**Children at risk of exploitation Procedure**

**December 2023**

**Contents**

**1. Introduction to Children at Risk of Exploitation (CRE) Page 2**

**2. Guidelines for children not already open to Children’s Services where professionals are concerned about exploitation risks Page 3**

**3a. Level of Risk and Referral Page 4**

**3b. Children who are ALREADY open to Social Care, Child and Family Support Services or Team around the Family meetings Page 5**

**4. High Risk Pathway Page 5**

**5. Arranging the chairing of High-Risk Exploitation Meetings by Independent CERAF Chairs Page 6**

**6. Medium Risk Pathway Page 7**

**7. Low risk pathway Page 7**

**8. Recording of Assessments and Meetings Page 8**

**Appendix 1 - Northamptonshire CERAF (Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework) Guidance - Identifying & Assessing Exploitation Risks Page 9-18**

**Appendix 2 - Word version of CERAF Page 19-28**

**Appendix 3- Invite list to SQAS for High Risk Meetings Page 29-30**

**Appendix 4- Exploitation Pathway Flowchart Assessing and Managing Risk Page 31**

**Children at risk of exploitation Procedure**

**December 2023**

1. **Introduction to Children at Risk of Exploitation (CRE)**

This procedure focuses on safeguarding and protecting children at risk of exploitation (CRE) and outlines the actions to be taken. To achieve high standards of practice and protection for children at risk of exploitation we must **collaborate** with our **partners** to ensure a joined up, efficient and innovative approach that adheres to statutory guidance and prevents duplication of multi-agency meetings.

Our **partnership definition of child exploitation** is:

Child exploitation is a form of child abuse which occurs when someone takes advantage of a child for their own profit or gain. It can take different forms. This includes:

* Child criminal exploitation: when a child is coerced, manipulated, or pressurised to take part in criminal activity.
* Child sexual exploitation: a type of sexual abuse where a child is coerced, manipulated, or pressured into sexual activity.
* Exploitation can be hard for a child to recognise, and they may not understand that they are being coerced/groomed.

Children and young people who are sexually or criminally exploited or at risk of exploitation are victims of child abuse. Where there is evidence that there are concerns a child is being exploited then a referral to MASH should be made.

[How to make an online referral - Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board (northamptonshirescb.org.uk)](http://www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk/social-care/how-to-make-an-online-referral/)

The referral to MASH should be accompanied by a Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (CERAF) screening tool (Appendix A and B or access via website below). There is also information available on our partnership/safeguarding board website with a video explaining how to complete the CERAF as below:

[www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk/about-northamptonshire-safeguarding-children-partnership/news/ceraf/](http://www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk/about-northamptonshire-safeguarding-children-partnership/news/ceraf/)

This procedure also offers guidance for use of the Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (CERAF) to enable practitioners to assess a child’s level of risk to all forms of exploitation in a quick and consistent manner.

**Purpose of the CERAF**

The CERAF will provide an opportunity to explain why the child is at risk of exploitation:

* Consider vulnerability factors from current and historic perspective.
* Identify indicators of concern that relate to all forms of exploitation but specifically Child criminal and child sexual exploitation.
* Practitioners should provide analysis in line with thresholds and procedures.
* Take action to promote the welfare of children who are being or may be exploited.
* Develop individual safety and disruption plans and local prevention strategies to address individual and place-based risk.
* Act against those with intent on abusing and exploiting children.
* Language used within the CERAF should be used sensitively without blaming the victim. Further information on this can be found in the hyperlinks below:

[Appropriate Language in relation to Child Exploitation](http://www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk/assets/legacy/getasset?id=fAAxADYANAAwAHwAfABUAHIAdQBlAHwAfAAwAHwA0)

[Challenging victim blaming language and behaviours when dealing with the online experiences of children and young people](http://www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk/assets/legacy/getasset?id=fAAxADYAOAAyAHwAfABUAHIAdQBlAHwAfAAwAHwA0)

The CERAF should be used flexibly to take account of each child’s individuality, culture, identity, and beliefs. The risk assessment is a live document that should be updated regularly and considers the uniqueness of the child’s circumstances and the changes that may occur for them over time.

1. **Guidelines for children not already open to Children’s Services where professionals are concerned about exploitation risks**

The CERAF should be used by all practitioners and agencies when a child is at risk of exploitation. For any child who is assessed to be at medium or high risk; a referral should be made to MASH. For children where a CERAF scores low, consideration should be given to an Early Help Assessment and Team Around the Family Meeting.

The CERAF is a professional tool and therefore includes professional language, however, we should encourage parents and children’s views to be an integral part of the assessment.

Furthermore, completion of the CERAF assessment is more effective when there are multi-agency views and collaboration. The practitioner identifying concerns should involve, where possible, liaison with other agencies.

The CERAF uses both scoring as well as professional judgement to determine a risk level of either low, medium, or high. Scoring is achieved by adding the scores from each vulnerability and indicator together. It is one point for low, medium, and high-risk indicators present with the last 3-6 months and 5 points for any high-risk indicators present now. For any child aged under 13 with a least one high risk indicator present, a further 5 points should be added to the total score.

All the information that has been gathered including protective factors and safety measures as well as the child and parents/carers views should inform a narrative around what the child may be experiencing, and this will need to be recorded in the professional judgement box using the helpful prompts as guidance.

The next step is to determine the level of risk to the child. Each risk level is given a score guideline, and this is because professional judgement may override a CERAF score. For example, the CERAF may have a score of 11 but one high risk indicator present that is significant in relation to child exploitation risk, so this would be explained in the professional judgement box and reflected in the risk level that is selected i.e., high risk rather than medium.

