



Child Sexual Abuse Strategy

2026 - 2028

WOLVERHAMPTON SAFEGUARDING TOGETHER PARTNERSHIP

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Shared Vision & Strategic Context	4
3.	Governance	5
4.	Local and Regional Context.....	5
5.	Strategic Aims and Intended Outcomes	9
6.	Prevention and Disruption of Child Sexual Abuse	10
7.	Identification of Child Sexual Abuse	11
8.	Partnership Supportive Response to Child Sexual Abuse	11
9.	Workforce Development	13
10.	Monitoring and Evaluation.....	13
	Appendix 1: Types of Child Sexual Abuse	14

1. Introduction

Statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 (WT2026)¹ requires Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements² to set out how partners will work together to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

However, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel “**I wanted them all to notice**”: **Protecting Children and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse in the Family Environment**³ completed by the Centre of Expertise in Child Sexual Abuse found that there are significant and long-standing issues in the response to child sexual abuse. It makes several recommendations for safeguarding partners including the recommendation for Partnerships to consider the findings of the national review and to develop a local response including a local action plan.

The development of the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together Partnership (WST) Child Sexual Abuse Strategy is part of our local response.

Child Sexual abuse - Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts, such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place in family settings, in institutional settings, online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Child sexual abuse material available online may have been generated in a family environment. Online abuse can also take the form of cyber grooming or self-generated sexual content under coercion. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. A child of any age or gender can be a victim of sexual abuse.

An estimated 500,000 children are abused in England and Wales every year. ⁴For many people, including practitioners it is not an easy subject to talk about, but it is essential that we do. Child sexual abuse can have a devastating impact on the lives of individuals and may have far reaching consequences for their families and our communities. It is not limited to any gender, geographic area or social background but it is clear from the increased awareness arising from a number of high-profile media cases that it remains prevalent throughout the UK.

This strategy advocates that the best way to tackle the sexual abuse of children is through effective co-ordinated agency and partnership working to a clear and coherent plan. The aim of doing everything possible to prevent child sexual abuse whilst ensuring there is a

¹ [Working together to safeguard children 2026: a guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children](#)

² [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#)

³ [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel - I wanted them all to notice](#)

⁴ [Scale & nature of abuse | CSA Centre](#)

swift, proportionate response with practical and tailored support for the children and young people impacted.

We have devised our strategy to be practicable, resource led and user friendly in order to maximise impact and effectiveness, it is informed by local and national learning and is relevant to all practitioners working with children and their families across the city, whether from statutory services or the Community and Voluntary Sector.

2. Shared Vision & Strategic Context

Our vision and purpose recognise that protecting and safeguarding children and young people is about the development of a culture that promotes good practice and continuous improvement, raises public and practitioner awareness that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, responds effectively and swiftly when sexual abuse has been alleged or occurs, seeks to learn when things have gone wrong, is sensitive to the issues of cultural diversity and equality and puts the children and young people at the centre of planning to ensure they are supported and safe in their families and communities.

Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together Partnership includes Child Sexual Abuse as one of its priorities in its Strategic Plan⁵.

Our vision is that we must identify the extent of sexual harm and violence towards children, and we must tackle it across all agencies to protect children. We must be conscious of the risks to children, paying particular attention to work with children who go missing from care, home or education; to protect children and young people from sexual harm and violence.

This strategy sets out the commitment and approach of WST to ensure the effectiveness of the arrangements to safeguard children from sexual abuse. We advocate that the best way to tackle the sexual abuse of children is through effective co-ordinated multi-agency links at every level, working to a clear and coherent plan, doing everything possible to recognise and prevent child sexual abuse, ensuring there is a rapid and proportionate response, with practical and tailored support available for children and young people.

The WST strategic approach to child sexual abuse aligns with statutory guidance including the Children Act 1989⁶, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026,⁷ and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025⁸, and local guidance including our Neglect Strategy 2025 - 2027⁹. This strategy is also informed by data insights from [the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse](#).

⁵ [WST Strategic Plan 2024 - 2027](#)

⁶ [The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations](#)

⁷ [Working together to safeguard children 2026: a guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children](#)

⁸ [Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK](#)

⁹ [Neglect Strategy V1 2025 - 2027 FINAL.pdf](#)

3. Governance

Governance will be provided through the Child Sexual Abuse Priority group with oversight from the Scrutiny and Assurance Co-Ordination Group to ensure multi-agency ownership of the strategy and subsequent action plan; ensuring all partners are able to contribute to developments and to hold each other to account.

