



OFG
Education

CHILD EXPLOITATION POLICY

Oakham Shires School

CHILD EXPLOITATION POLICY

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TERMINOLOGY

- “Our teams” and” “team member/s” include everyone working in Outcomes First Group’s settings and services in a paid or unpaid capacity, including employees, consultants, agency staff, trainees and contractors. For Blenheim schools, volunteers are included in this definition.
- “Parents and carers” refer to the person or -people with legal parental responsibility for the child/young person
- “Students” refers to all children and young people being educated and supported at the setting or service

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We put the safety of the students we educate and support as the highest priority and are committed to ensuring that they are effectively safeguarded at all times, this includes in the offline and online worlds. We recognise the growing risk in relation to the exploitation of children and young people and that those who are looked after or have physical, learning, emotional and/or mental health difficulties may be particularly vulnerable. This policy must be read in conjunction with the:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Protecting Children & Young People from Radicalisation & Extremism (Prevent Duty) Policy
- Web Filtering & Monitoring Policy
- Staying Safe Online Policy
- Mobile & Smart Technology Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy

2.0 TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT FOR TEAM MEMBERS

All team members must be safely recruited and have all relevant checks completed and on file. Please see the ***Safer Recruitment Policy*** for further information.

In addition to the ***Introduction to Safeguarding*** and ***Safeguarding Children*** Foundation courses, all team members must complete the ***Exploitation - An Introduction*** course which includes information on Prevent and this must be refreshed every 3 years. These training courses are available on *Shine*.

3.0 WHAT IS CHILD EXPLOITATION?

3.1 “Child exploitation refers to the use of children for someone else’s advantage, gratification or profit often resulting in unjust, cruel and harmful treatment of the child. These activities are to the detriment of the child’s physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It covers situations of manipulation, misuse, abuse, victimisation, oppression or ill-treatment.”
(UN/[Save the Children](#))

3.2 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity,(a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for (b) the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. CSE and CCE can affect children and young people of any age, sex, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity and can include those who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation [Keeping children safe in education \(KCSiE\) 2026](#)

Different forms of harm often overlap, and perpetrators may subject children and young people to multiple forms of abuse, such as criminal exploitation and sexual exploitation.

Settings in **Wales** should be familiar with:

[Keeping children safe from child sexual exploitation](#) (Welsh Government),
[Child Criminal Exploitation \(Safer Communities Wales\)](#) and

All Wales Practice Guide: [Safeguarding children from child criminal exploitation](#)

Settings in **Scotland** should be familiar with:

[Child Protection: Child sexual and criminal exploitation](#) (Scottish Government)

3.3 Exploitation can be facilitated through technology and can take place wholly online. Children and young people may be groomed, coerced, blackmailed or exploited through social media, messaging applications, livestreaming services, gaming platforms, image sharing platforms or other online environments. Team members must remain alert to the risks of online grooming, financially motivated sexual extortion and the misuse of technology to facilitate exploitation.

3.4 Extra-Familial Harm - We recognise that harm can occur outside the home and family environment. Extra-familial harm includes child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, serious violence, harmful sexual behaviour, abuse within peer relationships, online abuse and other forms of abuse occurring within social groups, schools, colleges, communities and online environments.

Team members should consider the influence of peer groups, social networks, neighbourhoods and online environments when assessing safeguarding risks and planning interventions.

4.0 CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

4.1 Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse and happens when anyone under the age of 18 is coerced, manipulated or deceived into taking part in sexual activity. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Child Sexual Exploitation can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence and may happen without the child's immediate knowledge. For example, through others sharing videos or images of them on social media. It can affect any child who has been coerced into engaging in sexual activities. This includes 16- and 17-year-olds who can legally consent to have sex. Some children and young people may not realise they are being exploited, for example, they believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship.

It requires knowledge, skills, professional curiosity and an assessment which analyses the risk factors and personal circumstances of individual students to ensure that the signs and symptoms are interpreted correctly, and appropriate support is given.

4.2 Child sexual exploitation is not a choice. It is a form of abuse. It is important to remember that even when a relationship appears consensual, it may be an exploitative relationship. There can be an interchangeable status between victim and perpetrator. Young people can be both victim and perpetrator. Males and females can be both victims and perpetrators.

4.3 It can include assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet. Child sexual exploitation involves perpetrators grooming children then forcing, enticing, threatening, and/or being violent towards them.