The risk level is not determined by the score, the score is a guideline, and it is professional judgement that is crucial to identifying exploitation risk.

The language and terminology used in the risk assessment is professional and is **not to be used directly with children or their families,** however, it is imperative their views are incorporated, and children and families understand the outcome of the assessment.

**3a. Level of Risk and Referral**

**Low:** when there is a low level of risk, it is unlikely the Police or Social Care involvement is required, when this is in isolation of other safeguarding concerns, or the child is not looked after. The CERAF should be regularly reviewed, and Early Help processes considered. Should concerns increase a referral should be made to social care and / or the information reported to the police.

The Partnership Support Coordinators can provide advice and support in respect of this. Their contact details are: 01604 362015 or [CFSS@nctrust.co.uk](mailto:CFSS@nctrust.co.uk)

**Medium or High level of risk:** Any young person recorded with a medium or high-risk outcome should be referred immediately to MASH.

MASH will screen this referral and determine whether a single assessment and strategy meeting needs to be convened by the Duty and Assessment team.

NB: All immediate risks will require an immediate telephone call to MASH. Where there are concerns that a child is suffering or likely to suffer Significant Harm or at Risk of Exploitation, a CERAF should be completed within 24 hours and Children’s Social Care will hold a Strategy Discussion/meeting involving the Police, health, and any relevant involved agency within 24 hours.

**MASH Decision Making following a CERAF referral**

The usual contact form should be used for a MASH referral but this should be accompanied by a CERAF. MASH decision makers make relevant MASH enquiries, consider the child’s history, and review the information contained within the MASH contact and CERAF submitted at the point of referral A decision will need to be recorded on the Initial Contact providing a clear rationale for the next steps or an explanation of why an alternative response would not be more appropriate. Within this all information should be analysed. This should include consideration of repeated contacts to ensure intervention to assess risk and provide protective intervention is offered in a timely way. An evaluation of risk should also be recorded in relation to places and spaces particularly when children go missing.

If the outcome of reviewing the CERAF and contact record indicates low risk of exploitation, then it should be considered whether the child and their family could be supported by Early Help Services to prevent smaller problems escalating into bigger ones. The referral should be transferred to CFSS Partnership MASH in order to coordinate appropriate support.

For children assessed to be at medium risk of exploitation; cases should be transferred to the Duty and Assessment Team (DAAT) to complete a Child and Family Assessment including an updated CERAF. For young people assessed to be at high risk of exploitation a Strategy Meeting should be convened by DAAT within 24 hours and a decision made as to whether Section 47 Enquiries should be progressed.

**3b. Children who are ALREADY open to Social Care, Child and Family Support Services or Team around the Family meetings**

Children who are already open to Children’s Services, CFSS or involved in Early Help processes will follow either a high, medium, or low risk pathway which will be blended with their existing statutory or voluntary meetings (i.e., Team around the Family, Child in Need, Child Protection or Children in Care (CIC) processes. It is recognised that risk can change and fluctuate quickly and that pathways may therefore change in relation to this as well as children’s legal status. The tasks, decisions, actions, and timescales are detailed below for each risk level considering the legal status of the young person so that meetings addressing exploitation concerns can be blended with other statutory meetings where possible.

1. **High Risk Pathway**

All children assessed to be at high risk of exploitation should be managed under statutory processes with social care being the lead professional under either a Child in Need Plan, Child Protection Plan or through Children in Care processes.

If parents or the young person do not consent to working under a Child in Need Plan, then further conversations need to be undertaken to explore this and it should **not** be recorded as no further action due to lack of consent. If there is evidence that a young person is at high risk of or already experiencing significant harm and parents are unwilling or unable to work with professionals under a Child in Need Plan, then consideration would need to be given to dispensing with consent through child protection conference processes.

For any children either newly referred into MASH or already open to Children’s Social care where high risk is identified, through the CERAF, then a Strategy Meeting be convened within 24 hours with consideration given for a Section 47 Enquiry and multi-agency plan to address the immediate risks of exploitation.

The CERAF should be reviewed and updated every 4 weeks by the allocated worker.

For Children in Need, the standard Child in Need template meeting/plan will be used and blended with a Child in Need meeting. However, this will have an additional tab for exploitation. This meeting should be held within 15 working days of a high-risk rating being identified through the CERAF assessment. The CERAF risk assessment should be reviewed at this meeting and an agreed multi-agency risk rating agreed and recorded on Carefirst. This meeting should be chaired by a Team Manager of Advanced Practitioner.

For children who are on a Child Protection Plan; a Team Manager or Advanced Practitioner should chair the first high risk multi-agency exploitation meeting within 15 working days unless a Child Protection Conference is held, within these timescales, which would supersede this meeting. At the first Core Group meeting the CERAF risk assessment should be reviewed, and an agreed multi-agency risk rating agreed and recorded on Carefirst. The standard Core Group meeting minutes should be used. However, there will be an additional tab for exploitation. This meeting should be chaired by a Team Manager of Advanced Practitioner.

For Children in Care, assessed to be at high risk of exploitation, a high-risk multi-agency meeting should be convened within 15 days of a high-risk rating being identified through the CERAF assessment. The CERAF risk assessment should be reviewed at this meeting and an agreed multi-agency risk rating agreed and recorded on Carefirst. There is a new form available on Carefirst called

For all children, regardless of legal status, assessed to be at high risk of exploitation, additional independent oversight will be provided by dedicated Child Protection Conference Chairs or Service Managers of the IRO team (Independent CERAF Chair). This will mean that the second core group, CIN meeting or stand-alone multi-disciplinary exploitation meeting for CIC will be chaired by an Independent CERAF Chair based in SQAS. Thereafter an Independent CERAF Chair will chair the core group/CIN meeting or MDT CIC meeting every three months.

