

Sexual and Criminal Exploitation Strategy for Northumberland 2019 - 2022

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Statement of Intent

Tackling criminal and sexual exploitation remains one of the most important challenges for the Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership, Northumberland Safeguarding Adults Board and Safer Northumberland Partnership Strategy Board (referred to as the Northumberland Boards).

It is the clear intent of the Northumberland Boards to improve the lives of all vulnerable people living in Northumberland, by ensuring they understand the risks of being sexually (SE) or criminally exploited (CE), enabling and supporting victims and their families to cease contact with the perpetrators of abuse, and working in partnership with others to disrupt and finally bring perpetrators to justice.

It is our collective, multi-agency responsibility to identify potential victims and our joint responsibility to safeguard them from further risk of harm. We are committed to preventing people becoming victims of this form of abuse and reassuring our communities that we can perform our duties effectively by the provision of positive support and intervention and promotion of community vigilance.

It is crucial that all key partners working with vulnerable people and the wider public understand what sexual and criminal exploitation is, how it differs from other forms of abuse, and how to respond to concerns.

This strategy will also consider the impact of the Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adults, known as County Lines¹. County lines is a major, cross-cutting issue involving drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing persons.

This strategy will have close links to the Modern Day Slavery Strategy being developed by the Safer Northumberland Partnership and the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy.

There are clear links between children and young people who go missing² from home or care settings and CE and SE. The Newcastle Joint Serious Case Review also highlighted that:

“It is our intent to implement effective multi-agency measures that will lead to better outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and adults. We recognise that feeling safe, having promoted self-esteem and self-awareness, engagement in positive activities

¹ Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: County Lines guidance July 2017 Home Office https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/626770/6_3505_HO_Child_exploitation_FINAL_web_2_.pdf

² Statutory guidance Children who run away or go missing from home or care DfE Jan 2014

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(including attendance at school, college or work) and the ability to make a positive contribution to wider society are all integral to the recovery and resilience of victims who may be, or have been subjected to sexual exploitation".

Strategy Principles

The Northumberland Boards are committed to keeping potential victims safe from sexual and criminal exploitation through the following key principles:

- Sexual and criminal exploitation are both a form of abuse which can involve sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse as well as neglect;
- Vulnerable people do not make informed choices to enter into or remain within sexually and criminally exploitative situations, as they do so via coercion, manipulation, grooming and/or other forms of enticement;
- Children under 16 years cannot consent to sexual activity with an adult, and sexual activity with a child aged less than 13 years or an adult who lacks the capacity to consent is statutory rape;
- People who are sexually or criminally exploited will experience difficulty and/or confusion around their autonomy to make choices, and their understanding around their rights, responsibilities, sex, sexuality and the sexual activity into which they have been coerced;
- Sexually and criminally exploited people must be treated as victims of abuse and not as offenders;
- Law enforcement efforts must involve disruption of sexually and criminally exploitative activity and target offenders as sexual abusers or subject criminal processes, who may be an adult but could also be a child's peer and/or other young people.

Strategy Aims and Objectives

Both sexual and criminal exploitation remain a hidden activity despite the increasing public awareness of the subjects following reviews and criminal cases across the United Kingdom. Given this, the aim of this strategy is to continue to raise the profile of the issue and develop expertise across all partner agencies. The aspiration of the Northumberland Boards is to develop a strategic overview of sexual and criminal exploitation, supporting a proactive partnership where those at risk are identified and safeguarded and offenders are disrupted and prosecuted.

Governance and Delivery Plan

This joint strategy has been agreed by all the Northumberland Boards. The joint strategy sets out the priorities for all Boards and agrees an approach that enhances a county-wide approach to the issue of sexual and criminal exploitation. The rationale being that this will create an environment where sexual and criminal exploitation is effectively prevented, identified and challenged. The Boards have a Joint Sexual and Criminal Exploitation sub group and agreed to progress the delivery plan through this joint Sub Committee.

There is regional activity, both within the Police and Local Authorities, to develop a shared problem profile, information sharing agreements, and explore regional events and approaches to sexual and criminal exploitation. It is anticipated with the change from LSCB to Safeguarding partners that a regional approach may become more formalised during 2018/20.

Sexual and criminal exploitation work is prioritised and coordinated through the Sexual and Criminal Exploitation Delivery Plan. This plan was completely reviewed and extended in 2018 to encompass all current requirements and good practice. It will be refreshed every three months and will report through the Boards' Business Groups after each Sexual and Criminal Exploitation Sub Committee Meeting.

The comprehensive nature of the plan is a challenge, so in order to enable focus and progress tasks, these will be subject to an annual review to ensure the delivery plan is workable and good progress has been made.

What is Sexual Exploitation?

In March 2015, the Government indicated the intention for the first time to provide a definition of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)³ and in February 2017, published advice including a definition⁴ emphasising that CSE is a complex form of abuse which can be difficult to identify and assess:

“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.”

³ Para 48. Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation. HM Government. March 2015

⁴ Advice, Child sexual exploitation: Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation. Department for Education. February 2017

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The Northumberland strategy asserts that this definition applies equally to all vulnerable people, including adults, focussing on vulnerability rather than age, gender, capacity, sexual orientation or ability.

The strategy also acknowledges that people of all ages may be vulnerable to sexual exploitation, not just children. For this reason, we refer to the term sexual exploitation, and not just CSE, throughout this document.

What is Criminal Exploitation?

Criminal exploitation has received considerable media coverage in the last year and there is a particular focus on the risks of county lines activity.

Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines activity. It is a harm which is becoming better understood across Northumberland and the Country.

Criminal exploitation is increasingly used to describe this type of exploitation where children are involved, and is defined as:

“Criminal Exploitation 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 vulnerable person. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology”.

This strategy also covers vulnerable adults and this definition has been adapted to recognise this.