This strategy is a 2-year strategy from June 2026 but will be reviewed and refreshed annually.

4. Local and Regional Context

Forms of Child Sexual Abuse

The sexual abuse of children and young people takes many forms and those relevant to this strategy are outlined below:

- Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Peer-on-Peer Abuse
- Harmful Sexual Behaviours
- Online Sexual Abuse

Risk factors for Child Sexual Abuse

Any child can be affected by sexual abuse. But they may be more at risk if they have:

- a history of previous sexual abuse
- a disability
- a disrupted home life
- experienced other forms of abuse (e.g. neglect, physical, emotional, domestic)

Young or disabled children may not be able to tell someone what's happening or may not understand that they're being abused.

Isolation: Some sexual abusers target children who are neglected by their parents, or children who don't have many friends.

Gender: Both boys and girls can be sexually abused. Research suggests that girls are at a greater risk of being sexually abused by a family member. Boys are at a higher risk of being abused by a stranger. [Sexual abuse | NSPCC](#)

Age: NSPCC research found that teenage girls aged between 15 and 17 years reported the highest rates of sexual abuse.

Online: Social media, chat rooms and web forums are places where children could be groomed, persuaded to meet an abuser in person or persuaded to send pictures of themselves or perform sexual acts in front of webcams.

The Age of Consent

The age of consent for sex in England and Wales is 16. The age of consent is the same regardless of the sexual orientation of a person and whether sexual activity is between people of the same or different gender.

It is an offence for anyone to have any sexual activity with a person under the age of 16. However, Home Office guidance is clear that there is no intention to prosecute [Fraser - competent](#) teenagers under the age of 16 where both mutually agree and where they are of a similar age.

Sexual activity between an adult (18 or older) and someone under 18 is illegal. If the adult is in a position of trust, it constitutes abuse of that position.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003¹⁰ provides specific legal protection for children aged 12 and under who cannot legally give their consent to any form of sexual activity. There is a maximum sentence of life imprisonment for rape, assault by penetration, and causing or inciting a child to engage in sexual activity.

Non-abusive underage sexual activity, risky sexual behaviour, and teenage pregnancies may be an indicator that a child has additional needs and vulnerabilities that require a co-ordinated response to stop issues escalating. For more information, please see the [WST Threshold Document](#).

Local and National Data on Child Sexual Abuse

Current local and national data on child sexual abuse can be found at Centre of Expertise on [Child Sexual Abuse Data Insight Hub](#).

Child sexual abuse: Data Insights Hub
csacentre.org.uk

About child sexual abuse data

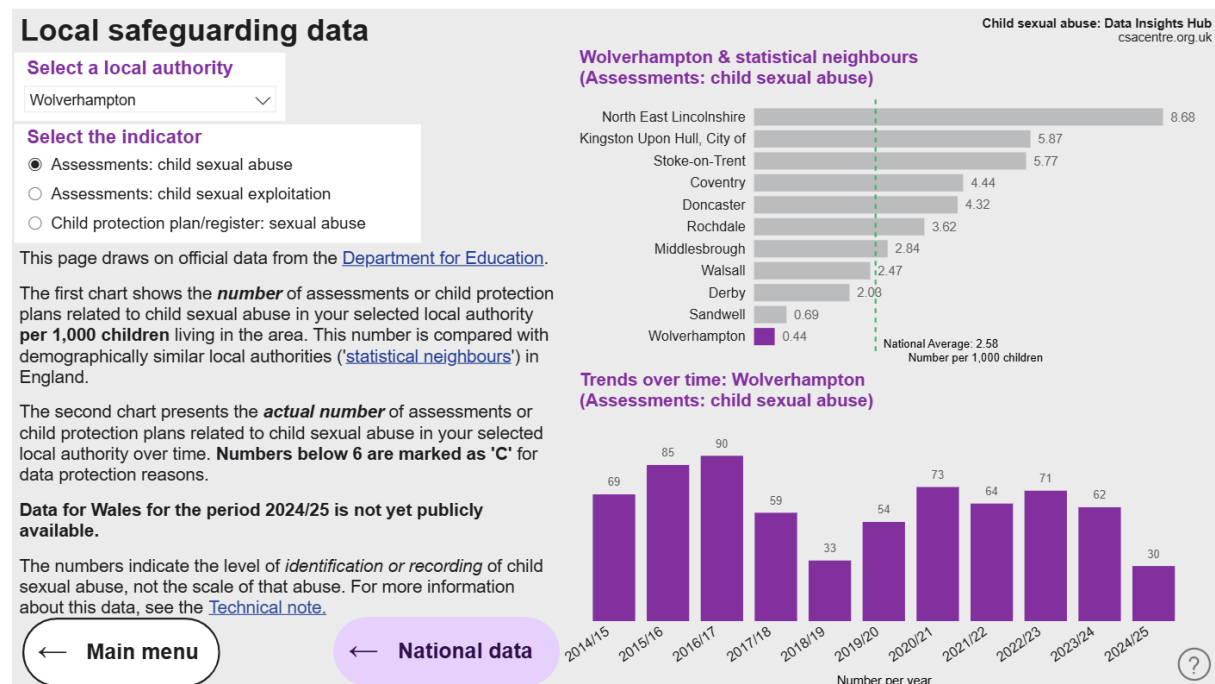
What we see in official data is just the tip of the iceberg



