

# **PRACTICE GUIDANCE FOR SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED IN PROSTITUTION / SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This document outlines Haringey Area Child Protection Committee's response to children and young people who are or are likely to be abused through prostitution. It is intended to enable staff in all agencies within the borough to recognise the problem and work together to both safeguard and promote the welfare of these children.
- 1.2 The document draws on Government Guidance Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution, Supplementary Guidance to Working Together (DOH 2000) and Guidance Review (DOH 2002) and on Haringey ACPC Child Protection Procedures 2002.

## **2. Key Principles**

- 2.1 The multi-agency approach is based on the following principles:
  - all work in this field aims to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
  - children and young people drawn into prostitution or sexual exploitation should be seen as victims of abuse and at risk sexually, physically and emotionally in the long and short term.
  - children and young people should be seen as children in need who may be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.
  - to encourage the investigation and prosecution of criminal activities by those who coerce children into or abuse them through prostitution/sexual exploitation.
- 2.2 Reference in the document to 'children' is in line with the Children Act 1989 definition as 'any person who has not reached the age of 18years.'

## **3. Confidentiality**

- 3.1 Issues of information sharing and confidentiality are particularly sensitive when working with young people involved in prostitution/sexual exploitation.
- 3.2 It is essential that agencies, whether statutory or voluntary, never agree to keep information confidential if it means the young person is at risk of harm.

- 3.3 In these circumstances policies of confidentiality in any agency should not prevent sharing of information about potential harm, nor be a barrier to referral to Social Services.
- 3.4 Consent to any referral would normally be sought from the young person and their parent/carer unless to do so would compromise the young person's safety.
- 3.5 Any professional who knows or suspects a young person is involved in or at risk of prostitution or sexual exploitation should share the information with appropriate people in their agency and make a referral to Haringey Social Services so that the protocol can be triggered and an appropriate assessment of need and risk undertaken.

## **PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT CHILDREN ABUSED THROUGH PROSTITUTION**

### **4. Recognition and assessment of information - all agencies**

- 4.1 Each agency will nominate a senior staff member as lead officer for children and young people abused through prostitution.
- 4.2 Any worker in contact with children and young people may identify early concerns and note substantial suspicions that a child is being abused through prostitution. Staff in every agency working with young people need to be aware of who to share their concerns with and how to refer to Social Services if necessary.
- 4.3 There are indicators that can alert professionals to the possibility of a child being abused through prostitution, but these should not be taken as conclusive proof.

#### Physical Indicators

- sexually transmitted infections
- bruising suggestive of physical/sexual assault

### Social Indicators

- associating with unknown men, particularly those older by several years
- acquisition of money, expensive clothes or other items
- persistent absconding, either from home or residential care unit
- using base for basic necessities like food but otherwise spending a lot of time out
- pattern of street homelessness

### Emotional Indicators

- low self image
- history of abuse (particularly sexual, emotional or neglect)
- expressions of despair (self harm, overdose, eating disorder, challenging behaviour, substance misuse)

### Actions to be taken

Concerns raised should result in the following actions.

- 4.4 The worker should consult with their manager/supervisor and the agency lead officer.
- 4.5 Referral should be made to the Social Services referral and assessment team, if the child is not currently allocated to a social worker, for consideration of an inter-agency planning meeting under these procedures.
- 4.6 Where a child has an allocated social worker the referral should be made to that worker who will contact the nominated lead officer and consider the need to convene a planning meeting.
- 4.7 A multi-agency planning meeting should consider what action should be taken and allocate tasks to the appropriate agency.
- 4.8 Research indicates that some children and young people who are looked after by local authorities are at risk of exploitation and abuse through prostitution. The specific guidelines in Section 7.4 of this protocol place particular emphasis on the need to respond proactively and effectively as early as possible when concerns are raised about looked after children. In these circumstances it is important that the planning meeting addresses the risks of other young people being drawn into prostitution.