- 4.4** It is child sexual exploitation when the young person receives or thinks that they will receive something that they want or need in exchange for the sexual activity. This can take the form of gifts, drugs, alcohol, or if young people perceive that they are getting love, affection, protection or protecting their families/friends, increased status within their peer group or community. Young people are still victims even if they accept what the perpetrator is offering in exchange for sexual activity. Perpetrators take advantage of an imbalance of power.
- 4.5** While it may appear that some young people are 'choosing' to exchange sex to meet their needs, it is vital to remember that young people have limited options and so it is not a 'choice' but rather 'constrained choices' or 'survival strategies.'
- 4.6** Child sexual exploitation may include financially motivated sexual extortion, where offenders threaten to share sexual images of a child unless money, further images or other demands are met.

5.0 CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION (CCE)

- 5.1** Criminal exploitation (CCE) is child abuse where a child or young people under the age of 18 is coerced, controlled, manipulated or deceived into committing crimes. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. It does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. CCE often happens alongside sexual or other forms of exploitation.
- 5.2** CCE is common in county lines (See Section 8.0), but it is broader than just county lines and includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft. Children can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others.
- 5.3** Children and young people can become trapped by this type of exploitation as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt. They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives or begin to carry a knife for a sense of protection from harm from others.
- 5.4** Children and young people involved in CCE often commit crimes themselves; their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals, particularly older children. They are not treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced. They may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be something they have agreed or consented to.
- 5.5** Children and young people of any gender can be criminally exploited; the experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys and the indicators may not be the same. However, perpetrators exploit children and young people for multiple and ever adapting purposes. Team members should always consider all possibilities and not let assumptions distract them from seeing what is really happening. It is also important to note that any child who is being criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.

5.6 Children and young people may be exploited by their peers as well as adults. Team members should recognise that exploitation can involve young people recruiting, controlling, or facilitating the exploitation of other young people whilst also being exploited themselves.

Please also see: [Gender and exploitation: dangerous assumptions](#)

6.0 RISK FACTORS

6.1 'Peer relationships are increasingly influential during adolescence, setting social norms which inform young people's experiences, behaviours and choices and determine peer status. These relationships are, in turn, shaped by, and shape, the school, neighbourhood and online contexts in which they develop. So, if young people socialise in safe and protective schools and community settings, they will be supported to form safe and protective peer relationships. However, if they form friendships in contexts characterised by violence and/or harmful attitudes these relationships too may be anti-social, unsafe or promote problematic social norms as a means of navigating, or surviving in, those spaces' (*Contextual Safeguarding Briefing*, Carlene Firmann, 2017).

6.2 Young people's peer groups, communities and social media activity are either key risk factors or key protective factors. For example, if a young person socialises with peers who have a positive influence on their thinking and behaviours, this will more than likely protect them within their communities and neighbourhoods. Likewise, if young people socialise with peers who are themselves involved in risky activities such as substance misuse, gangs or exploitative relationships, this too may impact on the young person's safety and wellbeing in the community and their neighbourhoods.

6.3 While any child or young person can be vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and harm, some factors may increase their vulnerability, including:

Individual needs and characteristics

- Having Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), being neurodivergent, or having speech, language and communication needs.
- Having a medical condition, physical disability or complex health needs.
- Experiencing emotional or mental health difficulties.
- Low self-esteem, poor self-confidence or limited awareness of risks and personal vulnerabilities.
- Questioning their sexual orientation, gender identity or wider identity without access to appropriate support.

Family and home circumstances

- Being looked after, previously looked after or having experienced interrupted care arrangements.
- Experiencing neglect or physical, emotional or sexual abuse.
- Living in an unsafe or unstable home environment, including where there is domestic abuse, parental substance misuse, mental ill-health or criminality.
- Being a young carer.
- Family members or others connected to the child being involved in adult sex work.

Social, educational and environmental factors

- Social isolation, exclusion or a lack of positive friendships and support networks.
- Disengagement from education, training or employment, including persistent or unexplained absence.
- Spending significant periods of unsupervised time online.
- Having limited access to positive activities, hobbies or trusted adults.
- Experiencing economic hardship, homelessness or insecure accommodation.

Risk-taking behaviours and exploitation

- Going missing from home, school, college or care.
- Substance misuse.
- Gang association, criminal behaviour or criminal exploitation.
- Connections with others who are experiencing exploitation, including child sexual exploitation.
- Anti-social, aggressive or violent behaviour.

Life experiences

- Experiencing bereavement, loss or other significant traumatic events.

