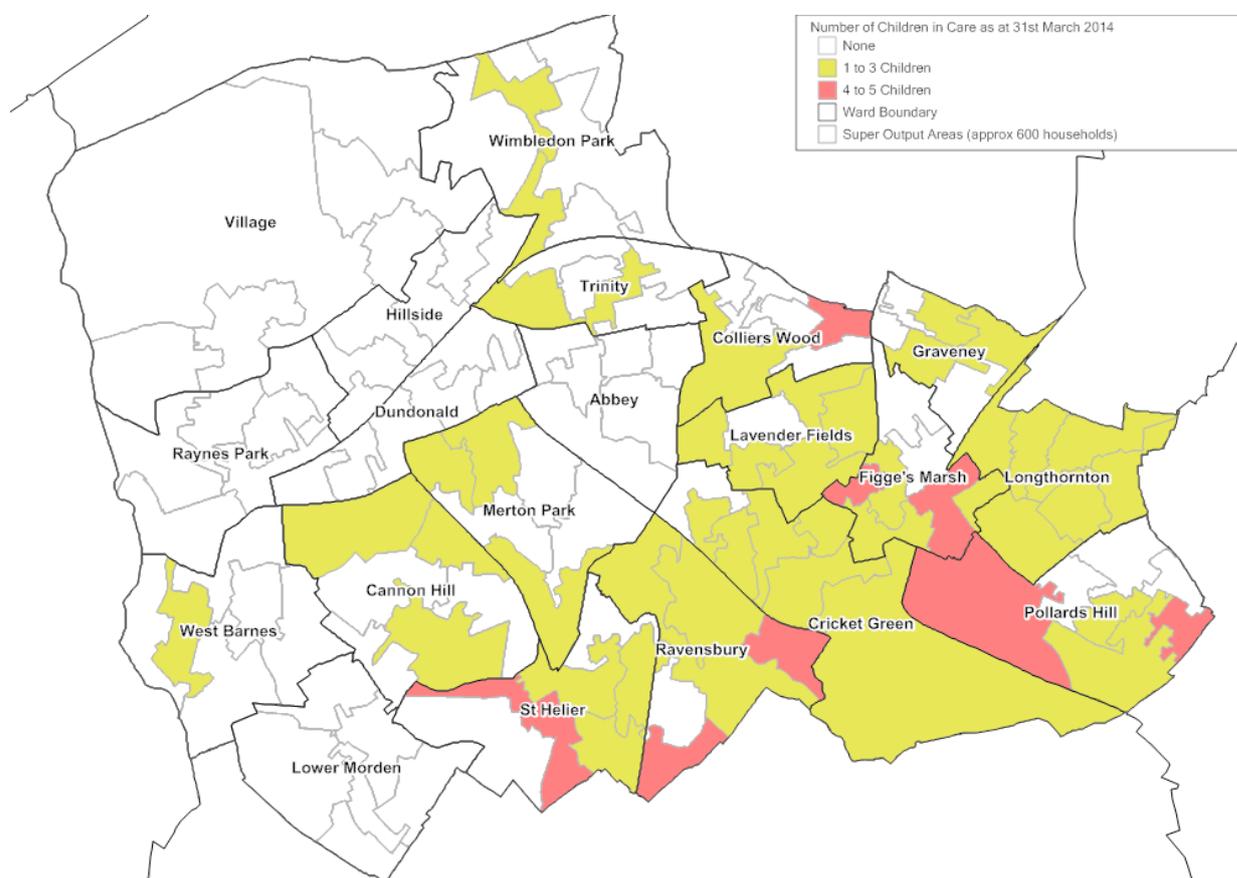
The position of Looked After Children in relation to possible CSE, needs particular attention because of the higher levels of vulnerability to Missing and CSE associated with this group.

In Merton 41% of our looked after children are aged 16 and 17 compared to 21% nationally.

