

**Brighton & Hove Local Safeguarding  
Children Board**

**Child Sexual Abuse  
Multi-Agency Strategy  
2018**



# 1. Introduction from LSCB Independent Chair

Child sexual abuse is a sensitive and complex issue that takes many forms. For many people, including professionals it is not an easy subject to talk about but it is essential that we do.

Child sexual abuse can have a devastating impact on the lives of individuals and may have far reaching consequences for their families and our communities. It is not limited to any particular gender, geographic area or social background but it is clear from the increased awareness arising from a number of high profile media cases that it remains prevalent throughout the UK.

In 2014 the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) commissioned a rapid evidence assessment into child sexual abuse in the family environment which showed that 1 in 20 children in the UK have been sexually abused, 90% by someone they knew. It is well documented that many children disclose sexual abuse through their behaviour not verbal accounts and that disclosures are often delayed or misunderstood. Some prevalence studies of intra-familial child sexual abuse place this figure much higher, however, of the 43,000 children in England who are subject to a child protection plan at any given time, only around 5% are on a plan for sexual abuse. In the last few years the number of cases of peer on peer abuse and sexually harmful behaviours has increased.

This strategy advocates that the best way to tackle the sexual abuse of children is through effective co-ordinated agency and partnership working to a clear and coherent plan, with the aim of doing everything possible to prevent child sexual abuse and as well ensuring that there is a swift, proportionate response with practical and tailored support for the children and young people unfortunate to become victims. Therefore an important part of this strategy is working with children and young people and their communities to inform them about the dangers of child sexual abuse and the early warning signs to look out for. We likely have children and young people involved in relationships that they themselves do not recognise as abuse and we want to equip them with the knowledge and confidence to come forward and report.

This strategy maps how the LSCB and its partner agencies intend to continuously improve our effectiveness in tackling child sexual abuse. In recent years we believe that we have made progress in identifying and supporting children who have been sexually abused and have the evidence to support this view and this new strategy builds on what we have learned, both locally and more widely.

The strategy outlines how agencies work together on cases when potential child sexual abuse concerns are reported, and our continuing plans to disrupt this kind of activity and prosecute, where relevant, the people who perpetrate this crime. It also talks to peer on peer abuse, harmful sexual behaviours and harmful practices.

The LSCB is committed to listening and learning from the victims and their families who have been affected and recognise that it is vital to translate what they tell us into positive action, so that we can tackle these crimes more effectively whilst ensuring that children and young people who are damaged by this experience get the professional help and support they need.

The safeguarding Board will include within its' Annual Report the details of how this strategy has been implemented and what has been achieved.

The strategy is supported by LSCB Learning & Development offers which provide professionals with an overarching understanding of the issues surrounding child sexual abuse, how it can impact on the children and young people to whom it relates and how early interventions and agency procedures can be used to reduce the risk and better safeguard them from harm.

**Chris Robson**  
**Independent Chair**  
**Brighton & Hove LSCB**

## 2. Strategic Context

The Children Act 2004 (sections 13 and 14) requires each Local Authority to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to co-ordinate the actions of partners with whom they work and ensure the effectiveness of the safeguarding children arrangements.

**Please note – Strategic Context will be updated post WT publication May 2018.**

### Vision & Purpose for Safeguarding in Brighton & Hove

#### **Priority Area 2: Sexual Harm and Violence towards children: (Child Sexual Abuse & Child Sexual Exploitation)**

**We must identify the extent of sexual harm and violence towards children and to tackle it across all agencies to protect children. Conscious of the risks to children who are alone, we will pay particular attention to work with those who go missing from care, home and education.**

**Outcome for children: Children and young people in Brighton & Hove are protected from sexual harm and violence.**

Our vision and purpose recognises that protecting and safeguarding children and young people is about the development of a culture that promotes good practice and continuous improvement within services, raises public and practitioner awareness that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, responds effectively and swiftly when sexual abuse has been alleged or occurs, seeks to learn when things have gone wrong, is sensitive to the issues of cultural diversity and equality and puts the children and young people at the centre of planning to ensure they are supported and ensure they are safe in their communities.

