

Multi- Agency Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy 2017 - 2019

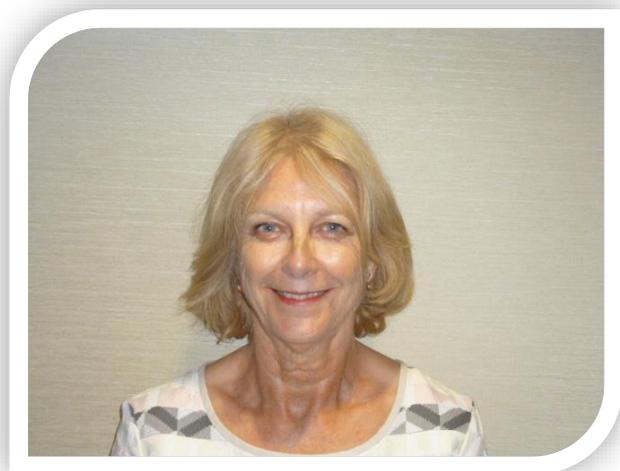


TACKLING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION TOGETHER

Contents

1. Foreword	Page 2
2. Introduction	Page 3
3. Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board Vision	Page 5
4. Definition of Child Sexual Exploitation	Page 5
5. Types of Child Sexual Exploitation	Page 6
6. Who is at risk?	Page 7
7. How do we know who is at risk?	Page 7
8. Categories of risk	Page 9
9. Local Context	Page 9
10. Diversity	Page 10
11. The Local CSE Strategy	Page 10
12. CSE prevalence and response within Sandwell	Page 11
13. Prevent	Page 12
14. Protect	Page 14
15. Pursue	Page 15
16. Prosecution	Page 16
17. Supporting for witnesses and victims	Page 16
18. Workforce Development and Training	Page 17
19. Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board Governance	Page 17
20. Strategic CMOG	Page 19
21. CMOG	Page 19
22. Measure of success	Page 19
23. Commissioning	Page 20
24. Conclusion	Page 20
25. Glossary of terms	Page 21

1. Foreword



As Independent Chair of Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) I am pleased to present our Multi Agency Child Exploitation Strategy 2017-19.

Protecting children from child sexual exploitation has been, and remains, a priority for our Safeguarding Children Board. This strategy builds on the work already in place across Sandwell as risks to children of sexual exploitation have been recognised for a number of years.

This document emphasises the importance of a strong partnership across all agencies responsible for safeguarding children. Organisations such as West Midlands Police, health services and the local authority cannot work in isolation when seeking to combat child sexual exploitation and protect children and young people in Sandwell. It is only through working together that we will be successful in our work in this complex area.

We know that child sexual exploitation can have a devastating impact on children and their families. We also know that to prevent it we need a workforce that is well trained, skilled and confident. Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board will ensure that professionals from all agencies are equipped to undertake this work and recognise, for example, the vulnerability of children who go missing from home, school or care settings. We will monitor the progress of the actions all agencies have agreed to undertake to support the strategy.

Finally, and most importantly, we will listen to children and young people in Sandwell to understand how we can support them, what services meet their needs and how we can prevent child sexual exploitation in our locality.

Audrey Williamson

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Audrey Williamson". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Independent Chair, Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board

2. Introduction

- 2.1. The purpose of this two-year strategy is to create a climate and culture that encourages all partner agencies to identify children and young people at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), to prevent them from becoming victims and to protect them from abuse. This strategy recognises and is committed to ensuring that the child's voice must be listened to and considered; children have the right to experience healthy relationships free of coercion, discrimination and violence.
- 2.2. Child sexual exploitation can impact greatly on the lives of victims and their families and can affect all our communities. Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board is determined to work with partners to intervene where CSE is suspected or identified and aims to prevent CSE from occurring across the borough. We aim to ensure that we 'get it right' in Sandwell and will work to improve the response that we, as agencies, provide. To do this, we must ensure that:
- All agencies recognise the voice of children to aid the recognition of and vulnerability to abuse
 - Prevention and intervention is instigated at the earliest opportunity. There is a need to refine the ways in which we work together to pursue the perpetrators of such criminal behaviour
 - We respond effectively when locations of concern are identified as potentially being used to effect abuse, this response should always be orchestrated as a partnership ensuring maximising effect in relation to the disruption of activity
- 2.3. Significant partnership working and information sharing already takes place between local authority children's services, the police, health services, the voluntary sector and other agencies to identify and address CSE across Sandwell. This is evident from the representation of partner agencies at MASE (Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Meeting) and the work which partners have completed to date.
- 2.4. Partner agencies should focus on a child's needs and recognise the fact that children are not always aware, able to identify or acknowledge that they may be in an exploitative or abusive situation. Whilst incorporating a child and family centred approach, a focused attitude towards prevention, early identification and intervention and proactively targeting, disrupting and prosecuting individuals or groups who seek to exploit children will be adopted.
- 2.5. Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a criminal act that has a devastating impact upon children and their families. Prominent national case reviews of the prevalence of CSE