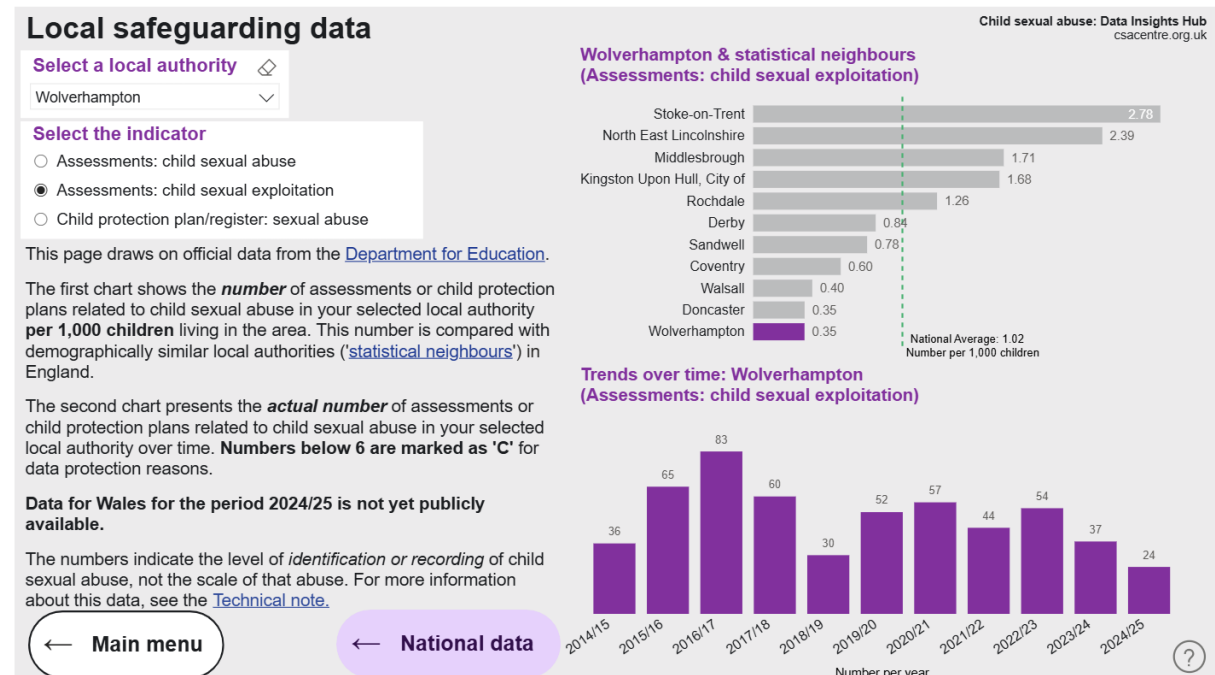
Child sexual abuse is one of the most hidden forms of child abuse. Every year **far more children are sexually abused than agencies identify**. In 2023/24 alone, an estimated 500,000 children were sexually abused in England and Wales. **Only a fraction of this abuse was identified and recorded** by police forces or local authorities.