## 3. Purpose of the Strategy

This strategy sets out the vision, commitment and approach of the Brighton Local Safeguarding Children Board to ensure the effectiveness of the arrangements to safeguard children from sexual abuse.

This strategy advocates that the best way to tackle the sexual abuse of children is through effective co-ordinated inter agency and partnership links, at every level and working to a clear and coherent plan, doing everything possible to recognise and prevent child sexual abuse and ensuring that there is a rapid and proportionate response, with practical and tailored support for children and young people unfortunate to become victims.

The Board has a key role in promoting and facilitating local and cross border co-operation and collaboration it is however the responsibility of the Police to focus on the detection, investigation and prosecution of perpetrators.

Support for younger children with harmful sexualised behaviours is vital to reduce possible future risks.

## 4. Child Sexual Abuse – A Description of what it is

Brighton & Hove Local Safeguarding Board has adopted the definition that describes child sexual abuse as:

*Sexual abuse ‘involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or in the production of sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse as can other children.’*  
(OCC, 2014)

The sexual abuse of children and young people takes many forms and those relevant to this strategy are outlined below:

### **Intra-familial Sexual Abuse**

This is where a family member involves a child in (or exposes a child to) sexual behaviours or activities. The “family member” need not be a blood relative, but could be someone who is considered “part of the family,” such as a godparent or very close friend.

### **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive ‘something’ (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child’s immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person’s limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability

Both girls and boys are at risk of sexual exploitation, and it is seriously harmful to children both emotionally and physically. Children and young people often find it very hard to understand or accept that they are being abused through sexual exploitation, and this increases their risk of being exposed to violent assault and life threatening events by those who abuse them. [Read more on the LSCB Website](#)

### **Peer on Peer Abuse**

Peer on peer abuse occurs when a young person is harmed by their peers who are the same or similar age, and everyone directly involved in peer on peer abuse is under the age of 18.

‘Peer-on-peer’ abuse can relate to various forms of abuse and can be harmful to the child perpetrator as well as the victim:

- **Domestic abuse** – young people who experience physical, emotional, sexual and/or

financial abuse, and coercive control, in their intimate relationships, as well as family relationships.

- **Child sexual exploitation** – those under the age of 18 who are sexually abused in the context of exploitative relationships, contexts and situations, by a person of any age, including another young person. A key element of CSE is the imbalance of power and control within the exploitative relationship. Many victims are not aware of the exploitation as they believe that they are loved by their boyfriend / girlfriend or are acting in accordance with their peers. Children are often recruited into exploitation by those of a similar age who they trust, and peer on peer exploitation often involves a sense of peer pressure and wanting to fit in. In peer on peer exploitation, schools and youth clubs are also locations where children and young people can be exploited.
- **Serious youth violence** – any offence of most serious violence or weapon-enabled crime, where the victim is aged 19 or younger, e.g. wounding with intent, rape, murder and grievous bodily harm.
- **Harmful sexual behaviour** – young people displaying sexual behaviours that are outside of developmentally 'normative' parameters (see more below)

### Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is the umbrella term for those actions that are either:

- **Sexually abusive**, where there is an element of manipulation, force or coercion or where the subject of the behaviour is unable to give informed consent, or
- **Sexually problematic**, where there may not be an element of victimisation but where the behaviours may interfere with the development of the child demonstrating the behaviour or which might provoke rejection, cause distress or increase the risk of victimisation of the child

Children's sexual behaviour should be thought about as being on a continuum, ranging from healthy, through problematic, to abusive.