## MULTI-AGENCY PLANNING MEETINGS

### 5. Planning Meetings

- 5.1 These must be held whenever there is a referral to social services from a professional or family member where there are indicators of concern or evidence that a child is being abused through prostitution. They should be held within three working days of the referral or decision made to hold such a meeting. It will be necessary in most cases for social services to undertake an initial assessment of need in line with the guidance and timescales contained in the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (HMSO, 2000)
- 5.2 They may also be held when there are early suspicions needing to be shared with other professionals and a response agreed.
- 5.3 The meeting should ensure the following:
  - this is a high risk group of young people
  - the need for a multi-agency response
  - there has to be formal, official planning and decision making
  - there is urgency and seriousness at a professional and agency level but which may not always require an immediate response
  - the need for sharing of relevant information with key agencies
- 5.4 The meeting is to be convened by social services.
- 5.5 The meetings will be chaired by a social services lead officer or a Child Protection Co-ordinator from social services. All agency lead officers will be notified by involved staff.
- 5.6 Membership of the meeting will be:
  - The referrer, if a professional
  - Lead officer from Police Child Protection Team, who will liaise with and invite Vice Squad or other police officer as appropriate
  - Involved Health and Education staff; and lead officers where attendance is considered appropriate
  - Worker from Barnardos Young Women's Project (if a girl)
  - Worker from Barnardos Young Men's Project (if a boy)
  - Social Worker

- Social Services Duty Manager
- Any other relevant person e.g. fostering link worker, foster carer, residential social worker, youth offending team worker, voluntary agency worker, GP and child mental health professionals
- Worker from Children's Refuge, if appropriate

5.7 The purpose of the meeting is to decide on action and make recommendations to address the concerns.

5.8 The issues discussed at the meeting will be:

- whether or not urgent action should be taken to protect the child
- whether there is a need to undertake child protection enquiries (see ACPC procedures)
- whether a child in need initial or core assessment would better suit the case in question (for further guidance, see section 3 of the ACPC procedures)
- whether there is the possibility of criminal action against the adult
- whether there is a need for services to divert the child away from being drawn into prostitution and if so who will deliver these services, when and how will they be monitored and evaluated
- whether there is sufficient information at this stage but concerns remain and further work is required to clarify them

Plans must specify who is responsible for undertaking the work.

Criminal action will not be taken against the child or young person other than in exceptional circumstances, and after reference to a review strategy meeting. The final decision on all forms of criminal action rests with the police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

5.9 Those attending the meeting will have to consider how and whether to inform the child and his or her parents or carers. Where action plans are made, they should include how the child will be informed of the concerns and included in the planning.

5.10 The meeting must consider what information to give parents and carers at this point and who should provide this. Parents should

usually be notified of concerns regarding their children and what action is being considered in response. Any exception to this needs to be recorded, with reasons given. Where the child concerned is looked after by the local authority, foster carers or residential home staff will always be told and involved in the planning process.

- 5.11 The meeting should strive to work by consensus. Decisions are the responsibility of the chair. Any disagreements should be noted and if they cannot be resolved should be raised within the relevant management structures.
- 5.12 A record of the meeting should be circulated to all attending, who must ensure that it is held securely within their agency.
- 5.13 Unless no further action is agreed or child protection enquiries invoked, a date for a review meeting will be agreed, to take place no later than three months after the initial meeting.

## **6. MULTI-AGENCY REFERENCE GROUP**

- 6.1 Haringey ACPC has established a multi-agency reference group which has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing its approach to the prevention of, and responses to, children involved in prostitution.
- 6.2 Membership of this group involves representatives of statutory agencies and voluntary groups with responsibility for children involved in/or at risk of prostitution
  - social services, including leaving care, looked after services
  - education
  - health services
  - police, including child protection team and vice squad
  - Youth offending team
  - Youth agencies involved with drugs
  - Sexual health services, including street agencies
  - Barnardo's Young Women's Project
- 6.3 The group will be chaired by the Social Services Lead Officer for children involved in prostitution.