¹⁰ [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#)

Assessments: Child Sexual Abuse



Assessments: Child Sexual Exploitation



Child Protection Plan / Register: Sexual Abuse

Local safeguarding data

Select a local authority

Wolverhampton

Select the indicator

- ☐ Assessments: child sexual abuse
☐ Assessments: child sexual exploitation
☒ Child protection plan/register: sexual abuse

This page draws on official data from the [Department for Education](#).

The first chart shows the **number** of assessments or child protection plans related to child sexual abuse in your selected local authority **per 1,000 children** living in the area. This number is compared with demographically similar local authorities ('*statistical neighbours*') in England.

The second chart presents the **actual number** of assessments or child protection plans related to child sexual abuse in your selected local authority over time. **Numbers below 6 are marked as 'C'** for data protection reasons.

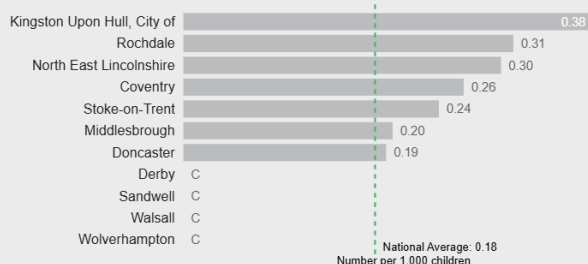
Data for Wales for the period 2024/25 is not yet publicly available.

The numbers indicate the level of *identification or recording* of child sexual abuse, not the scale of that abuse. For more information about this data, see the [Technical note](#).

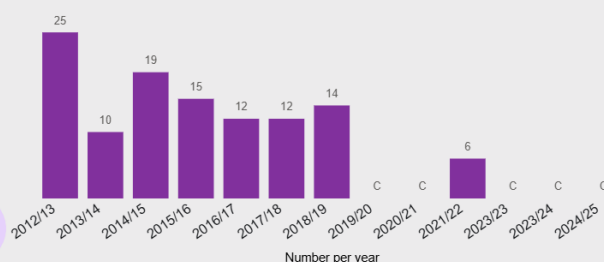
← Main menu

← National data

Wolverhampton & statistical neighbours (Child protection plan/register: sexual abuse)



Trends over time: Wolverhampton (Child protection plan/register: sexual abuse)



Child Sexual Abuse is significantly under-reported both locally and nationally. Research and national reviews consistently show that the number of children identified through statutory systems represents only a small proportion of those affected. Recorded data should therefore be interpreted as reflecting levels of identification and recording, rather than the scale of abuse itself.

Child Sexual Abuse Data 2024 - 2025 in Wolverhampton

Factors identified at the end of assessment	Definition	Number of Assessments Completed
11a: Child Sexual Exploitation	The child sexual exploitation (CSE) factor should be recorded where a child or young person under 18 is at risk of, is being, or has been, sexually exploited.	24
19b: Abuse or Neglect – Sexual Abuse*	The sexual abuse factor should be recorded where there are concerns that a child or young person is at risk of, is being, or has been subject to sexual harassment, sexual violence or sexual abuse and may have been forced or enticed to take part in sexual activities, including	13
19c – Abuse or Neglect – Sexual Abuse*		17

	online, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.	
--	---	--

*19b relates to child-on-child sexual abuse

*19c relates to adult-on-child sexual abuse

Initial category of abuse breakdown for children who became subject to a child protection plan within the year (31st March 2025)

Breakdown	Numbers
Neglect	156
Physical Abuse	7
Sexual Abuse	3
Emotional Abuse	63
Multiple	3

Initial category of abuse breakdown for children open on a child protection plan at the end of the year (31st March 2025)

Breakdown	Numbers
Neglect	146
Physical Abuse	3
Sexual Abuse	2
Emotional Abuse	59
Multiple	3

5. Strategic Aims and Intended Outcomes

WST has developed a multi-agency approach to increase effectiveness in tackling all forms of child sexual abuse. This strategy has been developed incorporating the recommendations from the Centre of Expertise in Child Sexual Abuse Guide [Developing your strategic response to child sexual abuse | CSA Centre](#).

Our strategy has the following elements: each element is underpinned by an overarching commitment to robust leadership and governance.