Criminal exploitation of vulnerable people is broader than just county lines, and includes for instance people forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft.

Like other forms of abuse and exploitation, criminal exploitation:

- can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years;
- can affect any vulnerable adult over the age of 18 years;
- can still be exploitation even if the activity appears consensual;
- can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and is often accompanied by violence or threats of violence;
- can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and young people or adults; and

- is characterised by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the exploitation. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

County Lines

County lines is a major, cross-cutting issue involving drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing persons; and the response to tackle it involves the Police, the National Crime Agency, a wide range of Government departments, local government agencies and VCS (voluntary and community sector) organisations. County lines activity and the associated violence, drug dealing and exploitation has a devastating impact on young people, vulnerable adults and local communities.

Individuals or gangs use vulnerable children and adults to transport and sell Class A drugs, primarily from urban areas into market or coastal towns or rural areas, to establish new drug markets or take over existing ones. They often use children to transport and hide weapons and to secure dwellings of vulnerable people in the area, so that they can use them as a base from which to sell drugs.

County lines may involve the commission of the offences of 'slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour' and 'human trafficking' as defined by the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Vulnerable people's travel may be 'arranged and facilitated by a person, with the view to them being exploited', which amounts to human trafficking according to section 2 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Vulnerable people may then be forced to work for the drug dealer, often held in the vulnerable adult's home against their will and under the force of threat if they do not do as they are told. This meets the definition of 'slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour' in section 1 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

County lines is the Police term for urban gangs supplying drugs to suburban areas and market and coastal towns using dedicated mobile phone lines or "deal lines". It involves child criminal exploitation, as gangs use children and vulnerable people to move drugs and money. Gangs establish a base in the market location, typically by taking over the homes of local vulnerable adults by force or coercion in a practice referred to as 'cuckooing'.

Some vulnerable persons are forced to carry the drugs in harmful ways that are abusive and could result in their death. For example, 'plugging' is commonly used, which is when children or vulnerable adults can be forced by an adult or another child or vulnerable adult to insert and carry drugs in their rectum or vagina.

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The national picture on county lines continues to develop but there are recorded cases of:

- children as young as 12 years old being exploited or moved by gangs to courier drugs out of their local area; 15-16 years is the most common age range;
- both males and females being exploited;
- White British children being targeted because gangs perceive they are more likely to evade Police detection, but a person of any ethnicity or nationality may be exploited, (these people are often referred to as Bics as, like the pen, they are disposable);
- the use of social media to make initial contact with children and young people;
- class A drug users being targeted so that gangs can take over their homes (known as 'cuckooing').

While living in a vulnerable adult's home, far away from their own home, vulnerable people may be required to set up or be part of a new drug market or expand an existing one. This involves vulnerable people putting themselves in extremely dangerous situations with vulnerable adults who are strangers who want to buy Class A drugs from them. Other dealers in the area may also target these vulnerable people to prevent them taking over their 'patch'. Some people have been stabbed and killed by rival gangs or dealers. Often, the first time that the Police become aware of county lines activity in their area is as a result of a significant increase in knife crime and youth violence.

Vulnerability Factors

All vulnerable people may be at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation, however, evidence in Northumberland and from a regional Police problem profile, shows that females between the ages of 12-16 years seem to be more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. It is important to note that males are also at risk of sexual exploitation, however, for a number of reasons, they are less likely to report or share their experiences, or view themselves as victims.

Many people who are involved in county lines are both criminally and sexually exploited by the gangs or individual running the county line. Sexual violence was used as a form of punishment

Our evidence also demonstrates a difference in the age range of male victims, who tend to be between the ages of 14-18 years. Most vulnerable people do not see themselves as victims of sexual and criminal exploitation and do not usually disclose the exploitation until well into adulthood. It is therefore important that all professionals are aware of the risk factors and signs of sexual and criminal exploitation.

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Nationally, our understanding of vulnerability was also increased through the Bradford Serious Case Review regarding Jack⁵ in 2017. Jack, a teenage boy living in the Bradford area, had been sexually abused by multiple adult males; this abuse commenced when he was 13 years old after he came out as gay.

Agencies first became aware of the risk of sexual exploitation in August 2010. Two separate Police investigations resulted in thirty-six adult male suspects being identified, twenty of whom have been convicted of various sexual offences and grooming offences against Jack. Whilst there was significant multi-agency support for Jack, services were not effective in keeping him safe from abuse. Consequently, there is evidence that Jack had experienced serious sexual, physical and emotional harm.

However, sexual exploitation of boys and men is complex and hidden with different models to those identified with female victims. The low incidence of identified cases is likely to be a significant under-representation of the abuse occurring.

Vulnerable children usually become vulnerable adults; the transition from childhood to adult is a particularly risky period in relation to sexual exploitation. The Sanctuary investigation in Newcastle began with a disclosure from a vulnerable adult, who had not been known to children's social care; she was concerned about children becoming involved in sexual exploitation, however, did not view herself as a victim of abuse.

Many vulnerable people travel between Northumberland, North Tyneside, Newcastle and Sunderland, which increases their vulnerability and the risk of sexual and criminal exploitation. In addition to this, other local authorities (neighbouring and further afield) place children and young people in Northumberland for either residential education or care provision. It is therefore essential that we make links between victims and share information with colleagues from neighbouring local authorities. The gathering and sharing of information from the independent Return Interviews when children go missing, is vital to capture and share the intelligence.

Adults seem to be at an increased risk of sexual and criminal exploitation if they have had a poor childhood experience, disrupted education, low attendance and achievements, have a learning difficulty or learning disability and have or are experiencing emotional or mental health issues. Involvement in alcohol and drugs will inevitably increase the risk of sexual exploitation.