These factors do not mean that a child or young person is experiencing abuse, exploitation or harm. However, they may increase vulnerability and should be considered alongside other information, professional curiosity and the school's safeguarding procedures.

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) explains more about the risks for [Children with disabilities](#) (Meeting the needs of particular groups of sexually exploited children, Part D.4, 2022)

Further information on risks and indicators can be found at:

[NSPCC - Gangs and criminal-exploitation](#)

[Metropolitan Police - Advice and information Child Criminal exploitation](#)

Children and young people with autism spectrum conditions can be particularly vulnerable to exploitation; the Devonshire Safeguarding Partnership has developed a [Preventing Exploitation Toolkit](#) that includes information about these particular risks to help develop understanding and awareness.

When assessing exploitation concerns, team members will consider the vulnerabilities of the individual student and the contexts in which harm is occurring, including peer groups, online environments, transport routes, neighbourhoods, community locations, and relationships with adults outside the family.

6.4 Possible indicators that a child or young person is being exploited can include:

- Unexplained money or gifts
- Regularly absent from school or education or not taking part in education
- Going missing (for short or long periods)
- Being distressed or withdrawn on return
- Disengaging from existing social networks

- Secrecy around new associations
- Relationship with or hanging out with someone older than them
- Additional mobile phones or concerning use of technology
- Possession of hotel key cards/keys
- Sexual health problems or becoming pregnant
- Displaying sexual behaviours beyond expected development age
- Disclosure of rape/sexual assault (and reluctance to report)
- Changes in temperament/emotional wellbeing, being angry, aggressive or violent
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Unexplained physical injuries
- Self-harming and feeling emotionally unwell
- Committing petty crimes like shoplifting or vandalism, carrying weapons

This is not an exhaustive list and team members **must** remain alert to possible signs of child exploitation even if young people do not have any of the above risk indicators or vulnerabilities.

6.5 Children and young people with SEND and multiple complex co-occurring needs can be particularly vulnerable to exploitation. It can also be difficult for team members to distinguish between some of the signs of abuse and behaviour that is part of the child or young person's condition. Team members should be vigilant and alert to **changes** in their behaviour and always consider all possible causes of this.

6.6 Exploitation risks continue to evolve. Children and young people may be targeted both online and offline through social media, gaming platforms, messaging services, peer networks and organised criminal groups. Team members must remain professionally curious and alert to emerging patterns of exploitation, recognising that exploitation may not always be immediately visible and that children may not recognise themselves as victims.

7.0 TRAFFICKING

7.1 Child trafficking is when children are recruited, moved or transported for the purposes of exploitation, slavery, or abuse. children can be trafficked as part of sexual exploitation, criminal activity such as the selling of drugs, forced marriage, forced labour and benefit fraud. [The Modern Slavery Act 2015](#) establishes that a person commits an offence if the person arranges or facilitates the travel of another with a view to being exploited. Wherever a child has been recruited, transported or transferred for the purpose of exploitation, they should be considered to be a victim of trafficking. This includes whether or not they have been forced, deceived or the child/young person believes that they are traveling willingly from one location to another, for example, where a child takes a bus or walks from one location to another for the purpose of exploitation.

Child trafficking should be viewed within the wider context of modern slavery and exploitation. Children cannot consent to their own exploitation.



7.2 Children and young people who are trafficked will usually experience physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Children are groomed and then threatened, coerced or intimidated. Children who are victims of trafficking will suffer significant trauma, and this can have a long-lasting detrimental impact on their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

7.3 Possible signs of trafficking include a child who:

- spends a lot of time doing household chores
- rarely leaves their house, has no freedom of movement and no time for playing
- is orphaned or living apart from their family, often in unregulated private foster care
- lives in substandard accommodation
- is not sure which country, city or town they're in
- is unable or reluctant to give details of accommodation or personal details
- might not be registered with a school or a GP practice
- has no documents or has falsified documents
- has no access to their parents or guardians
- is seen in inappropriate places such as brothels or factories
- possesses unaccounted for money or goods
- is permanently deprived of a large part of their earnings, required to earn a minimum amount of money every day or pay off an exorbitant debt
- has injuries from workplace accidents
- gives a prepared story which is very similar to stories given by other children.

Team members should recognise the strong links that can exist between serious violence, child criminal exploitation, county lines activity, online harms, substance misuse and exploitation by peers or adults.