have concluded that there will be children at risk and being sexually abused and exploited in most local authority areas. Central Government has given CSE the status of one of the five current national threats in the Strategic Policing Requirement so that this is prioritised by every police force. Children should always be treated as unwilling participants in CSE and it is with this in mind that a strategic approach to preventing such abuse and supporting those who have been victims of such abuse is contained within this document.

- 2.6. Sandwell works within the West Midlands CSE Regional Framework and works collaboratively with the other local authorities and Police Force's to improve identification of CSE victims, locations and perpetrators. This strategy sets out our overall approach which is underpinned by the See Me Hear Me Framework principles and the West Midlands Local Standards. [See me Hear Me – West Midlands Metropolitan CSE Regional Framework.](#)
- 2.7. Prevention of Violence and Exploitation is an agreed priority across the four statutory boards in Sandwell i.e. Sandwell Safeguarding Childrens Board, Adults Safeguarding Board, Health and Wellbeing Board and Safer Sandwell Partnership Board.

3. Sandwell Safeguarding Childrens Board Vision

3.1. The vision and purpose of this strategy is to ensure that:

- All relevant professionals have a good understanding of the prevalence, risk factors and indicators of CSE
- Children and young people, parents and carers and members of the wider community have increased awareness of CSE
- Children and young people at risk of CSE and other related risks are identified and effectively supported to prevent them from becoming victims of exploitation
- Victims of exploitation are supported towards positive outcomes
- The activities of perpetrators are either effectively disrupted or result in successful prosecutions

3.2. There are four key areas that need to be strategically addressed:

- **Prevent**
- **Protect**
- **Pursue**
- **Prosecute**

4. Definition of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

4.1. The government issued an updated definition of child sexual exploitation in 2017 to be used for the purposes of the statutory [Working Together](#) child safeguarding guidance to reflect the changes, [and issued a new guide for practitioners on working with child sexual exploitation](#). It states that:

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.

5. Types of Child Sexual Exploitation

5.1. The act of CSE is generally a hidden activity whereby and is much more likely to occur in private dwellings than in public places. However, the act and method of coercion by the perpetrator(s) can take place in public.

5.2. The following examples describe the different types of exploitation offender's use and how children can be coerced:

5.2.1. **Peer on Peer**

This refers to situations where children are forced or coerced into sexual activity by peers or associates. This can but not always be linked to gang activity.

5.2.2. **Boyfriend model**

The perpetrator will befriend and groom a child into a 'relationship' and will then coerce or force them to have sex with friends or associates. The 'boyfriend' may be significantly older than the victim but this is not always the case.

5.2.3. **Inappropriate relationships**

This usually involves one perpetrator who has inappropriate power or control over a child (physical, emotional or financial) – one indicator could be a significant age gap or a person in a position of authority exploiting a child. The child may believe they are in a loving relationship.

5.2.4. **Gang associated CSE**

A child can be sexually exploited by a gang, but this is not necessarily the reason why gangs are formed. Types of exploitation may include using sex as a weapon between rival gangs, as a form of punishment to fellow gang members and/or a means of gaining status within the hierarchy of the gang.

5.2.5. **Organised/networked sexual exploitation or trafficking**

Young people (often connected) are passed through networks, possibly over geographical distances, between towns and cities whereby they may be forced/coerced into sexual activity with multiple men. Often this occurs at 'parties' and young people who are involved may recruit others into the network. Some of this activity is described as serious organised crime and can involve the organised 'bullying and selling' of young people by offenders. Organised exploitation varies from spontaneous networking between groups of

perpetrators to more serious organised crime where children are effectively sold.

It is important to recognise that any of the models detailed can utilise technology in a variety of ways and means. Exploitation varies from spontaneous networking between groups of perpetrators to more serious organised crime where children are effectively sold.

Any of the models detailed can utilise technology in a variety of ways and means.

