



## **Child Sexual Exploitation Procedure and Practice Guidance**

**July 2019**

## Version Control

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This procedure and practice guidance have been designed to assist practitioners in identifying what is Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).
- 1.2 The guidance outlines how practitioners can support children and young people to prevent, protect, disrupt and to prosecute those who abuse children and young people through sexual exploitation.
- 1.3 Evidence has shown that parents/carers/relatives and those professionals (such as teachers, family workers, health professionals, social workers, GPs, Police Officers and the voluntary sector) who have regular contact with children and young people are well placed to notice changes in behaviour and physical signs, which may indicate involvement in sexual exploitation.
- 1.4 The earlier that sexual exploitation, or likelihood of it, can be identified, the more opportunities there are to prevent or minimise the harm suffered by a child or young person.
- 1.5 Definition of Child Sexual Exploitation;

“Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. “The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology<sup>1</sup>.”

## 2. What to do if you have concerns

### 2.1 Vulnerability Factors

In order to identify children at risk of sexual exploitation or experiencing sexual exploitation and follow a clear plan of effective inter-agency action, you should consider **ALL** of the 14 risk indicators as outlined within the [Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Information Form](#).

- Family and peer relationships
- Accommodation
- Education
- Emotional Health
- Experience of Violence
- Running away / going missing
- Contact with abusive adults and / or risky environments
- Substance misuse

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Education – Child sexual exploitation, **Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation (February 2017)**.

- Coercion / control
- Rewards
- Sexual health and relationships
- Sexualised Risk Taking
- Risk to others
- Engagement with services

## 2.2 Procedure

The CSE risk assessment form will assist you in determining the level of risk for the child or young person and if after considering the above, you remain concerned you must **contact the [Children's Initial Advice Team \(CIAT\)](#)** for further advice and actions required, this contact must also include details of any other child and/or young person who may be involved (whether perpetrators/victims) and/or may also be at risk:

### **Children's Initial Advice Team**

Telephone: 01325 406252

e-mail: [childrensfrontdoor@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:childrensfrontdoor@darlington.gov.uk)

**If a child is at immediate risk, you must contact the Police in the first instance on 999.**

In order to ensure consistency in decision making, the CIAT will utilise the **Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Tool** . The assessment will consider the vulnerabilities and identify the level of risk as either:

- low
- medium
- high

The CIAT will also determine whether the case is:

- An open case to Early Help;
- An open case to Social Care;
- A new case identified or;
- A child from Out of Authority living in Darlington

#### If the case is open to Early Help

The CIAT will screen the contact using the CSE risk assessment information form, if low risk the case will remain open to Early Help Services and forwarded to the relevant Early Help practitioner. If medium or high risk the case will be transferred to the Children's First Response Team to determine whether a strategy or other multi-agency meeting should be arranged. See process map 1, page 14 of this document.

#### If the case is open to Children's Social Care

The CIAT will forward to the case holding social worker with 24 hours, the social worker will complete the CSE risk assessment form to determine the level of risk. If new concerns are identified the social worker will discuss with his/her team manager to

establish if it meets the threshold for a strategy meeting or other multi-agency meeting to be arranged. If agreement reached for a strategy meeting, then you must follow the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Child Protection Procedures. If a multi-agency meeting is to be arranged the Social Worker must contact Durham Constabulary to obtain Police intelligence. If medium or high risk the Social Worker must refer to the Designated CSE worker and Darlington Safeguarding Partnership's Child Exploitation (Operational) Group. See process map 2, page 15 of this document.

#### If a new case is identified

The CIAT will screen the contact using the CSE risk assessment information form, if low risk the case will be transferred to Early Help Services for an Early Help Assessment (EHA). If medium or high the case will be transferred to the Children's First Response Team to determine whether a strategy or other multi-agency meeting should be arranged. If a Strategy or multi agency meeting determines the level of risk is medium or high the case should be referred to the Children and Families Assessment Team and the Designated CSE worker. All medium and high-risk cases should be referred to the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership's Child Exploitation (Operational) Group. See process map 3, page 16 of this document.

#### If a child is from out of authority, living in Darlington

The CIAT will inform the child's placing social worker. The placing Local Authority can make a referral to the Designated CSE Worker and a referral should be made to the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership's Child Exploitation (Operational) Group (CEG).

Likewise, if a Darlington child is placed out of area, the case holding social worker will liaise with the host Local Authority.

In all circumstances when the risk is reduced from either high or medium to low, the case holding Social Worker should always ensure that the case is either stepped down or worked alongside Social Care to ensure additional low level support is offered by an Early Help practitioner for a period of up to 3 months to reinforce the strategies provided by the CSE Project worker in protecting the young person from the risk of CSE.