Please see [NSPCC - Child Trafficking](#) for further information

7.4 Team members must report any concerns regarding trafficking to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The local authority procedures for reporting and referring trafficking concerns are to contact the Children's Social Care Team:

- Rutland County Council - [01572 758 407](#)
- Leicestershire County Council - [0116 305 0005](#)
- Leicester City Council - [0116 454 1004](#)

7.5 Trafficking concerns must immediately be reported to the local authority, who will make a referral to the **National Referral Mechanism (NRM)**, which is a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking and ensuring they receive appropriate care. When a child or young person is trafficked, a range of agencies may be involved such as police, UK Border Agency (UKBA), local authorities and non-governmental organisations such as charities. The NRM makes it easier for these agencies to co-operate, share information and facilitate access to advice, accommodation and support.

7.6 If there are immediate concerns that a child or young person is being trafficked, team members must report this immediately to the DSL and police.

7.7 For further information about reporting trafficking concerns, team members must speak to the DSL and seek guidance from NSPCC Child Trafficking Advice Centre **0808 800 5000** [NSPCC Helpline](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/08005000)

8.0 CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION AND COUNTY LINES

8.1 “County Lines” is a national term used by police and law enforcement to commonly describe the approach taken by gangs and criminal networks originating from urban areas, who travel to locations such as county or coastal towns to sell class A drugs. Gangs typically use children, young people and vulnerable adults to deliver drugs to customers and this often involves the child being subjected to deception, intimidation, violence, financial exploitation and grooming.

8.2 County lines relates to a group (not necessarily affiliated as a gang) establishing a network between an urban hub and county location, into which drugs (primarily heroin and crack cocaine) are supplied.

8.3 A branded mobile phone line is established in “the market,” to which orders are placed by introduced customers, with the phone line commonly (but not exclusively) being controlled by a third party, away from “the market”.

8.4 The gang exploits young or vulnerable people to achieve the storage and/or supply of drugs, movement of cash proceeds and to secure the use of dwellings (commonly referred to as ‘cuckooing’).

8.5 The gang, or individuals exploited by them, regularly travel between the urban hub and the county market, to replenish stock and deliver cash. The gang is inclined to use violence or threats and weapons, including knives, corrosives and firearms.

8.6 County Lines is a form of exploitation. [Research](#) shows that some young people are more vulnerable than others to potential County Lines activity. Team members must ensure that they remain vigilant to potential risk factors in order to prevent risk from increasing and that they consider young people’s vulnerabilities and risk factors as well as risk factors of the area.

Possible risk factors for young people include:

- substance misuse issues
- living in ‘cuckooed’ premises.
- being looked after or previously looked after
- having mental health difficulties.
- going missing from their home/care.

- Being withdrawn, not engaging in school/college and having limited trusted adults around them. They can be targeted due to their ability to operate without drawing attention to themselves.

Other key risk factors of areas are towns with high unemployment, high levels of social housing and deprivation; which are close to a prison or have a probation centre nearby; have a drug treatment centre, children's homes and/or a train station or easy vehicle access.

Further guidance and advice can be found at:

[Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines guidance](#)
[Preventing Child Sexual Exploitation | The Children's Society](#)

9.0 SERIOUS VIOLENCE

9.1 All team members should be aware of the indicators, which may signal students are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include:

- increased unexplainable and/or persistent absence from school or college
- a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups,
- a significant decline in performance,
- signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing,
- signs of assault or unexplained injuries.
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions could indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of exploitation.

9.2 The [Serious Violence Strategy \(Home Office, 2018\)](#) identified that risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence, include:

- being male (although girls can be involved):
- having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school
- having experienced child maltreatment
- having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery.

Further advice is provided in Home Office Guidance: [Preventing youth violence and gang involvement](#)

10.0 USE OF LANGUAGE

It is very important for team members to be mindful of the language they use and the impact it can have on a student that has suffered/is suffering exploitation. Team members must ensure they use language that is not 'victim-blaming' or non-judgmental and in no way puts any blame on the young person for the abuse.

For further information please see:

[Language Matters - Barnardo's](#)

[Making words matter - A practice knowledge briefing](#)

[Challenging victim blaming language and behaviours - UKCIS](#)

11.0 WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS THAT A STUDENT IS BEING EXPLOITED

- 11.1** If there are immediate concerns for the student's safety, team members must inform the DSL straight away. The police must be notified if there are concerns for a child or young person's immediate safety or wellbeing because of exploitation.