6. Who is at Risk?

6.1. The reasons children and young people are at risk can be due to numerous factors. Often vulnerable children are targeted by perpetrators; however, this is not exclusive to those who are vulnerable. Perpetrators frequently target children at venues such as; hostels, food outlets, taxi ranks and outside schools. Some children do not recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and do not see themselves as victims of exploitation, as they consider they have acted voluntarily. The reality is their behaviour is not voluntary or consenting. It is important to remember that a child cannot consent to his or her own abuse. There is a link between trafficked children and CSE. Children are known to be trafficked for sexual exploitation and this can occur anywhere within the UK, across local authority boundaries and across international borders. It is important to highlight that any child may be at risk of CSE, whilst there are 'higher risk' groups of children who may be more susceptible to being groomed for a range of reasons, it is clear that any child may be groomed and exploited.

7. How do we know who is at risk?

7.1. There are a number of indicators that may evidence a child is being groomed for sexual exploitation. For example, children:

- Who going missing for periods of time or regularly returning home late. Unhappy and lonely children can be flattered and seduced by the attention of streetwise adults who appear to sympathise with them
- Who are disengaging from education and are not in school during the day may be more at risk of sexual exploitation. Children who are becoming involved in this activity may begin to skip school or become disruptive

- Who often appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions: children who appear to have new clothes, jewellery, mobile phones or money that cannot plausibly be accounted for
- Who have peers and friends who are also involved in exploitation and with older boyfriends/girlfriends
- Who have sexual health issues: a history of unprotected sex leading to sexually transmitted infections or inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Who may exhibit changes in temperament/depression: mood swings or changes in emotional wellbeing can be related to being involved in sexual exploitation
- Who misuse drug and alcohol: this may leave children more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, and abusers may use drugs and alcohol to help control children
- Who display inappropriate sexualised behaviours, such as being over familiar with strangers or sending sexualised images via the internet or mobile phones
- Who have involvement in exploitative relationships or association with risky adults

7.2. There are additional signs that might indicate that a child is a victim of complex or organised sexual exploitation. A child may describe being taken to different towns or districts, or they may be found in areas with reference to risky adults who appear to be connected to each other.

7.3. However, it is important to be aware that Child Sexual Exploitation can happen to any child/young person or family. It is also important to recognise that some cohorts of children may be less likely to have their abuse identified or responded to for example, males, children with disabilities. LGBT and BME children.

8. CSE Categories of Risk:

8.1. The West Midlands Regional CSE group have agreed an operating protocol which includes three levels of risk based on a range of indicators. This framework will be used when assessing the required response towards young people thought to be at risk of CSE:

8.1.1. Category 1 - Low/ At risk

A vulnerable child or young person, where there are concerns they are being targeted and groomed and where any vulnerability factors have been identified. However, at this stage there is no evidence of any offences.

8.1.2. Category 2 - Medium/ Serious

Evidence a child or young person is being targeted for opportunistic abuse through the exchange of sex for drugs, perceived affection, sense of belonging, accommodation (overnight stays), money and goods etc. The likelihood of coercion and control is significant.

8.1.3. Category 3 - High/ Significant

A child or young person whose sexual exploitation is habitual, often self-denied and where coercion or control is implicit.

Young people identified at any of the above risk levels level of risk will be provided with a range of services from relevant agencies informed by the specific needs of each individual.

9. Local Context

9.1. Sandwell statistics show that the region is amongst the most deprived areas of the nation (www.sandwelltrends.info). Within the statistics, it is highlighted that Sandwell's prevalence profile for a number of CSE risk and vulnerability factors are significantly worse than the England average. These include levels of deprivation, number of children living in relative poverty, long term unemployment, childhood obesity, teenage pregnancies, hospital stays for self-harm (under 18's) and drug and alcohol dependence/misuse (www.healthprofiles.info).

9.2. In addition to this Sandwell has a relatively young population; with 33% of Sandwell residents being under the age of 25 (2011 Census).

- 9.3. Using these statistics, alongside the National Working Groups (<http://www.nwgnetwork.org/>) risk and vulnerability indicators and the [regional screening tool](#) it is likely that many Sandwell children are vulnerable to CSE.
- 9.4. Internal data suggests that those children at medium and high risk of CSE also have co existing complicating factors, including being in Local Authority care, poor education attendance, educational exclusions, domestic abusive or violent households, drug and/or alcohol misuse issues and frequent missing episodes.