All of the above actions are in line with [Darlington Safeguarding Partnership \(DSP\) Child Protection Procedures](#).

***Note: where a child is under the age of 13 years, and /or has learning disability and there are concerns regarding sexual exploitation, a referral to Children's Initial Advice Team is required.***

### 2.3 Information Sharing Form

It is important, if you have any information no matter how small in relation to: suspected offenders; suspected vehicles; or locations of interest you must provide details. You should record any detail on the '[CSE intelligence/Information Sharing Form](#)' and submit to Durham Constabulary as a matter of urgency. The benefits of sharing this information will enable agencies to work collaboratively to disrupt perpetrators, whilst protecting victims and developing an understanding of local CSE issues.

## 2.4 Multi-agency approach to managing Medium and High-Risk Cases

A multi-agency meeting is held on a monthly basis and is Chaired by a Safeguarding Lead from Durham Constabulary. The main purpose of the group is to prevent, disrupt and deter children and young people from being sexually exploited and/or who go missing.

It is the Social Worker's responsibility to liaise with the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Business Support Officer (e-mail: [DSP@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:DSP@darlington.gov.uk)) for any cases to be included on the Child Exploitation (Operational) Group (CEG) agenda. The CEG will have management oversight of all medium and high-risk cases, with the aim to disrupt perpetrators, target locations and protect children and young people at risk of CSE.

Low risk cases are managed through the Early Help process and interventions are offered by the Early Help team with the aim of reducing/preventing risks escalating. If at any point a low risk case identifies a new or escalating risk the lead worker e.g. Early Help practitioner, teacher must refer to the CIAT, see paragraph 2.2 of this document.

All agencies are responsible for the implementation of the safeguarding plans and disruption plans and the appropriate dissemination of these to their organisations.

The intelligence gathered at the CEG meetings is shared with the Missing, Exploited and Sexual Abuse Subgroup (MESA) to inform the CSE and Missing strategies and to improve the long-term outcomes for children and young people in Darlington.

## 2.5 Professional Challenge

Should at any time you feel unhappy about any decisions that have been made in relation to a young person which you feel may not effectively ensure the safety or well-being of a child or young person, then you should refer to the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Professional Challenge Procedure.

***Note: At no time must professional disagreement detract from ensuring that the child or young person is safeguarded.***

## 3. Practice Guidance

3.1 The above procedure identifies how sexual exploitation should be dealt with, outlining a coordinated approach where exploitation is identified. The Practice Guidance supports this and provides a background and an understanding of sexual exploitation and is aimed at all practitioners who may encounter children and young people who may be at risk of being sexually exploited.

### 3.2 What is Sexual Exploitation?

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of sexual abuse and is a hidden crime. It affects children and young people of all backgrounds and from all communities including boys, young men, girls and young women. Young people often trust their abuser and don't

understand that they are being abused. They may depend on their abuser or be too scared to tell anyone what's happening. Professionals should recognise that disclosure of this form of abuse by a child or young person is exceptionally rare.

CSE can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults, including oral and anal rape. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status. CSE doesn't always involve physical contact and can happen online. A child or young person is when someone makes or manipulates a young person into doing sexual things for the benefit or enjoyment of others.

CSE steals children of their childhood and can have a serious long-term impact on every aspect of their lives, health and education. It damages the lives of families and carers and can lead to family break-ups.

*'Child sexual exploitation can ruin children's lives. But it doesn't just impact on the victims – it affects their parents, siblings and the entire family. (PACE UK)'*

### 3.3 Spotting the signs of CSE

Adolescence is a time of experimentation and can be a particularly challenging period for parents and their children. Most parents and professionals understand the value of young people learning about themselves through new experiences, but everyone wants to protect their child from harm.

There could be cause for concern if a child is exhibiting three or more of the following warning signs:

- He or she becomes especially secretive and stops engaging with their usual friends. They may be particularly prone to sharp mood swings or are appearing to have a different personality. Whilst mood swings are common to all adolescents, it is the severity of behaviour change that is most indicative.
- They may be associating with or develop a sexual relationship with older men and/or women (although bear in mind that the perpetrators could approach the child through a peer from school who is already being exploited, or through the youngest member of the grooming network).
- They may go missing from home – and be defensive about their location and activities, often returning home late or staying out all night (again, perpetrators know that parents will immediately suspect something is wrong if their child stays out all night, so they may initially drop the child off at the home address and before their curfew. They may even pick them up outside the school gates).
- They may receive odd calls and messages on their mobiles or social media pages from unknown, possibly much older associates from outside their normal social network
- They may be in possession of new, expensive items which they couldn't normally afford, such as mobile phones, iPods or jewellery.