Strategic Aim	Intended Outcome
Raising Awareness: To ensure awareness is raised across multi-agency partners at all levels and the community.	Earlier identification to mitigate the impact of child sexual abuse on children and young people.
Learning & Development: Develop a workforce with appropriate knowledge, skills and confidence to identify and respond to child sexual abuse	Staff are recognising more children where there are concerns of child sexual abuse. Staff are more commonly acting on their concerns by having open communication when they have concerns about child sexual abuse. Staff routinely use resources to inform their practice when they have concerns of child sexual abuse.

Strategic Aim	Intended Outcome
Resource & Practice: Monitor multi-agency practice and identify any gaps in services to support managers, frontline practitioners and commissioners to provide high quality services to protect children. Promote available resources and pathways to support practitioners across the partnership including resources from the Centre of Expertise in Child Sexual Abuse.	Improved access to resources will support practitioners to have the confidence, knowledge and skills to appropriately discuss child sexual abuse with children and young people, other practitioners and family members. Improved early identification and recognition of child sexual abuse, supporting proactive multi-agency response.
Strengthen the multi- agency response to child sexual abuse	All staff are able to recognise the role they and other agencies/organisations play in supporting children and families. Staff are sharing appropriate information in a timely manner

6. Prevention and Disruption of Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is a criminal offence and following a series of high-profile cases widely reported in the media, it remains prevalent in the UK and for many children and young people the impact of this abuse can have serious long-term implications on every aspect of their life particularly mental and physical health and education that endures into adulthood.

Consistent findings from research highlight that the adverse consequences for the child often include acute feelings of betrayal, powerlessness, stigmatisation, guilt, trauma, sexualisation, physical and mental health problems, as well as difficulties forming and maintaining relationships. Abuse often has wider impacts and can damage the lives of families and carers and can lead to family break ups.

We believe that the child/young person must always be the focus of what we do as safeguarding partners. It is important that we not only listen to but also effectively engage with children and young people, whatever their developmental/cognitive stage, their families and carers and the wider community and use their experiences to understand the local needs.

Key Principles:

- Maintain a clear focus on the child whether they are a victim or an offender.

- Whole system leadership in raising awareness and tackling Child Sexual Abuse with all partner agencies taking responsibility for professional standards within their organisations.
- Employ an approach that acknowledges the frequent correlation with neglect, physical and domestic abuse.
- Clear lines of accountability and roles and responsibility in cases of where Child Sexual Abuse is suspected.
- Employ a shared, multi-agency approach to identification of and interventions for Child Sexual Abuse.
- Demonstrate commitment to equalities and diversity acknowledging that some children are at more risk due to their diverse needs.
- Be culturally conscious in this area of work.
- Be competent and confident in recognising and managing the complexity and tensions inherent within intra-familial Child Sexual Abuse, particularly where sibling on sibling Harmful Sexual Behaviour or abuse is occurring.
- Ensure that the complex nature of Child Sexual Abuse and the impact on the workforce is acknowledged and that there is practical and emotional support in place for practitioners.

7. Identification and Immediate Response to Child Sexual Abuse

If you are worried that a child / young person has been or is at risk of being sexually abused contact should be made with Police and MASH24, practitioners should seek guidance and support from their supervisor or agency lead for safeguarding.

If you are concerned about the immediate safety of a child / young person, seek urgent advice from the Police.

An eMARF should be submitted to MASH24 which articulates the concerns and provides information to support the referral being made.

Where the child / young person has significant injury and is in need of urgent medical attention they should be taken to the Accident & Emergency Department. The Emergency Department isn't a place of safety and will not be part of the physical assessment for possible sexual abuse, this is the remit of the SARC.

A multi-agency Strategy Discussion will determine, in consultation with the Children's Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) paediatrician or SARC clinician, the need and timing for a paediatric assessment.

8. Partnership Supportive Response to Child Sexual Abuse

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is a critical issue that requires a co-ordinated and comprehensive response from all safeguarding partners. Despite its prevalence, CSA remains under-identified, with significant gaps in prevention, identification, and response. A strategic, multi-agency approach is essential to address these gaps, ensuring timely and effective interventions that mitigate harm and promote recovery. To address this WST has developed a multi-agency Child Sexual Abuse Priority Group.