Defining what behaviours fit where on the continuum can be a difficult task and should be thought about within the context of the behaviour itself and the developmental situation of the child. A particular behaviour in one circumstance could be harmful whilst in another it may not. A number of checklists are available to assist in considering children and young peoples' sexual behaviour, including the [Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool](#). Read more about Harmful Sexual Behaviours in the [Pan Sussex Child Protection & Safeguarding Procedures](#).

### Harmful Practices

[Female Genital Mutilation](#) is a collective term for procedures which include the removal of part or all of the external female genitalia for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons.

This practice is not required by any major religion and medical evidence indicates that female genital mutilation causes harm to those who are subjected to it. Girls may be circumcised or genitally mutilated illegally by doctors or traditional health workers in the UK, or sent abroad for the operation.

Many girls may not be aware that they may be at risk of undergoing FGM but suspicions may arise in a number of ways that a child is being prepared for FGM to take place abroad. These

include knowing that the family belongs to a community in which FGM is practised and is making preparations for the child to take a holiday, arranging vaccinations or planning absence from school. The child may also talk about a 'special procedure/ceremony' that is going to take place.

[Honour Based Violence](#) is the term used to describe murders in the name of so-called honour, sometimes called 'honour killings'. These are murders in which predominantly women are killed for perceived immoral behaviour, which is deemed to have breached the honour code of a family or community, causing shame.

The Sussex Police definition of so-called honour based violence is: 'a crime or incident, which has or may been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community'

A child who is at risk of honour based violence is at significant risk of physical harm (including being murdered) and/or neglect, and may also suffer significant emotional harm through the threat of violence or witnessing violence directed towards a sibling or other family member.

The perceived immoral behaviour which could precipitate a murder can include inappropriate make-up or dress; the existence of a boyfriend; kissing or intimacy in a public place; rejecting a forced marriage; pregnancy outside of marriage; being a victim of rape; inter-faith relationships. Read more about Honour Based Violence in the [Pan Sussex Child Protection & Safeguarding Procedures](#).

A [forced marriage](#) is when one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of some vulnerable adults, cannot) consent to the marriage and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure.

Forced marriages of children may involve non-consensual and/or underage sex, emotional and possibly physical abuse and should be regarded as a child protection issue and referred to Children's Social Care.

Forced marriage is primarily, but not exclusively, an issue of violence against girls and young women: "Most cases involve young women aged between 13 and 30, although there is evidence to suggest that as many as 15% of victims are male" Read More about Forced Marriage in the [Pan Sussex Child Protection & Safeguarding Procedures](#).

## 5. Who it effects

Any child can be affected by sexual abuse. But they may be more at risk if they have:

- a history of previous sexual abuse
- a disability
- a disrupted home life
- experienced other forms of abuse (e.g. neglect, physical, emotional).

Young or disabled children may not be able to tell someone what's happening, or may not understand that they're being abused.

## Risk factors for child sexual abuse

- **Isolation:** Some sexual abusers target children who are neglected by their parents, or children who don't have many friends (Elliot et al, 1995).
- **Gender:** Both boys and girls can be sexually abused. Research suggests that girls are at a greater risk of being sexually abused by a family member. Boys are at a higher risk of being abused by a stranger (Maikovich-Fong and Jafee, 2010).
- **Age:** NSPCC research found that teenage girls aged between 15 and 17 years reported the highest rates of sexual abuse (Radford, 2011).
- **Online:** Social media, chat rooms and web forums are places where children could be groomed, persuaded to meet an abuser in person or persuaded to send pictures of themselves or perform sexual acts in front of webcams (Leonard, 2010).

## The Age of Consent

The age of consent for sex in England and Wales is 16 for both men and women. The age of consent is the same regardless of the sexual orientation of a person and whether sexual activity is between people of the same or different gender.

It is an offence for anyone to have any sexual activity with a person under the age of 16. However, Home Office guidance is clear that there is no intention to prosecute teenagers under the age of 16 where both mutually agree and where they are of a similar age.