The child or young person may also:

- Exhibit a sudden change in dressing patterns or musical taste

- Look tired and/or unwell, and sleep at unusual hours
- Have marks or scars on their body which they try to conceal
- Adopt new 'street language' or respond to a new street name

### 3.4 What is trauma bonding?

The term 'Trauma Bond' is also known as Stockholm Syndrome. It describes a deep bond which forms between a victim and their abuser.

Victims of abuse often develop a strong sense of loyalty towards their abuser, despite the fact that the bond is damaging to them.

Conditions necessary for trauma bonding to occur include:

- To be threatened with, and to believe, that there is real danger
- Harsh treatment interspersed with very small kindnesses
- Isolation from other people's perspectives
- A belief that there is no escape

A sexually exploited child is often judged as if he or she is thinking from the logical part of his or her brain. When confronted with dangerous situations, the logical part of the brain – that thinks, reasons and exercises choice – is NOT the part of the brain that takes control. In reality, fear activates a more primitive part of the brain, the survival brain (or amygdala), which is concerned with immediate survival. The brain will respond: 'this won't kill you, so freeze and endure it'. The more a person responds passively (enduring it), the more likely that this will become an automatic response when confronted with fear and sexual violence in the future.

The main survival drive is to create attachments to others. This can create a very complex situation when the abuser uses both fear and a relationship with the victim, which can make abusive relationships so complex and difficult to understand to people outside of the relationship.

### 3.5 Breaking the trauma bond

There is no easy answer, but to break the trauma bond a victim needs to have alternative healthy relationships available and be isolated from the abusers for a significant period of time. This allows the child time to heal and come to terms with the trauma they experienced, re-shaping the nature of future relationships. Observing this situation, particularly as a parent, can be heart-breaking, but the consistent presence of the parent and carer means that the child is not solely dependent on the abuser (which is what the abuser wants) and has a place of safety to flee to.

### 3.6 The impact of child sexual exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation has a devastating, long-term impact, not only on the child who is abused, but also for the whole family.

### 3.7 Child sexual exploitation grooming models

Perpetrators 'groom' a child for sexual exploitation in a process designed to break down the child's defences and existing relationships with family and friends to establish control.

'Grooming' is like a process of recruitment and the victims are introduced into a lifestyle which they are made to believe is normal, but which is actually abusive. This may take place online or offline and could include violence, lies, blackmail, or threats. Once groomed, the child is expected to participate in sexual activities, often in exchange for something such as alcohol, gifts, money, affection, drugs, or a place to stay.

- **Peer on peer exploitation:** Children are sexually exploited by peers who are known to them at school, in the neighbourhood or through mutual friends.
- **Exploitation through befriending and grooming:** Children are befriended directly by the perpetrator (in person or online) or through other children and young people. This process may begin with a girl (or boy) being targeted and befriended by a young boy or girl usually known to her as an equal, i.e. a classmate, a friend of a sibling, or a neighbour.

This introductory young person later introduces the child to either one or more older men, whom s/he may describe as an older sibling or cousin. The older men offer the child attention in the form of gifts, flashy cars, cigarettes, alcohol and drugs.

To the child, it is new and exciting. The older men treat the child as an adult and deliberately portray her/his parents as unreasonable and overly-strict, should they seek to intervene.

- **The 'boyfriend'/pimp model of exploitation:** Perpetrators target children posing as 'boyfriends', showering the child with attention and gifts to cause infatuation. They initiate a sexual relationship with the child, which the child is expected to return as 'proof' of her/his love or as a way of returning the initial attention and gifts. The child is effectively told that they owe the perpetrators money for cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, car rides etc. and that sexual activities are one way of paying it back.
- **The 'party' model:** Parties are organised by groups of men to lure young people. Young people are offered drinks, drugs and car rides often for free. They are introduced to an exciting environment and a culture where sexual promiscuity and violence is normalised. Parties are held at various locations and children are persuaded (sometimes financially) to bring their peers along.

Children are also encouraged to associate with others via Facebook, Bebo, ooVoo, etc. The parties may be held some distance from the child's home, enabling the perpetrators to force the child to have sex in return for a lift home. Drugs and alcohol are used to suppress the children's resistance. Images may be taken of them without their clothes for purpose of future bribery.

There are different models of grooming – children might experience exploitation at parties, by groups of older men or (less often) women, as part of a gang, or even by friends their own age.

**Please note:** the models are as a guide, every situation is different, and a child may have been groomed for sexual exploitation through a variety of tactics.

### 3.8 The grooming process for child sexual exploitation

Grooming may be a phased, gradual process used by perpetrators to sexually exploit children. It can take place over varying periods of time either online or offline – from a few days to several years.

