



West Sussex A County against Exploitation Strategy 2019-2024

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1. Summary

Whilst the various forms of exploitation detailed in this document are different, they also have many commonalities, so rather than separating out work related to individual types e.g. modern slavery, CSE or criminal and drug exploitation, this document brings together all forms of exploitation under one high level umbrella.

Bringing different forms of exploitation together in this way not only reflects the commonality between different forms of abuse but also better reflects the reality that many vulnerable people will not just experience one form of exploitation, but more than one - often simultaneously.

The aim of this document is also to demonstrate how we continue to move away from thematic or siloed working practices by adopting a partnership approach to deal with violence and exploitation in its entirety and achieve systemic change at community level.

This document is not, however, a substitute or replacement for existing thematic strategies and procedures already in place across West Sussex and its content should be considered in conjunction with these.

2. Our Vision

In West Sussex, our vision is based on the belief that everyone has the right to live free from exploitation.

The purpose of this document is to formally set out our ambitions for achieving this.

Success in realising this vision can only be achieved through the collective and collaborative endeavours of communities, organisations, businesses and other stakeholders across West Sussex; working with common purpose to take a stand against all forms of exploitation.

Activity to prevent, disrupt and tackle exploitation is being delivered through the County's partnership alliance of multi-agency boards which collectively represents organisations across West Sussex. These boards - the [Safer West Sussex Partnership](#), [West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) and the [West Sussex Safeguarding Adult Board](#) share a commitment to work in partnership to keep our county safe and protected from exploitation.

By working together, we aim to:

- Work with communities and our partners to **raise awareness** of the warning signs of exploitation.
- **Empower** the whole community to adopt a proactive, zero tolerance response to exploitation.



- **Assist** those who have been abused or are at risk of abuse – as well as their family members, friends, and the wider community.
- **Protect and support** those who have experienced exploitation as they **recover**.
- Ensure our response to perpetrators of exploitation is **restorative** and proportionate whilst balancing the need for **rehabilitation and recovery**; especially where perpetrators may have themselves been groomed and exploited.
- **Improve** how professionals, organisations, and systems respond to the needs of exploited individuals.
- Ensure we **recognise and understand** new ways and methods of exploitation against our communities.
- Develop services that can respond and adapt to **meet unmet needs**.

We have set ourselves challenging ambitions that can only be achieved through a continual focus on the needs and lived experiences of people in our communities.

3. Defining Exploitation

Exploitation can largely be defined as the mistreatment of people through the use of manipulation, coercion or force. Those who are exploited often do not recognise their abuse and may believe they have consented or been a willing participant in the exploitative behaviour. People may experience exploitation either as a result of being groomed or radicalised or through a lack of (informed) choice.

The common feature across all forms of exploitation is that it *always* involves an imbalance of power between people, with those exploited often treated and traded as little more than commodities.

Whilst some people are inherently more vulnerable to exploitation, vulnerability can also be a temporary state, brought on by a change in individual circumstances. Recognised risk indicators of vulnerability include adolescence, unemployment, divorce, debt, poverty, poor or declining health, cultural and social isolation. Any of these combined with a sense of desperation, a perceived lack of choice, a lack of support networks and a pressing need for shelter or food is enough to create vulnerability that is easily preyed upon.

This means any and every member of society could at some point in their lives become vulnerable to exploitation.

Exploitation in this context includes, but is not limited to:



Modern Slavery

This is an umbrella term for activities that involve one or more person keeping another/others in compelled service.

This includes:

- forced labour;
- forced criminality;
- sexual exploitation;
- forced marriage;
- domestic servitude.

Labour Exploitation or Slavery

This applies when someone is:

- Forced to work through mental or physical threat;
- Owned or controlled by an “employer”- usually through mental or physical abuse or the threat of abuse, often with perceptions of “debt bondage”;
- Dehumanised, treated like a commodity or bought and sold as “property”;
- Physically constrained or has restrictions placed on their freedom.