6.4 The role of the group will be:

- to monitor the situation of children and young people abused through prostitution/sexual exploitation in Haringey
- to identify good practice initiative and work undertaken with this client group
- to monitor and review the operation of the protocol
- to receive statistics on the number of young people subject to strategy meetings, and known outcomes
- to contribute to and oversee the required inter-agency training and awareness raising of children and young people involved in sexual exploitation

6.5 The group will meet on a three monthly basis, and report to the ACPC on at least an annual basis.

6.6 A list of Lead Officers from each agency is included in Appendix 1 of this document.

## **SINGLE AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **7. Role of Social Services Staff**

#### **7.1 All children**

7.1.1 In accordance with their statutory responsibilities under the Children Act 1989, Social Services hold the lead responsibility for responding to children abused through prostitution. However, decisions on what action to take should only be taken following discussion within a multi-agency planning meeting or via strategy discussions if an emergency.

7.1.2 On receipt of a referral, consideration must be given at once to whether the child is at immediate risk of significant harm, and if so, usual child protection procedures should apply, whether the case is known, allocated, or not known. The case must be allocated to a named social worker. Whenever possible, a discussion should be held with the social services lead officer for Children and Young People Abused through Prostitution during this time but action should not be delayed if s/he is not available.

- 7.1.3 Following emergency action, it is important that a multi-agency planning meeting is arranged in order to consider in more depth the concerns around abuse through involvement in prostitution. Where a child protection conference is held, a separate planning meeting will not always be necessary but should be considered by members of the conference.
- 7.1.4 In situations where emergency action is not required, but concerns remain, a multi-agency planning meeting should be convened.
- 7.1.5 Following the planning meeting, if child protection enquiries are not appropriate, but there is sufficient information to confirm concerns, a child in need assessment will be undertaken. The nature and timescales of this assessment should be in line with Government guidance (cf. "Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families" HMSO, 2000)
- 7.1.6 The assessment and planning meetings under this guidance must consider what resources may be appropriate and available. This may include:
- Use of accommodation;
  - Application to court for a care or supervision order;
  - Application for secure order;
  - Provision of counselling and health services;
  - Provision of advice, support and mentoring;
  - Opportunities to access leisure, education, employment and housing;
  - Direct provision of family support services.
- 7.1.7 It has to be recognised that devising an effective support plan and "exit strategy" for the child is not an easy task, and may require professionals to be extremely persistent in continuing to offer support and services. It may be that the direct service is being provided by a non-social services professional. However, the case should remain allocated to a social worker whilst a support plan is in place, in order to act as a point of contact for the child, family and professionals, and to co-ordinate the plans.

## **7.2 Concerns Arising in Respect of Children from outside the Borough**

7.2.1 If a referral is received regarding a child being abused through prostitution, and whose home resides in another local authority, Haringey Social Services must liaise immediately with the home authority in order to establish where case responsibility lies. Haringey would normally expect the home authority to accept responsibility but emergency action and action to safeguard the child before such an agreement is reached remain the responsibility of Haringey Social Services. Arrangements with other local authorities should always be confirmed in writing and details placed prominently at the front of the case file.

7.2.2 If the child needs to be returned to her/his home authority, clear arrangements should be made, either with the relevant Social Services or the child's parent(s), for the child to be escorted back by a responsible adult. It may be necessary to consider accommodating the child overnight, whilst arrangements are put in place. Wherever possible, this should take place after discussion with the home authority, including discussion of financial responsibility. If the child is to be found accommodation, attention must be given to identifying an appropriate placement, so as not to exacerbate the risk to the child, or present a risk to other children.

7.2.3 It is not appropriate to arrange for the child to travel to the home authority unescorted.

7.2.4 These plans and arrangements should be reported to the lead officer social services, and recorded, in the same way as for any Haringey young person.

## **7.3 Concerns regarding a Haringey child arising in another local authority**

7.3.1 If a referral is received regarding a Haringey child being abused through prostitution outside the borough, these procedures apply.

7.3.2 If the child has run away and has been located by police or social services elsewhere, discussions must be held with the relevant local authority, regarding how to keep the child safe and to make initial

enquiries as to the circumstances giving rise to the concerns; the discussion should then consider arrangements to have the child collected by an appropriate responsible adult.

- 7.3.3 The local authority where the child is found should be asked specifically not to merely offer the child financial assistance to return unaccompanied to Haringey.
- 7.3.4 These plans and arrangements should be reported to the lead officer social services, and recorded, in the same way as for any Haringey young person.