Grooming for sexual exploitation can also take different forms and be more or less violent. Although we talk about it as having stages, this doesn't necessarily mean that it will always develop in the same way. The picture we present is to give you an indication of what could happen.

- **Initial contact:** Contact may be direct or through a child's school mates, friends, siblings or neighbours. Many children disclose that the initial contact was made by someone they regarded as an equal.
- **Befriending:** After initial contact has been made, the child is then introduced to one or older men who pose as, or are, the initial contact's older brother or cousin. The befriending stage involves the perpetrators using coercive and non-coercive seductive and deceptive behaviour.
- **Exchange of favours:** Following the befriending stage, the child typically feels infatuated with the older man, interprets his attention and behaviour as love and regards him as a 'boyfriend'. The child's infatuation can override and weaken the child's ability to see through and resist the coercion and deception. At this point, the man then seeks sexual favours for himself and for others. The child is expected to perform sexual acts as either proof of the child's love for this person or as a way of paying for the 'kindness' shown during the befriending stage. The child is normally unaware that money is exchanging hands. Although legally significant, the awareness of the exchange of money is a minor consideration. More serious for the child is the demand for sexual activity and the actual experience of it, which can be profoundly shocking and shaming. The perpetrators use the shame against the child as it makes it more difficult for the child to seek help.
- **Control:** When the child expresses unwillingness to return sexual favours, the perpetrators start making threats. The perpetrators gain control over the child in the following ways:
  - encouraging the child to truant from school and fear reprisals from parents and school authorities
  - showing the child weapons in the car or on the person and keeping the child under constant threat
  - encouraging addiction to cigarettes, alcohol and drugs and making the child dependent on him to supply these
  - photographing the child performing sexual activities and threatening to publicise the images

- involving the child in criminal activities and threatening the child with police action
  - using physical violence and threats against the child and the child's family.
- **Exploitation:** In the later stages, the perpetrators build upon the alienation which may have begun in earlier stages through the child's truanting, deception and concealment. The perpetrators continue to seek to sever the child's links with family, friends and other support systems. Distance means the perpetrators' activities go unhindered. The child is led further into a life of violence, exploitation and crime. The sexually exploitation process results in the child earning money to support the child's 'needs' and those of the perpetrators.

Control and alienation are exercised in the following ways:

- encouraging over 16s to seek their own accommodation in order to exploit the distance from support networks and create a widened, irreversible gap
- proactively seeking accommodation for the child
- encouraging the child to make abuse claims against family members
- encouraging teenage pregnancy and then exercising further control via a baby or arranging a termination
- creating conflicting feelings of love and hate, protection and exploitation, guilt and innocence, entitlements and duties.

Although some children are able to free themselves from their perpetrators, the whole experience, particularly when it is sustained over a long time during a period of significant personal development, can profoundly change the child's personality and affect their life prospects and chances. This includes the child experiencing significant psychological effects and extends to the child facing adverse social and economic consequences.

### 3.9 Online Grooming and Sexting

#### *Definitions*

Sexting is defined as the "exchange of sexual messages or images" and "creating, sharing and forwarding sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images" through mobile phones and the Internet.

Youth produced sexual images youth-produced sexual images are pictures created by minors (age 17 or younger) that depict minors and that are or could be indecent images of children (IIOC) under applicable criminal statutes. We include the sending of such images by any electronic technology (e.g., phone, webcam, digital camera). In addition, we include the full range of such incidents that come to the attention of law enforcement, including those involving adults and situations that do not involve romantic relationships.

When sexual exploitation happens online, young people may be persuaded, or forced, to:

- send or post sexually explicit images of themselves
- take part in sexual activities via a webcam or smartphone
- have sexual conversations by text or online.

In many circumstances grooming online is faster and anonymous and results in children trusting an online 'friend' more quickly than someone they had just met 'face to face'. Those intent on harming children can easily access information about them and they are able to hide their true identity, age and gender.

Abusers may threaten to send images, video or copies of conversations to the young person's friends and family unless they take part in other sexual activity.

Images or videos may continue to be shared long after the sexual abuse has stopped.

