

Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth & Southampton 4LSCB Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Children Protocol

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Hampshire
Safeguarding
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1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the 4LSCB protocol for practitioners who may become aware of children and young people who are at risk of, or who are going missing, being sexually exploited and/or are being trafficked. The three issues are likely to appear together in day to day practice and this protocol is provided as a single resource to guide practitioners. While it will be necessary in some of the content below to highlight distinct issues for each area of concern, the overlap and interaction between them is inescapable and should always be borne in mind.

Whilst children and young people go missing for a range of reasons, and for different lengths of time, there is always concern for a child/young person when they are not where they should be and it is essential that any response to a missing child is timely, effective and proportionate.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) and child trafficking are child abuse and are completely unacceptable. Tackling these issues remains one of the most important challenges for the 4LSCBs. We recognise that they can have serious long term impact on every aspect of the child or young person's life, health and education. It also damages the lives of families and carers and can lead to family break up.

It is our collective multi-agency responsibility to identify children and young people at risk of going missing, being sexually exploited and/or being trafficked and to safeguard them from further risk of harm.

2. Aim

The aim of this protocol is outline the practice and processes that should take place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people when there are concerns that they are at risk of abuse, or are being abused, because they are going missing, being exploited and/or being trafficked

The purpose of this protocol is to:

- Ensure that police, local authorities, education, health and other agencies work together and share a consistent approach to tackling these child protection issues.
- Define what is meant by missing, child sexual exploitation and child trafficking.
- Formalise the exchange of information between agencies.
- Provide a framework for the identification of risk.
- Provide a protocol for managing individual cases.
- Establish a quality assurance process to monitor and evaluate arrangements.

3. Information sharing responsibilities.

Professionals can only work together to safeguard children if there is an exchange of relevant information between them. Whenever possible, consent should be obtained before sharing personal information with third parties. However, in some circumstances, consent may not be possible or appropriate but the safety and welfare of a child may dictate that the information must be shared.

Any disclosure or decision not to disclose must be justified according to the particular facts of the case and documented accordingly. Advice should be sought in cases of doubt from lead professionals in child protection within the practitioner's own agency without delay.

The protective network of professionals involved in strategy meetings, child in need plans and child protection plans should agree the on-going response to risk together, enabling individuals to feel confident that information shared will be used to enable positive outcomes for the child or young person.

Further information regarding principles of confidentiality and information sharing can be found in the 4 LSCB safeguarding procedures (Chapter 1.7).

4. Definitions

4.1 Missing

Governmental guidance describes a young runaway or a missing child as 'children and young people up to the age of 18 who have run away from their home or care placement, have been forced to leave, or whose whereabouts is unknown'¹.

However, it is important to be aware that within Hampshire Constabulary not all children reported to the police as missing will be recognised as such. There are 2 category definitions used by the Police:

ABSENT:

A person is not at a place where they are required or expected to be. The level of risk is assessed as no risk or tolerable risk.

MISSING:

Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be the subject of crime, or they may be a risk themselves or others. Risk will be assessed as medium or high.

¹ DCSF (2009) *Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care.*

Factors that will impact on the police assessment will include:

- Age of the child
- Subject to a Child Protection Plan or on-going Section 47 enquiry
- Whether the child is looked after
- Weather and child's state of dress
- Any specific health issues
- Indicators of a plan to go missing/spontaneous event
- Previous history of missing
- Known friends/associates
- Information of concern from other agencies/sources

4.2 Child sexual exploitation

“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”².

The guidance applies to male and female children up to the age of 18 years irrespective of whether they are living independently, at home, with carers, or in a residential setting.

4.3 Trafficked

Human trafficking is defined by the UNHCR³ as a process that is a combination of three basic components:

- Movement (including within the UK);
- Control, through harm / threat of harm or fraud;
- For the purpose of exploitation

Children are a special case for whom there are only two components – movement and exploitation. **Any child transported for exploitative reasons is considered to be a trafficking victim** – whether or not s/he has been deceived, because it is not considered possible for children to give informed consent. Even when a child understands what has happened, they may still appear to submit willingly to what

² DfE (2009) *Safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation*. National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People (NWG) 2008

³ UNHCR (2006) *Eligibility guidelines for assessing the international protection needs*.

they believe to be the will of their parents or accompanying adults. It is important that these children are still protected.

There is significant evidence that children (both of UK and other citizenship) are being trafficked internally within the UK. In fact, this is increasingly being regarded as a more common form of trafficking in the UK. This guidance focuses mainly on trafficking from abroad, but many sections of this practice guidance will help practitioners and their managers who are concerned that a child may have been trafficked internally.

5. Handling Individual Cases

This section should be read in conjunction with the 4 LSCB Safeguarding Procedures, Chapter 3 (Managing Individual Cases where there are Concerns about a Child's Safety and Welfare). Appendix 1 provides a flowchart outline the process involved in managing individual cases.

Each statutory agency should identify a lead officer for missing, exploited and trafficked children. In addition, each team, residential unit, school or service etc. should identify a lead practitioner or manager for these issues. These lead individuals should have, or develop, a level of expertise. They should be able to advise within their agency on identifying and referring a child at risk and how their agency can contribute to risk reduction work and a safeguarding plan.

5.1 Recognition

5.1.1 Missing Children

Research estimates that some 100,000 children and young people runaway each year including 10,000 reported as missing from care⁴. These children are vulnerable and can be exposed to the risks of being physically or sexually abused or exploited.

For those children living within the local authority care system their vulnerability to these risks are even greater and are disproportionately represented within the group of children known to be sexually exploited. Within the care system those living in residential care homes are at an even higher level of risk.

Agencies and professionals should also be aware of the potential risks to children and young people who are absent, as opposed to reported as missing. Within this cohort could be children who are victims of exploitation but attract less attention as perhaps they are only absent for a short period of time or they are absent but their whereabouts is known. It is important for those working with children and young people, and those within the school environment, to be aware that not all children at risk of child sexual exploitation go missing or absent. In such cases it will be other

⁴ DfE (2013) *Draft statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care*

information about the young person, changes in their behaviour and presentation that will be the trigger for concern.

