



# **Safeguarding Children from Criminal Exploitation (Including County Lines Activity)**

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# What is criminal exploitation?

Criminal exploitation interlinks with a number of multiple vulnerabilities and offences including the child being exposed to and/or victim of physical and emotional violence, neglect, sexual abuse and exploitation, modern day slavery and human trafficking, domestic abuse and missing episodes. (Children's Society 2017)



# County Lines

The term County Lines is becoming widely recognised to describe situations where young people may be internally trafficked for the purposes of criminal exploitation.

‘County Lines’ is a term used by government departments, law enforcement, local authorities and partner agencies to describe the use of mobile phone ‘lines’ by gangs looking to extend their drug dealing activities into locations outside of their metropolitan home areas. (NCA 2015).

It is a specific type of exploitation and our local work is focused on addressing county lines and other forms of exploitation to make our children and city safer.



# This is not a new story?





# Grooming Cohesion and Serious Youth Violence

- Key learning is being delivered to raise awareness for professionals (e.g. in schools) and we will be sharing lessons across partnerships about how children are being groomed –
- Tricking young people into getting into their debt, for example, by arranging for them to be robbed. They will then be in '**debt bondage**' to the gang, owing it a debt that may also have interest.
- Giving them gifts, protection, using the word family making them feel they belong.
- Peer grooming is common and takes place in schools, communities and via social media.
- **These methods can lead to children firmly believing they have made an active choice to join in with offending and to deny that they have been exploited whilst also being scared.**



# Victim not suspect



- There is currently poor awareness and understanding of CCE and it is often the case that victims are mistakenly viewed as having made a 'choice' to engage in criminal behaviour.
- This is often exacerbated by the child's refusal to recognise themselves as a victim.

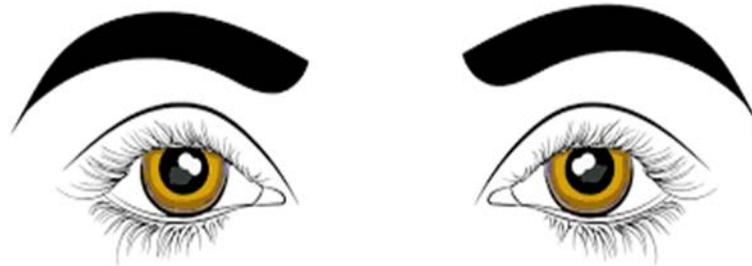


# We should all be alert; signs to look out for

- Excess cash
- New clothing
- Going missing – (out of county)
- Leaving home / care without explanation
- Suspicion of physical assault / unexplained injuries
- Increase in mobile phone use
- Change in behaviours – ASB
- The term O.T. (Out of town) / Gone Foreign/ Country
- Suddenly employed working out of town, no previous mention of interview, limited details of role and company working for.



# Signs to look out for continued



- Regularly being found away or going to other cities;
- Relationships with controlling individuals or groups these may be older; ( Don't forget as with CSE, peer victims can be used to groom and recruit.)
- Significant decline in school results / performance;
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being.



# Ensuring an appropriate response

- A multi-agency response is needed and not just from statutory agencies. Concerns of parents/carers need to be heard
- Those affected to be treated as victims not offenders
- The voluntary sector has an important role to play
- Accommodation and relocation
- Access to employment/education



# Vulnerability Factors

- Having a prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse.
- Lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past(domestic abuse or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example);
- Social isolation or social difficulties;
- Economic vulnerability;
- Homelessness or insecure accommodation status;
- Connections with other people involved in gangs;
- Having a physical or learning disability
- Having mental health or substance misuse issues;
- Being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories).



# Lower Level Indicators

- Change in behaviour; more secretive/withdrawn/isolated from peers or not mixing with usual friends.
- Expressions around invincibility or not caring about what happens to them.
- Possession of hotel keys/cards or keys to unknown premises.
- Entering or leaving vehicles cars with unknown adults.
- New peer groups and/or relationships.
- Leaving home/care without explanation.
- Significant decline in school results/performance.
- Sudden loss of interest in school or change in behaviour. Decline in attendance or academic achievement (although it should be noted that some gang members will maintain a good attendance record to avoid coming to notice).
- Sudden change in appearance – dressing in a particular style or 'uniform' similar to that of other young people they hang around with, including a particular colour.
- Dropping out of positive activities.
- Breaking off with old friends and hanging around with one group of people.
- Starting to adopt certain codes of group behavior e.g. New nickname, ways of talking and hand signs, Graffiti style 'tags' on possessions, school books, walls.