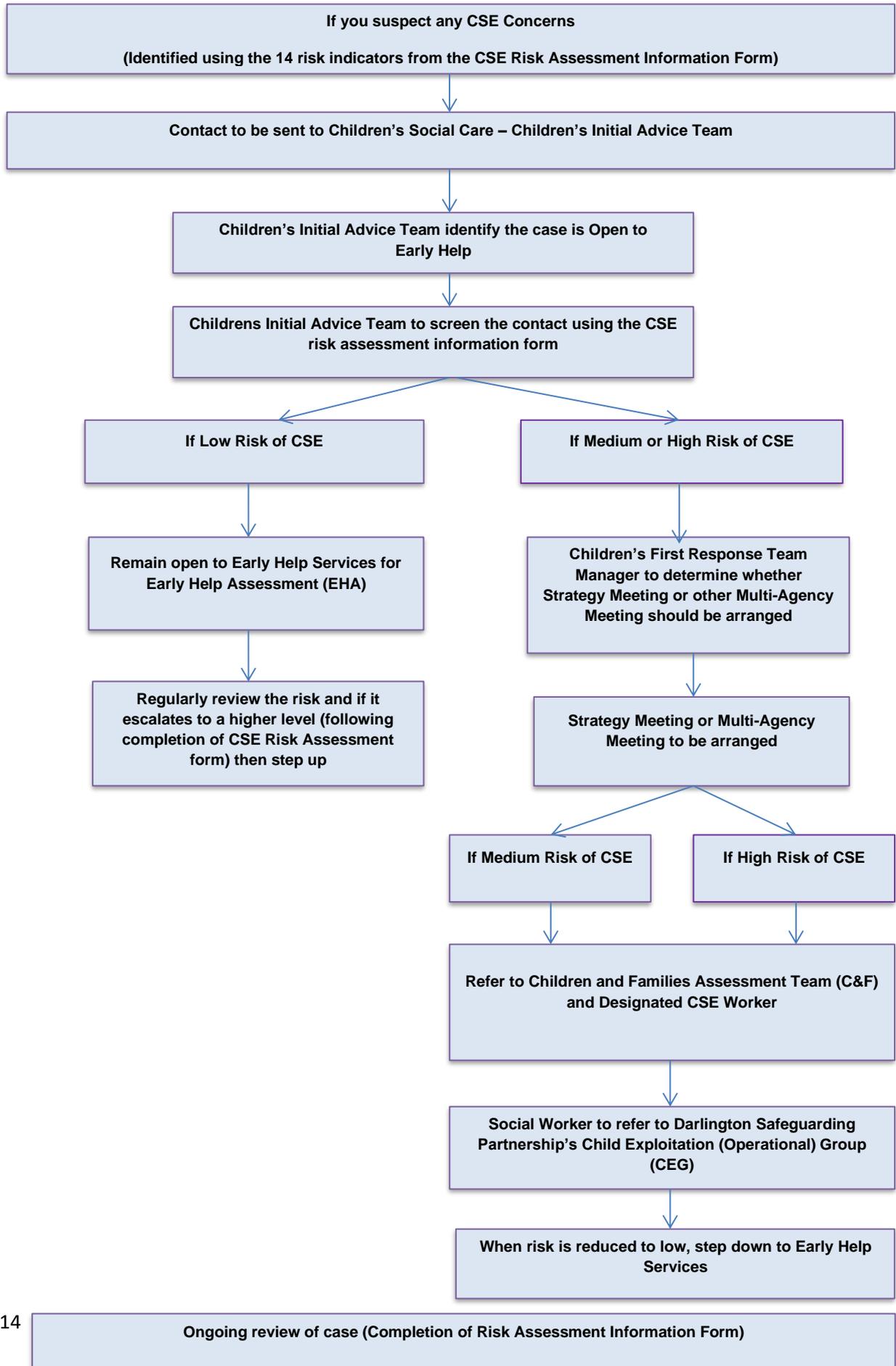
Further information on online grooming and sexting is available on the Durham Constabulary [website](#).