Children and young people go missing for a number of reasons. A range of 'push' and 'pull' factors may be present:

Push factors: Conflict with parents/carers
Feeling powerless
Being bullied/abused
Being unhappy/not being listened to

Pull factors: Wanting to be with family/friends
Peer pressure
For those who have been trafficked into the United Kingdom as unaccompanied asylum seeking children there will be pressure to make contact with their trafficker

5.1.2 Sexually Exploited Children

Evidence gathered on CSE across the UK suggests that CSE often takes place 'off street', in private accommodation, hotels, or sauna/massage establishments. The hidden nature has a significant impact on the visibility of the problem. Disclosure of exploitation and violence is always difficult for children and young people. The sophisticated grooming and priming processes executed by perpetrators and the abuse, act as additional barriers, which increase the fear for themselves and in some cases their families and make disclosure especially difficult.

Frontline practitioners from voluntary and statutory sector organisations (including, for example, health and education) should be aware of the key indicators⁵ of children being sexually exploited which can include:

- going missing for periods of time or regularly coming home late;
- regularly missing school or education or not taking part in education;
- appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions;
- associating with other young people involved in exploitation;
- having older boyfriends or girlfriends;
- suffering from sexually transmitted infections;
- mood swings or changes in emotional wellbeing;
- drug and alcohol misuse; and
- displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour.

Practitioners should also be aware that many children and young people who are victims of sexual exploitation do not recognise themselves as such.

Professionals concerned about an individual child or young person being at risk of sexual exploitation should use the SERAF to record their concerns. The sexual exploitation risk assessment framework (SERAF) has been developed by Barnardos Cymru (Appendix 2). The SERAF will consider existing vulnerabilities and risks and

⁵ Barnardos (2011) *Spot the signs (leaflet)*

place the child in one of four categories of risk: 1 - not at risk, 2 - mild risk, 3 - moderate risk or 4 - significant risk. It relies upon recognition of a mixture of vulnerabilities and risk indicators.

5.1.3 Trafficked Children

Children are unlikely to disclose they have been trafficked, as most do not have an awareness of what trafficking is or may believe they are coming to the UK for a better life, accepting that they have entered the country illegally. It is likely that the child will have been coached with a story to tell the authorities in the UK and warned not to disclose any detail beyond the story, as this would lead them to being deported.

Apparent collusion with the trafficker can add to confusion when attempting to identify a child as victim of trafficking. The child may be reluctant to disclose their circumstances because:

- Their experience of authority in their country of origin is such that they do not trust the police or other statutory agencies (s/he may provide a statement to a voluntary and community agency).
- The identification and referral process may mimic aspects of what had happened during trafficking – promises of help and a good life, movement by persons the child did not know, being taken to unknown locations where ‘everything would be fine’ and ‘they would be taken care of’.
- The circumstances, even under exploitation, in the UK may compare more favourably to the child’s experiences at home.

Disclosure from a child can take time, especially where the child is within the control of a trafficker or facilitator and relies on a relationship of trust and safety being established.

There are a number of indicators which suggest that a child may have been trafficked into the UK, and may still be controlled by the traffickers or receiving adults. These are as follows:

At port of entry

The child:

- Has entered the country illegally;
- Has no passport or other means of identification; Has false documentation;
- Possesses money and goods not accounted for;
- Is unable to confirm the name and address of the person meeting them on arrival;
- Has had their journey or visa arranged by someone other than themselves or their family;
- Is accompanied by an adult who insists on remaining with the child at all times;
- Is withdrawn and refuses to talk or appears afraid to talk to a person in authority;
- Exhibits self-assurance, maturity and self-confidence not expected to be seen in a child of such age;

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- Does not appear to have money but does have a mobile phone; and/or
- Is unable or reluctant to give details of accommodation or other personal details.

The sponsor could:

- Be a community member, family member, or any other intermediary;
- Have previously made multiple visa applications for other children and/or has acted as the guarantor for other children's visa applications; and/or
- Is known to have acted as the guarantor on the visa applications for other visitors who have not returned to their countries of origin on the expiry of those visas.

Whilst resident in the UK (in addition to those listed above)

The child:

- Receives unexplained / unidentified phone calls whilst in placement / temporary accommodation;
- Shows signs of physical or sexual abuse, and/or has contracted a sexually transmitted infection or has an unwanted pregnancy;
- Has a history with missing links and unexplained moves;
- Is required to earn a minimum amount of money every day;
- Works in various locations;
- Has limited freedom of movement;
- Appears to be missing for periods;
- Is known to beg for money;
- Performs excessive housework chores and rarely leaves the residence;
- Is being cared for by adult/s who are not their parents and the quality of the relationship between the child and their adult carers is not good;
- Is one among a number of unrelated children found at one address;
- Has not been registered with or attended a GP practice;
- Has not been enrolled in school;
- Is excessively afraid of being deported.

Children internally trafficked within the UK

Indicators include:

- Physical symptoms (bruising indicating either physical or sexual assault);
- Prevalence of a sexually transmitted infection or unwanted pregnancy;
- Reports from reliable sources suggesting the likelihood of involvement in sexual exploitation / the child has been seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation;
- Evidence of drug, alcohol or substance misuse;
- Leaving home / care setting in clothing unusual for the individual child (inappropriate for age, borrowing clothing from older people);
- Phone calls or letters from adults outside the usual range of social contacts;
- Adults loitering outside the child's usual place of residence;
- Significantly older boyfriend;
- Accounts of social activities, expensive clothes, mobile phones or other possessions with no plausible explanation of the source of necessary funding;

- Persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation;
- Returning after having been missing, looking well cared for despite having no known base;
- Having keys to premises other than those known about;
- Low self-image, low self-esteem, self-harming behaviour including cutting, overdosing, eating disorder, promiscuity;
- Truancy / disengagement with education;
- Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults;
- Going missing and being found in areas where the child or young person has no known links; and/or
- Possible inappropriate use of the internet and forming on-line relationships, particularly with adults.

London Safeguarding Children Board has produced a Risk Assessment Matrix⁶ to assist professionals in using the available information to focus their thinking and form the basis for discussion about the risk of harm - through trafficking - to a child. Professionals should use the Risk Assessment Matrix to identify and assess whether there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the child is trafficked.