A discussion should be held with the Independent CERAF Chair to agree a reduction to medium or low risk. Should this be agreed then the medium/low risk CERAF pathway should be followed.

1. **Arranging the chairing of High-Risk Exploitation Meetings by Independent CERAF Chairs**

If the risk level in relation to exploitation is assessed as high at either the first or subsequent Core Groups, CIN meetings or MDT CIC meetings, then a notification should be made to SQAS within five working days of this meeting. The CERAF assessment and an invitation list (appendix 3) should be sent to the SQAS inbox. For CIC this will be [IROAdmin@nctrust.co.uk](mailto:IROAdmin@nctrust.co.uk). For children subject to CIN or CP Plans this will be [conference@nctrust.co.uk](mailto:conference@nctrust.co.uk)

The invitation list (appendix 3) should detail all professionals involved (including police) together with parents(s), carers, any family members, and the young person. If young people, parent(s), carers, or family members do not have an email address then their full postal address should be provided. It should also state the last working day that the meeting can be convened which should be within 20 working days of the first core group, CIN meeting or CIC MDT meeting as well as any dates to avoid for family members for example holidays or working days. There will be an expectation that if professionals cannot attend that an alternative representative is identified. A suggested venue should be included on the invitation list with full contact details provided for ease of booking by CP/CIC administration.

Following on from the first high risk and independently chaired meeting, it is the responsibility of the ICPC Chair or Service Manager (IRO) Service to set the dates and book the venues for independent reviews on a three-month basis. In between these timescales, high risk CE meetings should be chaired by either a Team Manager or Advanced Practitioner and blended with existing meetings i.e., Core Groups, CIN meetings or CIC MDT meetings.

1. **Medium Risk Pathway**

Children who are already in our care or subject to a Child Protection Plan should be managed under statutory processes with social care being the lead professional.

For children assessed to be in need, for many it will be appropriate for the lead professional to remain with social care under a Child in Need Plan. However, for some young people assessed to be at medium risk they could be appropriately supported by Child and Family Support Services with a Team around the Family. This will need to be a matter of professional judgement, discussion and a decision made between Children’s Social Care and Children and Family Support Services Managers. Partnership Support Services also need to be a key part of this decision. The rationale for this should be recorded. This may be as part of step-down processes from either Duty and Assessment Teams or Safeguarding and Support Teams. In considering this decision there should be an up-to-date Child and Family Assessment and a CERAF completed within the last two weeks.

Meetings should be held every 4-6 weeks whilst the young person remains assessed as medium risk and blended with existing meetings (i.e., TAF, CIN, CP, CIC). They should be chaired by the Social Worker or Lead Professional. The CERAF should be reviewed and updated 4-6 weekly or following a significant event.

Should there either be an escalation to high risk or reduction to low risk this should be agreed with the Team Manager and recorded. If the risk increases to high and is not open to social care, then a referral should be made to MASH.

If a high-risk score is identified, then the high-risk pathway should be followed. If a low-risk score is identified, then the low-risk pathway should be followed.

1. **Low risk pathway**

For children assessed to be as low risk of exploitation a referral to Children’s Social Care would not be proportionate unless there are additional concerns within the family that warrant a referral in line with the Threshold Guidance or they are already subject to a Child in Need Plan, Child Protection Plan or are Looked After.

However, to ensure a proactive approach is taken the lead professional or Social Worker should ensure that preventative action is included in the existing TAF, CIN, CP, or Care Plan to be reviewed 4-6 weekly. For CIC this should be discussed within supervision to ensure CE concerns are addressed and additional multi-disciplinary meetings arranged if helpful and appropriate using the multi-disciplinary CIC template on CareFirst.

1. **Recording of Assessments and Meetings**

To prevent duplication; additional tabs have been created within Carefirst to ensure exploitation is considered and recorded within assessments and plans for the:

* Child and Family Assessment
* Core Group Meeting
* CIN meeting

New recording forms have been added to Carefirst for the:

* CERAF
* CIC MDT meetings

It will be the responsibility of the Social Worker/Lead professional to update the CERAF in line with the timescales for the high/medium risk pathways.

It will be the responsibility of the Chair of the high or medium risk meetings to record within existing CareFirst templates i.e. CIN meetings, Core Group Meetings and CIC MDT meeting.

**Appendix 1**

**Northamptonshire CERAF (Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework) Guidance**

**Identifying & Assessing Exploitation Risks**

***Children that come to notice must be treated as children, whatever the circumstances they find themselves in.***

**General Guidance**

* The Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (CERAF) is a child exploitation risk assessment tool. Your professional judgement is as equally important as the score. Be mindful that child exploitation does not exist as a standalone issue and that children who are displaying indicators of one form of exploitation are also likely to have experience of other forms of exploitation.
* A CERAF should be completed as soon as potential concerns regarding any form of child exploitation are identified. This may include child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), child financial exploitation (CFE), county lines (CL), modern day slavery (MDS) or child trafficking concerns. The evidence may follow a missing episode, or increasing occasions of a child truanting from school, staying out late, associating with new peers/associates where there may be some concerns or known intelligence risk.
* Best practice indicates that **information from multiple sources (**including family members, the child concerned, school, other professionals) is needed to ensure that you have as much information as possible on the risk indicators and any explanations for these**.**
* Give **timeframes** for when indicators have been identified – the frequency and extent of concerns/incidents should be informing your view of the level of risk.
* You should **provide relevant details** for each vulnerability and risk indicator identified, as this will be informing your understanding of the nature and extent of risks – including how it may be linked to exploitation.
* **Be mindful of your use of language.** Children are not responsible for their own abuse/exploitation and often they do not recognise the risks we may be concerned about. Children who are groomed are unable to give consent to their abuse.