It is an offence for a person aged 18 or over to have any sexual activity with a person under the age of 18 if the older person holds a position of trust (for example a teacher or social worker) as such sexual activity is an abuse of the position of trust.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 provides specific legal protection for children aged 12 and under who cannot legally give their consent to any form of sexual activity. There is a maximum sentence of life imprisonment for rape, assault by penetration, and causing or inciting a child to engage in sexual activity. Read more: [Pan Sussex Safeguarding Procedures: Sexually Active Children.](#)

Non-abusive underage sexual activity, risky sexual behaviour, and teenage pregnancies may be an indicator that a child has additional needs and vulnerabilities that require a co-ordinated Early Help response to stop issues escalating. For more information please see our [Threshold Framework.](#)

## 6. Why is it important?

Child sexual abuse is a criminal offence and following a series of high profile cases widely reported in the media, it is clear that it remains prevalent in the UK and for many children and young people the impact of this abuse can have a serious long term implications on every aspect of their life particularly mental and physical health and education that endures into adulthood.

Consistent findings from research highlight that the adverse consequences for the child often include acute feelings of betrayal, powerlessness, stigmatisation, guilt, trauma, sexualisation, physical and mental health problems, as well as difficulties forming and maintaining relationships. Abuse often has wider impacts and can damage the lives of families and carers and can lead to family break ups.

We believe that the child/young person must always be the focus of what we do as safeguarding partners. It is important that we not only listen to but also effectively engage with children and young people, whatever their developmental/cognitive stage, their families and carers and the wider community and use their experiences to understand the local needs.

This multi-agency strategy for safeguarding children who are abused or at risk of sexual abuse draws on:

- [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) (DfE 2017),
- Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners (2017) [I thought I was the only one. The only one in the world: The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups](#), (OCC 2012).
- [Pan Sussex Procedure - Child Sexual Exploitation](#)
- [Pan Sussex Safeguarding Procedures: Sexually Active Children.](#)
- [Child Sexual Exploitation - Pan Sussex Strategy](#)
- [Guidance on Children who present with Harmful Sexual Behaviours](#)

## 7. What to do if you are worried about a child:

If you are worried that a child has been, or is at risk of being sexually abused contact should be made with the Front Door For Families, professionals should seek guidance and support from their supervisor or agency lead for safeguarding. Contact with the Front Door For Families should be supported by a written statement which articulates the concerns and provides information to support a referral being made. Where there is evidence of harm identified and likely significant harm the Front Door For Families should be contacted immediately on **01273 290400**.

## 8. Key principals of the strategy:

- We will maintain a clear focus on the child whether they are a victim or an offender.
- We will have whole system leadership in raising awareness and tackling CSA with all partner agencies taking responsibility for professional standards within their organisations.
- We will have clear lines of accountability and roles and responsibility in cases of where CSA is suspected.
- We will have a shared, multi-agency approach to identification of and interventions for CSA
- We will demonstrate commitment to equalities and diversity acknowledging that some children are at more risk due to their diverse needs.
- We will be culturally competent<sup>1</sup> in this area of work
- We will be competent and confident in recognising and managing the complexity and tensions inherent within intra-familial child sexual abuse, particularly where sibling on sibling Harmful Sexual Behaviour or abuse is occurring.
- We will ensure that the complex nature of CSA and the impact on the workforce is acknowledged and that there is practical and emotional support in place for practitioners.

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<sup>1</sup> Cultural competence is the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures. It encompasses the interpersonal skills and knowledge that allow professionals to appreciate cultures other than their own, including being aware of one's own world view; developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences; and gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and world views.

Cultural competence is a continuous process of learning about the cultural strengths of others and integrating their unique abilities and perspectives into our lives.

Cultural competence in safeguarding puts children's wellbeing and protection within the cultural context, and helps separate which aspects of the family's difficulties are 'cultural', which are neglectful, and which are a combination of factors.

## 9. Our Strategy

The Safeguarding Children Board has resolved to develop and co-ordinate a cross agency approach to increase effectiveness in tackling all forms of child sexual abuse.