5.2 Referral

Where child sexual exploitation or trafficking, or the risk of it, is suspected, frontline practitioners should discuss the case with a manager or the designated member of staff for child protection. The lead practitioner/manager for missing, exploited and trafficked children should be consulted providing this does not jeopardise the immediate safety of the child. If after discussion there remain concerns, local safeguarding procedures should be triggered, including referral to local authority children's social care and the police, regardless of whether the victim is engaging with services or not.

As with all child protection concerns, all agencies should refer their concerns to the local children's social care following the process set out in chapter 3.1 of the 4LSCB safeguarding procedures.

The Children's Social Care lead officer for missing, exploited and trafficked children should be informed of the referral by the person receiving the referral. Where the child has an allocated social worker, they should also be informed.

Reporting a child as missing

If there are concerns that a child or young person is not where they are expected to be then the police that must be contacted. Parents, carers and those working with children and young people will need to take a risk based approach when there are concerns that a child is not where they should be that takes account of a number of factors including age, circumstances, specific issues/vulnerabilities for that child. In

⁶ London LSCB (2011) [Safeguarding Trafficked Children Toolkit](#), p5, 1(b).

some situations the whereabouts of a child may actually be known and there may, or may not, be risks associated with that address or their whereabouts is unknown but again there may or may not be risks to the child/young person.

A police Children and Young People form (CYP) is no longer automatically forwarded to Children's Services to alert them to the fact that a child or young person was reported to the Police as missing or absent. CYP's will be issued in the following circumstances:

- Child/young person was missing, has returned and has suffered harm
- Child/young person is missing and not returned
- Child/young person been recorded as absent or missing 3 times in 90 days

In making a decision as to whether a child or young person is missing or absent the Police will draw on all the information they hold for that individual. The category given can be changed at any time in light of new information or changes to a situation.

Details of individuals missing more than 24 hours are automatically sent by the police to the National Missing People Bureau. If this is not appropriate the police must be informed.

When a child is missing or absent there is the additional risk to them of being exploited as a victim of child sexual exploitation or trafficking, both internally within the UK and from abroad. Children and young people who enter the UK as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) are especially vulnerable to trafficking and as a result are at very high risk of going missing within 24 hours of entering the UK.

Any unaccompanied asylum seeking child who is assessed to be under 18 years old will be accommodated in the care of the relevant local authority. It is essential that a safety plan is put in place for those for whom there are concerns that they have been trafficked. If a trafficked young person goes missing it is the first 'golden' hour that is crucial in ensuring a speedy and effective response from relevant agencies, particularly the police.

UASC who are in the care of the local authority and who go missing continue to remain Looked After children.

5.3 Assessment

5.3.1 Missing Children

Those children reported to the Police and deemed by them to be 'absent' will NOT meet the threshold for a police led investigation. However, their circumstances will be reviewed by the police and contact made with the referrer after a defined period of time, usually 6-8 hours, to see if anything has changed or new information available. At any time the category can be changed from absent to missing.

For those children reported to the Police and deemed by them to be 'missing' a police investigation **will** commence.

Return interviews

Each local authority will have their own policy and arrangements in place regarding who undertakes a return interview for a missing child or young person and at what point they should be undertaken. For those who are in the care of the local authority their return interview should be conducted within a maximum of **72** hours, although individual circumstances will impact on this timescale and for those where there are issues related to their placement a return interview may well be required prior to returning to their designated placement. For those children and young people living with parents and family in the community there is greater discretion associated with when a return interview is undertaken and each local authority will have its own internal procedures.

A return interview with a child or young person who has been missing provides an opportunity to gather a range of information including:

- Do they require medical advice or intervention/have they been harmed
- Explore the circumstances that lead to them going missing (e.g. harm, placement issues, care issues, contact with family, peer pressure, coercion)
- Where have they been during the time they have been missing, and with whom
- What did they do whilst missing
- How did they manage whilst missing (e.g. securing food, sleep, money)
- Where voluntarily returned – what made them return
- Is there anything that needs to change to prevent them from going missing again
- Have they been the victim, or perpetrator of a crime

The information gained from a return interview will be key to supporting decisions regarding further action. This could include a further assessment, instigating safeguarding procedures, convening a high risk strategy meeting, referrals for support services or no further action. The police will also assess whether further action or investigation is required.

There is a protocol agreement that those children and young people notified by the police to Children's Services as having 3 absent or missing episodes in 90 days an Initial Assessment, incorporating a return interview, will be undertaken.

Safe and well checks

Return interviews are in addition to any 'Safe and Well' checks undertaken by the Police. Where Children's Services are working with a child/young person or family it may be appropriate, in some circumstances, to undertake these jointly.

5.3.2 CSE

The Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework SERAF is the tool recommended for risk assessment by the 4LSCB Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Children Group, which was established by the 4LSCB chairs to provide strategic advice to the 4 LSCBs on matters including CSE.

A sexual exploitation risk assessment should be undertaken as part of the initial assessment to establish if a child is in need and requires protection. This should be completed by children's social care, in consultation with partner agencies, within 7 working days of the referral.

The SERAF risk assessment will consider existing vulnerabilities and risks and place the child in one of four categories of risk: 1 - not at risk, 2 - mild risk, 3 - moderate risk or 4 - significant risk. It relies upon recognition of a mixture of vulnerabilities and risk indicators. The SERAF enables safeguarding actions to be linked to evidence of risk, thereby facilitating both preventive action and appropriate interventions and is intended to inform appropriate responses in relation to children and young people's safeguarding needs.

5.3.3 Trafficking

As part of the initial assessment a Child Trafficking Assessment Tool⁷ should be completed by children's social care, in consultation with partner agencies, within 7 working days of the referral. This multi-agency assessment is designed to assist practitioners in both:

- Identifying and assessing the needs of a child who is suspected of being trafficked and the continuing risks they may face; and
- Referring their case to the competent authority and other relevant agencies.