[Appropriate Language in relation to Child Exploitation](http://www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk/assets/legacy/getasset?id=fAAxADYANAAwAHwAfABUAHIAdQBlAHwAfAAwAHwA0)

[Challenging victim blaming language and behaviours when dealing with the online experiences of children and young people](http://www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk/assets/legacy/getasset?id=fAAxADYAOAAyAHwAfABUAHIAdQBlAHwAfAAwAHwA0)

* **Use the scoring guides** on the form to ensure that you are scoring the CERAF correctly.
* A CERAF should be **carried out at regular intervals** to record any increase or reduction in risk and should **inform appropriate intervention**. As a minimum, it should be updated every three months or following a **change in circumstances** (e.g., change in placement) as this can have a significant impact on risk.

**2.** **Low Risk / Vulnerability Factors**

This section of the CERAF includes factors that we know may render children and young people vulnerable to being targeted for child exploitation.

**Emotional neglect by parent/carer/family member**

THINK ABOUT – Has the child suffered emotional neglect and has this impacted upon their vulnerability to exploitation? Do they feel wanted and loved within their family? Are they likely to be at increased risk of seeking out attention, affection or belonging, due to their caregiving experiences? Are there factors in the family home that push them to being outside the family/carers home? Have you considered neglect in an affluent family as well as those from low income background?

**Physical abuse by parent/carer/family member**

THINK ABOUT – Has the child suffered physical abuse which is likely to have increased their vulnerability to exploitation?

**Sexual abuse**

THINK ABOUT - Has the child suffered sexual abuse in the past? This is not about current sexual exploitation – it is about considering whether the child has past experiences of sexual abuse in some form, which will have increased their vulnerability to being exploited.

**Breakdown of family relationships**

THINK ABOUT – Has there been a breakdown in family relationships which might cause the child to avoid going home or make them vulnerable to others who may seek to befriend them?

**Family history of domestic abuse**

THINK ABOUT – Is there a known history of domestic abuse within the family which may have impacted upon the child’s emotional wellbeing and understanding of healthy relationships? Is ongoing domestic abuse a reason for the child to avoid being at home?

Is the impact of domestic abuse impairing the parent’s capacity to act protectively?

**Family history of substance misuse**

THINK ABOUT – Is there significant past or current substance misuse by family members which may increase the child’s vulnerability? Is parental substance misuse having an impact on parenting capacity and parental oversight of the child? Parental Substance misuse means the child is likely to have face to face contact with people who may target the child to exploit them.

**Family history of mental health difficulties**

THINK ABOUT – Is there significant past or current mental health issues of family members which may increase the child’s vulnerability? Are parental mental health issues impacting on parenting capacity?

**Low self-esteem**

Self-esteem relates to our view of self, the value we give ourselves (our self-worth). When thinking about low self-esteem THINK ABOUT - Does the child consider themselves unlovable, inferior, or unworthy? Do they believe that they deserve bad things to happen to them? Do they accept when bad things happen to them and is this a sign of their lack of self-worth?

**Unsuitable/inappropriate accommodation (including placement breakdown and multiple moves)**

THINK ABOUT – Is unsuitable or inappropriate accommodation an issue and is this increasing the child’s vulnerability to being exploited? Is the child sofa-surfing or street homeless? Are they in accommodation which is not suitable for their needs e.g., young people in supported accommodation or a known ‘Hotspot’ when they are known to be vulnerable? Are they in the care of the local authority with multiple placements and/or multiple placement breakdowns?

**Isolated from peers/social networks**

THINK ABOUT – Does the child lack a stable friendship group? Do they have appropriate friends their own age? Do they struggle to maintain appropriate friendships and tend to drift around? Do they feel lonely and that they have no real friends?

**Lack of positive relationship with a protective/nurturing adult**

THINK ABOUT – Does the child have a positive relationship with an adult who is protective and nurturing of them e.g. parent, extended family, family friend, professional?

**Physical or Learning Disability**

THINK ABOUT – Does the child have a physical or learning disability which is increasing their vulnerability/susceptibility to being targeted for grooming/exploitation?

**3. Medium Risk Indicators**

This section of the CERAF includes indicators that are associated with risk of, or that may indicate, abuse through sexual/criminal exploitation.

**TIMEFRAME:** These should be ticked if they are currently present or have been present during the past three months.

## Regularly staying out late (this may include periods of staying out all day and whereabouts unknown)

THINK ABOUT – Is the child demonstrating a pattern of staying out late or has there been a recent change? Are they just pushing boundaries, or does it appear to be indicating something more concerning? Provide details of dates this has happened, how late they have stayed out, who they were with, where they went, how did they act when they left/returned? Note anything else relevant about the incidents.

## Multiple callers (unknown adults/older young people)

THINK ABOUT – Are there *multiple* unknown people coming to the child’s address to look for them or contacting them? Are there suspicions these people present an exploitation risk to the child?