Merton has a changing profile of ethnic groups for LAC. The majority of children looked after in Merton are from a white background, this is lower than the general resident population (18%). Mixed ethnic backgrounds, Black or Black British heritage and 'other ethnic groups' have looked after children proportions greater than the resident population. We continue to report an increase in the category of 'other ethnic groups' in 2013 and 2014 circa 80% were known to the authority as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

The borough map below represents their residence prior to being looked after, 60% of the 2014 LAC population came from an area of deprivation (Indices of Deprivation Affecting Children Index bottom 30%), an increase of 9% from 2013. The majority of children looked after as at 31 March 2014 lived in wards, pre intervention, in the east and south of the borough.

This map shows by ward the home address of Children Looked After at the 31st March



The MASE panel places a focus on the particular vulnerability of Children Looked After ensuring the following factors should be taken into account when considering concerns about a looked after child:

- The risks to other children in placement
- Whether the child should remain in placement
- The feasibility of controlling the child's movements and the whether the placement can keep him/her safe
- The child's parents should be informed. Any decision not to inform the parents must be recorded on the child's file with clear reasoning signed off by the team and service manager
- Other children in the placement should be monitored to identify whether they are also at risk of harm or involved in sexual exploitation
- Foster carers and residential care workers should be asked to take positive action to clarify and record suspicions and minimise the child's involvement in sexual exploitation
- If there is knowledge or suspicion that looked after children are involved in sexual exploitation together or are controlled by the same person there will need to be additional planning and consideration given to using child protection and /or organised abuse procedures
- Our approach is to work inclusively and in partnership with families and carers, acknowledging their concerns, stresses and capabilities.
- For young people placed in Merton by a different Local Authority any action to safeguard them must be led by the placing authority
- Monitor the young person's social activities in and outside the placement.
- The need for carers to be aware of direct and indirect risks of child sexual exploitation including access to the internet and social media. (Direct and indirect risks may occur inside or outside of a placement.)

Where child sexual exploitation is linked to reports of missing LAC young people they will be offered a debrief through the CSE and Missing Service and this will be communicated to the host and home authority. The host authority will always be Merton and usually also the home authority but on occasion the home authority will be another Local authority who have placed a young person in care in our area.

The Missing Persons and the CSE and Missing Service will report all local data to the MASE meetings, including all other local authorities placements in Merton where there is a risk of child sexual exploitation and/or reports of missing episodes.

(d) Health

Health professionals have an important role in early identification including school nursing, accident & emergency; sexual health services, paramedic and ambulance services, midwifery; primary care and child and adolescent mental health services. Recent reports have highlighted the role of health professionals in early identification of CSE:

The Health Working Group on Child Sexual Exploitation report⁵ recommended the effective engagement of health services and staff identifying: the need to raise awareness among health staff; for health care professionals to build trust and take a

⁵ Health Working Group Report on Child Sexual Exploitation (2014) an independent group chaired by the Department of Health, January 2014.

child and family centred focus; to take an active part in multi-agency responses to CSE; and the need to ensure there is a local child abuse and sexual exploitation pathway which provides clear decision making points, easy and timely access to services needed for acute and recovery support.

The Academy of Medical Colleges has published guidance on improving recognition and response to CSE in health settings⁶. This provides guidance for doctors across all specialities on indicators of sexual exploitation, support in communicating with and engaging with young people, and ensuring that health professionals feel equipped to refer sexually exploited children in a safe and appropriate manner.

BASHH – British Association of Sexual Health & HIV have worked on and circulated a risk assessment pro forma to support identification and referral of potential cases of CSE, although as yet there is no data on its use to support identification of cases of possible CSE.

For Looked after young people they often enter the care system with a poorer level of physical and mental health than their peers, and their longer-term outcomes remain worse. Nationally two thirds of looked after children have at least one physical health complaint, and nearly half have a mental health disorder.

Ninety five per cent of Merton LAC had an annual health assessment during 2014, compared to 87% nationally in 2012/13.

There are many health services that may work with young people at risk of sexual exploitation such as school nursing, teenage pregnancy services and sexual health services to name but a few. For Looked After young people the role of the Looked After Nurse is especially important in ensuring their health needs are met and carers are made aware of concerns to look out for and where to seek help.

A review of CSE services and responses in Health has been led by an Independent Group chaired by the Department of Health. In its report entitled *the Health Working Group Report on Child Sexual Exploitation* published by the DoH January 2014 it recommends a full service review of the Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC's) to improve clinical education and training and the need to improve how the needs of young victims are better met.