### **Children looked after**

- 7.4.1 When a referral is received regarding a child looked after, the allocated social worker must inform their team manager and the social services lead officer.
- 7.4.2 A planning meeting must take place, in accordance with the above procedures. In addition, the following factors will be considered:
- risks to any other children in the placement
  - whether the child should remain in their current placement and the need to offer additional support to the placement in question
  - the feasibility of controlling the child's movements and the likely effects of doing so.
- 7.4.3 A support plan should be drawn up, which will form part of the overall care plan for the child. The planning meeting should consider the appropriateness and method of informing the child's parents. If children are accommodated, parent(s) must be informed of all significant matters. When a child is subject to a care order, generally parent(s) should be informed of such a significant matter. Any decision otherwise should be recorded on file.
- 7.4.4 Following the planning meeting, the child's social worker should where appropriate implement the plans agreed.
- 7.4.5 If there is a need to place a child in secure accommodation, this must be agreed by the relevant social work manager and the Assistant Director (Children and Families).

7.4.6 If the child is in a residential unit, or in foster care, social services should provide guidance and support for the carers and staff so they can assist, in line with protection plans and exit strategy, meet the specific needs of the child.

## **7.5 Involvement of groups of children looked after**

7.5.1 Where there is knowledge, or strong suspicion that children are engaged together, or are being controlled by the same person, particularly when that person is a child, there will need to be additional planning, including consideration of the use of the ACPC procedures relating to organised abuse (see section 10 of ACPC procedures). There will need to be a single overview meeting in these cases to consider the strategies required to deal with multiple concerns. The Service Manager (Child Protection and Reviews) must be informed of all such cases.

7.5.2 Where patterns are noted within establishments, or between establishments (either to do with the young people or those influencing or coercing them from outside) these should be reported to the lead officer.

7.5.3 Where the placement is in another authority, that authority's child protection manager (or equivalent) must be contacted, to discuss which authority is to take overall responsibility for convening the meeting and co-ordinating the response. Responsibility for convening such meetings will normally lie with the authority where the placement is located and any disagreements should be reported to a Child Protection Co-ordinator.

## **7.6 Leaving care / aftercare**

7.6.1 The leaving care plan for any young person where there are concerns about abuse through prostitution, should address any vulnerability to sexual exploitation, and address factors known to be associated with involvement in prostitution, e.g. homelessness, poverty, lack of educational and employment opportunities, lack of supportive social contacts, illicit drug use.

7.6.2 The assessment must consider what resources may be appropriate and available, as part of the exit strategy. This may include:

- Provision of counselling and health services
- Provision of advice, support and mentoring
- Opportunities to access leisure, education, employment and housing

7.6.3 Whenever there exists concern about a young person who has left the care or accommodation of the local authority, these procedures still apply. There exist clear after-care responsibilities for such young people. Planning meetings about such young people will need to recognise that the Children Act does not apply to young people in their own right once aged 18 or over and that some agencies might need to vary their attendance, e.g. adult health care professionals might be involved whilst educational input may have ceased or may be at a college of further education, whilst the police's child protection team will have no remit work in such cases. However, some children's agencies may still be required to attend in order to provide background information about the young person concerned.

## **8. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE POLICE**

- 8.1 Police may become aware of children and young people being abused through prostitution through normal police work on the streets and in other criminal investigations.
- 8.2 Initial response to the discovery of a child or young person who is engaging in, and who is at immediate risk of significant harm through involvement in prostitution must be to remove them from the source of harm. This must be followed by referral to social services.
- 8.3 If there are concerns that a child is being abused through prostitution, but there is no direct evidence and no immediate risk of significant harm, the person noting the concern should refer to the Haringey Police Child Protection Team who hold Police Lead Officer role for children and young people abused through prostitution. The child protection team will then refer to social services.
- 8.4 Action against the child or young person under criminal justice legislation will not be instigated until the matter has been discussed

within a multi-agency planning meeting and then only in very limited circumstances when it is established that all attempts at diversion have failed. Particular attention should be paid to the following:

- Age and vulnerability of the child or young person
- The involvement in prostitution must be considered genuinely voluntary, with no evidence of physical, mental or emotional coercion
- The child has been told and understands that criminal proceedings may take place and the implications of this now and in the future

8.5 The priority for the police is the welfare of the child or young person and the prosecution of offender who are implicated directly or indirectly in abusing the child through prostitution.