## Use of a mobile phone that causes concern (e.g., multiple phones, contact from unknown / concerning people)

THINK ABOUT – Does the child’s mobile phone use give cause for concern regarding exploitation? Are they communicating with someone of concern? Are they sending/receiving explicit images? Are they receiving lots of calls/messages from unknown sources or at odd times of the day? Does their demeanour change following contact on their phone, or do they leave the house straight after? Do they have more than one phone, or is their phone use or messages indicative of involvement in drug supply?

Remember: It is quite usual for teenagers to have sole control of their mobile phone so this in itself should not give you cause for concern. You need to think about the connection with the child’s mobile phone use and possible exploitation.

**Expressions of despair (self-harm, overdose, eating disorder, challenging behaviour, aggression, carrying weapons, other sudden change in wellbeing)**

THINK ABOUT – Has there been a change in their emotional wellbeing and/or behaviour which could be reactions to undisclosed trauma e.g., self-harming, acting very aggressively or withdrawn, taking overdoses? Is the child carrying weapons because they feel threatened / at risk of harm from others?

Consider the context around the behaviour and any potential triggers.

## Exclusion or unexplained absences from school or not engaged in school/college/training/work

THINK ABOUT – Is the child out of education/training/employment and their whereabouts is unknown a lot of the time? Is the child truanting from school and their whereabouts is unknown or are there concerns about where they are going/who they are meeting?

## Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), pregnancy/termination of pregnancy

THINK ABOUT – Has the child contracted STI’s, got pregnant and/or had a termination and there is concern this could link to CSE? If the child is accessing sexual health services in relation to the above issues, does the sexual health nurse/health professionals have concerns? Was the child accompanied to any appointment by anyone? Recurring STI’s and/or pregnancies/terminations should be a cause for significant concern.

## Drug/Alcohol including cigarettes & vapes misuse

THINK ABOUT – Are there concerns regarding the child’s drug/alcohol/cigarette/vape use which potentially increases their risk of exploitation? Is their substance use beyond more common teenage experimentation (as this in itself is not an indicator of exploitation but could increase vulnerability)? Are drugs/alcohol/cigarettes/vapes being supplied to the child as part of a grooming process? Does the substance given reduce the child’s capacity to keep safe? Are there indications of a dependency/increasing dependency? Could the child be accruing a debt?

Relevant details: How is the child accessing/funding the substance? Who is supplying them? Who is the child using them with? What is the extent of their usage? What type of substance is the child using and what effect does it have on the child (this should assist you in considering why a perpetrator may provide the child with either drugs or alcohol or both)? Remember: This is about the child’s substance use, not their parents or anyone else’s.

## Use of the internet that causes concern (e.g., coerced to take/share indecent images; dealing drugs; selling stolen goods; use of the [‘Dark Web’](https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/professionals/resources/dark-web-explained/))

THINK ABOUT - Does the child’s internet use give cause for concern regarding exploitation? Has their use of the internet changed and is this giving cause for concern? Are they using the internet to communicate with someone of concern? Are they sharing explicit images of themselves or receiving them from others? Are they arranging to meet up with strangers? Are there indications that they are being groomed?

**Living independently and failing to respond to attempts by worker to keep in touch**

THINK ABOUT - This relates to young people who are living independently (not at home) e.g., they may be in some form of supported accommodation. Consideration should be given as to whether the child’s failure to respond to the workers attempts to keep in touch are a change in their usual behaviour or have a cause other than exploitation. Are they engaging with anyone else? Are there cuckooing risks? This indicator relates to the concern that the cause for the young person’s non-engagement is because they are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, exploitation.

# 4. Significant Risk Indicators

These risk indicators are very prevalent in cases where children and young people are at risk of, or are, being abused through sexual/criminal exploitation.

In order to monitor any change in risk over time as a result of intervention or a change in circumstances it is important to know whether the risk indicator is **current (on date of referral or in the past three months) or recent (between three and six months ago)**. Remember to provide in your explanation details of why you have ticked “current 3 months” or “previous 3-6 months” in order that this is clear.

## Disclosure of sexual/physical assault (which may be followed by withdrawal of allegation)

THINK ABOUT – This indicator is suggestive of there being an individual/group who is grooming/exploiting the child and the child’s withdrawal of the allegation is an indication of the presence of the abuser’s control over them. There may be possible use of violence in advance of exploitation in order to control the child. Also consider issues relating to being forced to internally insert drugs inside the body to transport or hide them (‘Coerced Internal Concealment’ – see appropriate language guide for more information).

Remember: You need to be thinking in the context of exploitation – this is not about the child having a parent who has been/is being physically/emotionally abusive (unless you think they are a perpetrator of grooming and exploitation).

## Peers suspected/known to be being sexually or criminally exploited

THINK ABOUT – Is the child associating with other children/peers who are suspected of being exploited sexually or criminally? Is there an indication the child may also be at risk because of this association?

## Periods of going missing overnight or longer

THINK ABOUT – Has the child gone missing overnight or longer? Provide details of when, what is known about where they have stayed or who with etc. Has the child been travelling out of Northamptonshire whilst missing or found in another area with no obvious link (consider trafficking and county lines risks). It is important to provide details of how often this has occurred within a period and the duration of the missing periods, as well as any other known details regarding the episodes.

## Relationship/s with older or controlling individual / group (e.g., older boy/girlfriend, gang/organised crime group)

The control element is important when considering this significant risk indicator – an exploitative relationship between a perpetrator and their victim is going to involve some degree of power imbalance and potentially control, intimidation, threats, and violence.

THINK ABOUT – Does the child have an older boyfriend or girlfriend? Are there concerns regarding relationships with an individual or group who have some control over them (this could be peers or adults)? Has the child become indebted to others and is now expected to pay this off?