5% of Merton LAC (5 young people) were identified as having a substance misuse problem during 2015/16 compared to 4% nationally in 2014/15. This followed on from a proactive campaign to get social workers to make referrals for substance misuse assessment and intervention and the relatively high figure might be in part explained by our larger number of older YP in care as a proportion of the total cohort. Specialist substance misuse services are commissioned which provide a full range of support and therapeutic interventions for young people under the age of 25 using substances at a level affecting their ability to live a healthy, functioning life. Over the last year the services have engaged young people referred for targeted interventions via schools, the youth justice service and other voluntary and statutory agencies by providing structured programmes of support and education to reduce and cease drug/alcohol use.

(e) Education

⁶ Academy of Medical Colleges (2014) Child Sexual Exploitation: Improving recognition and response in health settings, September 2014.

Transition and adolescence can be a difficult time for young people. Schools through their PSHE and SRE programmes play a key role in raising awareness about healthy relationships and the healthy development of sexuality. Through a robust PSHE programme that includes work around understanding and managing risk, students are supported in developing their own strategies to keep themselves safe. Schools are most often best placed to see patterns of concern in a young person's behavior.

All Secondary and Academy schools including the Special schools in Merton have identified CSE Champions and this group meets regularly to look at issues of identification, training, awareness and multi-agency collaboration.

School systems highlight vulnerable students and ensure referrals to appropriate agencies. Some schools have developed their practice in identifying students at risk of sexual exploitation and run groups with trained staff to support the most vulnerable. Staff coordinating these groups will require consultation time with mental health professionals to ensure that they are able to manage the strong and sometimes overwhelming feelings that working with these vulnerable students sometimes elicit.

Support to Schools is being strengthened and includes guidance on promoting safety online. As well as meeting their responsibilities to potential victims of CSE schools are also well placed to pick up on activity in the school environment and locality and they need to work closely with allocated Schools Officers from the police to develop a clear and consistent response to unknown or in any way concerning adults bringing or collecting young people. Senior management in schools must make sure that all staff, including reception, are aware of the appropriate protocols.

(f) Voluntary Organisations

As part of a multi-agency response to child sexual exploitation Merton has commissioned specialist support for Missing Children and Young People as well as specialist work with those most at risk of Sexual Exploitation through Voluntary Organisations.

Training has been provided to a broad multi-agency audience aimed at raising awareness of the risks and prevalence of CSE and making sure partners are aware of how to refer in to the CSE services in Merton. Since 2010 services have offered group work to schools and a number (4) of schools have engaged with this service and made close links to the service often seeking support and advice. The ADAD theatre company reached over 1000 young people through its interactive play on sex and relationships. The CSE service has also provided casework support to 7 of the 9 Secondary schools in the Borough including the PRU and one of the Specialist schools. They have also worked with 3 Alternative Education providers to support and encourage young people's re-engagement with education and training.

During 2014 the CSE service linked with the Merton's MOPAC-funded worker for Young Women and Girls and ran joint workshops within schools looking at Sexual Exploitation and Girls within Gangs. The service also provided a number of training sessions for Merton both Social Work focused and Multi-agency. These have consisted of lunch time seminars and full day trainings. Feedback given to the Local Authority has always been of a positive and productive nature (see attached). As a result of this activity over 150 professionals across the borough have been briefed or trained in recognition of the potential symptoms of CSE and identifying young people at risk.

Many of the children known to MASE have been reported missing. The vast majority of children reported as missing were referred to a specialist missing from home and care project. Importantly however, many children known to be at risk from CSE were not necessarily reported as missing and this reveals the complex causes and indicators of risk in this area. 33% of young people who were at risk of CSE (referred to MASE) also had missing periods from home or care.