During the initial assessment, a social worker should meet with the referrer and check all the documentation held by the referrer and other relevant agencies. Documentation should include (if available), passport, Home Office papers, birth certificate and proof of guardianship. This list is not exhaustive and all possible types of documentation should be considered. A recent or new photograph of the child should be included. When assessing any documentation, attention should be given to the details. If a passport is being checked the official should:

- Verify the date of issue;
- Check the length of the visa;
- Check whether the picture resembles the child;
- Check whether the name in the passport is the same as the alleged mother/father, and if not, why not; and
- Check whether it appears to be original and take copies to ensure further checks can be made if necessary.

Assessing the age of a victim of trafficking can be necessary because a child may have documents which are fake, or belong to another child, in order to make them

⁷ London LSCB (2011) *Safeguarding Trafficked Children Toolkit*, p18, 1 (j).

appear younger or older. Children are groomed (coerced) to lie about their age by the adults trafficking and exploiting them. Accordingly, information about a child provided by an accompanying adult / carer may not be accurate.

When the age of the victim is uncertain and there are reasons to believe that they are a child, either because the victim has stated they are under 18 years of age or there is documentation or information from statutory or specialist agencies that have raised concerns that they may be under 18, then s/he should be presumed to be a child and be provided with full protection as a child victim of trafficking.

Where there is concern that a child may have been trafficked and an age dispute arises, the child should be given the benefit of the doubt as to their age until his/her age is verified. This is in accordance with the Council of Europe Convention.

The UK Government introduced a National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in April 2009 to formalise the identification of victims of trafficking and facilitate their referral to support services. The NRM, which was set up in response to UK's ratification of the Council of Europe Convention, provides a framework for public bodies, local authorities and NGOs to share information about potential victims, co-operate in their identification and provide them with assistance and support. The NRM should be followed where, through the assessment process, it is suspected that a child has been trafficked. Appendix 3 outlines the NRM.

5.4 Child's/Young Person's wishes and feelings

Children at risk of exploitation/trafficking will often be in high risk situations and isolated from protective, nurturing adults. They will need to be enabled to express their wishes and feelings to make sense of their particular circumstances and contribute to decisions that affect them. Of particular relevance is the impact of those who may have groomed and conditioned children, in order to coerce and abuse them. Children may also be under very strong pressure, intimidated, afraid and/or dependent on the exploiter/s because of substance misuse. Children may therefore reject offers of help and support; interventions need to be designed to address this.

5.5 Strategy Discussions / Meetings

5.5.1 Strategy Discussions

Prior to the completion of a SERAF risk assessment or a child trafficking assessment it may be decided that a strategy discussion is required (see 4 LSCB Procedures 3.3) The rationale for a strategy discussion is to identify within core agencies intelligence that may identify vulnerabilities or risk indicators. A strategy discussion should take place in all cases where there is a reasonable cause to believe that the child is being exploited or trafficked. A child going missing is likely to trigger a strategy meeting where there are repeated episodes of going missing or particular risks identified such as the child or young person being at risk of violence, exploitation or contact with a sex offender.

The strategy discussion should share and discuss all information received/gathered, and decide on the next course of action within 24 hours or without delay if there is immediate concern for the child. The person making the referral should be informed of the outcome of the strategy discussion.

A strategy discussion may agree that a multi-agency strategy meeting should be held.

5.5.2 Multi-Agency Strategy Meetings

A multi-agency strategy meeting should always be convened for children at risk of or being trafficked or at moderate or significant risk of sexual exploitation.

Multi-agency strategy meetings for children at risk of or being sexually exploited/trafficked should be conducted as set out in 4 LSCB Procedures (3.3.3) and should incorporate the following additional measures:

Those attending the strategy meeting should include:

- representative from any specialist child trafficking or child sexual exploitation service
- any other relevant person who can assist in the planning process for the child protection enquiries and in formulating a multi-agency safeguarding plan e.g. fostering link worker, residential key worker/manager, YOT worker, voluntary agency worker, designated child protection nurse
- representative from Probation Service or Youth Offending Team working with any identified perpetrators
- UKBA

The meeting should consider which of the following may be appropriate:

- share and clarify information
- identify all risks (including those in the trafficking risk assessment matrix or in the sexual exploitation risk assessment framework) and agree on action and make recommendations to address each risk
- consider the likelihood of prosecution of relevant adults and where prosecution is not likely, consider range of alternate action against perpetrators
- Implement the immediate safety plan:-
 - 24/7 supervision
 - No access to a mobile phone
 - No access to landline phone
 - No access to the internet
 - No access to money
 - The child/young person will not go out alone
- develop a **written** plan to safeguard the child or young person
- agree a date to review the plan
- decide who will undertake what elements of direct work with the child or young person to enable recovery

5.6 Intervention

Subsequent to referral to children's social care interventions should accord with the 4LSCB safeguarding procedures for managing individual cases (Chapter 3). However specific considerations are likely to be required for those at risk or known to be exploited or trafficked.

5.6.1 Immediate Protection

Where immediate action to safeguard a child is required, it may involve removing the child from their current situation to a safe place. However, those working with children in these circumstances must never underestimate the power of perpetrators to find where the child is. It is extremely important that a child victim is prevented from contacting the perpetrator. Professionals need to be aware that the child victim may seek to communicate with the perpetrator by way of mobile phones in his/her possession. The child is a victim and as such no power of seizure exists. A consensual seizure is recommended. It will be for individuals on a case by case basis to ascertain true consent.

Such children will need placements with carers who have experience of building trusting relationships and skills at containing young people.

5.6.2 Child Sexual Exploitation

Within the four SERAF assessment outcomes, a different response is required in relation to each level of risk. Each of the four categories of risk has associated safeguarding actions as outlined below.

SERAF Category of risk	Indicators of risk	Description	Associated actions
Category 1 Not at risk	No risk indicators but may have one or more vulnerabilities present.	A child or young person who may be 'in need' but who is not currently at risk of being groomed for sexual exploitation.	Educate to stay safe. Review risk following any significant change in circumstances.
Category 2 Mild risk	Multiple vulnerabilities. One or two risk indicators may also be present.	A vulnerable child or young person who may be at risk of being groomed for sexual exploitation.	Consider multi-agency meeting to share information and agree a plan to address risk and/or need. Work on risk awareness and staying safe should be undertaken with this child/young person. Review risk following any significant change in circumstances.