### 3.10 Identifying and prosecuting offenders

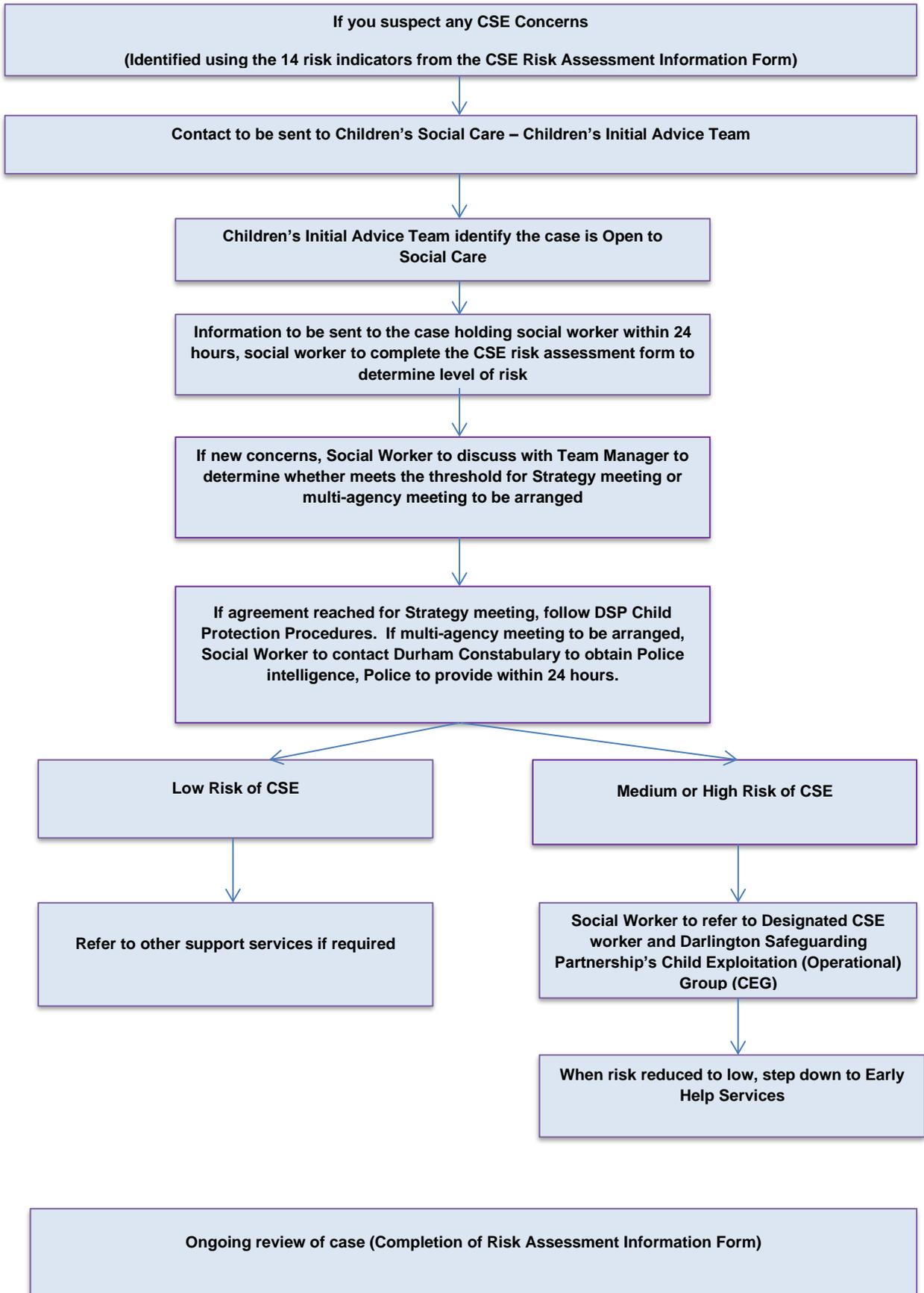
Whilst the police and criminal justice agencies lead on this, the support of all partners in gathering and recording information/evidence is vital. All those involved in caring for a child who is suspected to be at risk of sexual exploitation, should gather record and share relevant information in line with their agency practice. Parents and carers should also be encouraged and supported to do so, ensuring that information is recorded appropriately, as this may be required in subsequent criminal proceedings.