8. Key documents and Contacts

- MSCB Child Sexual Exploitation Protocol
http://www.merton.gov.uk/cse_protocol_-_feb_2017.pdf
- Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation – Action Plan (DfE)
<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/safeguardingchildren/a00200288/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation>
- Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation 2009 (DCSF)
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00689-2009>
- London Child Protection Procedures, Part B3: safeguarding Children Practice Guidance, Section 7
http://www.londoncp.co.uk/chapters/sg_sex_exploit_ch.html
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 (Department for Education)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419595/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf
- Safeguarding Children and Young People who may be affected by Gang Activity 2010 (Department for Schools, Children and Families)
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00064-2010>
- Sexual Offences Act 2003 Sections 47-51 (appendix 5)
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents>

CSE KEY CONTACTS

For Consultation and Discussion

- Emma Bradley London Borough of Merton CSE Lead.
Emma.bradley@merton.gov.uk 0208 545 5352

- Police Single Point of Contact

VW-CSE@met.pnn.police.uk

- CSE lead in MASH 020 8545 4304

NAME	AGENCY	TEL.	EMAIL
Sarah Daly	Head of Service LAC, Permanency & Placements	0208 545 4658	sarah.daly@merton.gov.uk
Emma Bradley	CSE Lead	0758 0903481	Emma.Bradley@merton.gov.uk
	CSE Lead MASH	0208 545 4304	
Nicola Church	Police Borough	0208 247 7800	nicola.s.church@met.pnn.police.uk.cjsm.net
Michele Okuda	Health (Community Services)	0208 254 8459	michele.okuda@nhs.net.cjsm.net
Fran Turko	Education	0208 288 5624	fran.turko@merton.gov.uk
Susie Carter	Catch 22 CSE and Missing	020 3701 8641	mertoncse.missing@catch22msm.cjsm.net
Roberta Evans	Y.O.T.	0208 274 4943	roberta.evans@merton.gov.uk.cjsm.net
Amy Coster	Transforming Families	0208 545 4965	Amy.coster@merton.gov.uk.cjsm.net

Note: Contact directly to confirm pathway to exchange information securely before sending confidential data.

9. Glossary

Acronym	In full
CAIT	Child Abuse Investigation Team
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CASA	Common and Shared Assessment
CSC	Children's Social Care
CEOP	Child Exploitation Online Protection
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CSST	Children's Safeguarding, Standards and Training
LAC	Looked After Child
MAPPA	Multi - Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MARAC	Multi - Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MASE	Multi - Agency Sexual Exploitation Panel
MASH	Multi - Agency Safeguarding Hub
MOPAC	Mayors Office for Policing and Crime
PPYP	Promote and Protect Young People
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SESM	Sexual Exploitation Strategy Meeting
TAC	Team Around the Child
YOMP	Youth Offending Management Panel
YOT	Youth Offending Team

Appendix 1

Some Risks/ vulnerabilities linked to gang involvement include:

- Childhood behavioural difficulties
- Learning difficulties
- Mental Health Issues; self harm , suicide , sleeping and eating disorders
- Exposure to violence in the home
- Poor parental mental health
- Experience to trauma
- Low academic aspirations
- Disengagement from school
- Association with gang or gang associates
- Peer rejection or victimization
- Feeling unsafe or marginalised in neighbourhood
- Poor family attachments
- History sexual abuse, emotional abuse, psychical abuse and neglect.
- History of running away or missing episodes
- Substance misuse
- History of professional services

Appendix 2

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) has identified the common characteristics of online exploitation of children and young people.

- Grooming children online for the purpose of sexually abusing them. This might involve an adult pretending to be a child, befriending the child through online chat rooms, social networking websites, email, mobile telephone messaging, gaining their trust, stalking their online activities
- Asking children to participate in non-contact sexual activities such as engaging in sexual conversations online or via mobile telephone
- Asking children to take and share indecent images of themselves online or through a mobile telephone
- Asking children to display sexualised behaviours or perform sexual acts that are recorded or shared live via webcam
- The creation, storage and distribution of child abuse images (also referred to as child pornography or indecent images)
- Arranging to meet a child in person for the purpose of sexually abusing them.

Appendix 3

CSE Information Sharing Protocol

Who does the Information Sharing Protocol affect?

The protocol affects all staff engaged with work that requires information to be shared with or is given to them by other organisations.