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Category 3 Moderate risk	Multiple vulnerabilities and risk indicators present.	A child or young person who may be targeted for opportunistic abuse through exchange of sex for drugs, accommodation (overnight stays) and goods etc.	<p>Convene multi-agency meeting under protocol for sexually exploited children and young people to ensure effective exchange of information with multi-agency colleagues and agree safety plan. At least one review meeting to be convened.</p> <p>Work should be undertaken with this child/young person around risk reduction and keeping safe.</p>
Category 4 Significant risk	Multiple vulnerabilities and risk indicators. One or more significant risk indicators also likely.	Indication that a child or young person is at significant risk of or is already being sexually exploited. Sexual exploitation is likely to be habitual, often self-denied and coercion/control is implicit.	<p>Convene multi-agency meeting under protocol for sexually exploited children and young people to ensure effective exchange of information with multi-agency colleagues and agree safety plan, including regular review meetings.</p> <p>Protection plan should include long-term intensive direct work with the child or young person.</p>
Moderate or Significant risk	As above.	Young person aged 18 years or above.	Where a young person is aged 18 years or over the associated action in relation to Moderate and Significant risk: sexual exploitation should be addressed as an issue in relation to this young person through the Pathway or other work plan; liaison between Social Services and Police Public Protection Unit to address the young person's protection.

Working with children and young people at significant risk of or abused through sexual exploitation

By the point in a child or young person's life where they are significantly at risk of or are already being abused through sexual exploitation, they are subject to a complex pattern of life experiences which are likely to impact negatively on every dimension of their life. Because of this they can present to agencies as 'streetwise' or as 'problematic' rather than in need of support. Intervention, support and action should be based upon the child or young person's needs and be delivered by a trusted worker in conjunction with a protective network of appropriate agencies.

Working with children and young people for whom sexual exploitation is an issue requires a holistic approach through investment of time and resources in long term

intervention. An important aspect of the work can be maintaining contact and being available to children and young people until they reach a point where they are ready to think about their situations and accept support. The process and effort spent by a worker on relationship building can be an important factor in bringing them to that point. These windows of opportunity, when they present, should be fully capitalised upon, with the right kind of support being made available at the time that it is required by the young person. Workers need to be realistic about expectations and to understand that this is long term, intensive work, where progress will go backwards as well as forwards.

If the child is in a residential unit, the staff should be asked to take positive action to clarify and record any concerns and minimise the child's involvement in sexual exploitation. If suspicions are confirmed the following steps should be taken:

- treating the child as a victim of exploitation, not a troublemaker or criminal
- ensuring that all relevant information is recorded in the child's care plan and file – concerning adults and identifying information e.g. appearance, street names, cars registration details etc., telephone activity, the child's patterns of going missing etc. – together with decisions and clear directions for action
- making every effort to dissuade the child from leaving to engage in sexual exploitation by talking to them, involving them in alternative activities, and ensuring they have the resources to attend those activities, including escorting where necessary
- ensuring that the child is aware of the legal issues involved, for example that those exploiting them are committing a range of offences
- monitoring telephone calls, text messages and letters by preventing the child from receiving some incoming calls, being present when phone calls are made, confiscating a mobile phone which is being used inappropriately, opening some letters in the presence of the child and withholding letters if necessary; reasons for intercepting letters and calls (for example, that they relate to a dangerous adult) should be included in the care plan
- monitoring callers to the home, or adults collecting children by car. This may involve turning visitors away, or passing information directly to the Police, monitoring any suspicious activity in the vicinity of the home and informing the Police
- using appropriate methods, in accordance with relevant guidance, to prevent the child leaving home to engage in sexual exploitation (these should be recorded in the care plan)
- where these efforts fail, and the child leaves, staff need to decide whether to follow them and continue to encourage them to return
- if they will not return, staff should inform the local Police that the child is missing and pass on all relevant information
- liaising with outreach agencies, so they can look out for a child who has gone missing
- offering sensitive and welcoming responses to children returning home

If the child is in foster care, the social worker and fostering link worker should meet with the foster carer to decide which of the above steps could reasonably be taken by the foster carer as part of the multi-agency plan.

The child's behaviour and attitude may be extremely challenging, and carers and staff will require on-going support, advice and training in knowing how to respond. These needs must be considered and resources identified, either by the manager of the residential unit, or the fostering link worker.

5.6.3 Trafficked

Trafficked children need:

- Professionals to be informed and competent in matters relating to trafficking and exploitation;
- Someone to spend sufficient time with them to build up a level of trust;
- Separate interviews - at no stage should adults purporting to be the child's parent, sponsor or carer be present at interviews or at meetings with the child to discuss future action;
- Safe placements if children are victims of organised trafficking operations and for their whereabouts to be kept confidential;
- Legal advice about their rights and immigration status;
- Discretion and caution to be used in tracing their families;
- Risk assessments to be made of the danger if he or she is repatriated; and
- Where appropriate, accommodation under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 or an application of an Interim Care Order.

Returning trafficked children to their country of origin [safe returns]

In many cases, trafficked children apply to the UK Borders Agency (UKBA) for asylum or for humanitarian protection. Among the factors to consider if the child is deported is the risk of him or her being re-trafficked with the possibility of further exploitation and abuse. When considering the child's application it will be important for the social worker to gather information about the child's family, community and general conditions in the country of origin.

Local authorities have a duty of care towards children who are being returned, and this must include adequate social work checks and assessments in the country of origin to ensure that the child will be safeguarded upon their return. It is crucial that these checks are thorough and adequately address the risk of re-trafficking, taking account of specific factors relevant to the child – whether their town or village is known for trafficking children, for example, and the likelihood of the child's family allowing them to be re-trafficked.

If the child does not qualify for asylum or humanitarian protection, and adequate reception arrangements are in place in the country of origin, the child will usually have to return. The process of returning the child should be handled sensitively and will require close co-operation between the UKBA and the child's social worker. The child's social worker should ensure that the local social services department in the country of origin have been notified of the child's return.