# Medium Level Indicators

- Increased interest in making money. Increasing use of drugs or alcohol.
- Unexplained absences from, or not engaged in school/ college/ training/ work.
- Returned from missing episodes with injuries, or disheveled.
- Disclosure/ Suspicion of sexual/ physical assault/ unexplained injuries, followed by withdrawal of allegation.
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being.
- Agencies unable to engage.
- Parental concerns.
- Repeated STI"s and/or pregnancy.
- Increase referrals to agencies for other known peers.
- Staying out unusually late without reason, or breaking parental rules consistently.
- Constantly talking about another young person who seems to have a lot of influence over them.
- Associating with known or suspected gang members, closeness to siblings or adults in the family who are gang members.
- Expressing aggressive or intimidating views towards other groups of young people, some of whom may have been friends in the past.



# High Level Indicators

- Frequent missing episodes and been found out of area.
- Found with large quantities of drugs and carrying weapons.
- Abduction or forced imprisonment.
- Unexplained amounts of money, mobiles, credit, clothing, jewellery, new hair cut or other items/gifts. Receiving rewards of money or goods for introducing peers.
- Increasingly disruptive, hostile or physically aggressive at home or school, including use of sexualised language and language in relation to drug dealing and/or violence.
- Fear of reprisal from “gang” members or violence from young people or adults.
- Reports being taken to parties, people’s houses, unknown areas, hotels, nightclubs, takeaways or out of area by unknown adults.
- Gang association or isolation from peers or social networks.
- Child seems to withdraw from family life/emotionally 'switched off', but also containing frustration / rage.
- Being scared when entering certain areas and concerned by the presence of unknown youths in their neighborhoods.
- Having multiple mobile phones, sim cards or use of a phone that causes concern - multiple callers or more texts /pings than usual.



# Impact of CCE on Children/Young People and Families/Carers

Children/Young People	Families/Carers
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Every aspect of a child/young person's life

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Education and training
- Family relationships
- Friends and social relationships
- Behavioural changes
- Unable to trust or engage with professionals

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Work life
- Family cohesion
- Economic stability
- Social life
- Despair
- Limiting their capacity to respond to the needs of their children





# Assessing risk and harm levels

- If a referral is appropriate, use the presenting indicators as a measure of risk/harm refer to risk assessment tool
- If a referral does not appear to be the best course, consider the following:
  - Consult Nottingham City's Safeguarding board procedures
  - Arrange a professionals meeting to facilitate information sharing
  - Consider how to raise awareness of and support young person
  - Take action where there is reluctance to engage either by young person or other professionals
  - Consult line manager/Designated safeguarding manager
  - Monitor and review



# Development of a 'hub' to reduce youth violence

- There is a strong link between young people involved in offending and violent incidents and those at risk of exploitation and County Lines.
- Recent challenge across the city to tackle the concerns about 'weapon-enabled' violence has resulted in a collaborative approach between Children's Integrated Services and Community Protection Service working together to reduce risk in the community for individual children and younger adults.
- A 'hub' is being piloted, comprising Children's Integrated Services, Community Protection colleagues and working closely with schools and police to identify those at risk of being involved in violence



# Development of hub cont'd

- The hub delivers a creative and responsive support from workers with specialist skills in youth work and offending, to divert young people from negative and harmful lifestyles and support families and communities to be safer.
- The hub is currently in 'pilot' form but is developing an approach that is sustainable and makes best use of all statutory and voluntary partnerships.