Team members must share any concerns that they have with the DSL, who will then support them to refer their concerns to the local authority and the placing authority within one working day. The DSL must inform the Chair of Governors, the Regional Director/Operational Director and the Director of Safeguarding/Safeguarding Adviser by emailing safeguarding@ofgl.co.uk

- 11.2** The Headteacher/ Principal must ensure that a preventative approach is taken and that all students are educated around the risks associated with grooming, online safety, safe/healthy relationships, sex including what consent means, and child sexual exploitation.
- 11.3** Mobile phones and internet use can be a key risk factor relating to child exploitation. If there are known risks relating to child exploitation, wherever possible team members must supervise internet use. The School's **Mobile and Smart Technology Policy** sets out the procedures for the use of mobile phones in school.
- 11.4** Any concerns relating to online grooming must be immediately documented on the appropriate electronic recording system and reported to the DSL. Team members must be aware of the **Web Filtering & Monitoring Policy**.
- 11.5** Where risks or activities relating to possible exploitation are identified, team members must escalate this to the attention of the DSL immediately. The local authority/ placing authority must be notified **within one working day** unless there are immediate safeguarding concerns. It is recommended as best practice that all steps are taken to convene a multi-agency professional meeting to review any potential child exploitation risks and agree actions to be taken to safeguard the student/s.
- 11.6** Child exploitation risks must be reviewed within governance meetings and within Senior Leadership Team meetings. The purpose of this is to ensure that information is being shared and that proactive measures are being taken to safeguard the young person/young people.
- 11.7** DSLs and Senior Leaders should analyse emerging themes, trends, and patterns relating to exploitation and use this information to inform safeguarding practice, curriculum content, supervision levels, and risk assessments.
- 11.8** The Home Office [Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit](#) outlines useful tools that the police and other safeguarding professionals can use to disrupt the sexual and criminal exploitation of young people and emphasises the importance of information sharing and multi-agency working.

Please also see [Multi-agency practice principles - child exploitation and extra-familial harm](#)

The [NWG Network](#) provides Information to help educate and prevent child exploitation and abuse across the UK. The Group has membership of the network for all team members which can be accessed through the chat/help facility on the [Welcome to the NFG Network](#) page, or by emailing network@nwgnetwork.org

12.0 WHAT TO DO IF A STUDENT DISCLOSES THEY HAVE BEEN EXPLOITED

- 12.1** If a student discloses that they are being exploited, it is likely that this will be very traumatic for them. Team members must be aware of the potential impact that this could have on the student's mental health and emotional wellbeing. Safety measures must be put in to support them.
- 12.2** Responses to exploitation concerns will be trauma-informed, child-centred and strengths-based. Team members will seek to understand the impact of trauma on behaviour, engagement and emotional wellbeing and avoid responses that could unintentionally blame or re-traumatise the student.
- 12.3** Team members must listen, ask open questions, write as much detail down as possible, and never promise to keep things secret. It is important that team members are open and honest with the student and show them unconditional positive regard. It is likely that they will need reassurance that they are safe and that they are not to blame. **Team members must document all information on the electronic recording system** (e.g. Sleuth).
- 12.4** After a student has disclosed, team members **must immediately** report the information to the DSL who will then support the team member to report the information to the police, local authority and placing authority immediately.
- 12.5** If a student has been sexually exploited by someone who they perceive as being their boyfriend or girlfriend, they may find it very traumatic to see this relationship as being exploitative and that the boyfriend or girlfriend did not love them as they perceived. It may take time for young people to understand and recognise that they have been exploited therefore team members must be patient and support the young person to get to this stage at their own pace.
- 12.6** DSLs must ensure that team members know and understand the Local Safeguarding Partnership's procedures for safeguarding young people against exploitation.
- 12.7** Students who have been exploited will need additional support to help maintain their education. Please contact the in-house Clinical Team for further support.
- 12.8** Any concerns about team members must be immediately reported to the DSL or deputy. If neither is available, the team member must report the information to the Headteacher/Principal or the Regional Director/Operational Director, as appropriate. Please see the setting's **Safeguarding Policy** for further information

about reporting concerns.

13.0 LOCAL PROCEDURES

The local procedures are:

Any concerns about a child or young person should be reported immediately (without delay) to a DSL (see below & see safeguarding flowchart displayed in school). Any concern raised must also be followed up in writing by the original reporter.

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead:** Joe Allen
- **Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead:** Claire Sillett and Paul Mackay
- **Headteacher:** Michelle Jordan

The DSL will then implement the following local procedures following the gathering of key information.

[Report a concern about a child or young person | Rutland County Council](#)

Report a concern

For advice, support or to report a concern, contact the Children's Social Care Team - Rutland County Council - 01572 758 407 or out of hours 0116 305 0005

LADO - 01572 758 454

Police

For non-emergencies, contact the police by calling 101.