Details: Provide any details of the relationship, how long it been going on for, where did they meet/continue to meet, what they do together, what explanations have been given for their friendship/association/relationship, and details of any indications of control. Consider the young person feeling indebted; being coerced to do things they would not normally do; online or offline.

**Physical abuse by controlling person / physical injury without plausible explanation**

THINK ABOUT - This indicator is about recognising if a child is being physically abused by a controlling person or presenting with injuries that they cannot give a plausible explanation for. This may indicate that they are being sexually/criminally exploited and that physical violence is being used as a way of controlling or punishing them.

## Emotional abuse by controlling person (who may be exploiting them)

THINK ABOUT – This indicator is about recognising if a child is being emotionally abused by a

controlling person who is likely to be seeking to, or is, sexually/criminally exploiting them. Consider whether someone is emotionally abusing the young person in order to control/coerce, or as part of a grooming process.

Clearly outline any evidence/indications of emotional abuse e.g., humiliating, embarrassing, constantly putting down, overly-criticising, ignoring/excluding, unreasonable jealousy, emotional blackmail, domination and control, withdrawal of affection, isolating from family and friends, threatening to hurt people they care about to get the child to conform etc.

## Entering/leaving vehicles driven by unknown people (not taking and driving away i.e., car theft)

THINK ABOUT – Has the child been seen or known to have been entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown people/people of concern? If so – when did this occur (date/time), how many occasions, is there a description or details of the car/individuals in the car etc?

## Unexplained amounts of money, expensive clothing, or other items

THINK ABOUT – Has the child been observed with money, clothing, mobile phones, or any other significant items that they cannot account for or give a plausible explanation on how they were obtained? If so, this could be an indication of goods being provided as part of an exploitation or grooming process?

## Frequenting areas known for sexual/criminal exploitation/associated with county lines (e.g., “trap houses”)

THINK ABOUT – Is the child frequenting somewhere where there are known concerns about children being targeted and groomed for sexual/criminal exploitation, or where sexual or criminal exploitation is taking place? Consider locations/addresses/properties (sometimes abandoned) linked to exploitation concerns.

The terms ‘trap house’ and ‘bando’ are sometimes used to refer to addresses used as a base for drug supply. These c can also refer to other locations including B&B’s, hotels, parks etc which may be linked to exploitation concerns.

## Travelling/located out of area without plausible explanation/known link; arrested out of area (especially for drug related offences)

This may be an indicator of a child’s involvement in county lines (model of drug supply where drugs are exported into other areas and a dedicated phone/deal line is used to manage supply). Children/vulnerable adults may be used to move/store drugs or money or may be sent to other areas to sell the drugs, often being forced to stay in poor conditions.

## Child found with large quantities of Class A/B drugs or suspected of/involved in movement and selling of drugs (in any quantity)

This may be an indicator/evidence that the child is involved in significant drug supply activity with the potential for them to be controlled/exploited by others. Due consideration needs to be given to what and who has led the child to become involved in this high-risk situation, and who is gaining from their involvement (often the child gains very little and/or may not have a sound understanding of the risks).

Whenever significant quantities of drugs are seized from a child there is the potential for them to become indebted to exploiters and be more susceptible to an increased risk of further harm, exploitation, and trafficking. Safety planning around this must always be implemented to ensure the young person is kept safe.

## Child involved in robberies/thefts/movement of drugs with no or limited signs of personal gain

This may be an indicator or evidence that the child is being drawn into criminal behaviours to be ‘tested’, to pay debts or for the benefit/gain of someone else.

## Child has a drug debt (and they are likely to be at risk if unpaid)

If a child has a drug debt or repeated debts that they are unable to pay, they may be required to run drugs further or in larger quantities. This may also mean having to commit robberies or steal from others including their family to fund payments. Confiscating drugs/cash from a child may put then at further risk and planning needs to be considered around their personal safety. Specify how much the debt is, if known.

# 5. Other Relevant Information

## Protective/safety measures

Presence of protective/safety measures may reduce the level of concern about current risks or a lack of these may heighten concern further.

Examples:

* Positive relationships with protective adult/s or supporting professionals
* Sustained/access to positive peer relationships
* Involvement in/access to diversionary/positive activities such as sports teams / clubs or other voluntary sector activity
* Positive engagement with education or employment
* Parental oversight/management of internet
* Social media plan
* Missing action plan
* Direct work
* Community disruption

## Extra Familial Links to Exploitation

When considering the exploitation, a young person may be at risk of it is important to consider the extra familial links to the young person and the effect these may be having. In this section we ask you to consider and provide any details of relationships, peer groups, locations or settings that may be adding to the risk of exploitation then young person is facing. In this section it is important that you try to provide as much detail as possible about these risks.

## Child & Parent’s / Carers view of risks / safety

Understanding the child and parents’ perspectives are vitally important to help assess what impact this has on their level of safety and whether risks were present but have now reduced.

* Does the child/parent recognise the exploitation risks/concerns?
* Is the parent taking all appropriate protective steps and is this having any impact, or is a lack of action increasing the exploiters access to the child?

## Scoring and Professional Judgement

Scoring guidance is detailed within the CERAF.

The score is only a guideline, and **your professional judgement is more important**. The information you have gathered in relation to risk indicators, child/parent views and protective/safety factors will assist in forming a narrative around what may be happening to the child and the level of exploitation risk they may be exposed to.