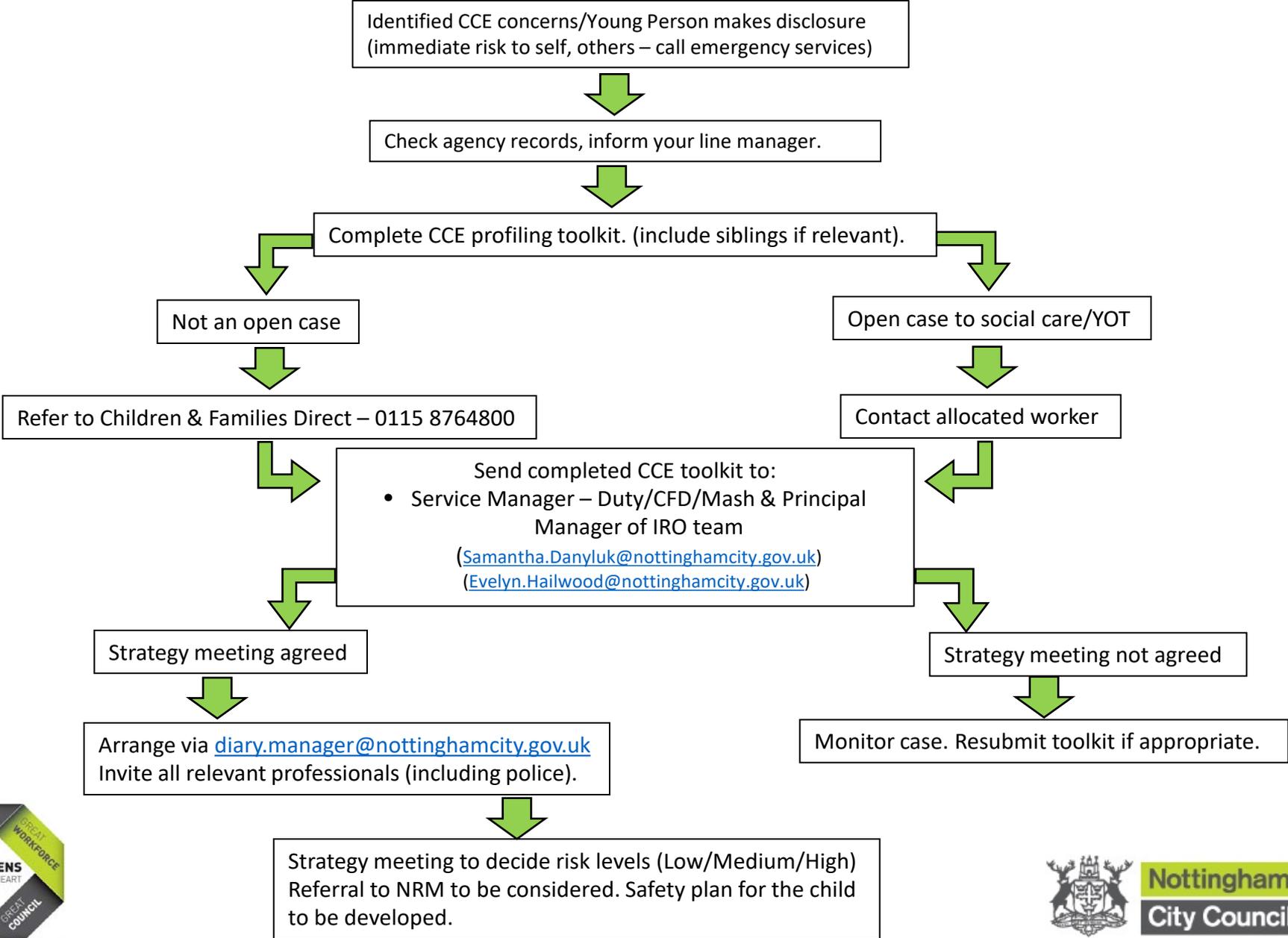
# Workers joining the hub will include:-

- Team Management
- Targeted Youth Support
- Priority Families Accredited Practitioner
- Youth Workers

A Senior Youth Justice Service Manager and a Specialist Project Manager Cohesion will manage this team for its pilot period.



# Child Criminal Exploitation Pathway



# A safe future for children

Safeguarding children from Criminal Exploitation is everyone's responsibility

Whoever comes into contact with children and young people in a professional capacity has a duty of care to that child by identifying those at risk and who need our help and protection

The Children's Act 2004 reinforced the message that all organisations that work with children and families share a commitment to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Changing lives is about creating a different, ambitious life for our valuable young people who are the future of our city

**Children and Families Direct : 0115 8764500**