## 4. Process Maps

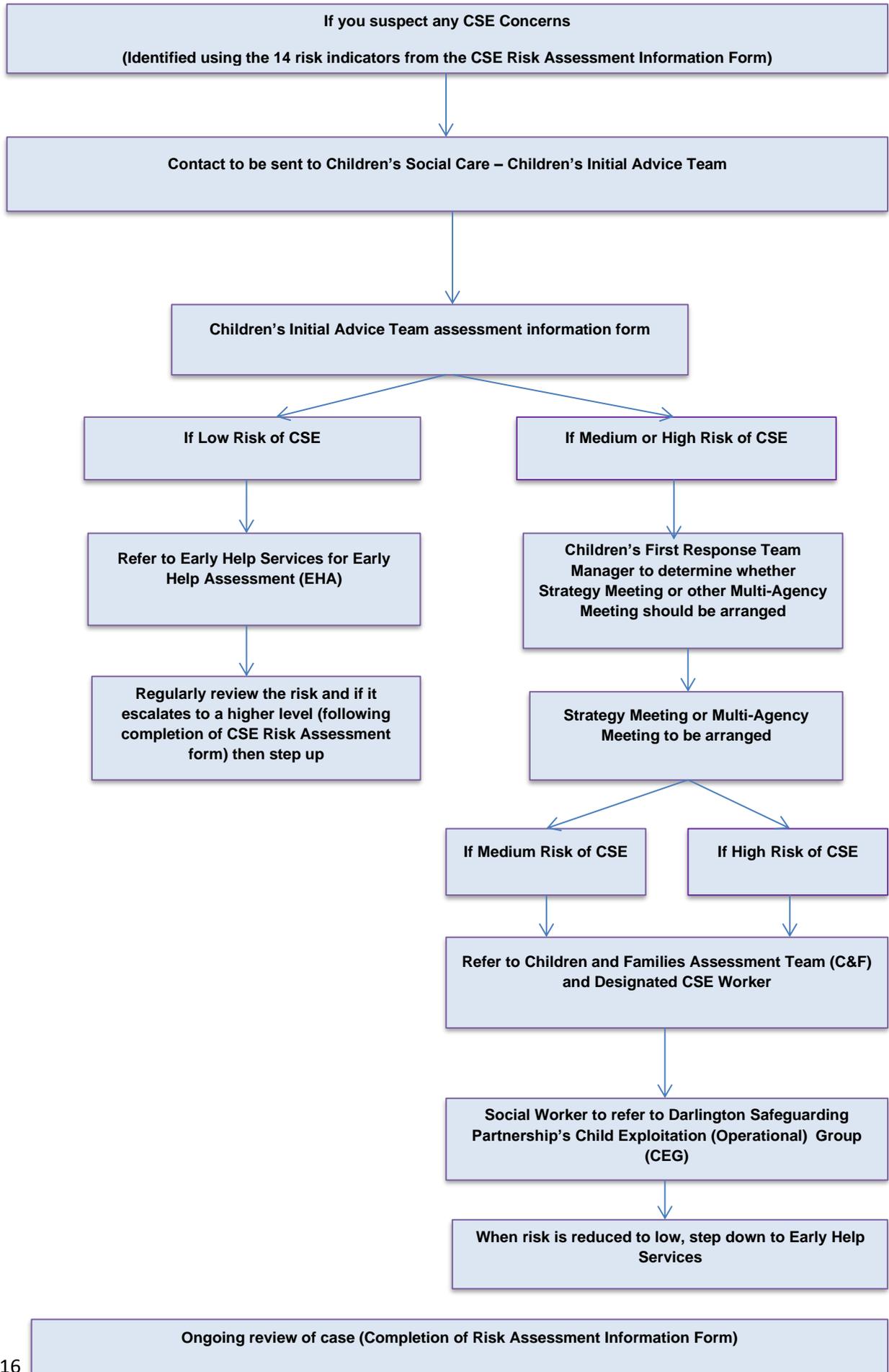
### Process Map 1 - Open Case to Early Help



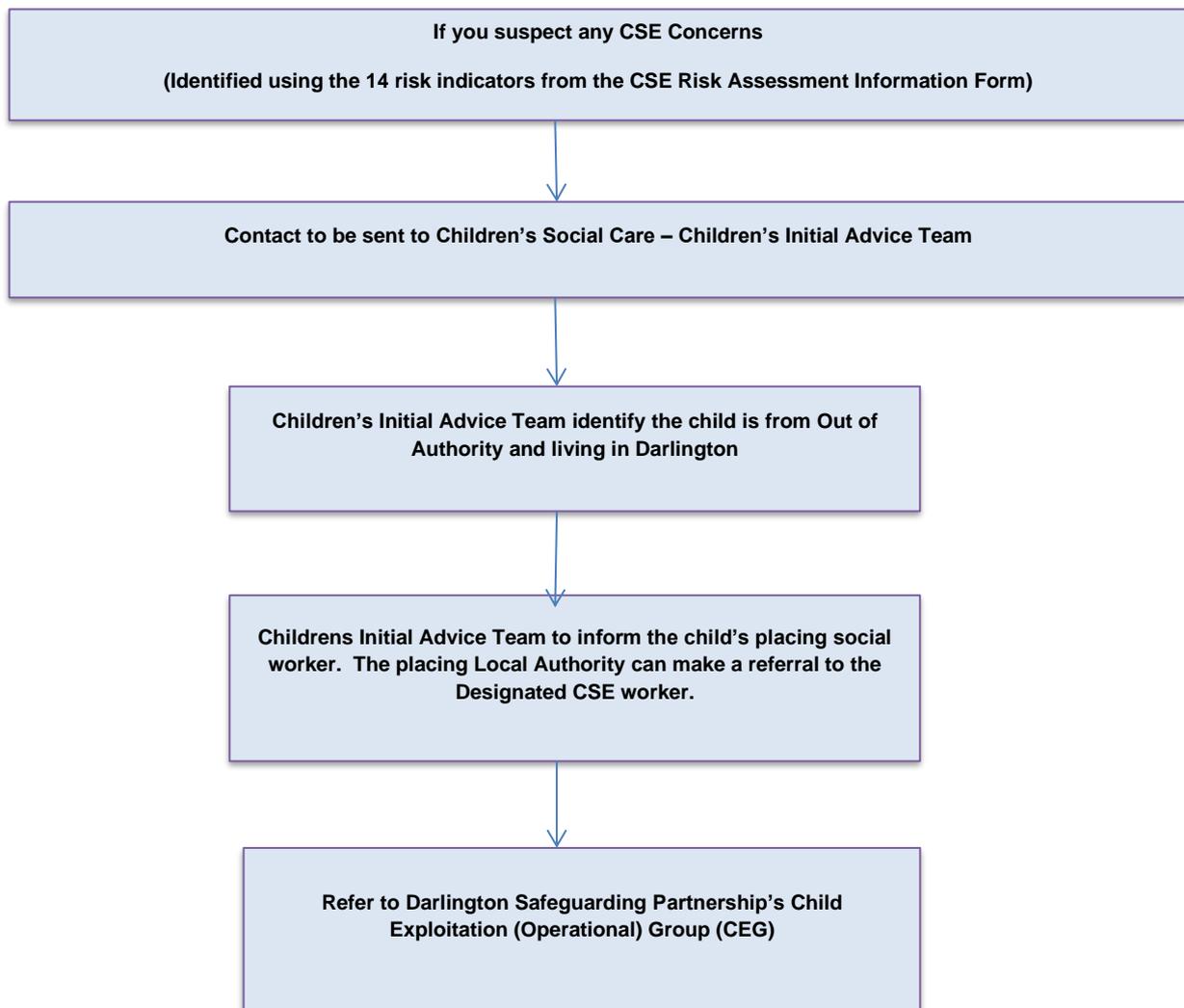
## Process Map 2 - Open Case to Social Care