Rationale for a Strategic Response

- **Scale of the Issue:** CSA affects at least 10% of children before the age of 16, yet statutory agencies identify only a fraction of cases. A strategic response is needed to close this gap.
- **Fragmented Systems:** Current responses to CSA are often siloed, leading to missed opportunities for early intervention and support. A strategic approach ensures alignment and coherence across agencies.
- **Impact of CSA:** CSA has lifelong impacts on victims/survivors and their families. Effective prevention and timely support can mitigate these effects.
- **Statutory Requirements:** Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance mandates robust multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, emphasising the need for strategic planning and collaboration.

The Child Sexual Abuse Priority Group have agreed to focus on the following activities to improve the recognition and response to CSA within Wolverhampton. This activity will be monitored via the priority group with oversight from the Scrutiny and Assurance Co-Ordination Group.

Priority	Aim	Activity
Child Sexual Abuse How as agencies do we reduce the impact of all forms of child sexual abuse through improved prevention and better response?	• Establish a clear commitment across the partnership to prevent, identify, and respond to Child Sexual Abuse in all its forms. • Align strategic priorities with national guidance and local / regional needs. • Understand what preventative work is already in place to identify and address any gaps. • Use local/regional data to understand the scale, nature, and context of CSA. • Undertake a multi-agency training needs assessment. • Deliver evidence-based training and provide accessible resources to support practice. • Increase public awareness and understanding of an appropriate response to suspected child sexual abuse.	• Develop a local strategy. • Review available data to understand the scale and nature of CSA within the city. • Conduct necessary dip samples and audits and develop actions plans as appropriate • Provide multi-agency training to upskill the workforce in recognising and responding to Child Sexual Abuse. • Promote and utilise the WM Regional CSA Pathway and resources. • Identify what services are currently available to support those at risk of CSA in all its forms and identify any gaps.

Priority	Aim	Activity
	Launch the WM Regional CSA Response Pathway and resources.	

9. Workforce Development

WST currently offer a selection of multi-agency courses, the thematic courses detailed below are available in addition to the core safeguarding training – full details of the WST Training Programme is available from: [Training - Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together](#)

- Complex Neglect
- Early Support Plan Training
- Restorative Practice
- Professional Curiosity
- Trauma Informed Practice Foundations
- Girls and Gangs
- Exploitation Awareness
- Contextual Safeguarding

Resources to support practice

- [Free e-Learning Courses - Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together](#)
- [Threshold Document](#)
- [Neglect Strategy](#)
- [Events | CSA Centre](#)
- [eLearning | CSA Centre](#)
- [Sexual abuse | NSPCC](#)
- [National review into child sexual abuse within the family environment - GOV.UK](#)
- [Harmful Sexual Behaviour - Multi-Agency Practice Guidance](#)
- [Exploitation Screening Tool 0-25](#)
- [EMARF - City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

This strategy will be reviewed and refreshed on an annual basis by WST. The associated action plans will be reviewed annually via the Child Sexual Abuse Priority Group with overall oversight, Scrutiny and Assurance Co-Ordination Group. Concerns or issues will be escalated to Delegated Safeguarding Partners.

Appendix 1: Types of Child Sexual Abuse

Intra-familial Sexual Abuse

This is where a family member involves a child in (or exposes a child to) sexual behaviours or activities. The ‘family member’ need not be a blood relative but could be considered ‘part of the family’, such as a godparent or very close friend.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

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 using 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.

Both girls and boys are at risk of sexual exploitation, and it is seriously harmful to children both emotionally and physically. Children and young people often find it very hard to understand or accept that they are being abused through sexual exploitation, and this increases their risk of being exposed to violent assault and life-threatening events by those who abuse them.

Peer on Peer Abuse

Peer on peer abuse occurs when a young person is harmed by their peers who are the same or similar age, and everyone directly involved in peer-on-peer abuse is under the age of 18. ‘Peer-on-peer’ abuse can relate to various forms of abuse and can be harmful to the child perpetrator as well as the victim:

- **Domestic Abuse** – Young people who experience physical, emotional, sexual and/or financial abuse, and coercive control, in their intimate relationships, as well as family relationships.
- **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)** – Those under the age of 18 who are sexually abused in the context of exploitative connections, contexts, and situations, by a person of any age, including another young person. A key element of child sexual exploitation is the imbalance of power and control within the exploitative ‘relationship’. Many victims are not aware of the exploitation as they believe that they are loved by their boyfriend / girlfriend or are acting in accordance with their peers. Children are often recruited into exploitation by those of a similar age who they trust, and peer-on-peer exploitation often involves a sense of peer pressure and wanting to fit in. In peer-on-peer exploitation, schools and youth clubs are also locations where children and young people can be exploited.