## National Referral Mechanism (NRM) & Trafficking

Human trafficking is an integral process to child exploitation and can include the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person, by means of the threat of or use of force, or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of abuse of power, for the purpose of exploitation.

The UNHCR (Guidelines 2006, Human trafficking) defines the process as a combination of three basic components:

1. **Movement** (including within the UK) - **WHAT**
2. Control, through harm/threat of harm or fraud - **HOW**
3. For the **purpose of exploitation – WHY**

For Child Trafficking we only need to show two elements 1 and 3 above and do not need to prove the means.

It is key for practitioners to ensure that they always consider trafficking as an issue related to child exploitation and act accordingly. Children may be taken from one place to another for exploitation including sexual activity and drug running. Practitioners also need to be aware that CCE and drug running for county lines falls under the forced labour category. This is all covered in the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

If a child meets the test for being trafficked as above, then appropriate safeguarding action must be the first step, followed by completion of a National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referral.

NRM forms can only be completed by first responders and an updated system is now in place for reporting.

### Digital Referral System now live

The ne[w digital NRM referral form](https://www.modernslavery.gov.uk/start)  is available to **all**First Responders – please use this form for all NRM **and** Duty to Notify (DTN) referrals.  The old referral system is being phased out and First Responders are requested to start using the new system as soon as possible.

The online form will identify whether someone is a First Responder by verifying their work email address. You will need to complete this verification to progress with the form. After submitting the form (which will be sent to the Single Competent Authority (SCA)) you will be sent a link to download a copy.

**Appendix 2: Word version of CERAF**

**Northamptonshire CERAF**

Child Exploitation Risk

Assessment Framework

*The CERAF is a tool to be used for young people who are at risk of, or who are currently being, exploited*

*& will support identification of risk areas to be addressed and next steps*

***Children that come to notice must be treated as children, whatever the circumstances they find themselves in.***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Child / Young Person Name:** |  |
| **Any other names the Child/Young Person is knows as or answers to:** |  |
| **Date of Birth (Age):** |  |
| **Gender:** |  |
| **Ethnicity:** |  |
| **Legal Status: (e.g. S20, ICO, Foster Care or Care Facility)** |  |
| **Education Status: (e.g. FT Education, PT Education, CME, NEET etc)** |  |
| **Place of education:**  **Attendance:** |  |
| **Languages spoken:** |  |
| **Refugee/Asylum Seeker Status:** |  |
| **Does the child have any communication need or a diagnosed disability:** |  |
| **If other agencies are involved please list them here e.g. CAMHS, Child & Family Support Service (CFSS) etc.** |  |
| **Has the Child / Young Person previously been a victim of exploitation?** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of person completing form:** |  |
| **Organisation / Team:** |  |
| **Who has assisted in the completion of this risk assessment? E.g. involved professionals, family members, child** |  |
| **Date of completion:** |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Vulnerabilities**  **(Low Risk Indicators)** | Please tick  **Score 1 each** | **Provide details of all Vulnerabilities identified** |
| Emotional neglect by parent/carer/family member |  |  |
| Physical abuse by parent/carer/family member |  |  |
| Sexual abuse |  |  |
| Breakdown of family relationships |  |  |
| Family history of domestic abuse |  |  |
| Family history of substance misuse |  |  |
| Family history of mental health difficulties |  |  |
| Low self-esteem |  |  |
| Unsuitable/inappropriate accommodation |  |  |
| Isolated from peers/social networks |  |  |
| Lack of positive relationship with a protective/nurturing adult |  |  |
| Child has diagnosed physical and/or learning disability |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Summary of Evidence for Low Risk Indicators:** |
|  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Medium Risk Indicators** | Tick if present **during the past 3 months**  **Score 1 each** | **Provide details of all indicators identified** |
| Regularly staying out late (This may include periods of staying out all day and whereabouts unknown) |  |  |
| Multiple callers (unknown adults/older young people) |  |  |
| Use of a mobile phone that causes concern (e.g. multiple phones, contact from unknown / concerning people) |  |  |
| Expressions of despair (e.g. self-harm, overdose, eating disorder, challenging behaviour, aggression, carrying weapons, other sudden change in wellbeing) |  |  |
| Exclusion from school or unexplained absences from or not engaged in school / college / training / work (to include during school day). |  |  |
| Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), pregnancy/termination of pregnancy |  |  |
| Drug / Alcohol use |  |  |
| Use of the internet that causes concern (e.g. coerced to take/share indecent images; dealing drugs; selling stolen goods; use of the ‘Dark Web’) |  |  |
| Living independently and failing to respond to attempts by worker to keep in touch |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Summary of Evidence for Medium Risk Indicators:** |
|  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **High Risk Indicators**  (Exploitation linked not intrafamilial abuse) | Tick if present **between 3 and 6 months ago**  **Score 1 each** | Tick if present **during past 3 months**  **Score 5 each** | **Provide details of all indicators identified** |
| Disclosure of sexual/physical assault (which may be followed by withdrawal of allegation) |  |  |  |
| Peers suspected/known to be being sexually or criminally exploited |  |  |  |
| Periods of going missing overnight or longer, sustained increase in missing episodes |  |  |  |
| Relationship/s with older or controlling individual / group (e.g. older boy/girlfriend, gang / organised crime group) |  |  |  |
| Physical abuse by controlling person / physical injury without plausible explanation |  |  |  |
| Emotional abuse by controlling person |  |  |  |
| Entering/leaving vehicles driven by unknown people  (**not** taking and driving away: car theft) |  |  |  |
| Unexplained amounts of money, expensive clothing or other items |  |  |  |
| Frequenting areas known for sexual / criminal exploitation / associated with county lines (e.g. “trap houses”) |  |  |  |
| Travelling / located out of area without plausible explanation / known link; arrested out of area (especially for drug related offences) |  |  |  |
| Child found with large quantities of Class A/B drugs or suspected of/involved in the movement and selling of drugs |  |  |  |
| Child involved in robberies/thefts with no or limited signs of personal gain |  |  |  |
| Child has a drug debt (and is likely to be at risk if unpaid) |  |  |  |
| Child is under 13 and there is at least 1 High risk factor present:  **Consider Child Protection Processes/HRSM** | | **Score 5** |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Summary of Evidence for High Risk Indicators:** |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Protective factors & strengths:**  *What’s working well? To include strengths identified within the family or community:* |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Safety measures & disruption:**  *What has been tried so far to reduce the exploitation risk?* |
|  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Please detail below any of the following you feel are linked to the risk of exploitation** | | | |
| **Relationships**  *(Please include all names and DOB’s, if known)* | **Peer Groups**  *(Please include all names and DOB’s, if known)* | **Locations**  *(Please provide details)* | **Settings**  *(Please provide details)* |
|  |  |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Childs / Young Persons Views:**  *What are the child’s views on safety, perception of risk and push / pull factors* |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Parents / Carers Views:**  *What are the parents / carers views on safety, perception of risk and push / pull factors* |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Professional Judgement: THIS SECTION MUST BE COMPLETED**   * *Consider* ***all*** *information and refer to risk categories below* * *The score is only a guideline.* * *Identify the level of risk you consider the child to be at currently and explain why.* |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TOTAL CERAF SCORE:** |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **RISK LEVEL** |  | **Not at risk - child may be ‘in need’ but grooming / exploitation not current concern**  (Score guideline 0 – 5) |
|  | **Low Risk – child is vulnerable / susceptible to grooming / exploitation**  (Score guideline **6 – 10**) |
|  | **Medium Risk – a number of warning signs suggesting child is at risk of opportunistic exploitation** (Score guideline **11 – 15**) |
|  | **High Risk – strong indicators / evidence that child is currently experiencing exploitation harm** (Score guideline **16+**) |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **What is the known/suspected exploitation risk: You may tick more than one:** | |
| **KNOWN** | **Sexual  Criminal  County Lines** |
| **SUSPECTED** | **Sexual  Criminal  County Lines** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Are there reasonable grounds to suspect this child has been trafficked or a victim of forced labour?** | **Yes  No** | **If yes –** Child Protection Procedures & [National Referral Mechanism](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-trafficking-victims-referral-and-assessment-forms/guidance-on-the-national-referral-mechanism-for-potential-adult-victims-of-modern-slavery-england-and-wales) form **must** be completed. |
| **If yes - is the trafficking internal, or international?** | **Internal** e.g. moved within town/city or UK  **Abroad** e.g. separated orUnaccompanied Asylum Seeker | |