### Process Map 3 - New Case Identified



## Process Map 4 - Child from Out of Authority living in Darlington



### 5. Research, evidence-based practice and resources

There are many additional resources and websites available to obtain further information on child sexual exploitation.

- Barnardo's [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)  
Barnardo's purpose as a charity today is to transform the lives of the UK's most vulnerable children, and provide a wide range of information on their website aimed at parents, children and professionals
- CEOP [ceop.police.uk](http://ceop.police.uk)  
The NCA's CEOP Command (formerly the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) protect children from harm online and offline, directly through NCA led operations and in partnership with local and international agencies.
- Childline [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)  
Childline helps anyone under 19 years in the UK with any issue they're going through.
- ERASE [www.eraseabuse.org/Pages/Home.aspx](http://www.eraseabuse.org/Pages/Home.aspx)

A local website for people living in County Durham and Darlington you can find out information about sexual exploitation. The site is owned by Durham Constabulary and Darlington Safeguarding Partnership works closely with;

- Fearless [www.fearless.org](http://www.fearless.org)  
Fearless is a site where you can access non-judgemental information and advice about crime and criminality.
- NSPCC [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk) - National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.
- NWG [www.nwgnetwork.org](http://www.nwgnetwork.org)  
Offers support and advice to those working with children and young people under eighteen who are affected by abuse through sexual exploitation.
- PACE UK [paceuk.info](http://paceuk.info)  
Pace works alongside parents and carers of children who are – or are at risk of being sexually exploited by perpetrators external to the family. They offer guidance and training to professionals on how child sexual exploitation affects the whole family.
- Safe and Sound (Fighting CSE) [safeandsoundgroup.org.uk](http://safeandsoundgroup.org.uk)  
Safe and Sound works to keep children and young people safe and sound from sexual exploitation.
- So You Got Naked Online: [swgfl.org.uk/products-services/esafety/resources/So-You-Got-Naked-Online](http://swgfl.org.uk/products-services/esafety/resources/So-You-Got-Naked-Online)  
Resources that offer children, young people and parent's advice and strategies to support the issues resulting from sexting incidents.
- Stop it Now [www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk) - Is a child sexual abuse prevention campaign.
- Think U Know [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) - Think U Know is part of CEOP and provides age appropriate information about how children and young people can keep themselves safe. Including information for parents/carers and professionals
- UK Safer Internet Centre website [www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk) Provides advice and support to children and young people, parents and carers, schools and the children's workforce and to coordinate Safer Internet Day across UK.

## 6. Legislation and Standards

- DfE Child sexual exploitation, Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation (Feb 2017)
- DfE Safeguarding Children who may have been Trafficked (2011)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DCSF 2018)
- Office of the Children Commissioner Report Gangs and Group CSE (2013) "If only someone had listened" and "It takes a lot to build Trust" (2014)
- Children and Young Person's Missing from Home, Education or Care (2014)
- Children and Families Act (2014)
- Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (2015)