5.6.4 Looked After Children

The assessment of needs to inform their care plan should include a risk assessment of how the local authority intends to protect them from any perpetrator/trafficker being able to re-involve the child in exploitative activities. This plan should include contingency plans to be followed if the child goes missing.

In addition:

- The location of the child should not be divulged to any enquirers until they have been interviewed by a social worker and their identity and relationship / connection with the child established, if necessary with the help of police and immigration services.
- Foster carers / residential workers should be vigilant about anything unusual (e.g. waiting cars outside the premises and telephone enquiries).
- Anyone approaching the local authority and claiming to be a potential carer, friend, member of the family etc, of the child, should be investigated by the local authority, the police and UKBA. Normal procedures for re-uniting a child with their family should be followed.

5.6.5 Young people aged 18 years and over

A young person who has been subject to the complex pattern of life experiences including sophisticated grooming and priming processes that have brought them to a point where they are at risk of, or are abused through exploitation, does not stop needing support and protection when they reach the age of 18 years. They remain a vulnerable young person with on-going needs. A person's vulnerability will depend on their circumstances and environment, and each case must be judged on its merits. Consideration should be given to referral through local Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) arrangements.

A vulnerable adult can be defined as a person 18 years old or over whom:

- is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and
- is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or is unable to protect him or herself from significant harm or serious exploitation.

5.6.6 Young people aged 18 years and over entitled to Aftercare Services

The Local Authority has a duty of care towards older young people leaving care under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 with regard to the safeguarding.

The pathway planning should specifically identify their vulnerability to exploitation, and address the factors known to impede successful recovery from exploitation e.g. homelessness, poverty, immigration status, lack of educational and employment opportunities and lack of supportive social contacts.

In relation to trafficked children, information and awareness raising actions should be included in the pathway planning process. Risk should be assessed and addressed as part of existing processes on an on-going basis.

As for children and young people under the age of 18, liaison between social services and the Police Public Protection Unit is also required in addressing the protection of the young person.

5.7 Identifying and prosecuting perpetrators.

Identifying, disrupting and prosecuting perpetrators is a key part of work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people from sexual exploitation. While the police and criminal justice agencies lead on this, the support of all partners in gathering and recording information/evidence is vital. All those involved in caring for a child who is suspected to be at risk of sexual exploitation should continually gather, record and share information, as appropriate, to this end. Parents and carers should be encouraged and supported to do so, ensuring that information is recorded in such a way that it can be used by the Crown Prosecution Service and accepted in Court.

Where a young person wants and is able to be part of a prosecution, it is essential that they are supported through this process and after the prosecution has taken place.

There is a range of criminal offences that perpetrators may have committed, e.g. under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Immigration offences may also be relevant, as well as drugs offences, tax evasion or benefit fraud. Police should consider using the range of powers at their disposal including those set out in repeat search of premises and child abduction legislation.