10. Diversity/Demographic Information

- 10.1. The latest population estimate for Sandwell is 316,720, this is the 2014 mid-year estimate produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Sandwell has a relatively young age profile compared with the population of England as a whole. There are particularly high numbers of young children under 10 and adults aged 25-34years. International immigration has been a contributory factor in this increase in young families in the Borough. Sandwell had seen a steady decrease in population until about 2001. After this date the population has grown gradually and data shows that this has been influenced by net international migration. We need to understand more fully the relationship between CSE and different ethnic communities in Sandwell. The young age of the population places a strain upon the provision of children's places in local schools and other services. Sandwell has a higher population growth rate when compared to the average for England and higher than the three other Black Country Boroughs. The LSCB needs to understand our demographics to ensure the correct response to the needs of all minorities in the population.

11. The Local CSE Strategy

- 11.1. The long term aim in Sandwell is the prevention of abuse of children within the borough. Enhancing childrens resilience and strengthening the protective factors around them is critical in preventing CSE. Community awareness raising is also a critical factor in the prevention of CSE. We will focus efforts on raising community awareness and building resilience and understanding to prevent children from being exploited. At the same time, we will respond to those children who do suffer harm and to those whom perpetrate it. The strategy is underpinned by the [See Me Hear Me Framework](#) and the West Midlands Local Standards.
- 11.2. The local CSE strategy involves a multi-agency approach to addressing CSE in Sandwell and consists of four key strategic objectives:
- **Prevention:** Collect data to analyse prevalence and identify trends, themes and 'hot spots'; increase public confidence and awareness in relation to CSE
 - **Protect:** Supporting, Safeguarding and Managing Risk with victims and their families; implement effect disruption tactics
 - **Pursue:** actively collate intelligence relating to suspected perpetrators, listen to victims and utilise their information in the identification and pursuit of offenders

- **Prosecution:** Implement proactive and effective disruption tactics, complete effective investigations and bring offenders to justice

11.3. The need to target, disrupt and prosecute perpetrators that are responsible for the grooming and exploitation of children and young people is paramount. Given the under reported nature of child sexual exploitation, it is crucial that children, families and carers, professionals and the community share intelligence in relation to perpetrators and locations, no matter how insignificant the information may seem.

12. CSE prevalence and response within Sandwell

12.1. A CSE problem profile has been developed, which provides the SSCB with a foundation to develop a service response to the identified needs and concerns. The problem profile is updated annually by the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU).

12.2. The quarterly data returns into the regional group also offer regular profiling of the victims and locations which can be used to inform partnership working on a more local basis. CSE profiles are utilised to ensure that our interventions are correctly tailored for children across the Borough.

12.3. Prevention: Collect data to analyse prevalence and identify hot spots

12.3.1. Gathering information is vital as it helps to capture themes and patterns which can be used to develop practice and improve the lives of children.

12.4. Local analysis

12.4.1. Sandwell regularly analyses all data captured in relation to CSE victims, missing and absent children to identify trends and themes across the borough. Information and concerns highlighted as part of this process are communicated to appropriate teams/partners and agencies to address and disrupt activity effectively.

12.5. Regional analysis

12.5.1. Sandwell is part of the wider Regional CSE Group and ROCU who develop CSE problem profiles; this partnership assists with the understanding of the CSE picture across the Midlands, and therefore provides an opportunity to develop co-working or joint approaches where required.

12.5.2. The purpose of the problem profile is to understand the nature and extent of CSE across the region by using all available information. The profile should summarise the key findings, make recommendations relevant to those key findings, and identify gaps in local information and/or how that information is recorded. This profile aims to establish opportunities for improved data sharing and collection between partners and authorities.