If you're concerned that a child is in immediate danger, call 999 straight away and ask to speak to the police.

Support and advice for young people

Say Something is a free and anonymous service that provides 24/7 support and is a means to report child sexual exploitation. The service is run by the charity Missing People and can be contacted by calling or texting 116 000.

You can also contact ChildLine by calling: 0800 11 11

Rutland child safeguarding & exploitation contacts

Service	Contact	When to use
Police – emergency	999	Immediate danger, child at immediate risk, crime in progress
Leicestershire Police – non-emergency	101	Police safeguarding/child protection concerns where there is no immediate emergency
Police – online reporting	Leicestershire Police online child-abuse reporting	Child abuse, exploitation or trafficking concerns where 999 is not required
Rutland Children's Duty Team	01572 758 407	Safeguarding referral to Children's Social Care during office hours
Children's Social Care email	ChildrensReferrals@rutland.gov.uk	Written safeguarding referral/information
Emergency Children's Social Care out of hours	0116 305 0005	Urgent children's safeguarding concerns outside normal office hours
National Referral Mechanism (NRM)	Via the designated First Responder	Suspected child trafficking/modern slavery
Independent Child Trafficking Guardian (ICTG)	Via ICTG referral route where applicable	Child potentially affected by trafficking
Rutland LADO	Via Rutland Children's Services	Allegation/concern that an adult working with children may have harmed or pose a risk to a child

13.1 Local Exploitation Risks

The DSL will summarise any known exploitation risks relevant to the school's/college's location and student cohort, including:

- Child sexual exploitation concerns within the local area
- Child criminal exploitation concerns
- County Lines activity
- Serious youth violence
- Missing children trends
- Online exploitation concerns
- Known community risks identified by safeguarding partners

Sources may include:

- Safeguarding Partnership publications
- Police briefings

- Local authority safeguarding updates
- School safeguarding data
- Multi-agency meetings

Please see below a local safeguarding-risk summary for Oakham Shires School focusing on the above sources and points for consideration.

Local Safeguarding Risk Summary for Oakham Shires School

This summary contains evidence published by Rutland County Council, the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership (LRSCP), Leicestershire Police and the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Violence Reduction Network/OPCC. The school is located in a predominantly rural part of Rutland, so risks should be understood as county-wide and cross-boundary risks rather than assuming that incidents are occurring directly around the school.

Executive assessment

Rutland has a relatively low overall crime and deprivation profile, but child exploitation remains a recognised safeguarding priority. The local safeguarding partnership specifically maintains work on child exploitation, serious youth violence and harm outside the home, and its 2024–25 audit identified links between school exclusion, exploitation, neurodiversity, risk assessment/screening and transitional safeguarding.

For a school such as Oakham Shires, the key issue is therefore not evidence of a high level of serious crime immediately around the school, but the possibility that vulnerable students may be exposed to county-wide, urban-to-rural or online exploitation networks, including through contacts outside Rutland.

Risk area	Local assessment	What this means for the school
Child sexual exploitation (CSE)	Recognised safeguarding concern	Monitor grooming, unhealthy relationships, unexplained gifts/money, sexualised behaviour, online contacts, substance use and unexplained absences.
Child criminal exploitation (CCE)	Recognised and actively addressed by local partners	Particular attention to vulnerable students, exclusion/non-attendance, offending, substance misuse, older peers and sudden changes in behaviour.
County Lines	Known regional risk extending into Rutland/rural areas	Children can be recruited to transport/store drugs or money between urban and rural locations; missing episodes are an important warning sign.

Risk area	Local assessment	What this means for the school
Serious youth violence	Recognised LLR strategic priority, with improving overall trends	Knife/weapon carrying, peer conflict, robbery, drugs and exploitation should be considered together rather than as isolated behaviours.
Missing children	Important exploitation indicator	Repeated missing-from-home/education episodes should trigger consideration of CSE/CCE and county-lines exploitation, not simply attendance/behaviour management.
Online exploitation	Significant and explicitly identified by LRSCP	Online grooming, sexual exploitation, social-media influence, harmful content and recruitment into criminal activity are relevant even where the physical community is low-risk.
Wider community risks	Contextual safeguarding remains important	Domestic abuse, substance misuse, school exclusion, peer relationships, vulnerability and social isolation can increase exploitation risk.

Child sexual exploitation

CSE is explicitly part of the local safeguarding framework. Rutland's community safety strategy identifies exploitation, county lines and CSE among the areas requiring partnership work to identify emerging regional threats.