Human Trafficking

This is where individuals are placed or maintained in an exploitative situation for economic gain. It is seen in forms of modern-day slavery and relates to the recruitment, harbouring and transporting of people into situations of exploitation through the use of violence, deception or coercion. People can be trafficked internally (within and between buildings, towns and areas of the country) and externally (cross border/internationally). Labour exploitation refers to people who are forced to work against their will or under degrading or exploitative circumstances.

Sexual Exploitation

This is a form of sexual abuse whereby an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive someone 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. This can also include non-contact abuse through the use of technology, such as encouraging people to self-produce and share indecent sexual imagery, which is then used to manipulate the person to comply with further demands.



Criminal Exploitation

In criminal exploitation people are forced to commit a range of crimes, such as counterfeit DVD selling, bag snatching, ATM theft, pickpocketing, forced begging, forced sham marriage and cannabis cultivation. It is often linked to County Lines' activity.

County Lines

This term is used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal or drug line”. Lines are operated by [mobile] phone often from larger metropolitan areas sending dealers to sell in smaller towns, rural and coastal localities. Many gangs form a secure base in the homes of vulnerable people and force assistance by using violence or exploiting an addiction to drugs.

Cuckooing

This involves a drug dealer or other criminal befriending a vulnerable individual who lives on their own. Like a cuckoo, the offender moves in, takes over the property, and turns it into a drug den or other criminal base.

Ideological Exploitation

Also known as *Radicalisation*, this refers to the ‘grooming’ or recruitment process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism that may lead to terrorism. This can happen online as well as through face to face contact.

Financial Exploitation

This involves the unauthorised and improper use of funds, property or any resources of a vulnerable person, and/or theft, coercion or fraud to obtain or try to obtain money, possessions or property. Financial exploitation also includes unregulated money lending (referred to as illegal money lending).

Fraud and Scams

This predominantly, involves money or transactions that involve financial loss to the victim performed by a dishonest individual, group, or company.



Domestic Servitude

Here people (regardless of age or background) are forced to work in private households performing tasks such as childcare and housekeeping for little or no pay and often in abusive conditions.

Forced Marriage

This is where one or both parties do not wish to get married but are manipulated, coerced or forced to marry by others, usually their families. People forced into marriage may be tricked into going abroad, physically threatened and/or emotionally blackmailed to do so.

New forms of exploitation

Whilst societal change and developments in technology have led to the emergence of some new forms of exploitation, such as cyber enabled offending, most forms of exploitation seen today are not new; with examples such as forced labour, slavery and sexual exploitation, being long-standing forms of abuse.

We do need to acknowledge however, that the methods and enablers for exploitation are changing rapidly and the use of technology and social media is facilitating this, with perpetrators utilising these opportunities using increasing degrees of sophistication to maximise effect.

In the light of more systematic and organised perpetration, however, we now have greater and still growing awareness, learning and understanding of different forms of exploitation and a continuously improving professional response.

4. The Legislative Framework

Across the public sector, there are numerous statutory duties and pieces of legislation that drive what we do in relation to exploitation, some of which are included here.

[The National Referral Mechanism \(NRM\)](#) is a framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support. An individual could have been a victim of human trafficking and/or slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Victims may not be aware that they are being trafficked or exploited, and may have consented to elements of their exploitation, or accepted their situation.

Section 47 Children's Act 1989 dictates that where a Local Authority suspects a child who lives, or is found in their area, is suffering (or is likely to suffer) significant harm, it must take action to



safeguard or promote that child's welfare. These duties are similarly enshrined within [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2018\)](#) guidance.

[The Care Act 2014](#) sets out the legal duties and responsibilities in relation to adult safeguarding. The legal framework for the Care Act 2014 is supported by the **Care and Support Statutory Guidance (2018)** which provides information about how the Care Act works in practice. The guidance has statutory status which means there is a legal duty to have regard to it when working with adults with needs for care and support and their carers.

[The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015](#) contains a duty on specified authorities to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This is also known as the **Prevent Duty** and it provides the foundation for our response to ideological exploitation across West Sussex.

