

SET Partnership Child Exploitation Pathway



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SET Partnership CE Pathway Functionality

The SET Partnership CE pathway utilises an interactive PDF form which professionals can complete on their computer and other devices. It has been tested on various systems however, if you have any issues filling in the form it is recommended that you print out the pathway so that it can be completed by hand.

1. Introduction

In this document you will find the SET Partnership Child Exploitation (CE) pathway. It has been designed to help professional who works with children and their families in Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) to make decisions regarding referrals where CE is suspected.

The tool contained in this pathway indicator is designed to be a guide which can help you begin to make professional decisions related to the most appropriate course of action where concerns related to CE are present.

2. SET Partnership CE Pathway Guidance

This pathway indicator is to be used by any professional working with children and young people if they suspect potential CE.

There are many reasons why you might suspect potential CE and the warning signs and symptoms will vary from child to child. There are various physical, emotional and/or behavioural issues that a child or young person may be exhibiting which suggest abuse and exploitation. SET guidance on identifying the signs of exploitation can be found [here \(pp.423-6\)](#).

Nationally there are a lot of different child exploitation risk assessment tools available however research has demonstrated that there is little correlation between the risk factors highlighted on a risk assessment to the link of exploitation. We have therefore taken a slightly different approach by developing a tiered framework to guide practitioners by listing a number of factors that may indicate that a child is being exploited.

This pathway indicator does not contain an exhaustive list and practitioners will need to carefully consider the context behind any of the behaviours, as this has an important role in determination of the appropriate action you should take. Professionals should also use their experience and knowledge of safeguarding and associated risk factors to inform their decision-making process. Similarly if you are unsure about which action to take then it is important to use this pathway as a means for compiling as much information as possible before seeking support within your local authority.

The framework is designed to help different agencies to work to the same criteria when considering possible CE. This pathway indicator can be used in two ways, either as a tick box screening tool which can be used to enable practitioners understand an individual's risk of exploitation or as supplementary guidance which allows practitioners to embed the learning into their existing assessments and plans.

The pathway indicator utilises a tiered framework for identifying potential CE; immediate safeguarding concerns are in the **black section**, behaviours and risk factors that are well established indicators of exploitation are in the **red section**, probable risk factors and indicators in the **amber section** and additional factors in the **yellow section**.

Similarly, there are also distinctions within risk factors, such as 'confirmed/suspected' and 'currently/previously'. While they are important distinctions they are both significant in deciding whether an individual is at risk. Please note that 'confirmed' does not necessarily require a direct disclosure of exploitation from the individual, but may include information being provided to you by other trusted (or multiple) sources, or through your own professional knowledge and experiences.

Additional vulnerability factors based on individual characteristics and socio-economic status have also been included at the end of the pathway, however, **please note that these do not indicate CE on their own**. Vulnerabilities are factors which make a child or young person less able to deploy protective capabilities when faced with a risk of exploitation, whereas risks are the threats and/or harms of CE a person may be faced with.

Specific questions should only be answered if you have a pre-existing relationship with that child or young person as they require an in-depth knowledge of that individual. If this is the first time that you have met this child or young person please only utilise the first section of the pathway indicator.

Assessing exploitation is not an exact science however, practitioners should understand the signs that someone might be being exploited or is at risk of exploitation and look to put in a plan to build resilience or safeguard as appropriate.

There is also a section at the end of this pathway indicator where you can write down detailed notes and your professional opinion about the individual child or young person. This is used to evidence why you have initial CE concerns. We recommend using this section as you may want to refer to your notes later on or use them as part of any onward referral process you may undertake. Each risk factor and indicator has a specific ID which you may refer to here. Additional vulnerability factors have been numbered also.

What your results indicate and the suggested actions/pathway you should take can be found on page 10. The pathway will be linked directly to your local area so please follow the local procedures.

3. Definitions

We have also compiled a list of key terms and provided more information and links about specific issues which will help with your decision-making process when completing the pathway.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is common in county lines and occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. Criminal exploitation of children is broader than just county lines and includes for instance, children forced to work on cannabis farms, theft and commit acts of violence. (Home Office, 2018)

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) 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. (Department for Education, 2017)

Modern Slavery is the term used within the UK and is defined within the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The Act categorises offences of Slavery, Servitude and Forced or Compulsory Labour and Human Trafficking. These crimes include holding a person in a position of slavery, servitude forced or compulsory labour, or facilitating their travel with the intention of exploiting them soon after. It is possible to be a victim of modern slavery within your own country and therefore applies to UK and non-UK resident children. (Modern Slavery Act, 2015)

Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and/or emotional connection with a child or young person so that they can exploit them. Children and young people who are groomed can be exploited, radicalised, trafficked or sexually abused. (NSPCC)

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons. (Home Office, 2018)

Please note that people of all ages may be vulnerable to exploitation. Exploitation does not stop once a person reaches the age of 18. Exploitation may start once the person reaches 18 but in many cases exploitation in childhood can carry on into adulthood meaning that a number of young people receiving support from children services may also need support from adult services. Where a young person is approaching the age of 18, you should consider making contact with adult social care to see what support might be available.