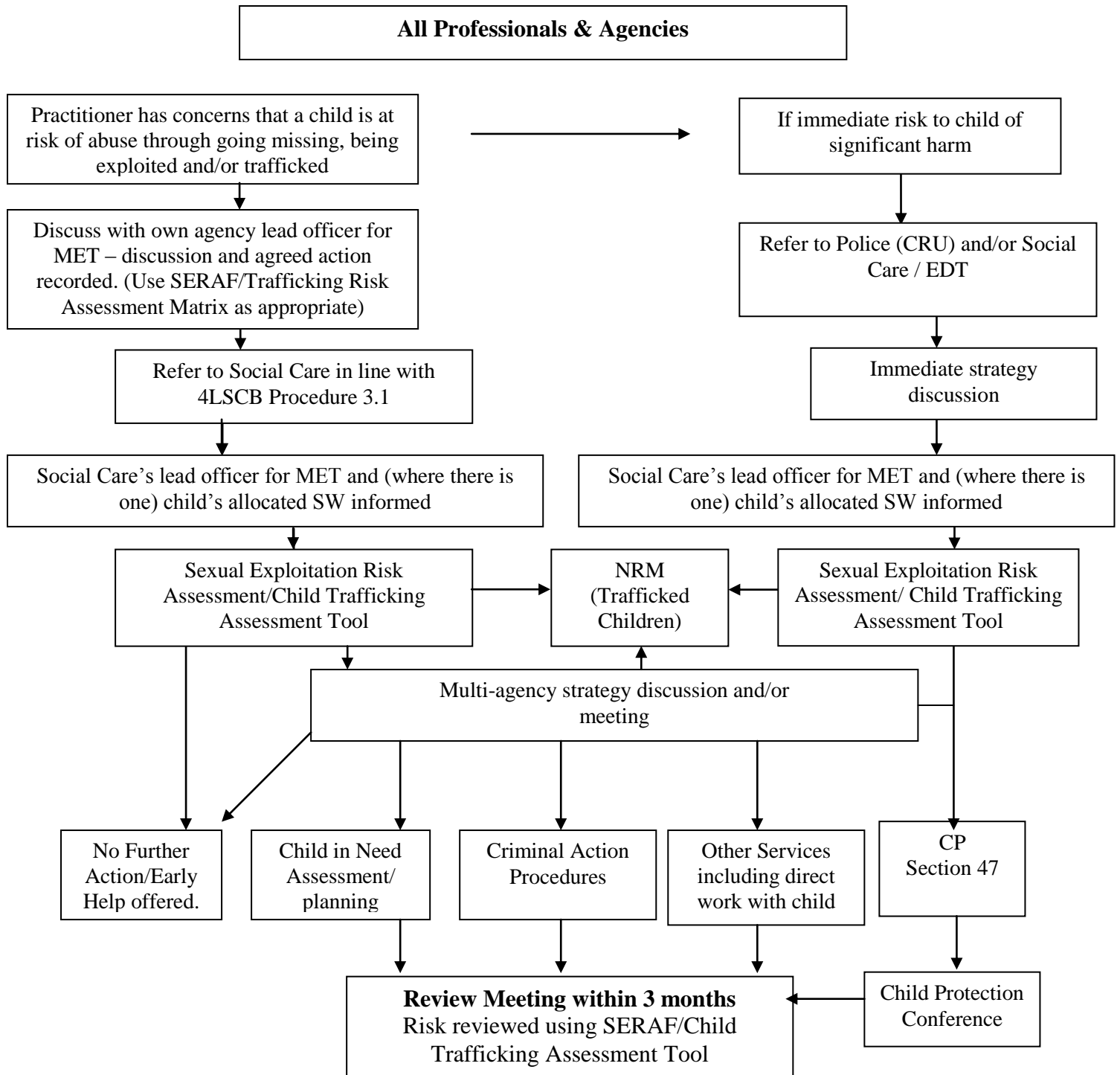
6. Monitoring

Local Safeguarding Children Boards should monitor and scrutinise the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and practice with regards to missing, exploited and trafficked children. The numbers of referrals and strategy discussions/meetings held under this guidance, the numbers of children involved and any deficits in service provision should be recorded and monitored by the LSCB in order to evidence local prevalence and need and ensure adequate service provision.

Agencies are encouraged to collect information to monitor prevalence, activity patterns and effectiveness of interventions for children in their area. The lead manager for missing/exploited and trafficked children should hold overall responsibility for this within agencies/teams/services and for passing that information onto the LSCB.

Appendix 1: Process Flowchart

Action where there are concerns that a child is at risk of abuse through going missing, being exploited and/or trafficked



Appendix 2: Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework



SERAF Risk Assessment Form

Name of worker completing assessment (by phone or email)		Name and contact details of referrer	
Child's Name		Local Authority	
Known to social services since		Date of SERAF Assessment	
Age		Legal status Section:	
Date of birth		Migrant/Refugee/Asylum Seeker/Trafficked status	
		Please specify:	
Ethnicity		Gender	
Physical/learning disabilities		Languages spoken	
Have child protection procedures been initiated? (If yes provide date)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If yes when:	Involvement with the youth justice system?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is the child receiving support or services from any other agency?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	If other agencies are involved please list them here e.g. CAMHS, EWO etc.	
Has sexual exploitation previously been identified as a specific issue for this child?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If yes when:	Has the All Wales Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children who are at Risk of Abuse through Sexual Exploitation Protocol been used?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If yes when:

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Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Children Protocol

Vulnerabilities	Please tick	Vulnerabilities	Please tick
Emotional neglect by parent/carer/family member	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family history of mental health difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical abuse by parent/carer/family member	<input type="checkbox"/>	Low self-esteem	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsuitable/inappropriate accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Breakdown of family relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	Isolated from peers/social networks	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family history of domestic abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of positive relationship with a protective/nurturing adult	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family history of substance misuse	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Moderate risk indicators	Please tick if present on date of referral or during the past 6 months
Staying out late	<input type="checkbox"/>
Multiple callers (unknown adults/older young people)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of a mobile phone that causes concern	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expressions of despair (self-harm, overdose, eating disorder, challenging behaviour, aggression)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exclusion from school or unexplained absences from or not engaged in school/college/training/work	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), pregnancy/termination of pregnancy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drugs misuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alcohol misuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of the internet that causes concern	<input type="checkbox"/>
Living independently and failing to respond to attempts by worker to keep in touch	<input type="checkbox"/>

Significant risk indicators	Please tick if present between 6 and 12 months ago	Please tick if present on date of referral or during past 6 months
Disclosure of sexual/physical assault followed by withdrawal of allegation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peers involved in clipping/sexual exploitation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Periods of going missing overnight or longer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Children Protocol

Older 'boyfriend'/ relationship with controlling adult	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical abuse by controlling adult / physical injury without plausible explanation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emotional abuse by controlling adult	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Entering/leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults (not taking and driving away: car theft)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unexplained amounts of money, expensive clothing or other items	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Frequenting areas known for on/off street sexual exploitation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SERAF Score		In addition: Physical/Learning Disability: Score 1 Age under 13 and at least 1 significant risk factor present: Score 5
Risk Category		

Vulnerabilities Identified: (if any of these have been ticked please detail why)

Emotional neglect by parent/carer/family member:

Physical abuse by parent/carer/family member:

Sexual abuse:

Breakdown of family relationships:

Family history of domestic abuse:

Family history of substance misuse:

Family history of mental health difficulties:

Low self-esteem:

Unsuitable/inappropriate accommodation:

Isolated from peers/social networks:

Lack of positive relationship with a protective/nurturing adult:

Moderate Risk Indicators Identified: (if any of these have been ticked please detail why)

Staying out late:

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Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Children Protocol

Multiple callers (unknown adults/older young people):

Use of a mobile phone that causes concern:

Expressions of despair (self-harm, overdose, eating disorder, challenging behaviour, aggression):

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

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

Drugs misuse:

Alcohol misuse:

Use of the internet that causes concern:

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

Significant Risk Indicators Identified: (if any of these have been ticked please detail why)

Disclosure of sexual/physical assault followed by withdrawal of allegation:

Peers involved in clipping/sexual exploitation:

Periods of going missing overnight or longer:

Older 'boyfriend'/ relationship with controlling adult:

Physical abuse by controlling adult / physical injury without plausible explanation:

Emotional abuse by controlling adult:

Entering/leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults (**not** taking and driving away: car theft):

Unexplained amounts of money, expensive clothing or other items:

Frequenting areas known for on/off street sexual exploitation:

Additional information:

SERAF Risk Assessment: Scoring Guidance

Vulnerabilities

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

Each vulnerability carries a score of 1.

Moderate risk indicators

This section of the risk assessment form includes indicators that are associated with risk of or that may indicate abuse through sexual exploitation.

These should be ticked if they are currently present or have been present during the past 6 months. Each moderate risk indicator carries a score of 1.

Significant risk indicators

These risk indicators are very prevalent in cases where children and young people are at risk of or are being abused through sexual exploitation. In order to monitor any change in risk over time as a result of intervention or a change in circumstances is important to know whether the risk indicator is current (on date of referral or in past 6 months) or recent (between 6 and 12 months ago).

If the risk indicator is current or has occurred in the past 6 months this carries a score of 5 (right hand column).