13. Prevent

- 13.1. Many of the children effected by CSE are living at home with their parents or carers when the abuse starts. Parents are likely to be the first people to realise that something is wrong. All agencies share a commitment to work with parents to safeguard children against CSE and a commitment to empower parents and families to offer the best care and protection for their children. We will do this by offering victims and their families support and interventions where required. Child Sexual Exploitation takes place within our communities, it is therefore important that we engage and raise awareness of CSE amongst the general public in addition to professionals. Professionals should ensure that they are aware of local protocols in relation to CSE. It is critical to victim and public confidence that the multi-agency partnership is reflected accurately through the media and other public facing communication methods. Sandwell adopt the regional materials and communications strategy developed and implemented within the See Me Hear Me Regional Framework; this ensures a consistent message across the wider region and supports with the visibility and identification of CSE by public figures and professionals alike.
- 13.2. In July 2017, the CSE superhero campaign was launched. This is an innovative project developed by Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group (SWB CCG) in partnership with the Children's Society, and is fully endorsed by NHS England. The CSE Superhero theme was developed in response to a challenge at a National Safeguarding Conference by the mother and brother of a young woman who was murdered trying to help a friend who was a victim of CSE. To raise awareness amongst healthcare professionals about CSE, SWB CCG funded and commissioned the 'Know the Signs' film. The film starring Josie Lawrence, was produced by 'Chatback', who are a group of looked-after or birth children of foster carers. To help support health professionals SWB CCG have collaborated with the Children's Society to produce a training toolkit to educate and accompany the training film. It is a learning resource appropriate for all staff, colleagues and stakeholders. The link to the campaign and training resource is www.sandwellandwestbhamccg.nhs.uk/csosuperheroes.
- 13.3. We will ensure that we adopt the following in relation to the prevention of CSE:
- Engagement with schools through the SSCB Education Advisory Group, increasing understanding and influencing local PSHE agendas to ensure that CSE is recognised by both professionals and children. This will include the dangers of online grooming and exploitation
 - Development of an endorsed awareness programme and layered approach that will be promoted to all Sandwell schools
 - Engagement with Colleges
 - Engagement with local communities, including faith groups; through targeted events and inclusion within other local events, through working in partnership with schools and through the wider community facing partnership

- Provision of training to staff in local authority and partnership agencies, through the SSCB and bespoke targeted sessions to ensure that the partnership workforce can identify signs of CSE and act appropriately to safeguard or educate the child(ren), including the referral pathways and procedures
- Working with companies/businesses that provide services to the community, i.e. Taxi Drivers, Hotels, Leisure Centres etc. to raise awareness of CSE, promote the community 'Eyes and Ears' response and limit perpetrators opportunities to target or abuse children. This will include working with licencing and other teams as appropriate to ensure that the full range of powers are used to address this area
- Developing responses to emerging issues that have the potential to raise the risk of CSE within Sandwell and implement those responses
- Developing more in depth awareness, knowledge and acceptance regarding the interdependencies of events, vulnerabilities and experiences of children and use this to better understand the nature and complexity of CSE and other issues facing our youth population. i.e. gang association, drug misuse, alcohol dependency
- Developing the use of the CSE superhero campaign and project across the partnership.

13.4. Sandwell's Early Help offer also plays a critical role in preventing CSE by raising awareness and supporting others to spot the early signs. This supports the preferred response of being proactive over being reactive.

13.5. Early Help and targeted services staff are key stakeholders in the strategy for prevention and identification of children and families in need of early intervention. All staff have access to the CSE team and resources to ensure that they are well equipped to deliver low level awareness and CSE interventions.

13.6. Resilience work is delivered through targeted services to ensure that young people are better aware of how to keep themselves safe and are able to spot the dangers of grooming or exploitation.

14. Protect

- 14.1. The priority for the multi-agency partnership is to identify and protect children at risk of or being sexual exploited to safeguard, support and prevent them from further harm.
- 14.2. The targeted services teams in COGs (Community Operational Groups), Childrens Social Care (CSC) and the CSE team will work directly with children at risk, or being exploited to provide support, and/or education and gather intelligence relating to both victim and potential perpetrators. All professionals have a responsibility to submit intelligence to the Police and CSE Coordinator using the [Force Intelligence Bureau \(FIB\) Form](#). This will enable appropriate measures to be implemented and assist with building a 'holistic' picture, inform disruption tactics and influence the ongoing planning to reduce CSE.
- 14.3. The MASE is a forum to discuss the risks, circumstances and situation of individual children. The meeting is chaired by the CSE Team Manager. There will be representation from professionals involved with the child along with:
 - Police
 - CSE team
 - Allocated case worker
 - Education
 - Health
 - Looked after Children (LAC) Nurse where applicable
- 14.4. The child and their parent/carer will be invited to participate in the meeting. The aim of the MASE meeting is to share relevant information, discuss specific details and incorporate the wishes and feelings of the child and wider support network, specifically the parent or carer. This will include developing a plan to enable the child or young person to be protected, helping them to recognise and avoid risky behaviours and people and to engage in positive activities and relationships.
- 14.5. Actions from the meeting will be assigned to relevant agencies with the expectation these will be completed in a timely manner. The focus of the MASE meeting will be on the 4 P's; Prevent, Protect, Pursue and Prosecute; it will be child focused and based on the Signs of Safety methodology.
- 14.6. Sandwell recognises that a victim of CSE may continue to be a victim into adult life. We will therefore work to build improved links with transition teams and adult services to ensure that the individuals continue to be supported past their 18th birthday. We will also fully utilise our robust relationships with local voluntary agencies that work to support adults and children who have experienced sexual offences, violence and domestic abuse.
- 14.7. We will develop and utilise both regional and local problem profile data to enable us to better understand the context of CSE and develop effective responses. This will allow us to identify specific problem areas (hot spots); build perpetrator profiles and highlight areas of organised activity.