Additional definitions/explanations can be accessed via the following links:

- [Child abuse](#)
- [Models and theories of exploitation](#)
- [Historic/Non-recent abuse](#)
- [Bullying and cyberbullying](#)
- [Homelessness and insecure housing](#)

Below you can find your specific local authority's safeguarding children board:

- [Safeguarding Southend](#)
- [Essex Safeguarding Children Board](#)
- [Thurrock Local Safeguard Children Board](#)

Process for referring to Essex Police

There are two processes with regards to contacting Essex Police about CE. The processes differ if you:

1. Have **concerns about a child and are looking to refer**
2. Would like to **provide information about CE activity only**

If you have concerns about a child, the partnership pathway can be completed and referred to Essex Police via email to their OC Triage team. The contact details can be found in your local authorities specific CE procedure pathway, found on pages 11-13.

If you would like to provide information about CE activity to Essex Police you will need to complete the [Partner Information Submission Form](#) and send it to intel.bureau@essex.police.uk

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ID	Date:		
Safeguarding concern <u>If selected immediately contact the police and social care</u>			
A	Evidence of child under the age of 13 having been sexually abused (a child under the age of 13 cannot consent to any sexual activity)	Confirmed <input type="checkbox"/>	Suspected <input type="checkbox"/>
B	Evidence of being bought/sold/trafficked (i.e. found out of area whilst deemed missing)	Confirmed <input type="checkbox"/>	Suspected <input type="checkbox"/>
Established risk factors/indicators of CE			
C	Gang membership or associating with other known victims or perpetrators of exploitation	Confirmed <input type="checkbox"/>	Suspected <input type="checkbox"/>
D	Child or young person who deems themselves to be in a relationship with someone and there are concerns about that person's age and/or the balance of power in the relationship (5+ years difference between ages, particularly if young person is under 16)	Confirmed <input type="checkbox"/>	Suspected <input type="checkbox"/>
E	Presented with descriptions of sexual injuries (to the genitalia) or serious physical injuries inflicted by someone else		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
F	Presenting with injuries which are unexplained/explanation implausible		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
G	Disclosure of abuse followed by a withdrawal of allegation		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Additional risk factors/indicators of potential CE <u>(May also highlight other issues unrelated to CE)</u>			
H	Evidence of sexual activity under the age of 16	Confirmed <input type="checkbox"/>	Suspected <input type="checkbox"/>
I	Alcohol/substance misuse (presenting under the influence of or in possession of substances)	Currently <input type="checkbox"/>	Previously <input type="checkbox"/>
		Confirmed <input type="checkbox"/>	Suspected <input type="checkbox"/>
If you have an existing relationship or have access to personal records please answer the following questions: Established risk factors/indicators of CE			
J	Child in care or you have early protection concerns (including CiC/CPP/CIN/Early Intervention Services)	Currently <input type="checkbox"/>	Previously <input type="checkbox"/>
K	Evidence of unhealthy or harmful sexual interaction (multiple STIs, UTIs, repeated pregnancy/termination)	Confirmed <input type="checkbox"/>	Suspected <input type="checkbox"/>
If you have an existing relationship please answer the following questions: Probable risk factors/indicators of CE			
L	Unaccounted money and/or goods (i.e. mobile phones, clothing etc.)		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
M	Persistent absence from home, care or school		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
N	Concerns about child/young person's use of online technology or that others may be using technology to access or abuse the child/young person (sexting/send videos, large amounts of unknown friends online etc.)	Confirmed <input type="checkbox"/>	Suspected <input type="checkbox"/>

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If you have an existing relationship please answer the following questions:
Probable risk factors/indicators of CE

<input type="radio"/>	Spending time in known CE hotspots/with friends associated with CE	Confirmed <input type="checkbox"/>	Suspected <input type="checkbox"/>
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If you have an existing relationship please answer the following questions:
Additional risk factors/indicators of potential CE
(May also highlight other issues unrelated to CE)