⁵ Bradford Safeguarding Children Board Serious Case Review Overview Report Jack 28 June 2017
<http://bradfordscb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Jack-Serious-Case-Review-Overview-Report.pdf>

Victims' Views of Sexual Exploitation

Research, undertaken by Bristol LSCB 2016 and Newcastle Joint Serious Case Review 2018, provided some views from victims of sexual exploitation. These are set out in Appendix 1. However, below are some extracts from the research:

- *"We don't see ourselves as victims";*
- *"Some people become really important to us leading up to court and when the trial's over we will miss them";*
- *"If we go missing, our families need advice quickly on what to do. Our parents shouldn't get angry with us but make us feel loved";*
- *"They knew that they had us";*
- *"They are very skilled at who they target";*
- *"I did not realise what was happening. The men treated me nicely but not everyone else. Some men were horrible. They left their countries in lorries—they'd done bad things—they have done bad things elsewhere in other countries—they said they had done bad things".*

Mental Capacity Act and Consent

It is acknowledged that victims may lack the capacity to consent or may be being threatened or coerced. The process of grooming may have led the victim to become so dependent upon the alleged perpetrator (s) that they see sex as something they have to do in order to survive.

Grooming, coercion and control have been known to all have an impact on an individual's mental capacity, particularly where sexual or criminal exploitation is a factor.

In 2011, Ofsted found that in serious case reviews across the country during 2007 to 2011, there was a failure to understand the impact of coercion by abusers on behaviour and to assess capacity to make informed choices or truly consent to go with abusers. The issue has consistently arisen since, including in Rochdale, Rotherham, Oxfordshire and in 2017, Somerset.

In Newcastle, similar uncertainties and the extent to which vulnerabilities undermined capacity also arose in relation to adult victims.

Decisions about action will be made based on the individual's capacity, their wishes and views. Where appropriate, the Safeguarding Adults process will be followed.

The Mental Capacity Act (2005) applies to anyone aged 16 years and over:

- who has an impairment of and/or disturbance in the functioning of the mind or brain;

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- a person's capacity is decision and time specific;
- if someone lacks capacity, then a decision should be made in their best interests;
- agencies need to work together to assess capacity and implement the best interest framework.

Best Practice Approaches

Information sharing - a vulnerable person at risk of sexual exploitation is a person at risk of significant harm and nothing should stand in the way of sharing information. The Government recommends that every agency should consider the following principles for multi-agency working: integrated working ('real time' risk assessments to enhance decision making), joint risk assessments, a victim approach, good leadership and clear governance, and a frequent review of operations to drive practice.

Findings from research, enquiries and inspections have consistently concluded that for children looked after by local authorities, good care is fundamental to keeping them safe. The following basic principles of good practice are reflected in Ofsted's inspection framework and should be applied in working with all children, regardless of their LAC status. We believe the basic principles of good practice are fundamental to keeping all potential victims safe:

- listening to victims;
- visiting regularly and getting to know them well;
- ensuring access to accurate information about individuals;
- responding quickly to emerging difficulties;
- ensuring effective management oversight;
- good training and challenging and reflective supervision for professionals;
- good commissioning arrangements;
- good assessments and care planning for all vulnerable people;
- good joint working and information sharing across services.

As a result of local learning identified in Newcastle, it is good practice to take a life course approach to safeguarding all victims of exploitation. People of all ages are vulnerable to exploitation. Victims of sexual exploitation can be children, young people or adults, male or female. It is the vulnerability (whether that be age, disability, illness, poor life

experiences, previous victims of abuse, isolation) of the alleged victim that it is important, not just their age.

Models of Sexual Exploitation

For the purposes of this strategy, it shall be assumed that the **four** broad 'models' of sexual exploitation, as first identified by Barnardo's in considering child sexual exploitation, equally applies to all to vulnerable people.

- **'Peer to Peer'** - Individuals are sexually exploited by peers who are known to them at school, in the neighbourhood or through mutual friends. Peer to peer grooming can sometimes be associated with gang activity, where the young person doing the grooming is a victim themselves.
- The **'inappropriate relationships model'** usually involves one perpetrator who has inappropriate power or control over a victim (physical, emotional or financial). One indicator may be a significant age gap and/or the victim may believe they are in a loving relationship
- The **'Boyfriend model'** of sexual exploitation and peer exploitation often involved the perpetrator befriend a victim and grooming them into a relationship in order to coerce or force them to have sexual activity with 'friends' or 'associates'
- **'Organised or networked sexual exploitation and/or trafficking'** often involved victims being passed through networks of perpetrators, and/or being moved between towns and cities and forced or coerced to have sexual activity with multiple groups of men. Often this activity occurred at 'sex parties' and vulnerable people may be recruited by perpetrators to encourage peers into the network for the purpose of abuse. Some of this activity can be serious organised crime or involved more loosely connected groups where the 'bullying and selling' of victims may take place
- Northumbria Police have recently reported a fifth model: the **'Commodity Model'** where victims are approached directly on the street and asked to attend parties or 'sessions' by perpetrators. Alcohol and drugs (mainly MKAT) is a significant factor in many of these cases investigated

We have seen examples within the region of the four models of exploitation, however, we have also seen exploitation evidenced in other ways. Exploitation of an individual's vulnerability is the common theme.

Adult sexual exploitation (ASE) is as prevalent as CSE in most areas, which presents additional problems with safeguarding and prosecution. Victims include children, adults exploited as children and then as adults, and adults whose abuse commenced in

adulthood. There is a strong link between ASE and survival sex work.

The use of alcohol and drugs by perpetrators is prevalent with MKAT being the most commonly used drug. A significant amount of exploitation centres on parties, which are referred to locally as 'sessions' or 'chilling'.

Alcohol and drug addiction are commonly seen and are more significant indicators of risk than unexplained gifts and money. The link between going missing and sexual exploitation is evidenced, reinforcing missing episodes as a risk indicator.

We see social media being used to groom victims but also being used to facilitate attendance at parties. Face-to-face approaches by perpetrators are still common with some geographic areas being identified as being 'hot spots' for parties and victim approaches.