Our strategy has the following 3 elements. Each element is underpinned by an overarching commitment to robust Leadership and Governance

**Awareness Raising:** Do more to mitigate the impact of this form of abuse upon children and young people; Identify child sexual abuse much earlier,

**Learning & Development:** Deliver a well trained workforce that works together confidently to tackle child sexual abuse and adopts a truly child focussed approach.

**Practice & Resources:** Monitor multi-agency practice and identify any gaps in services to support front line professionals and commissioners to provide high quality services to protect children. Promote the resources and pathways that are available to support practitioners across the partnership.

### Learning & Development

The LSCB currently offer a selection of multi-agency training:

- **Dealing with CSA**, a full day, face to face training, delivered by professionals from, Children's Services, SARC staff, CISVA and LSCB, looking at all aspects from initial disclosure, through investigation, medical and support services offered. Within this day the Harmful Practices including FGM, Forced Marriage and HBV are also discussed, and participants are signposted to the specific training they can access via the LSCB and VAWG.
- **Children & Young People Who Display Harmful Sexual Behaviours** Delivered by local experts from the Clermont Unit. This introductory session helps professionals distinguish between 'normal' and harmful behaviours, whilst exploring the reasons why some children & young people develop Harmful Sexual Behaviours.
- **Exploitation** (VVE) including all aspects of CSE, Criminal Exploitation, the influences of Drug Culture and also those of Radicalisation, are looked at within the two days face to face training being offered by WISE, firstly exploring why and how young people are drawn into exploitive situations and then looking at the potential interventions being used to support them and extract them from the circumstances they have be forced into.
- **Safeguarding in Digital World**, is a half day presentation delivered by our partners from Safety-Net, in which all aspects of digital misuse and safety are discussed, it also looks at how young people can be groomed, forced or coerced into sexually abusive situations.

## Resources to support Practice

One space - Council employees can access has resources to support workers working in this area.

- [Pan Sussex Procedure - Child Sexual Exploitation](#)
- [Pan Sussex Safeguarding Procedures: Sexually Active Children.](#)
- [Child Sexual Exploitation - Pan Sussex Strategy](#)
- [Guidance on Children who present with Harmful Sexual Behaviours](#)

## 10. Strategic Objectives: What will the partnership achieve?

### Raising awareness

**PREVENTION:** The LSCB will develop a package of preventative awareness raising materials which will include information about services, resources and most importantly listening to the voice of the child, for use by all agencies, parents and the general public.

**REFERRAL PATHWAYS:** The LSCB will publish referral pathways to support parents and professionals in knowing how to get support for children who have been abused or are at risk of CSA or who are displaying sexually harmful behaviour.

**EARLY HELP/ WIDE ENGAGEMENT:** The LSCB will engage with a wide range of agencies to promote awareness throughout the implementation of the strategy, including Schools, nurseries, Voluntary & Community Groups

**SAFEGUARDING IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY:** Agencies will be responsible for actively promoting awareness raising materials and resources with their staff and service users.

**AWARENESS RAISING EVENT:**  -CSARC open days.  
**Are there other events available?**

**QUALITY ASSURANCE:** The LSCB will cascade learning from LSCB Multi-agency CSA audit 2018 with front line staff and take forward recommendations that are made..

### Learning & Development

**MULTI-AGENCY:** The LSCB will review the multi-agency training on CSA and sexually harmful behaviour to ensure it is fit for purpose for each agency. The LSCB will also ensure that our CSE exploitation training is updated and relevant to all aspects of potential exploitation that may result in sexual harm being caused to children or young people.

**SINGLE AGENCY:** All agencies will review and report on their own respective workforce's skill and knowledge in relation to CSA and provide single agency training where necessary to ensure the right level of skill and knowledge are achieved and that specialist practice is of a high standard.