The benefits of this Information Sharing Protocol

- Help remove barriers to effective information sharing
- Provide guidance to assist in complying with legislation
- Help to ensure that consent to share personal information is obtained whenever it is required
- Help to ensure that information is shared when there is a requirement to do so
- Help to ensure that all agencies comply with relevant legislation
- Raise awareness amongst all agencies of the key issues relating to information sharing and give confidence in the process of sharing information with others

Principles of Information Sharing

Effective information sharing underpins integrated working and is a vital element of both early intervention and safeguarding. Each partner can hold different pieces of information which need to be placed together to enable a thorough assessment to be made.

To share information about a person you need a clear and legitimate purpose to do so, as this will determine whether the information sharing is lawful. For partners working in statutory services, the sharing of information must be included within the powers of the service. This will also apply if partners from the voluntary sector are contracted to provide a service on behalf of a statutory body.

Obtaining and sharing information

The sharing of information must have due consideration with the law relating to confidentiality, data protection and human rights. Having a legitimate purpose for sharing information is an important part of meeting those legal requirements. It is

important only to share as much information as is needed and records should be accurate, relevant and up to date.

Confidential information

Confidential information is:

- Private or sensitive personal information
- Information which is not already lawfully in the public domain or readily available from another public source
- Information that has been shared in circumstances where the person giving the information could reasonably expect that it would not be shared with others

This is a complex area and you should seek advice from your organisation's Information Manger, if you are unsure about confidentiality

Signatories to the protocol may lawfully share confidential information without obtaining consent if this can be justified in the public interest. Judgement is required on whether there is sufficient public interest using the facts of each case individually. Public interest can arise when protecting children from significant harm, promoting the welfare of children or preventing crime and disorder.

Proportionality and necessity are factors to be taken into consideration when deciding whether or not to share confidential information. In making the decision, practitioners must weigh up what might happen as a result of the information being shared against what might happen if it is not and apply their professional judgement.

The nature of the information to be shared is also significant where the information is sensitive and has implications for the practitioner's relationship with the individual, recognising the importance of sharing information in a timely manner if it is in the child best interest to do so.

Where there is a clear risk of significant harm to a child the public interest test will almost certainly be satisfied

Obtaining consent ³

Consent must be informed, in other words the person giving consent needs to understand:

- Why the information needs to be shared
- Who will see it
- How much will be shared
- What are the purposes and implications of sharing

It is good practice for signatories to set out their policy on sharing information when clients first join a service and when securing information, the process should be transparent and respect the individual. Consent must not be obtained by coercion

and must be sought again if there are to be significant changes in the use to be made of the information.

A child or young person, who is able to understand and make their own decisions, may give or refuse consent to share information. This would generally include children aged over 12, although younger children may have sufficient understanding. The child's view should be sought as far as possible. If a child is competent to give consent or refusal but a parent disagrees each individual case should be considered and again professional judgement should be applied.

When assessing a child's ability to understand, practitioners should explain in a way suited to their age, language and likely understanding. Where a child cannot consent, a person with parental responsibility should be asked to do so, on their behalf, although there are circumstances where this might be inadvisable. Where parenting is shared only one person with parental responsibility for a child needs to give consent.

It may not be appropriate to let a person know that information about them is being shared nor to seek their consent to share the information. For example, this would arise when sharing information is likely to hamper the prevention or investigation of a serious crime or put a child at risk of significant harm. In these circumstances, practitioners need not seek consent from the person or their family nor inform them that the information will be shared.

Similarly, consent need not be sought when practitioners are required to share information through a statutory duty or court order. However, in most circumstances they should inform the person concerned that they are sharing the information, why they are doing so and with whom.

Sharing Information Appropriately and Securely

Information should be shared in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 and follow the policy and procedures of the signatory service.

Practitioners should:

- Only share the information which is necessary for the purpose
- Understand the limits of any consent given, particularly if it is from a third party
- Distinguish between fact and opinion
- Only share it with the person or people who need to know and check that the information is accurate and up to date
- Record decisions on sharing information and the reasons for doing so or not
- If deciding to share the information, record what was shared and with whom

Prior to any meeting (e.g. strategy meeting, core group, or TAC meetings) to discuss CSE, professionals should meet to agree what information can be shared and what should not. The matter is especially relevant in this area of

work as parents/carers from a number of families may need to be invited to attend and should only hear of information that they have already been privy to whether directly or through their own third party sources.