Role of Social Media

It is acknowledged that the internet and other forms of social media (including smart phone/mobile technology and the internet) are often utilised by perpetrators to identify potential victims:

- **Online grooming** is achieved via social networking sites where victims are vulnerable and easy to locate as they often post detailed personal information including their home addresses, schools and mobile contact details, etc.;
- **Non-contact sexual exploitation** which involves victims being persuaded, manipulated, groomed and/or threatened into exposing themselves or performing sexual acts over a webcam or sending indecent images of themselves to offenders;
- **Meeting vulnerable people offline** following online grooming for the purpose of sexual or criminal exploitation.

The importance of being aware of the dangers of the internet, which was highlighted in the Jack SCR, is relevant to several children and young people subject to the Risk Management Group (now the Missing Slavery Exploitation and Trafficking Group):

'The internet and new technologies have allowed potential victims to be accessible and available to perpetrators, who may be anonymous, quickly and freely, in ways that would otherwise not be possible.'

Certain groups of children such as children with learning difficulties, those with mental health problems and lesbian, gay, bi sexual, transgender and questioning, appear to be particularly vulnerable to online harm.'

Sexual and criminal exploitation is often linked to other types of crime including:

- Human trafficking (this can be within a town, region or into/out of the UK);
- Domestic Violence;
- Sexual violence in intimate relationships;
- Grooming (both online and offline);
- Viewing, creating or distributing abusive images of children;
- Organised sexual abuse of vulnerable people;
- Gang related activity;
- Immigration-related offences.

Statutory Responsibilities

There is no specific offence of 'sexual exploitation' in the UK. Instead, prosecutions can be brought under a range of offences in each nation's legislative framework to protect children from harm. For further details please see Appendix 2.

There are no specific statutory responsibilities in relation to adult sexual exploitation. However, professionals and agencies have more general duties in relation to safeguarding, health and wellbeing which are often relevant to sexual exploitation, in particular the duties outlined in section 42 of the Care Act. The LA has a duty to undertake safeguarding enquiries where an adult with care and support needs (whether or not these are being met) is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect. The Care Act statutory guidance specifically references sexual exploitation as a form of abuse.

Gang related Sexual Exploitation and County Lines

Although sexual offending programmes would meet many of the offence related needs described above, for those involved in gangs, an important aim of any intervention would

be to help the individual to disengage from the gang. Some of the future-focused work in the sex offender programmes is targeted directly at relationships and crime so would be relevant. However, offender managers should consider the impact of gang membership, and where possible work with partner agencies in order to assist former gang members to disengage.

Prevalence in Northumberland

Within Northumberland, we are attempting to improve our intelligence regarding criminal exploitation however, the National Crime Agency recently assessed that there are more than 1,500 lines operating nationally, with evidence of increasing levels of violence. County lines activity affects many areas of the country, including market and seaside towns and areas of relative affluence, such as affluent or holiday towns, that we might not naturally associate with organised crime.

The government action plan highlights the importance of understanding the prevalence and nature of the problem, including circumstances and locations in each area where children and young adults are particularly vulnerable and at risk. Subsequently, the government has identified the need for Local Safeguarding Children's Boards to put systems in place so trends and patterns of criminal and sexual exploitation can be identified and monitored, and service responses developed effectively. The Safer Northumberland Strategic Board are under a duty to consider trends and patterns of crime and disorder.

In Northumberland, there are a range of professionals and specialist agencies that have recognised these forms of abuse for many years. However, the hidden nature of sexual and criminal exploitation means that it potentially remains under recognised and under reported. To address this issue data about sexual and criminal is systematically gathered by several agencies across Northumberland including Children's Services, Police and other organisations. The methods used to gather data include:

- Police and Children's Services databases record all known incidences where a child, young person or vulnerable adult (with leaving care status) has gone missing and/or is at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation ;
- Adult service database records sexual and criminal exploitation as a form of abuse so that this information can be extracted at referral and assessment;
- A risk assessment framework to assist all agencies in identifying if a child or young person is at low, medium or high risk of sexual and criminal exploitation;
- Multi-agency strategy meetings to consider S47 child protection enquires where a child is identified or suspected to be at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation;

- Multi-agency strategy meetings to consider S42 safeguarding adult enquiries where sexual and criminal exploitation is identified and the person is identified as having care and support needs and unable to protect themselves;
- Identifying if a child or young person is at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation at the point of referral and the completion of a Child and Family Assessment (C&FA);
- Independent Return Interviews;
- The Missing Slavery Exploitation and Trafficking Group (MSET) and accompanying risk tool are used to establish and explore where a potential victim is at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation and what level of risk is present. This includes monthly meetings chaired by Northumbria Police complex abuse team with the Senior Manager of NAS and CSE Lead meeting alongside other key stakeholders i.e. Police Missing from Home Coordinator, ESLAC etc.

Extent and Nature of Sexual Exploitation in Northumberland

From 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018, there were 41 sexual exploitation referrals submitted for Northumberland. Of these 41 referrals, 16 related to online exploitation. The victims of this exploitation were all from a White European background, with 33 female victims and 7 male victims (1 referral was unknown gender).

The main age range of the victims were between 13 and 16 years old, with 7 relating to 13 year olds, 9 relating to 14 year olds, 9 relating to 15 year olds and 7 referrals relating to 16 year olds.

Perpetrators are in the main adult males. Over half of the referrals have no identified perpetrator. Of the identified perpetrators, the majority are in the 18-21 age bracket and relate to peer on peer exploitation. Only one known perpetrator is from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) background. Four of the referrals relate to young males being exploited on homosexual dating sites. The majority of the referrals relate to both online and contact grooming as a means of establishing a relationship with the young person. There is no evidence from the referrals of any organised criminality around sexual exploitation and trafficking.