**EVIDENCE:** The LSCB will review the use of Question and Answer's and develop the 'Achieving Best Evidence' training to ensure best practice working with children and young people when they are interviewed by police and social workers following abuse and ensuring that children with additional needs are equally supported.

**TRAUMA INFORMED:** The LSCB will develop multi-agency training to support the understanding of the impact of childhood trauma, including PTSD, and the understanding the neuro-developmental implications of abuse, neglect and trauma on brain development.

**CARING FOR CHILDREN:** Children's Services will ensure that there are specific resources and training for residential workers, foster carers and adopters who find they are caring for/parenting a child who displays sexually harmful behaviour.

**INCREASED VULNERABILITY:** The LSCB will ensure that all aspects of multi-agency training and awareness raising make explicit reference to early years, children with disabilities and children from minority ethnic backgrounds because evidence suggests there is increased vulnerability combined with a higher risk of non-identification of CSA.

### Practice

**RESOURCING GAPS:** The LSCB will support commissioners/joint commissioning bodies in addressing any resourcing gaps particularly support for children who display sexually harmful behaviour but are not within the criminal justice system.

**ACCESS TO RESOURCES:** The LSCB will ensure that pathways to resources that support children and families who have been affected by CSA, are clearly documented, communicated and accessible.

**MULTI-AGENCY WORKING:** The LSCB will endorse information sharing across the partnership to promote the safety and welfare of children and prevent abuse wherever this is possible. This will include encouraging the SEAM to establish communications with the local MAPPA Chair.

**PRACTICE STANDARDS:** The LSCB expect high quality of practice in relation to CSA to include greater transparency with families and within multi-agency meetings when we are worried about signs that a child is at risk of being sexually abused, has been sexually abused or displays sexually harmful

## 11. Monitoring Impact: How will we measure the difference we make?

### Raising awareness

Agencies, including Primary Care, will report to the LSCB Learning & Development Subcommittee on numbers of staff who have received CSA awareness training and 3 months after attendance will undertake work to ascertain the resulting impact on services provided.

The LSCB will seek staff feedback (via Survey Monkey) to the L&D Subcommittee to establish if their confidence and knowledge has improved following the awareness raising training and the implementation of the strategy

Agencies will share feedback with the LSCB Participation & Engagement Subcommittee from parents and children/young people when they have shared resources with them, regarding whether their awareness of risks of child sexual abuse and exploitation have improved.

Feedback from the CSARC open days and LSCB training will help to evidence increased awareness of and confidence in recognising and managing CSA.

### Training & Development

The LSCB Learning & Development subcommittee will monitor the impact of multi-agency training on frontline practice and ensure any deficits are addressed in future workforce development agreements.

Agencies will report to the Learning & Development subcommittee on any single agency training being delivered and the impact it has had on the quality of practice.

Children/young people and families will have an opportunity to provide feedback following criminal investigations to allow agencies to learn from their experiences and improve practice

The Workforce & Development Team – BHCC, will seek feedback on the impact of training for residential workers, foster carers and adopters in terms of their ability to care for and meet the needs of the children they look after.

The Learning & Development subcommittee will seek feedback from practitioners on improved practice in tackling CSA in cases relating to early years, children with disabilities and children from minority ethnic backgrounds.

### Practice

The LSCB Monitoring & Evaluation subcommittee will undertake quality assurance work to monitor the effectiveness of pathways to help and support. This will also demonstrate if the voice of the child has been integral to practice standards where child sexual abuse is suspected or raised as a concern. This work will include asking children, young people and families about their experiences

Child Protection conference processes will be audited with the specific focus on CSA, categorisation and challenge – role for 2018 CSA audit.

## **12. Governance**

Governance will be provided to the LSCB through the Child & Young Person Exploitation Strategic Group and the Monitoring & Evaluation Subcommittee.

## **13. Review**

This strategy will be reviewed on a two yearly basis by the LSCB. Its associated plan will be reviewed annually via the Child and Young Person Exploitation Strategic Group.