Retaining and storing Information

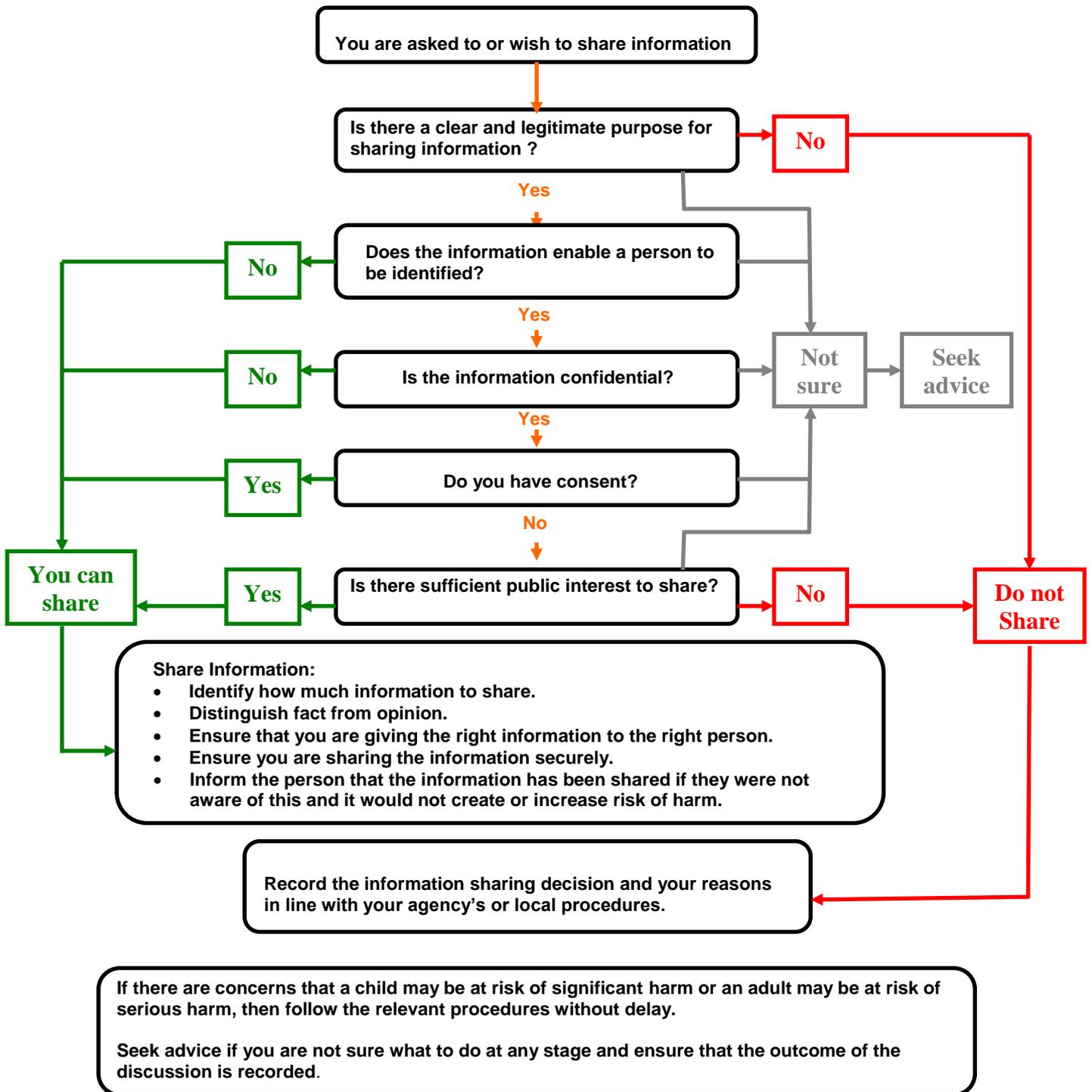
Information must not be retained for longer than necessary for the purpose for which it was obtained. Signatory services should ensure that they have physical and electronic security in place for the stored data and that there is awareness, training and management of the systems where the information is stored.