At present, there are no identified hotspots for SE offending within Northumberland.

Very few children are subject to Child Protection Plans (CPPs) for CSE, however, we do not have a separate CSE category for CPPs and children may become subject to a CPP for neglect, especially if there are multiple risk factors.

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The majority of children identified are female; 61% female and 39% male. Male victims are not always referred into social care due to differing views on gender when considering SE. This is now an issue covered in SE training, with a view to raising professional awareness of male victims and increasing early identification of said victims.

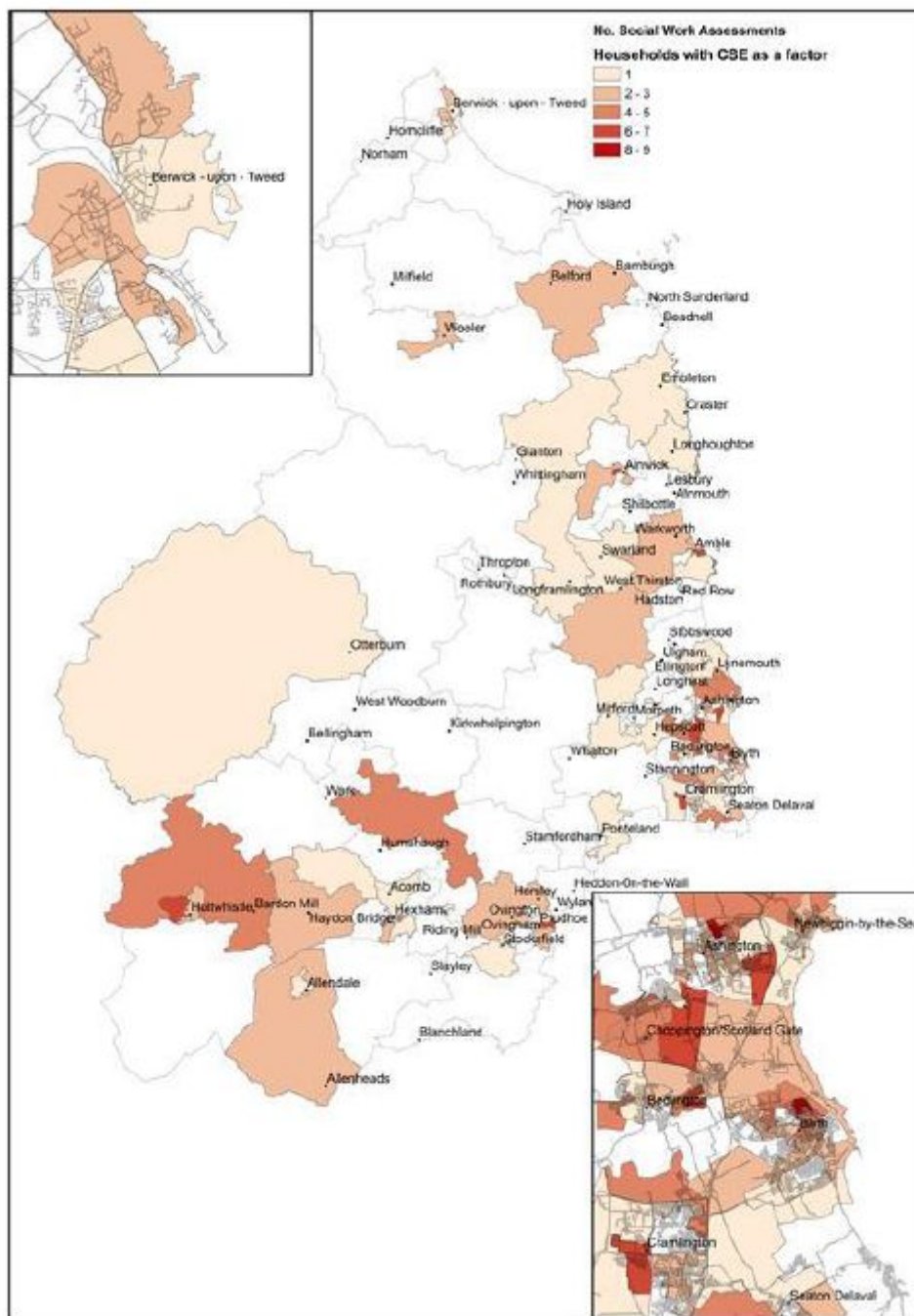
The majority of the children identified are White British.

Most of the CSE concerns come from the south east of the County, however, there is a spread across all of Northumberland, including the rural areas, namely Bamburgh, Alnwick and Shilbottle.

Although the numbers identified through the C&FA are relatively low, the numbers have increased since March 2014 when the new C&FA template was introduced which has a specific focus on sexual exploitation.

The number of sexual exploitation cases identified through the MSET process is notably higher and is increasing, reflecting the focussed and targeted multi-agency work around sexual exploitation in the county. All children, young people and vulnerable adults subject to the MSET process will have a multi-agency risk assessment and plan of support which aims to target each area of risk identified. Those subject to the MSET process will only be removed from the MSET log when the risk and associated scoring has reduced to medium or low risk.

In addition, all children's homes are registered and operate under Children's Homes Regulations 2015, and Quality Standards, which require the home to demonstrate their approach and management of missing children from care. The homes must be able to present a Location Risk Assessment which includes transport links near to the home location, Police information and crime data. All homes follow the Missing from Placement Joint protocol and there is 100% compliance for Return Interviews. Return Interviews are carried out by the Missing Return Worker or the child's social worker. Northumberland County Council do not differentiate between absent and missing and all children, young people and vulnerable adults (with leaving care status) are deemed to be missing and offered a Return Interview. Periods of missing from care are collated and presented monthly to the Home Manager Meeting and there is senior manager oversight and analysis of themes.



Households with CSE as a factor in Child and family assessments 2017-2018 by Ward.