[The Serious Crime Act 2015](#) and subsequent [Serious Violence Strategy 2018](#) set out the government's **County Lines Action Plan** which has been replicated across West Sussex to tackle criminal exploitation. Likewise, recent criminal justice legislation regarding the transmission of indecent imagery has helped strengthen the policing response to sexual exploitation.

In addition to statutory legislation, various combinations of regulatory powers can also be used to tackle exploitation. Examples of this include use of environmental health or licensing powers to disrupt and stop opportunities for offending.

5. The County Context

West Sussex prides itself on being a diverse, multi-cultural society, and with this comes a responsibility to ensure that residents and visitors feel confident in seeking help and support when needed, from its public services. West Sussex is not unique but is seen as a county of strategic importance and prominence; with its geographic positioning, demographic and economy, not only attracting people and commerce, but also those seeking to exploit others through illicit means.

The County is serviced by an extensive and strategic arterial road and rail network linking Hampshire, Surrey, Kent and London. Gatwick Airport is situated within the County and receives 40 million passengers a year. There is also a strategic seaport at Shoreham. Both are regulated by UK Border Force. In addition, there is the UK coastal border stretching 40 miles between West Wittering and Southwick – this is policed by a range of land and maritime agencies.



The County is home to almost 850,000 residents (projected to increase a further 10% by 2021)¹, 45,000 businesses and around 1200 vulnerable looked after children (half of whom are placed here by other local authorities²).

Age Range	Count	% County Population
Age 0-17 years	170,439	20.4%
Age 18-64 years	478,916	57.3%
Age 65+ years	186,901	22.3%
Total	836,256	100%

Source: Office National Statistics, Mid-year Population Estimate 2015

In addition, over half a million visitors come to West Sussex each year. The County also has a less quantifiable, but substantial transient population of travelling families and seasonal migrant workers with most of the latter being employed within the agricultural sector. The County’s “growing sector” is of national significance; housing the largest glasshouse area in England; collectively growing produce with a retail value of more than £500m; and providing an estimated 4,290 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs (including industry-support/ancillary workers) and almost twice as many seasonal jobs (such as harvesting and packing) to the local community³. The open field sector also provides a significant contribution to the West Sussex economy. Adding to this transiency, the county has experienced, over the last few years, a substantial growth in the number of foreign workers in the care sector and service trades such as nail bars and car washes, domestic building projects (such as basement excavations) as well as the hospitality and leisure industry, all of which mirrors national migration trends.

The demographic of the County is varied with a wide distribution of wealth and poverty at both extremes. The 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation⁴ ranked West Sussex as 130th out of 152 upper tier local authorities for overall deprivation (where rank 1 is the most deprived), yet the County has become relatively more deprived since 2007, when it was ranked 132nd. Moreover, a cluster of 47 areas (boundaried by postcodes) within West Sussex are among the 30% most deprived nationally.

Adur, Arun and Worthing are among the most deprived districts and boroughs across the county. Within Arun there are pockets of deprivation in the wards of River and Ham in Littlehampton, with three Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in these two wards falling in the top 10% most

¹ ONS Population Estimates, accessed via West Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

² West Sussex Life 2017-19

³ Business Link (2010) Growing Together: A strategy for the West Sussex Growing Sector

⁴ Department for Communities and Local Government (2010) English Indices of Deprivation



deprived nationally. Conversely, the County also has a number of affluent areas, many of which are rurally situated.

Vulnerability takes many forms and West Sussex residents who have had or witnessed adverse childhood experiences or abuse, have low self-esteem, disabilities or additional needs, are physically dependent upon others for help and support, who experience language barriers, or who are engaged in low paid employment or unemployed, are all at greater risk of one or more forms of exploitation.

6. Contextual Safeguarding

Underpinning our stance on exploitation and the achievement of our collective vision is the use of a framework known as Contextual Safeguarding (CS) - developed by Carlene Firmin at the University of Bedfordshire. This is an approach to safeguarding adolescents that is intended to inform policy, practice and system design and focuses on working with contexts and communities to affect change.