- 14.8. We will use all available resources and techniques from across the partnership to disrupt activity when identified and to collate information/intelligence where possible to build robust cases and take action against perpetrators of CSE.

15. Pursue

- 15.1. Lessons learnt from high profile CSE cases and reviews have indicated that we must share information and intelligence that we receive in relation to CSE. We should not recoil from difficult discussions or challenges and we should use the information that we hold to develop a better understanding of the issues and to inform more effective and robust responses. The disruption of perpetrators is an essential strand to ensure that there is a comprehensive response to CSE.
- 15.2. A key role for the CSE Police Coordinator is to collate data and intelligence of emerging trends and concerns, develop these and report information as appropriate. Information and intelligence will be shared across local authority borders to ensure that responses are coordinated effectively and there is consistency through the region; acknowledging that activity and perpetrators will not be confined to specific local authority boundaries.
- 15.3. Information gathered will be used to advance police actions as appropriate; where Police are unable to exercise their powers the information will be shared with relevant teams and services within the partnership to design and implement alternative disruptions and/or monitoring tactics that will allow us to protect children and pursue perpetrators.
- 15.4. Sandwell promote the use of the Force Intelligence Bureau (FIB) document which allows professionals to submit information relating to a range of issues directly to the Police Intel systems. Training delivered within Sandwell includes the completion and submission of FIB's to collate relevant information which may be used in the pursuit of criminals.
- 15.5. There is also an emphasis placed on sharing information or soft intelligence from all stakeholders, including the community wherever possible, to enable trends and concerns to be highlighted and acted upon at the earliest opportunity. Methods to promote this will be explored and enhanced to ensure a robust and consistent approach to capturing intelligence.

16. Prosecution

- 16.1. Tackling offending behaviour is critical to the effective prevention of CSE and protection of victims; this will be delivered through professional investigation, effective identification and targeting of perpetrators (including potential perpetrators) and robust offender management.
- 16.2. Sandwell is committed to pursuing prosecutions of those found to be involved in CSE within the borough. The SSCB and the CSE team will work closely with West Midlands Police to provide information to secure effective prosecutions. Sandwell will work closely with neighbouring authorities where required and appropriate to ensure that all relevant information is shared and/or combined to ensure the most effective case evidence and support is presented.
- 16.3. Where formal prosecutions are not possible or successful, it may be possible for alternative measures to be implemented. Sandwell will utilise tactics and techniques that are available, a number of these are available via the See Me Hear Me Regional materials and are commonly known as the 'West Midlands Metropolitan Area [Disruption Toolkit](#)'.
- 16.4. There are a range of disruption techniques and tactics available across the partnership, together with opportunity to capture intelligence and information relating to the offenders, these should be used to full effect and opportunities to disrupt or prosecute offenders is key to the effectiveness of the CSE Strategy.

17. Supporting Witnesses and Victims

- 17.1. Victims and witnesses involved in cases of CSE are particularly vulnerable. Victim support is vital but is also an important aspect of ensuring a successful prosecution. The role of the Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) is important. ISVAs are trained to support victims of sexual violence and help them understand how the criminal justice process works. Special measures are available for witnesses and can be requested for a vulnerable or intimidated witness of any age. Given the protracted nature of investigations in sexual exploitation cases, it is not unusual for a young person to have reached the age of 18 before the case comes to court. It is important that consideration should be given to applying for special measures in these cases. Special measures include:
 - Using a video of the child's evidence to give their account of what happened
 - Answering questions from the defence using the live link from another room
 - In sexual cases, giving evidence in private by clearing the court of people who do not need to be there
 - Advocates and Judges in the Crown Court removing their wigs and gowns
 - Aids, such as sign and symbol boards, for children who have difficulty speaking
 - Screens to prevent a witness who is in Court from having to see the defendant

- An intermediary to help explain the questions or answers if necessary. It is important that these are considered on an individual basis and discussed with the child concerned.
- 17.2. Assumptions should not be made for the child, for example, some children do decide they want to face their abuser(s) in Court rather than give evidence via video link. Sound preparation and effective witness care can increase the likelihood of an effective trial. Care should be taken in managing the support to a victim and their family before and during the Court process. ISVA support is an intrinsic part of the Criminal Justice process. A Victim Care Strategy should be driven by the victim's needs.