For further information regarding Children’s data please see Appendix 4

Sexual Exploitation of Adults in Northumberland

Learning from Newcastle has emphasised that sexual exploitation is not restricted to child victims; vulnerability is not restricted by age. It is likely that extensive abuse of vulnerable adults is taking place across the country unrecognised and under-reported.

In 2017/18, there were 8 cases recorded in Northumberland as being in adult safeguarding procedures under the category of sexual exploitation (1.2% of the overall number of safeguarding cases, 16.3% of allegations of sexual abuse). This compares to 15 cases recorded in 2016/17 (2% of the overall number of safeguarding cases).

Structure of the Delivery Plan

The sexual and criminal exploitation strategy 2019-2022 involves a multi-agency approach to addressing sexual and criminal exploitation in Northumberland and consists of four key strategic objectives:

1. Prevent: Collect data to analyse prevalence and identify trends, themes and 'hot spots'; increase public confidence and awareness in relation to sexual and criminal exploitation;
2. Pursue: Implement proactive and effective disruption tactics, complete effective investigations and bring offenders to justice;
3. Protect: Supporting, Safeguarding and Managing Risk with victims and their families; implement effective disruption tactics;
4. Prepare: Actively collate intelligence relating to suspected perpetrators, listen to victims and utilise their information in the identification and pursuit of offenders.

The delivery plan has been developed as a separate document and is monitored by the Joint Board Sexual and Criminal Exploitation Sub Committee.

Appendix 1

Victims' Views of Sexual Exploitation

What young people say about Sexual Exploitation (taken from Brooke SCR Bristol LSCB 2016)

- “We don’t see ourselves as victims”
- “If our behaviour is challenging, question why?”
- “It’s really hard to talk about sexual experiences with adults, especially if those experiences hurt”
- “If we do talk about sex, it’s really important not to look embarrassed
- “Some people become really important to us leading up to court and when the trial’s over we will miss them”
- “Be clear it’s hard to say what is happening and we worry it’ll get back to our families or we may get hurt by the people who did this if they find out we’ve talked”
- “It is difficult to trust teachers but we want them to notice behaviour changes and try to talk to us”
- “Mental health workers just want to talk about the past and that is too difficult. If you want us to share, do stuff with us, find places outside your offices, not just McDonalds”
- “If we go missing, our families need advice quickly on what to do. Our parents shouldn’t get angry with us but make us feel loved”
- “The public need to be aware of what can happen and report what they see, if children are with a group of older males in a hotel, this is not normal, ring and tell the Police”
- “Have services available on demand and at night, this is when we really need you”
- “Once we’re over eighteen we will still need help”
- “Passing on information makes us really anxious, we know you need to do it but it puts us in a risky situation if it gets passed around the community”
- “Messages for other children:
 - Stay away from Facebook
 - Don’t try to fit in with your friends by using drugs and smoking
 - Go home and call the Police, tell someone—don’t worry about being embarrassed, it happens to others and they will understand
 - Speak to teachers and counsellors and try not to dwell on things
 - Having someone work with your Mum and family really helps”
- “Finally, if you feel someone is not safe (what is described as the Jimmy Savile feeling), tell someone, you are almost certainly right”

What adult victims say (Newcastle JSCR 2018)

- “I didn’t think what was happening was wrong. I thought they were my friends. They bought me drink and drugs. I thought it was ok because of my family”

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- “Then it became more sinister. Different. There were parties with men a lot older, 30/40-year-old, when previously 20/21”
- “They knew that they had us”
- “They are very skilled at who they target”
- “Judges, social workers—get the Police involved. They need to know how hard it is to get out of this”
- “I did not realise what was happening. The men treated me nicely but not everyone else. Some men were horrible. They left their countries in lorries—they’d done bad things—they have done bad things elsewhere in other countries—they said they had done bad things”
- “I didn’t think it was out of the ordinary. We stayed there for days. My Dad used to worry. I said I was just sleeping over. I didn’t think anything bad was going on”
- “I didn’t tell my friends I had been raped. I didn’t think they would believe me. They thought I wanted to go with him. It was on my birthday. I thought no-one would believe me”
- “I suffer from mental health. Personality disorder. It impacts on every part of my life, including my family because of the trauma and abuse that I suffered”
- “After the abortion, I got quite depressed. I had no support. I started self-harming”
- “I went to the emergency department and said I was suicidal. I did that a few times. I lost control”
- “No-one understood what was happening. I had voices in my head. The perpetrators were continually in my head. I was sectioned and detained.”
- “I keep getting flashbacks of the rape”
- “I was really scared.... their family members were sending threats. I was frightened of being killed. I had seen rapes and was too terrified to say anything”
- “At the care home, I had a call said I would be killed”
- “I appreciate the support now. Because I have had a bad time. If I had had it then—the Police and others—it would have been good. Later (social worker) came to court. She was my rock”

Appendix 2

Statutory Responsibilities

There is no specific offence of 'sexual exploitation' in the UK. Instead, prosecutions can be brought under a range of offences in each nation's legislative framework to protect vulnerable people from harm.

Prosecutions for sexual exploitation can be brought under the provisions of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. These include:

- [S.1 Rape](#)
- [S.2 and 3 Sexual assault](#)
- [S.5-8 Rape and other sexual offences against children under 13](#)
- [S.14 Arranging or facilitating commission of a child sex offence](#)
- [S.15 Meeting a child following sexual grooming](#)
- [S.47 Paying for sexual services of a child](#)
- [S.48 Causing or inciting sexual exploitation of a child](#)
- [S.49 Controlling a child in relation to sexual exploitation](#)
- [S.57-59 Trafficking within and outside the UK for sexual exploitation](#)

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 sets out a number of offences relating to adults
There are other potential offences. The following are examples:

- [Protection from Harassment Act 1997 S.2A and S.4A](#)
- [Protection from Harassment Act 1997 section 2A and section 4A](#)
- [Street Offences Act 1959 section 1\(1\) as amended by Police and Crime Act 2009 – Loitering for purposes of prostitution](#)
- [Sexual Offences\(Conspiracy and Incitement\) Act 1996 S.2 Incitement to commit certain sexual acts outside the UK](#)
- [Public Order Act 1986 S.5 harassment alarm or distress and S.29 AB hatred grounds sexual orientation](#)

This is not an exhaustive list as there are many other offences. A more comprehensive schedule of potential charges can be read on the [Crown Prosecution Service webpage](#). This is regularly updated as and when legislation is introduced, amended or repealed.