The approach recognises that during adolescence the nature of the risks faced by young people, and the way that they experience them, often differs from earlier childhood – as do their needs. Specifically, young people may be faced with new, complex risks, not posed by families, but by peers, partners and adults unconnected to their families.

Such risks:

- often manifest themselves in extra-familial environments including schools, public spaces and online platforms;
- are informed by peer norms and relationships;
- involve young people perpetrating, as well as experiencing harm;
- can present as the result of perceived 'choices' a young person has made and/or continues to make despite professional/parental intervention;
- often feature grooming, coercion, criminality and serious risks of significant sexual and physical harm that create climates of fear and reduce engagement with services;
- are beyond the control of parent carers and rarely instigated by them;
- can lead to large numbers of relocations including children over-12 coming into care for the first time and following a rapid escalation in risk and/or managed-moves across schools;
- continue into adulthood and young people, such as care leavers and young offenders, during the 18-25 transitional period are particularly vulnerable.



In the light of this knowledge and understanding, practitioners, researchers and policy advisors have been developing and testing ways to advance child protection and multi-agency safeguarding practices to better engage with these dynamics of adolescent experience.

Findings from this work suggest that the type of system required to maximise the impact of contextual interventions would include four domains.

A safeguarding and child protection system would be contextual if it:

1. Was designed to identify, assess and intervene with the *social conditions* of abuse (i.e. targeted the nature of the contexts in which abuse occurred rather than just the individuals affected by it);
2. Drew extra-familial contexts into child protection and safeguarding processes (which were traditionally focused on families);
3. Built partnerships with sectors and individuals who managed extra-familial settings where young people spent their time;
4. Measured its impact in relation to a change in the nature of the contexts where young people were vulnerable to abuse or harm (rather than just focusing on a change in the behaviour of individuals who continued to spend time in harmful spaces).⁵

A Contextual Safeguarding system supports the development of approaches which disrupt/change harmful extra-familial contexts rather than move families/young people away from them. While parents/carers are not in a position to change the nature of extra-familial contexts those who manage or deliver services in these spaces are; and therefore, become critical partners in the safeguarding agenda. This approach extends the concept of 'capacity to safeguard' beyond families to those individuals and sectors who manage extra-familial settings in which young people encounter risk.

Contextual Safeguarding has the potential to help us tackle all forms of exploitation - reducing the need to move people away from unsafe people and places by creating instead, safety in the spaces and places where communities spend their time.

To maximise the impact of the Contextual Safeguarding framework in tackling exploitation in West Sussex we are also committed to working closely with East Sussex and Brighton and Hove's Safeguarding Children Partnerships in a pan Sussex approach. Our shared commitments include the use of agreed principles to collectively underpin our policies and practice.

⁵ Information drawn from and informed by various sources including the briefing paper, *Contextual Safeguarding: An overview of the operational, strategic and conceptual framework*, Carlene Firmin, (2017).
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Pan Sussex Contextual Safeguarding Principles

1. Recognise & Respond - Understand, recognise and respond to young people's experiences of harm beyond their families (extra familial risk)
2. Assess & Intervene - Develop effective tools to identify, assess and intervene when extra familial risk and harm are suspected.
3. Expand Our Vision - Expand our vision of child protection and build upon existing criminal justice work to incorporate extra familial contexts into child protection frameworks and referral pathways.
4. Work in Partnership - Work in partnership to engage with individuals & sectors who have influence over/within extra-familial contexts to reduce harm and increase welfare.
5. Capable & Competent Systems - Ensure our systems are capable and competent to work contextually, looking for opportunities to developed shared resources and systems where appropriate.
6. Monitor Outcomes - Monitor outcomes of success in relation to contextual, as well as individual, change.