- **Serious Youth Violence** – Any offence of most serious violence or weapon-enabled crime, where the victim is aged 19 or younger, e.g. wounding with intent, rape, murder, and grievous bodily harm.
- **Harmful Sexual Behaviour** – Young people displaying sexual behaviours that are outside of developmentally ‘normative’ parameters (see more below)

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

The term ‘harmful sexual behaviour’ has been used to describe sexual behaviour by under-18s that is “developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful to self or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult”. The CSA Centre’s [*Key Messages from Research on Children and Young People Who Display Harmful Sexual Behaviour*](#) summarises research findings relating to a range of behaviours – both online and offline – and those who engage in them.

Some aspects of online spaces cause many children to feel more at risk of harm and abuse. The opportunity for constant and instant response, anonymity, and an emphasis placed on ‘likes, fans and followers’ can all lead users – whether adults or children – to disinhibition.

Research suggests that there are a wide range of overlapping factors relating to vulnerability to sexual harm in online contexts. Having previously been abused – particularly where the abuse was sexual – increases a child’s vulnerability to sexual harm online, as does experience of other adversity such as family homelessness, parental unemployment, being removed from the family, parental incarceration, and parental substance use. There is also increased vulnerability among:

- girls and disabled children, who are more vulnerable than other children to sexual abuse generally
- children with special educational needs – this may be because their desire to maintain friendships, or difficulty in reflecting on the consequences of certain actions, makes it easier for others to take advantage of them
- children who are depressed or experiencing mental health difficulties, those who are out of school, and those from poorer households and/or marginalised groups
- lesbian, gay and bisexual young people, and those identifying as transgender or questioning/queer, who may go online to try to understand their sexual orientation or gender identity and connect with people like them
- lonely or socially isolated children, who may spend more time online as they seek friendship and acceptance.

Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is the umbrella term for those actions that are either:

- **Sexually abusive**, where there is an element of manipulation, force or coercion or where the subject of the behaviour is unable to give informed consent, or
- **Sexually problematic**, where there may not be an element of victimisation but where the behaviours may interfere with the development of the child demonstrating the

behaviour or which might provoke rejection, cause distress, or increase the risk of victimisation of the child.

Children's sexual behaviour should be thought about as being on a continuum, ranging from healthy, through problematic, to abusive. Defining what behaviours fit where on the continuum can be a difficult task and should be thought about within the context of the behaviour itself and the developmental situation of the child. A particular behaviour in one circumstance could be harmful whilst in another it may not. A number of checklists are available to assist in considering children and young peoples' sexual behaviour, including the [Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool](#).

Sexual Harassment

When referring to sexual harassment we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school or college. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include:

- sexual comments, such as telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names.
- sexual "jokes" or taunting.
- physical behaviour, such as deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes.
- displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature
- upskirting (this is a criminal offence¹⁴⁰)
- online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.

Online Sexual Abuse / Technology Assisted Child Sexual Abuse

The terms 'online child sexual abuse' and 'technology-assisted child sexual abuse' are widely used in relation to the production, viewing and/or sharing of sexual imagery (both still photos and videos) of children. However, digital technology can feature in almost all types of child sexual abuse – examples include having sexual conversations with children; ordering someone to sexually abuse a child in front of a webcam; communicating with a child with the intention of sexually abusing them in person later; and inciting a child to pose naked or perform sexual acts via video or live webcam.

Child sexual abuse involving technology may incorporate both online and 'in-person' aspects, with a fluidity between them; for example, in-person abuse of a child may be filmed, and then shown to the child online in order to blackmail or coerce them into further abuse.

The impacts of child sexual abuse in online contexts vary widely and can be severe and lifelong. It can lead to feelings of guilt, shame and self-blame, with children feeling that they participated in some way in the abuse. It also makes victims vulnerable to further sexual abuse, for example when images are used to blackmail them.

When images of a child have been shared, there is the potential for the child to be revictimised repeatedly, every time an image is watched, sent or received. This impact can persist into adulthood, with victims/survivors reporting that they worry constantly about being recognised by a person who has viewed the material, and some have been recognised in this way. The ongoing availability of the material means that achieving 'closure' can be impossible.