8.6 All interviews with the child as an actual or potential victim should be conducted in line with the best interests of the child and should normally be interviews undertaken jointly by a social worker and a police officer. In some cases, the planning meeting will determine that the interview should be carried out in line with the Achieving Best Evidence Practice (HMSO, 2001) about which further details can be gleaned in the ACPC procedures.

8.7 If the child has made a statement and/or is a potential witness careful consideration must be made as early as possible of the need for witness protection and witness support.

## **9.0 THE ROLE OF EDUCATION AND PLAY & YOUTH SERVICES STAFF**

9.1 Teachers, education services and play and youth staff who have regular contact with children and young people have an important role to play in the prevention, identification and referral of concerns. All staff have a responsibility to be alert to signs which may indicate that a child or young person may be at risk of being abused through prostitution.

9.2 The procedures for staff who have a concern that a child or young person may be suffering abuse through prostitution are the same as those used to refer any concern about child welfare as detailed in

the ACPC procedures. These procedures require that school staff and those from play and youth services should refer directly to social services whenever there is concern about the safety of a child. In addition, wherever a school has concerns about involvement of a young person in prostitution, the lead officer for these issues in the education service (see appendix) should also be advised thereafter.

- 9.3 Teachers and other staff who work with pupils have an important role in enabling young people abused through prostitution to be reintegrated into education as part of an exit strategy. The attendance at planning meetings and participation in planning is therefore an important requirement of staff working in education services.

### **Prevention**

- 9.4 Through schools' delivery of personal, social and health education (PSHE), discussions should take place during which it is appropriate to raise awareness of issues relating to coercion and influence leading to the abuse of young people through prostitution. This could be planned under the category of "Keeping Self and Others Safe".

## **10. THE ROLE OF HEALTH SERVICES STAFF**

The Government guidance notes:-

"Because of the universal nature of most health provision, health professionals may often be the first to be aware that a child may be involved, or be at risk of becoming involved in prostitution. Children involved in prostitution are likely to need a range of services including advice and counselling for harm minimisation, health promotion, advice on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV.

Health professionals who come into contact with children who they suspect may be involved in prostitution have a crucial role in providing holistic support for the physical and mental health of these children".

For information on the recognition and assessment of children being abused through prostitution please see section 1 above.

- 10.1 The role of the health professional in relation to children abused through prostitution is in the prevention, recognition, referral and planning stages and not to investigate suspected or reported incidents of abuse. Health education counselling, sexual health and medical intervention should be provided to the young person where indicated.
- 10.2 The Gillick ruling should assist professional judgement in cases where family planning advice is sought. This essentially asserts that children and young people who are sufficiently competent to understand the issues and implications can give consent to their own receipt of contraception or other medical treatment regardless of the views of parents or carers.
- 10.3 Where suspicions arise regarding a child, a referral should be made to social services and the Health lead officer for issues around child prostitution (see appendix) should be informed thereafter. In cases of uncertainty, practitioners should consult with either their lead officer or directly with social services. In no circumstances should a practitioner decide not to refer potential concerns without the agreement to this line of action from one of these sources.
- 10.4 Concern in relation to confidentiality issues that arise in relation to children should be discussed with the lead officer for Health. Confidentiality will never be an acceptable reason for failing to share information with relevant agencies about situations where there is the possibility of harm to a child.
- 10.5 Clear and accurate records should be kept about concerns and contacts in relation to these children.
- 10.6 Health staff will be required to take part in the multi-agency planning meetings about individual children and participate in undertaking aspects of agreed plans as appropriate.

## **11.1 THE ROLE OF VOLUNTARY AND OUTREACH AGENCIES**

- 11.1.1 The Government guidelines on young people being abused through prostitution emphasises the importance of a multi-agency approach which includes voluntary sector and outreach agencies, whether these be statutory or voluntary in nature.

11.1.2 There is a wide range of voluntary agencies and outreach services working in the local area. These include agencies which provide services around drugs, HIV prevention, homelessness, counselling and advice but this is not an exhaustive list.