7. Our Overarching Approach

We are committed to tackling all forms of exploitation; including CSE, CCE, ideological exploitation (referred to locally as Preventing Radicalisation and Violent Extremism), Human Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery. We are also committed to tackling forms of maltreatment such as Domestic and Sexual Abuse, Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse.

In relation to our aims, work to address and eradicate these forms of abuse will include:

- a) establishing a common contextual safeguarding framework and approach across the County
- b) raising awareness about all forms of exploitation and maltreatment and their effects on individuals, families and communities – working with and through individuals, organisations, services, communities, schools and colleges
- c) helping communities in West Sussex to become resilient
- d) educating and informing communities about how to recognise and respond to suspected abusive behaviour linked to extra-familial environments including those believed or known to be linked to organised criminality



- e) working with communities who are deemed to be at risk of exploitation and its various forms to help them understand more about what it is and how they can avoid becoming victims of it
- f) generating mechanisms for listening to the voice of communities with professional curiosity to gather local intelligence that can inform what is happening in local areas and strategies for disrupting abusive and violent extra-familial environments
- g) providing those who have been exploited or affected by exploitation with both appropriate intervention and ongoing support to aid their recovery and prevent the possibility of future victimisation
- h) supporting professionals and communities in challenging the “normalisation” of deviant and exploitative behaviour.

8. Raising awareness

Our awareness raising and educative activities about exploitation in its various forms and how to respond to known or suspected instances will be directed at all children and young people, parents and carers, the wider community, including businesses, and professionals who work directly with children and their families.

All awareness raising activities need to leave those communities with an understanding of what exploitation is, who may be most vulnerable to being exploited and what they can or need to do if they see or hear something that worries or concerns them.

9. Empowering Communities

Enabling communities to be strong, resilient and prosperous is a key goal in the prevention and management of exploitation, which requires the promotion and fostering of conditions and ways of working that inspire and enable people to look after themselves and one another. We need to support communities in achieving this, by modelling ways in which this can be accomplished through awareness raising and educative activities about exploitation and through the judicious use of targeted resources to help tackle disadvantage.

Improving information flow between agencies and communities about suspected exploitation is essential to our stance against it, as this intelligence will help to support more targeted interventions and help reduce levels of risk and exploitation. So, our activities and the way we engage with communities about their role in safeguarding, needs to leave them feeling empowered to both trust their “gut instincts” when they see or hear something that worries them and report their concerns.

The mechanisms we use to raise awareness, build resilience and report concerns will need to be well-communicated, easily understood and accessible to all communities in West Sussex. This will



include systems and processes for engaging and supporting communities with learning difficulties or additional needs; people who are not proficient in written or spoken English and/or are speakers of other languages; and those for whom a lack of confidence, fear, cultural practice, a lack of community cohesion or social isolation may affect their capacity to seek help or support for themselves, or report concerns about others.

10. Supporting People

Identifying and responding appropriately to the threat of exploitation is only half the challenge. It is crucial that those who have experienced and been harmed by exploitation are provided with appropriate intervention and ongoing support, to aid their recovery and prevent the possibility of future victimisation.

In order to understand how we can best support those who have experienced or been harmed by exploitation we need to learn from their lived experience, not only what they need, to aid their recovery and to keep themselves safe in the future, but also what might have helped to prevent them from being exploited and what, if anything might have helped them to get away from their exploitative situation.

This information will be used to ensure we have the right agencies in place at the right time and offer appropriate responses that include support for the person who has been exploited and those around who have been affected by the experience. This might include family, friends, and whole neighbourhoods.

11. Restoration, Rehabilitation and Recovery

Understanding that recovery takes time is essential and in West Sussex all agencies are committed to helping those affected by exploitation to get the support they need to make sense of and recover from their experiences, so they can go on to live fulfilling lives and realise their potential.

That support needs to include access to therapeutic recovery models - for those who have been victims of exploitation and others affected by the experience, whilst at community level we need to encourage and facilitate the development of effective community support groups to provide “safe” environments for young people post various forms of intervention, to support their continued recovery and rehabilitation.