18. Workforce Development and Training

- 18.1. All agencies are bound by Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and have a duty to ensure their staff receive safeguarding children training appropriate to their individual roles and responsibilities. In addition to training provided by individual agencies, CSE should be a core part of multi-agency training plans, which are developed and overseen by the SSCB. The training should cover:
- Preventing child sexual exploitation
 - Identifying all types of child sexual exploitation
 - Local referral and assessment processes
 - Investigating child sexual exploitation, compiling a case, and supporting children through the process
 - Responding to disclosure
- 18.2. The See Me Hear Me framework provides a set of questions to support agencies and managers/supervisors to address the responsibilities of their staff. It is through staff that agencies meet their responsibilities to vulnerable children and young people and without the right training and support, frontline staff cannot act effectively.
- 18.3. Sandwell recognises that CSE is an issue that is best tackled using a wider partnership approach. It is for this reason that there is an expectation that all relevant agency structures and operational plans recognise CSE within their remit and actively engage with the agenda.

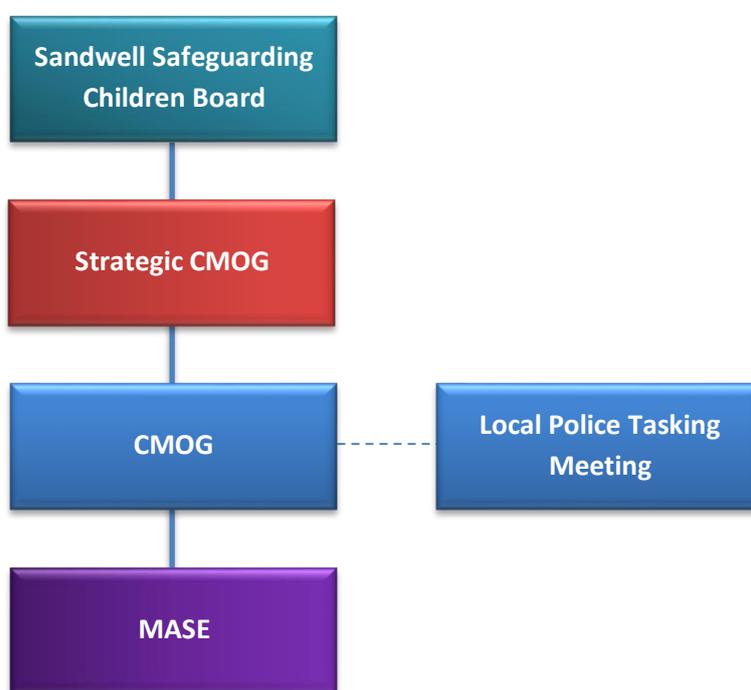
19. Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) Governance

- 19.1. Tackling CSE is a safeguarding priority for the SSCB. The Board is committed to developing a robust approach to addressing CSE in Sandwell. This will be achieved through a multi-faceted and multi-agency approach that will consider the following areas:
- Educate children and their families to help prevent CSE happening

- Train professionals and practitioners to enable them to identify potential signs of CSE as early as possible
- Respond to children missing from home/care
- Disrupt potential perpetrators or activity
- Prosecute offenders
- Provide support to victims and survivors

19.2. The SSCB has a two-tiered approach to the CSE agenda that looks at both operational and strategic CSE developments and activity.

19.3. The two tiers are composed as strategic CMOG and operational i.e. CMOG. The Strategic level provides oversight of all operational work and provides the direction and reports directly to the Sandwell Safeguarding Childrens Board.



19.4. Representatives from the strategic subgroup will ensure that CSE is discussed and actions developed within and across other relevant board structures.

19.5. Whilst the SSCB has overall responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness, it must work in conjunction with the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board, Safeguarding Adults Board and Health and Wellbeing Board.

- Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board have a key role in disrupting and managing offenders and through their local tasking processes they will be managing key locations and perpetrators

- Health and Wellbeing Boards should ensure that CSE is a key feature in Health & Wellbeing Strategies and the JSNA and be using the findings to drive commissioning and ensuring the sexual health, teenage pregnancy and other relevant health and lifestyle services are identifying and referring potential victims of CSE
- Local Safeguarding Adults Boards have a key role to play in identifying and supporting vulnerable adults and have a significant part to play providing support to victims of CSE during transition from Children's to Adult Services.

19.6. Where the SSCB and its strategic members are involved in any of these boards or sub groups there is an expectation that members ensure that CSE is considered in the context of the remit and accountability for the respective meetings. This evidences Sandwell's recognition that the issue is a complex matter, which requires a holistic and collective approach to eradicate; but also, ensure that accountability for the complexities of the matter are distributed amongst appropriate strategic planning groups for consideration and that combined working plans are considered where appropriate.

20. Strategic CMOG (CSE & Missing Operational Group)

20.1. Strategic CMOG provides oversight for CSE and missing work across the local area on behalf of the SSCB. They receive regular reports from the CSE and Missing Operational Group and ensure that there are sufficient multi-agency resources available to respond effectively to CSE. The group will ensure that the strategic plan is delivered and performance is monitored.

21. CMOG (CSE & Missing Operational Group)

21.1. The CMOG is a multi-agency forum which directs medium and long term actions to safeguard, disrupt and reduce opportunity for children to be harmed through sexual exploitation and missing episodes. There are clear links between children who go missing from home or care and CSE. The meeting discusses perpetrators and potential perpetrators along with the implementation of disruption tactics and/or prosecution routes. The group also discuss locations of concern and plan activity to monitor and disrupt activity. CMOG meets monthly and includes key agency partners.

22. Measures of Success

22.1. Members of Strategic CMOG have a strategic role within their agencies in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. They must have the authority and experience within their agency to enable them to speak on behalf of their agency to commit on matters of policy and practice and be able to hold their agency to account.

22.2. The SSCB agencies work closely together to improve the identification of and support for victims of CSE. They can do this by ensuring:

- Children are protected and feel safe

- There is a consistent response to CSE across the partnership
- There is a clear multi-agency understanding of categories of CSE, which will be identified through referral data
- There is evidence of a robust multi-agency dataset being in place
- There is evidence of effective multi-agency partnership being established
- The workforce is trained

22.3. The CSE Action plan will be monitored at strategic CMOG. Outcomes from the action plan will be reported to the SSCB.

23. Commissioning

23.1. Sandwell will seek to utilise available resources in the most effective, efficient and sustainable manner to improve outcomes for children and their families. Commissioning of services and service provision will be informed by the voice of the child, ensuring that consideration has been given to the needs and desires of the children and their families. Feedback obtained through various engagement activities, the MASE process and audits will be considered when designing service specifications.

23.2. Commissioning for CSE within Sandwell will be inclusive of statutory and non-statutory partners; recognising that third sector partners play a vital role in the effective delivery of services across the region. It will also recognise that research indicates that effectively commissioned services for CSE do not necessarily 'fit' into traditional models/structures of social care. This emphasises the need to listen and respond to the voice of the child and to develop and design services that are fit for purpose; whilst considering a range of factors such as local need, accessibility/availability, diversity and adversity.

23.3. Where possible and beneficial, we will endeavour to work with both partners and neighbouring authorities to co-commission services for its population. This approach will not only reduce costs and duplication but will also work towards improving consistency, equitability and continuity for children, young people and families across Local Authority boundaries. For this to be possible it is vital to understand all resources available and have a good understanding of best practice and 'what works' in order to design robust service specifications, built on evidence based models and service user experience feedback.

24. Conclusion

24.1. This strategy outlines the process that SSCB will work with to understand the prevalence of CSE across Sandwell and the multi-agency response to need and concern. It has been developed to establish a platform by which the SSCB can clearly see what needs to be achieved, the processes and techniques which should be used and a method by which success can be measured.

Glossary of Terms

BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CMOG	Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Operational Group
COG	Community Operating Group
CSC	Childrens Social Care
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
FIB	Force Intelligence Bureau
LAC	Looked after Children
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
MASE	Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation
ONS	Office of National Statistics
ROCU	Regional Organised Crime Unit
SSCB	Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board