The current LRSCP position is particularly important. Its 2024–25 report states that the partnership's Harm Outside the Home priority continues into 2025–27 and specifically identifies persistent concerns around group-based CSE and grooming. Local CSE and online-safety procedures were updated in April 2025.

For the school, relevant indicators include:

- older or unknown individuals taking an unusual interest in a pupil;
- unexplained gifts, money, phones or clothing;
- secretive relationships, particularly with significantly older people;
- unexplained sexualised behaviour or knowledge;
- online sexual contacts or sexual bullying;
- substance misuse;
- repeated absence or going missing;
- a sudden deterioration in attendance, presentation or relationships.

Leicestershire Police specifically lists going missing, school absenteeism, drugs/alcohol, unexplained gifts, online sexual bullying and vulnerability on social networking sites among CSE warning signs.

Child Criminal Exploitation

CCE is a significant local safeguarding theme. The LRSCP's multi-agency Serious Youth Violence and Child Exploitation audit identified specific learning around:

- the relationship between **school exclusion and exploitation**;
- additional support needed for **neurodiverse children**;
- risk assessment and screening;
- transitional safeguarding.

This is particularly relevant to a specialist school because vulnerability associated with additional learning needs can potentially be exploited by others. This should not be interpreted as saying that SEND students are inherently at risk; rather, local partners have identified **neurodiversity and learning needs as factors requiring consideration when assessing exploitation vulnerability**.

Local youth-justice services also identify high-risk peer associations, previous victimisation, bullying, substance misuse, learning needs/EHCPs, family offending and antisocial behaviour among circumstances that can increase the need for targeted intervention.

A key safeguarding principle is therefore to avoid treating behaviours such as offending, carrying drugs, aggression or repeated absence solely as **pupil behaviour problems** where exploitation may be behind them.

County Lines

County Lines is a recognised regional risk affecting **smaller towns and rural communities**, including Rutland. Leicestershire Police describes local children aged **7–17** as being used by criminals and explains that organised criminal groups exploit children to move and store drugs and money, sometimes using coercion, intimidation, violence, sexual violence and weapons.

The rural nature of Rutland should not be regarded as protective against this form of exploitation. Indeed, the county-lines model specifically involves movement of drugs from urban areas into suburban and rural locations.

Potential school-level indicators include:

- unexplained periods away from home;
- repeated missing episodes;
- travelling to Leicester or other towns without an obvious reason;
- unexplained cash, phones, clothing or other possessions;
- receiving calls/messages from unknown or older individuals;
- sudden association with older peers;
- drug involvement;
- unexplained injuries;
- carrying knives or other weapons;



- deterioration in attendance;
- becoming unusually secretive or anxious.

Importantly, the child may present as an offender while actually being a victim of criminal exploitation. National safeguarding guidance requires a safeguarding response where a child may be at risk of county-lines exploitation.

Serious Youth Violence

Serious youth violence is being considered jointly with child exploitation by local safeguarding partners. The LRSCP has an **Adolescence Safety and Diversion Board** overseeing work concerning child exploitation and violence affecting young people, alongside a **Child Criminal Exploitation and Serious Violence Delivery Group**.

The local Serious Violence Prevention Strategy covers Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, and current partnership work identifies vulnerabilities including:

- school exclusion;
- substance misuse;
- exposure to abuse or neglect;
- instability;
- learning/development challenges.

There is also positive evidence that serious violence is reducing. Leicestershire Police reported in April 2026 a 15.4% reduction in serious violence in hotspot areas and 8.6% outside hotspots, alongside more missing children being located through proactive policing.

This means the appropriate assessment is not that Rutland is experiencing a high level of youth violence, but that violence remains a recognised safeguarding/exploitation risk and is actively monitored.

Missing children trends

Missing behaviour is a well-established local exploitation indicator. Rutland's safeguarding threshold guidance identifies persistent missing from home, emerging patterns of missing from home/education and offending/antisocial behaviour associated with missing episodes as indicators requiring consideration.

Rutland also explicitly states that children missing education can be at significant risk of harm, exploitation or radicalisation.

Leicestershire Police uses the Philomena Protocol for children at risk of going missing, designed to capture risk factors, people/places associated with the child and information that can help locate them quickly. For Stretton Shires, the important distinction is therefore between:



- one-off absence = attendance issue to understand;
- repeated unexplained absence/missing = potential safeguarding/exploitation indicator requiring a wider assessment.