11.1.3 There are several reasons why the inclusion of these agencies into the policy is essential:

- Outreach agencies are often the first point of contact with the young people when they are in risk situations.
- The agencies are often able to build up a trust relationship with the children/young people, since they are seen as separate from other more formal types of 'authorities'
- The agencies can maintain a link to the young person if they become 'lost' to statutory services (e.g. if they persistently abscond or reappear at the place of risk)
- The agencies can provide expertise on the issues to multi-agency strategy meetings and update on any local developments affecting prostitution in the area
- The involvement of the agencies in the multi-agency meetings will enable information to be shared and ensure support for staff in both statutory and non-statutory/outreach agencies

11.1.4 It is important that voluntary agencies are involved as fully as possible in the planning for the children involved in or at risk of involvement in prostitution. It is equally important that those agencies should have clear policies around child protection issues, covering as a minimum the recruitment of their staff and volunteers in a safe way and the sharing of information whenever there are concerns of possible harm. Even when an agency acts as an advocacy service for a child or young person, it is always essential that information in such circumstances is shared with social services and/or the police and other relevant agencies.

11.1.5 In sharing information, it is important that agencies seek to minimise the risk of losing contact with children/young people being abused through prostitution, since many will already have lost touch with mainstream agencies.

11.1.6 Outreach agencies often have a comprehensive picture of the scale and nature of prostitution involving young people in the local area. The sharing of information about young people being abused

through prostitution will lead to greater knowledge and understanding in the statutory sector and enable improved planning across agencies to meet needs.

## **11.2 Procedures for Voluntary and Outreach Agencies**

11.2.1 In the guidelines from the Government it is made clear that 'any child who comes to the notice of an agency must be considered for immediate referral to the multi-agency reference group'.

11.2.2 If an agency comes into contact with a child/young person who is being abused through prostitution or who is at risk of becoming so abused, discussion between project workers and social services should take place, regarding bringing such concerns to a planning meeting under this guidance.

11.2.3 Whenever possible the young person will be informed that they are considered to be at risk and that the agency will work with them to ensure that their safety is restored. They will be informed that this will mean involving other agencies. (It is important that the young person does not see this as a punitive measure). In some cases, there will be a view that it might increase risk if informing the young person. In such cases, the planning meeting will determine this issue.

11.2.4 All cases of concern will be reported to the duty social worker in social services and will be logged regardless of whether further action is taken. Even when a full referral is not possible, the concern should still be reported in order to build up a picture of the extent of the numbers of young people at possible risk. Telephone referrals to social services should be followed by a written version of the referral.

11.2.5 Where a voluntary or outreach agency is uncertain of whether to refer, workers in that agency must use their line management structures to clarify further. In some cases, it will be helpful for there to be a separate discussion with a social services lead officer (see appendix) for further advice.

11.2.6 If an agency is aware that the young person is known to social services outside the local area, they will make contact with the duty or allocated social worker in the area concerned. Where it is

unclear as to which local authority is responsible, a referral will be made to Haringey Social Services.

11.2.7 Where there is inadequate information (e.g. a full name) the agency will endeavour to increase contact with the young person. However, even where full basic details are not established or reliable, it will still be important that these procedures are used as other agencies might be able to contribute to the protection of unknown young people in the same way as for others.

11.2.8 Where the risk is immediate, the agency will inform the Police so that the young person can be removed from the risk situation.

### **Involvement of agencies in Multi-Agency Planning Meetings**

11.2.9 When a multi-agency meeting is convened, outreach agencies will attend as appropriate.

11.2.10 Where appropriate, outreach agencies will provide on-going support or services as part of a future plan for the young person.

## **Appendix 1 LIST OF DESIGNATED SENIOR MEMBERS OF STAFF**

**The following have been designated to carry out the functions outlined in this guidance:**

DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY	POST & TELEPHONE
Social Services Department	Child Protection and Planning Service Service Manager 020 8489 1177  Child Protection Advisers 0208489 5458
Education Department	Child Protection Co-ordinator 020 8489 2417
Haringey Primary Care Trust	Designated Nurse for Child Protection 020 8442 6987
Metropolitan Police Service	D.I. Child Protection Team Haringey 020 8345 2232