Regular review

This protocol will be reviewed at least annually and amended to take account of changes in law, guidance and lessons learned from sharing data.

Flowchart for Information Sharing

Flowchart of key questions for information sharing



Signatories to the Protocol

This protocol is provided to meet the needs of partners and it is intended that all signatories will use the protocol. More detailed information on the parties to this protocol is set out below.

Organisation	Signatory Person And Position	Nominated Representative	Contact Details (Include Telephone Number And E-Mail Address)

Information Sharing Checklist

- Do I already have informed consent to share this information?
- Is the information sensitive and personal?
- Do I need consent to share the information?
- Have I a legal duty or power to share the information?
- Whose consent is needed?
- Whose information is this?
- Would seeking consent place someone at risk, prejudice a Police investigation, or lead to unjustifiable delay?
- Would sharing the information without consent cause more harm than not sharing the information?
- How much information is it necessary to share in this situation?
- Am I giving this information to the right person?
- Am I sharing this information in a secure way?
- Does the person I am giving it to know that it is confidential?
- What will they do with it?
- Is the service user aware that the information is being shared (where this would not place someone at risk or prejudice a Police investigation)?
- Have I distinguished between fact and opinion?
- Does the person who is giving consent understand the possible consequences of sharing the information?

Legislation/Guidance

The Data Protection Act 1998

The Human Right Act 1998

The Children Act 2004

The Crime & Disorder Act 1998

Freedom of Information Act 2000

NHS Act 2006

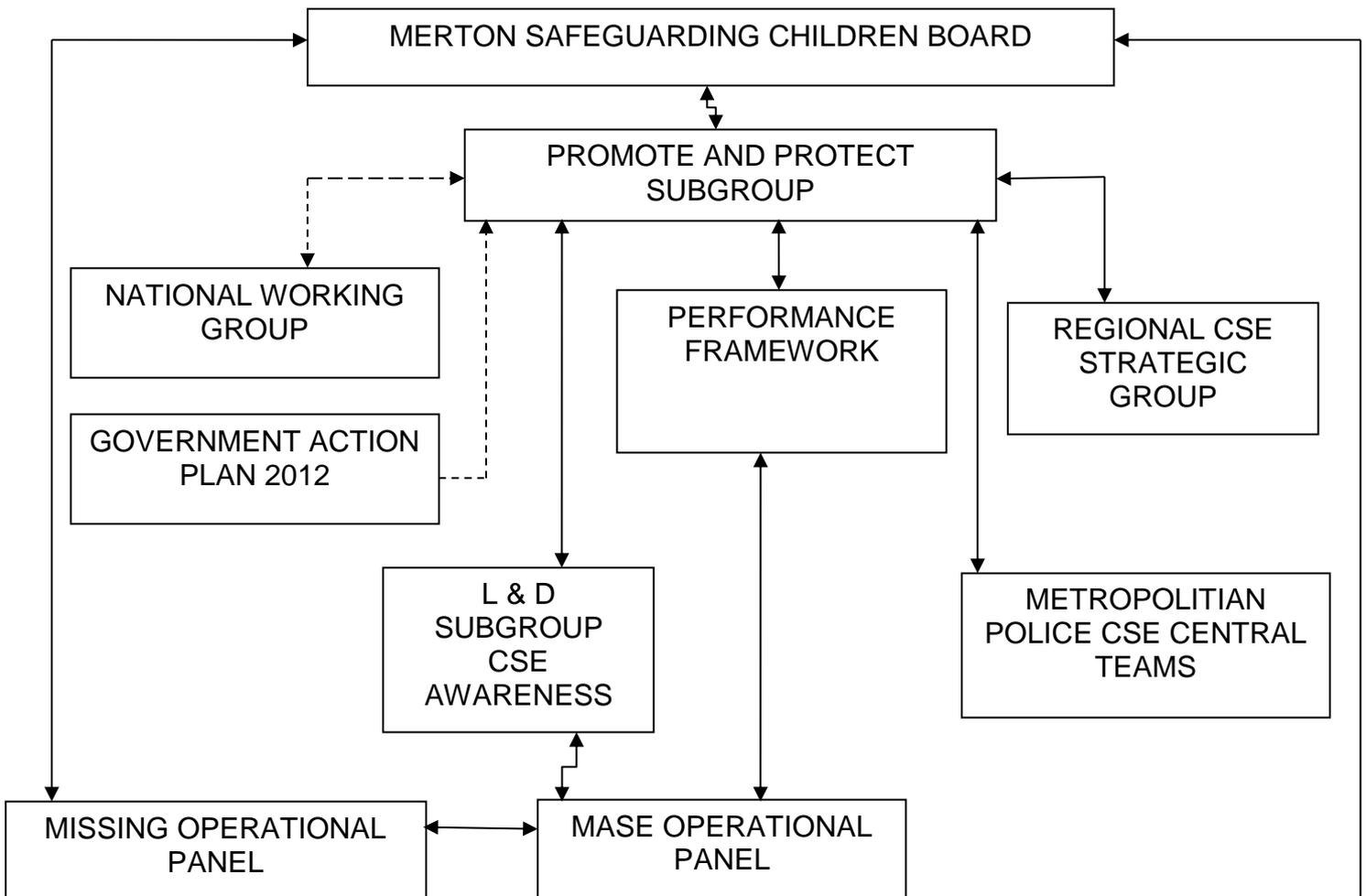
Working Together 2015

Refer to the Fraser Guidelines

Seven Golden Rules for Information Sharing, HM Government

Appendix 4

Governance of the Merton Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy and Action Plan



Members:

Independent Chair; Children, Schools and Families Directorate.; Education and Commissioning; Clinical Commissioning Group ; Designated Doctor; Designated Nurse; Youth Offending Service; Probation; Community Health Services; SWL&STG Mental Health Trust; Metropolitan Police; Adults Safeguarding; Cabinet Member, Secondary Head Teachers Representative; Primary Head Teachers Representative; Special Schools; Probation; Cafcass; Voluntary Sector..

Appendix 5

Terms Of Reference Merton Safeguarding Children Board **Child Sexual Exploitation MASE Panel**