Where the risk indicator was present between 6 and 12 months ago but has not been present in the past 6 months this carries a score of 1 (left hand column).

If a significant risk factor has been present during the past 6 months and was present between 6 and 12 months ago both column should be ticked generating a score of 6 in relation to that significant risk indicator.

- Once the form is completed a total score can be worked out.
- Each score generates a category of risk.
- Each category of risk has an associated action (see SERAF Categories of Risk Framework).

Score

0-5 = Category 1: (Not at risk)

6-10 = Category 2: (Mild risk)

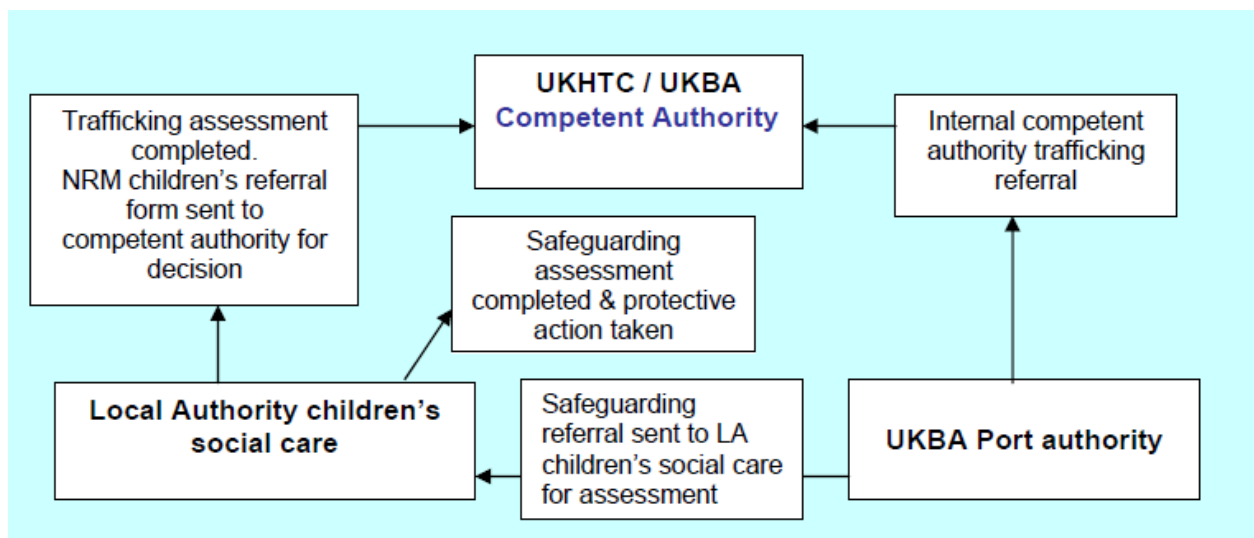
11-15 = Category 3: (Moderate risk)

16 + = Category 4: (Significant risk)

If any of the significant risk indicators are identified but the child is categorised as 'not at risk' or as at 'mild risk' a discussion with the team manager and any other professionals or carers involved in the child's life should take place. This is necessary to ensure that all the information relevant to the case has been included in the risk assessment.

Cases involving children under the age of 13 who have one or more of the significant risk indicators present should score an additional 5 to be added to the total assessment score to reflect the additional vulnerability of their age.

Appendix 3: National referral mechanism overview



The national referral mechanism comprises a four stage process for establishing formally that a child is a victim of trafficking:

Stage one – safeguarding assessment

In the first stage a frontline professional identifies that the child may be trafficked and undertakes a safeguarding assessment.

With support, as required, from the local trafficked children lead and using information from the safeguarding assessment, the professional completes the Trafficking assessment tool (section 1j in the *Trafficked Children Toolkit*).

Stage two – referral to a competent authority

In cases where the front line professional suspects that a child may have been trafficked, LA children's social care will refer the case to a competent authority by sending the child NRM referral form to UKHTC. This will be in addition to acting promptly before the child goes missing and initiating an assessment of the child's levels of need / risk of harm.

Practitioners should be aware that the safeguarding of the child takes precedence and their needs should be addressed. An NRM referral should not prevent immediate safeguarding actions taking place, although information from the NRM assessment may be helpful to those considering the safeguarding response.

Stage three – 'reasonable grounds'

Once the case has been formally referred, the Competent Authority will consider the details supplied on the First Responder Form along with any other evidence and apply a 'reasonable grounds' test to consider if the statement "I suspect but cannot prove" that the person is a victim of trafficking holds true. LA children's social care

may be required to supply further information at this stage if there is insufficient information available.

The child will be granted an extendable reflection and recovery period if the Competent Authority finds there are reasonable grounds to believe the child is a victim of trafficking. During this time UKBA will be asked to suspend removal action. This will allow for a fuller assessment of whether the child is a victim of trafficking. The 45 day period is also a period in which scope for criminal investigation can be explored.

Stage four – referral to competent authority

Following a positive reasonable grounds decision, Competent Authorities are required to make a second identification decision which is to conclusively decide if the individual is a victim of trafficking. As part of this decision, LA children's social care will be consulted and are expected to feed in any further information that may aid the decision making process.

LA children's social care can at any stage consider accessing assistance with reintegration available through voluntary return schemes (which are always the preferred way of carrying out any return to the child's country of origin).

Following a negative reasonable grounds or conclusive decision the child may still have safeguarding needs especially if they are unaccompanied. Social workers should continue to make their own assessments of a child's care needs in line with the statutory duty placed on local authorities by virtue of the Children Act.

National referral mechanism and other agency contacts

For initial advice on trafficking matters contact: UKHTC: 0114 252 3891
For initial advice on immigration matters contact: UKBA: 0161 261 1640
For advice on accommodation providers contact: UKHTC: 0114 252 3891

[NRM referral form](#) – National referral form child victims of trafficking

Competent Authorities:

United Kingdom Borders Agency
Amadeus House
Mondial Way
Hayes
UB3 5AR
Tel: 020 3014 8012
Fax: 020 3014 8186

United Kingdom Human
Trafficking Centre
Tel: 0114 252 3891
Mob: 07770 267286
Fax: 0114 228 6456
Web: www.ukhtc.org