P	Change in physical appearance (i.e. well cared for, sudden change in hygiene or having brand new clothes despite you having no knowledge of how they might have access to this)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Q	Sudden deterioration of personal hygiene	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
R	Change in personal behaviour (i.e. conduct issues, regularly missing or not attending appointments etc.)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
S	Low self-esteem or feelings of worth	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
T	Having new unknown friends	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
U	Reduced contact with family and/or friends	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
V	Becoming or remaining isolated from others	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
W	Suspicious behaviour with phone/smart device (i.e. constantly looking/checking it, after having looked at it leaving the room/area etc.)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
X	Child or young person remaining hypervigilant, nervous or protective about discussing things with you	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>

Additional factors which may make children and young people more vulnerable to CE
Note: These on their own do not indicate CE

1. Disabilities including SEND <input type="checkbox"/>	2. Neglect <input type="checkbox"/>	3. Low socio-economic status <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Parental substance misuse <input type="checkbox"/>	5. Domestic abuse (including witnessing) <input type="checkbox"/>	6. Criminality in the family <input type="checkbox"/>
7. Homeless or in insecure housing (i.e. sofa surfing, refuge shelters etc.) <input type="checkbox"/>	8. Alternative education provision or missing out on education <input type="checkbox"/>	9. Known association with other C&YP who are being exploited <input type="checkbox"/>
10. Identifying as LGBTQ+ <input type="checkbox"/>	11. Previously a victim of CE <input type="checkbox"/>	12. Previous sexual abuse (either personally or witnessed) <input type="checkbox"/>
13. Identifying as transgender <input type="checkbox"/>	14. Other agency involvement (i.e. social care, EWMHS, YOT etc.) <input type="checkbox"/>	
15. Poor mental health and wellbeing, including: <input type="checkbox"/>		
<div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• anxiety• depression• low self-esteem or self-worth• self-harm• suicidal thoughts/ ideation• other mental health issues and or disorders that may increase vulnerability to exploitation (such as PTSD, dissociation, personality disorders, etc)</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental health issues and/or disorders (i.e. dissociation, PTSD, multiple personality, depression etc.)• suicide attempts• sleep problems• ADHD/ASD diagnosis• eating disorders</div></div>		

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Professional notes and comments:

(You may utilise the corresponding ID letter/number when commenting)

If you plan on making an onward referral please complete the following details:

If you don't know some of the child's details please leave blank

Your details

Your name:

Your organisation:

Contact details: Phone
Other

Email

About the child

Child's name:

Child's date of birth:

Child's contact details: Phone
Other

Email

Child's home address:

5. What actions should I take?

If there are immediate safeguarding issues:

Contact the police and Children's Social Care to initiate child protection procedures. This could be because there is immediate danger or indicators of current abuse.

If there are issues relating to trafficking and slavery you will need to refer the young person using the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). [More information about this can be found here.](#)

Serious cause for concern and/or immediate safeguarding issues

If after completing the pathway you have highlighted:

- **Multiple confirmed/current established risk factors of CE**
- **Multiple suspected/previously established risk factors of CE**

This indicates there is serious cause for concern. The child/young person is potentially associating with or being groomed by individuals/groups who may be engaging in CE.

If no immediate safeguarding concerns are present but serious concerns of exploitation, you should follow your local authority procedures for referring the child/young person. These can be found below.

You should aim to develop a multi-agency protection plan. This will identify direct work to be undertaken with the child/young person, their family and any other persons of concern.

Cause for concern or suspected CE

If after completing the pathway you have highlighted:

- **Multiple confirmed/current risk factors of probable CE**
- **Few suspected/previously established risk factors of CE**

This indicates there is cause for concern for suspected CE.

If this child/young person does not have a pre-existing relationship you should refer them to and/or seek advice from a local specialist professional. If you have an existing relationship with the child/young person you should follow your local authority procedures relating to CE.

No immediate concerns but vulnerabilities raised

If after completing the pathway you have highlighted:

- **Multiple additional risk factors of CE**
- **Few suspected/previous risk factors indicating probable CE**

This does not necessarily suggest potential CE. It is suggested that you gather more information and continue to assess and review the situation.

Similarly there may be other safeguarding issues that do not relate to CE. It is recommended that you seek advice from local child protection services to discuss the case or find support from local agencies. Your local procedures can be found below.

Due to the information you have provided the child/young person may be suitable for referral but are unlikely to meet the threshold required for services.