Recovery also means giving those affected by exploitation the tools they need to regain power and control of their lives, including for victims how to avoid being victimised again. This means supporting them to become resilient or regain their resilience – whether they were harmed or



were 'the harmer' and involves helping them to develop self-esteem and an understanding of how to build and maintain positive relationships. We need to ensure that the services they need to support their on-going recovery and rehabilitation are in place and that they know what is available and how to access it.

In our approach to restoration, rehabilitation and recovery, we also need to recognise that some exploiters have been exploited themselves. This type of victim/perpetrator paradigm is often seen in the instance of sexual and criminal exploitation where those who recruit and harm have been harmed themselves and then become perpetrators. This generally happens either as a coping mechanism or through learned or mimicked behaviour.

Our response must also be to safeguard these perpetrators and ensure their needs are met, whilst restoring justice for those harmed. Tackling 'learned behaviours' and providing better alternatives to committing crime are key factors in recovery, and in the prevention of reoffending.

We will need to develop innovative ways of working to comprehensively, coherently and consistently manage perpetration in a way that serves the community, the exploited and those who exploit.

12. The Professional Response: Responding to Unmet Needs

By investing in people and holding each other to account through professional development we can learn best practice from each other's agencies and use this to drive forward areas where our understanding is less developed and needs to be better informed. Listening to those with lived experience and learning lessons from Serious Case Reviews, Safeguarding Adult Reviews, national and local best practice are all key to the shaping and development of our professional response.

An integral part of realising any transformational commitment is ensuring the right systems and processes are in place and this includes having the right stakeholders engaged in monitoring and scrutinising our activity; providing robust challenge from which we can learn and continue to improve our practice and provision.

We also need to put systems in place to monitor and evaluate our own performance, holding each other to account regarding both progress and impact. The focus of these activities needs to include how we deploy our limited resources to best effect and how we ensure our partnerships are strong and yet flexible enough to respond to new and emerging demands.



13. Collaborative Commitment

This document is not owned by any single agency; but represents the collaborative and collective commitment of all West Sussex stakeholders in working together to stand up to and tackle exploitation.

In terms of accountability and transparency making this collective agreement and commitment acknowledges and binds us to working together to ensure:

- There is clarity and agreement regarding the roles and responsibilities of different partnerships and boards in relation to safeguarding;
- Governance and decision-making arrangements are clear and work is well co-ordinated, preventing duplication of effort and resources;
- Systems and processes for preventing, responding to and tackling exploitation are clear;
- There is clear communication and relevant information sharing between different partnerships and boards in furthering work to tackle exploitation;
- Our collective work has a positive and demonstrable impact on people and communities;
- That there is regular and effective challenge and scrutiny of safeguarding arrangements across West Sussex.

14. The Future

There is still much to do to fulfil our ambition to eradicate exploitation in West Sussex and we acknowledge that sustained energy and an ongoing commitment to work collaboratively will be required to make West Sussex inhospitable to exploiters, and safer for our communities, businesses and visitors.

We will strengthen our response to perpetrators who exploit; including restoration and rehabilitation for those drawn into offending through their own experience and victimisation.

Investment in prevention and awareness raising activity will remain, not only allowing our communities to recognise and respond to the warning signs of exploitation but also giving them confidence that when they report concerns their voice is heard, listened to and acted upon.

We will continue to work in partnership to ensure that the right services are available at the right time and are able to flex and adapt to meet the needs of those people who need help, support and guidance. This includes families and the wider community who also suffer the ramifications of exploitation.

Our aims and ambitions will challenge us over the next five years and beyond so we will publish information on an annual basis to document our progress.



Policy and decisions must be made with this agenda in mind because it is intrinsically linked to the fabric of our society. Our direction of travel will be influenced by national, regional and local developments yet our collaborative commitment to eliminating exploitation remains.

We thank all agencies who contributed to the production of this document, which was achieved through a series of multi-agency co-production workshops and partnership consultation.

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Lead Author: Emily King, Director of Communities, West Sussex County Council

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