**CERAF Risk Categories & Actions**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **CERAF Risk category** | **Actions** |
| **Not at risk** | * Educate young person to stay safe. * Seek to address vulnerability factors. * Review risk following any significant change in circumstances. * Update intervention/support plan if in place. |
| **Low Risk** | When there is a low level of risk, the threshold for Police or Social Care involvement is unlikely to be met, where this is in isolation of other safeguarding concerns, or the child is not looked after. The CERAF should be regularly reviewed and should concerns increase a referral should be made to social care.  A team around the family meeting could be initiated through Early Help processes if this would be helpful and the family agree to this. There are also a range of universal and preventative services available that can be referred to. |
| **If the CERAF outcome is Medium or High risk and the child is not open to Children’s Services – contact the MASH to discuss / report the safeguarding concerns with a copy of this assessment.** [**Report a concern (nctrust.co.uk)**](https://www.nctrust.co.uk/protecting-children-information-for-professionals/Pages/report-a-concern.aspx) | |
| **Medium Risk** | Any young person recorded with a medium or high-risk outcome should be referred immediately to MASH. MASH will screen this referral and determine whether a single assessment and strategy meeting needs to be convened by the Duty and Assessment team. |
| **High Risk** |

**Appendix 3: Invite list to SQAS for High Risk Meetings**

**High Risk Exploitation Meeting Invite list**

This document is to be used to refer to SQAS for a young person who has been assessed as high risk of exploitation.

Referral to be sent to:

* [Conference@nctrust.co.uk](mailto:Conference@nctrust.co.uk) for children who are not in care
* [IROAdmin@nctrust.co.uk](mailto:IROAdmin@nctrust.co.uk) for children in care

**Personal Details of Young Person**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Surname: |  | | **Care First Number:** | |
| First Name(s): |  | | | |
| Address: |  | | | |
| DoB: |  | Age: | | School Year : |
| Legal Status: |  | | | |
| Status –  C&F / CIN / CP |  | | | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Parents / Carer details – names and email addresses |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Support required for the family to participate in meetings |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date assessed as High Risk  (copy of Ceraf and latest meeting minutes to be attached to referral) |  |

Invite List - Please give details of contact name and email address

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Police | **Standard Referral** |
| Education |  |
| Health |  |
| YOS |  |
| Early Help (Inc. Troubled Families) |  |
| CIRV |  |
| ICTG |  |
| Any other  (please state contact name, agency and email address) |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Authorisation:** | |
| Completed by:  Job Title: | Date: |
| Countersigned (Manager):  Job Title: | Date: |

**Appendix 4: Exploitation Pathway Flowchart Assessing and Managing Risk**