Online Exploitation

Online harm is an explicit current safeguarding priority for the LRSCP.

During 2024–25, the partnership held a safeguarding event specifically on the internet, including the impact of social media on children. Its CSE and Online Safety procedures were subsequently updated. The partnership states that its 2025–27 Harm Outside the Home priority includes continuing assurance around online harm and abuse.

Potential online risks include:

- sexual grooming and coercion;
- production/sharing of sexual images;
- sextortion;
- online sexual bullying;
- contact with unknown adults;
- recruitment into drug dealing or other criminal activity;
- gaming/social-media contacts with exploitative individuals;
- harmful peer-group influence;
- exposure to violent or extremist material;
- online relationships that subsequently result in physical meetings.

The local partnership specifically noted that professionals needed greater understanding of how many very young children are accessing online platforms, which is particularly relevant to specialist education settings.

Online exploitation should therefore be treated as capable of occurring **irrespective of where a child lives or attends school**.

13.2 Local Contextual Safeguarding Assessment (Wider Community/contextual safeguarding risks in Rutland).

Several wider factors are relevant to the local safeguarding picture.

Domestic abuse and family vulnerability

Domestic abuse features prominently in Rutland children's social-care referrals. In 2024–25, Rutland recorded 1,098 contacts and 381 referrals, with increasing complexity of need; domestic abuse was reported as a significant feature of referrals.

Substance misuse

Substance misuse is repeatedly identified locally as a factor associated with vulnerability to offending, violence and exploitation.

School exclusion/non-attendance

This is particularly important. Local partners' exploitation audit specifically identified a link between school exclusion and exploitation.

Peer networks

High-risk peer association is specifically recognised by local youth-justice services.

Rural isolation and cross-boundary movement

Rutland's relatively low crime/deprivation profile should not obscure the fact that exploitation networks operate across Leicester, Leicestershire, Rutland and neighbouring counties. The LRSCP itself operates across local-authority boundaries, and national safeguarding research emphasises the importance of cross-boundary working for county-lines exploitation.

Identified local contexts that may increase vulnerability.

Local Locations:

- Parks
- Retail areas
- Transport hubs
- Fast-food outlets
- Hotels
- Community venues

Online Contexts:

- Social media trends
- Gaming platforms
- Messaging applications
- Sextortion trends

Peer Contexts:

- Friendship groups of concern
- Community peer networks
- Neighbouring schools and colleges

Adult Contexts:

- Known community concerns
- Ongoing safeguarding themes identified through referrals

Overall risk judgement for Oakham Shires School

Rutland presents a comparatively low-crime and predominantly rural community context, but child exploitation remains a recognised safeguarding risk. Local safeguarding partners identify child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, county lines, serious youth violence and harm outside the home as ongoing areas requiring multi-agency oversight. The principal concern for Oakham Shires is therefore not evidence of high levels of serious violence immediately surrounding the school, but the potential for vulnerable children to be targeted through peer networks, online platforms, movement between urban and rural areas, county-lines activity and exploitative relationships. Repeated absence/missing episodes, school exclusion or disengagement, unexplained possessions, substance misuse, older peer associations, changes in behaviour and online contacts should be considered collectively as potential indicators of exploitation.

13.3 School Level Indicators

The DSL will review safeguarding data annually and identify:

- Number of exploitation concerns in previous year
- Missing episode patterns
- Attendance trends
- Behaviour trends
- Use of mobile devices in safeguarding incidents
- Online safety incidents
- Peer-on-peer abuse trends

The purpose is to identify any emerging exploitation themes.

13.4 Prevention and Curriculum

Through the school's extensive PSHE & RSE Curriculum students are educated about the following;

- Healthy relationships
- Consent
- Grooming
- Online exploitation
- County lines
- Serious violence
- Missing episodes
- Trusted adults

Leaders record the following to demonstrate how the school is actively supporting the learning of students:

- PSHE provision
- Assemblies
- Specialist interventions
- External agencies used

13.5 Multi-Agency Arrangements

The DSL will be responsible for:

- Raising exploitation concerns are escalated to local multi-agencies
- Attending strategy discussions convened with local multi-agencies
- Requesting professional meetings with local multi-agencies to address ongoing concerns
- The sharing and dissemination of contextual safeguarding concerns with professionals
- Active discussion and input to support multi-agency disruption activity and considerations

13.6 Annual DSL Reflection

DSLs will reflect on:

- What exploitation concerns have emerged this year?
- What themes or patterns have been identified?
- What changes are required to improve prevention, identification or response next year?



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