The MASE is a Multi-Agency Operational Panel responsible for coordinating information sharing and multi-agency CSE interventions. The MASE Panel Meeting has been established to provide a comprehensive approach to tackling issues of sexual exploitation of children and young people across the Merton area. The MASE Panel Meeting is the key mechanism for agreeing how relevant organisations will co-operate and work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in effectively tackling child sexual exploitation. It is chaired by the Police; the vice chair is the Head of the Looked After Children Permanency & Placements from within Children's Social Care.

Definition of CSE

The MASE Panel uses the nationally agreed ACPO definition of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE):

Sexual exploitation of children and young people **under 18** involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where the young person (or third person/s) receive 'something' (e.g., food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities.

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/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain.

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

A common feature of CSE is that the child or young person does not recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and does not see themselves as a victim of exploitation (The London Child Sexual Exploitation Operating Protocol - 2015).

What is Child Sexual Exploitation - CSE?

Sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse⁷, and children and young people who become involved face huge risks to their physical, emotional and psychological health and well-being.

Membership

Effective and respectful inter-professional communication and teamwork is imperative to promote well-being and prevent potential being missed. This will be best achieved with a multidisciplinary forum comprising:

Core Members i.e. attending regularly

⁷ See *Working Together 2015*, p. 93

Police

Metropolitan Police - Missing Persons Office and PPD

Children's Social Care

Head of Service Looked After Children

MASH Representative

Independent Reviewing Officer

Health

Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children

Clinical Lead Merton School Nursing NHS Sutton & Merton

Women's Health NHS Sutton & Merton

Commissioned Services

Gangs and Young Girls Worker

Barnardo's Child Sexual Exploitation Project

Catch 22 CSE and Missing Worker / Catch 22 Representative

Education and Youth Inclusion

Youth Offending Services

Virtual Behaviour Service

Education Welfare Service

Joint Chair of Meeting: Sarah Daly Head of Service LAC, Permanency & Placements and DCI Nicola Church Borough Police