The NSPCC's [Flaw in the Law](#) campaign successfully amended the Serious Crime Bill so that it is now a criminal offence for an adult to send a sexual message to a child. The

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Serious Crime Act which received royal assent on 3rd March 2015 amends section 15 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Closing this gap in the legislation means that predators will be discouraged from grooming children online for sexual exploitation and the Police will be able to take action against offenders earlier on in the grooming process.

[View section 67 of the Serious Crime Act 2015](#)

Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

Section 116 of this act 'Protection from sexual harm and violence' allows Police to require hotels and similar establishments, in which they reasonably believe child sexual exploitation is taking place, to provide information about guests. This is intended to equip the Police to better investigate sexual offences committed on these types of premises

[View section 116 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#)

Section 113 amends the Sexual Offences Act 2003 to create Sexual Harm Prevention Orders (SHPOs) and Sexual Risk Orders (SROs). A SHPO or SRO is intended to protect the public or an individual against sexual harm.

[View section 113 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#)

Where the victim of sexual exploitation is an adult at risk as defined by the Care Act 2014: aged 18 or over; and has needs for care and support (whether those needs are being met); and as a result of those needs is unable to protect him or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 sets out a number of offences relating to adults
There are other potential offences. The following are examples:

[Equality Act 2010 section 26 prohibits sexual harassment](#)

[Protection from Harassment Act 1997 section 2A and section 4A](#)

[Street Offences Act 1959 section 1\(1\) as amended by Police and Crime Act 2009 –
Loitering for purposes of prostitution](#)

[Sexual Offences\(Conspiracy and Incitement\) Act 1996 section 2 Incitement to
commit certain sexual acts outside the UK](#)

[Public Order Act 1986 section 5 harassment alarm or distress and section 29 AB
hatred grounds sexual orientation](#)

This is not an exhaustive list as there are many other offences.

Appendix 3

SE and CE Vulnerability Factors

The following are the key vulnerability risk factors that we have identified from the multi-agency Complex Abuse Meetings and the multi-agency Risk Management Group meetings that have taken place in Northumberland:

- Children and young people living with vulnerable parents and carers who have been targeted by perpetrators to gain access to their children
- Children and young people who may be living in neglectful home circumstances, including not prioritising school attendance and important health or CYPS appointments
- Parents and carers who do not report their children as missing
- Looked After Children including children and young people placed in Northumberland from other local authorities, particularly those from local authorities further afield
- Children and young people who have had multiple placement moves
- Young people who have left care and are in unsuitable or unstable accommodation
- Children and young people who have left secure units
- People with Special Educational Needs
- Children and young people not in education
- Children and young people who have had multiple school moves or excluded from school
- Children and young people with poor school attendance, on partial or reduced timetables, in alternative education provision or not engaging in any meaningful education
- Missing from home, care or education (including missing from school for an hour and then returning)
- Unknown adults dropping off and collecting children and young people from school
- Presenting as tired, withdrawn, irritable or angry in school
- Mental Health Services involvement and non-attendance or engagement with these services
- Parents or carers not bringing children and young people to essential appointments
- Involvement in the criminal justice system
- Association with an older peer group
- An older partner, or multiple partners
- Secrecy around their partner (s)
- Attendance at house parties, especially where alcohol and drugs are available
- Preoccupied or obsessed with a mobile phone use and social media, likely to have multiple mobile phones
- A high level of secrecy around mobile phone and internet use

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- Having money and gifts that they would not ordinarily afford
- LGBTQ is an additional layer of vulnerability, the lack of family, friends and community support
- Children, young people and vulnerable adults not seeing the risks and not viewing themselves as victims of sexual exploitation

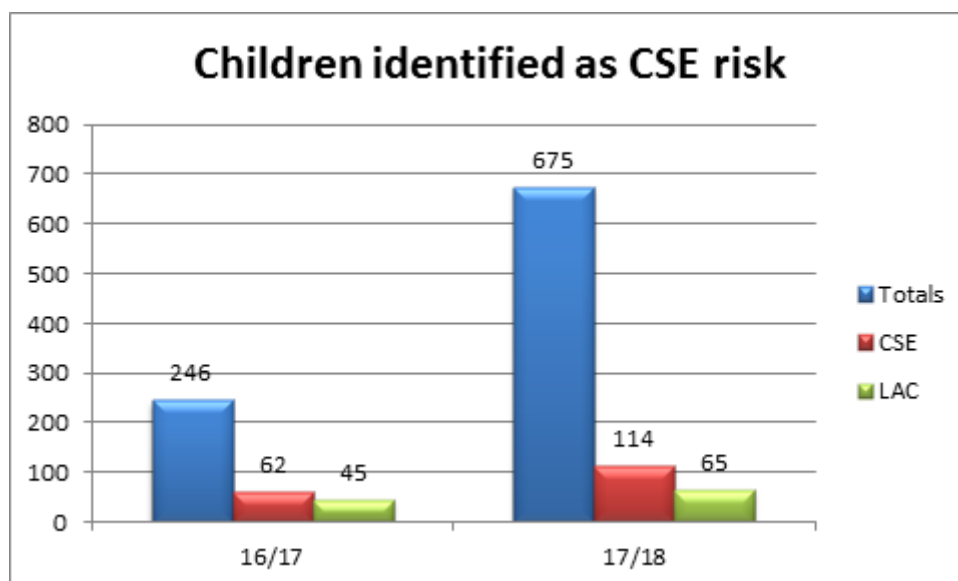
Many of these key vulnerability risk factors above also relate to adults, however, there are some additional vulnerability factors identified for adults:

- Isolation, lack of strong social networks
- Social exclusion; poverty/deprivation/homelessness
- Missing from home/care/education/work
- Breakdown of family relationships
- Lack of engagement/inconsistent engagement with support networks
- Friends/peers are victims of sexual exploitation
- Have been a Looked after Child (LAC), or had children who are Looked After
- History of abuse/neglect/domestic abuse
- Low self-esteem
- Susceptible to grooming
- Bereavement or loss
- Dependency on alleged perpetrators
- Substance misuse/dependency
- Needs for care and support
- Learning disability/difficulty, mental health issues
- Bullying
- Communication difficulties

Appendix 4

Children at risk of CSE between April 2016 and March 2018

598 children were identified during this period from the reason for the referral, children and family assessments and from child protection plans.



Very few children are subject to child protection plans for CSE, however, we do not have a separate CSE category for Child Protection plans and children may become subject to a child protection plan for neglect, especially if there are multiple risk factors.

The majority of children identified are female, 61% female and 39% male. Male victims are not always referred into social care due to differing views on gender when considering SE. This is now an issue covered in SE training with a view to raising professional awareness of male victims and increasing early identification of said victims.

The majority of the children identified are white British.

Most of the CSE concerns come from the south east of the County, however, there is a spread across all of Northumberland, including the rural areas, including Bamburgh, Alnwick and Shilbottle

In terms of the perpetrator profile, 37 perpetrators were identified within this period where an incident took place in Northumberland, linking with 67 offences.

The vast majority of perpetrators were male, 35, at 95%.

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The main type of offence was sexual assault of a female child under the age of 13, with a much smaller number of sexual assault against a male child under 13, again, are we viewing males as potential victims of CSE?

Online abuse seems to be increasing with 10 offences of causing or inciting a female child under 13 to engage in sexual activity, 7 offences meeting a child following sexual grooming and 4 offences arranging or facilitating the commission of a child sex offence.

There was a high percentage charged 61, 91% and cautions.

Vulnerability Checklist and the multi-agency Risk Management Group

Since 2014, was when the newer VCL form was introduced containing the CSE focus, such as receiving money or gifts, more than one mobile phone, secrecy around mobile phone use, there have been 29 young people who had had **at least 2 VCLs** scored with a CSE subtotal **score of 8 or more** (shows that CSE is a significant issue across at least 2 of the CSE factors).

Between the first and last time that CSE was scored, **19 (66%) saw their CSE scores reduce**, 5 (17%) saw their scores remain the same, and 5 (17%) saw their scores increase.

Of the 19 with a reduced score, **7 scores reduced by at least 50%** (15 reduced by at least 25%). Of the 5 with an increased score, only 1 score increased by 25% or more.

Northumbria Police child sexual exploitation profile

The information shared by Northumbria Police regarding the CSE profile in Northumberland shows that between 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018 there were 41 sexual exploitation referrals submitted to Northumberland. Of the 41 referrals, 16 related to online exploitation. The following table shows the gender and age range of victims.

Victims of exploitation (all white European)		
Female	Male	Unknown
33	7	1
Age Range of victims		
13 Years Old		7
14 Years Old		9
15 Years Old		9
16 Years Old		7

The perpetrators in the main were adult males. Over half of the referrals had no identified perpetrator. Of the identified perpetrators, the majority were in the age 18-21 bracket. Only one known perpetrator was from a BME background. 4 of the referrals related to young males being exploited on homosexual dating sites. The majority of the referrals related to both online and contact grooming as a means of establishing a relationship with the child or young person. There was no evidence from the referrals of any organised criminality around sexual exploitation and trafficking. The Police information did not identify any hotspots for sexual exploitation offending within Northumberland

The above information highlights the importance of being aware of the dangers of the Internet which was highlighted in the Jack Serious Case Review in Bradford. This has been relevant to several children and young people subject to the Risk Management Group during 2017-2018. The low number of males is significant as we know that they are less likely to identify themselves as victims. Furthermore, there are additional layers of vulnerability around the **Lesbian Gay Bi-curious Transgender Questioning +** community, which may be heightened in some of the rural communities in Northumberland due to isolation. The Jack Serious Case Review highlighted the following key message:

'The Internet and new technologies have allowed potential victims to be accessible and available to perpetrators, who may be anonymous, quickly and freely in ways that otherwise not be possible'.

Certain groups of children such as children with learning difficulties, those with mental health problems and lesbian, gay, bi sexual, transgender and questioning appear to be particularly vulnerable to online harm'.

Number of children missing where CSE is a risk factor

Our understanding of child CSE has developed throughout the lifetime of this service. Serious case reviews, national investigations and Police led criminal investigations in our region have increased our recognition of CSE as a pull factor in children who go missing. This increasing recognition and understanding impacts on the coding of risk factors regarding missing episode identified in the table below, which has been taken from the information in the Return Interview template, category of need and the Vulnerability Checklists linked to the Risk Management Group. Although there is a link between children going missing and child sexual exploitation, many children may be at risk of child sexual exploitation without being reported as missing. This is particularly relevant to online child sexual exploitation which has seen an increase in Northumberland.

Multi-agency strategy meetings and complex abuse meetings take place with a clear focus on CSE and other forms of exploitation and the meetings have a much stronger focus on disruption activity. In addition to this, there is a strong link with the Operation

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Sanctuary North team where meetings take place on a weekly basis in Newcastle and joint visiting and work takes place with the Complainants Team.