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# safeguarding in public spaces toolkit



toolkit for professionals working in public spaces

**saferlondon**

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# 1 introduction

Safer London is the leading London charity working to prevent and address gang violence, vulnerability and exploitation among young people. We have over a decade's experience of working with young people to keep themselves safe.

The aim of this toolkit is to provide essential information to shopping centres, town centre managers, neighbourhood managers, transport hubs and retail spaces to improve the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults in the public domain.

The pilot scheme that informs this toolkit consisted of training shopping centre staff on CSE, and young people to conduct surveys in public spaces. In total, 642 young people (aged 25 and younger) and 83 adults (over 25 years old) were surveyed between December 2016 and August 2017. Frightening and intimidating experiences, including sexual harassment, were widely reported and corroborate evidence that 1 in 4 women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime. Young men also told us that at times, they felt unsafe, and there is urgent work to be done to ensure that all young people are able to enjoy public spaces without the risk of harm, intimidation, harassment or assault. The findings can be found in the full research report which accompanies this toolkit.

Safer London believes every young person should be given the opportunity to live free from exposure to gangs, exploitation and crime and we are the leading London charity working to prevent and address these issues. We provide needs-led intensive support, early intervention and mentoring through our extensive pan-London services.

We know from experience that for our work to have the greatest impact, we need to change the environment in

which young people are exposed to harm. This means not only working with young women and men, but we also need to be working with and supporting professionals in order to heighten awareness and help them identify those most at risk, so they can be provided with the services and support they need.

This toolkit does not require you to have prior knowledge or experience of child protection. Its purpose is to help you identify your role and equip you with information, so you can respond effectively. Further training is available from Safer London or via local Child Safeguarding Boards. This toolkit aims to support professionals working in public spaces to keep young customers safe.

It provides:

- Guidance on key stakeholders and partners
- Information and guidance for staff to recognise the signs of child sexual exploitation and how to safeguard young people in public spaces, including what to do if you are worried about a young person
- A self-assessment which will help establish the scope of current practice and identify areas for development
- Information and guidance to support public spaces to shape their policies and procedures in order to improve safeguarding and keep young people safe.

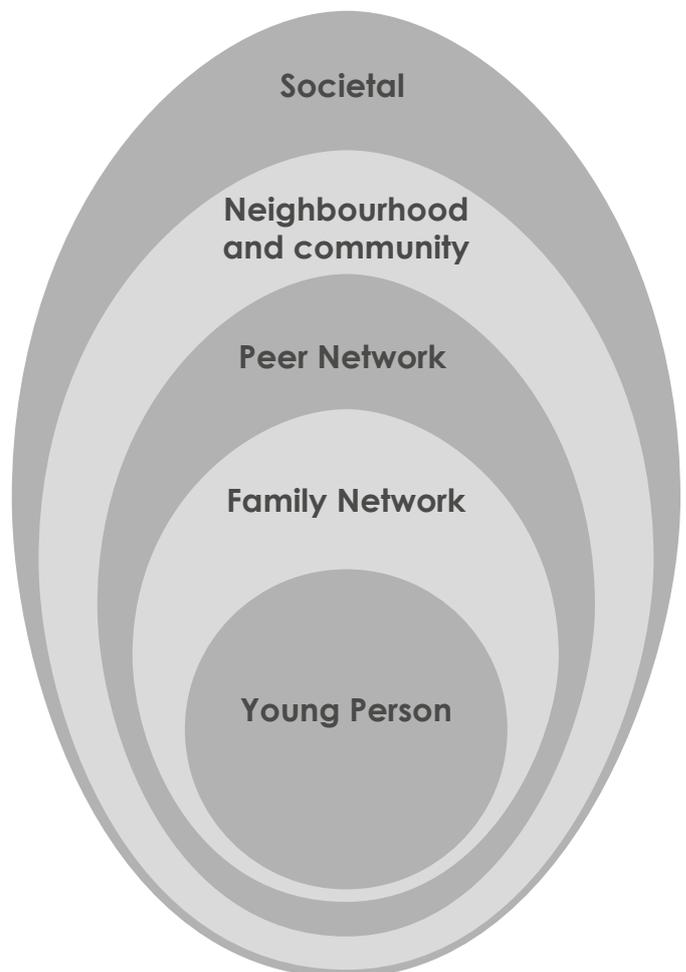
# 2 what is contextual safeguarding?

Traditionally approaches to protecting young people from harm (safeguarding them) have focussed on the risk of violence and abuse from inside the home, usually from a parent/carer or other trusted adult.

The current structures don't always address the time that young people spend outside the home and the influence of peers on young people's development and safety.

Contextual safeguarding recognises the impact of the public/social context on young people's lives, and consequently their safety. Contextual safeguarding seeks to identify and respond to harm and abuse posed to young people outside their home, either from adults or other young people. It's an approach that looks at how interventions can change the processes and environments, to make them safer for all young people, as opposed to focussing on an individual.

Safer London works with vulnerable young Londoners, including young women and men who are at risk of or have experienced CSE. From our experience, we know that young women are particularly affected, and that gender inequality, gender roles and societal attitudes are behind this difference. A young person's experience is influenced by their family, but also their peer network, wider community and society in general. From our work with young people, we know that sexual harassment, grooming and CSE can often occur in locations outside the home or school, including parks, transport hubs and shopping centres.



# 3 what is child sexual exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation is when a person under 18 is pressured into performing sexual acts. This often involves a stage of ‘grooming’, in which the young person might receive something such as protection, affection, money, a mobile phone, drugs, alcohol or clothes (for the current full Home Office definition see Glossary, section 9)

## There are different types of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE):

We often think of CSE happening with older people exploiting younger children. This is not always the case. There are times where the perpetrator is an older ‘boyfriend’; however, peer on peer abuse is common. This is where young people exploit other young people of their own or similar age.

Young people can also be trafficked within the UK (from one place to another) for the purposes of exploitation. This can be ‘organised’ or can happen on an ad hoc basis.

Some young people are also sexually exploited by gangs (groups often involved in criminality but not necessarily formed for the purpose of sexual exploitation). The term ‘gang’ is often a word used by professionals; young people often do not identify as being gang affected. Caution should be exercised in the use of this terminology due to the associated stereotypes it holds for young people (see Glossary, section 9 for more details).

Young people can sometimes be exploited by their families or carers. They are forced to do acts which family members or carers gain from, in terms of money, gifts or accommodation.

Sexual exploitation doesn’t just happen in person, it can also happen online. Pictures could be sent of them or they could be forced to send sexual pictures of

themselves (including ‘nudes’). In reality, anyone can be sexually exploited; however, some young people, including young women, can be more vulnerable, as explored in section 5.1.

Young People interviewed by Safer London’s Peer Advisors said they see CSE as:

*“A guy can approach a girl with compliments and can use the girl to get his own way.”*

*“When you feel intimidated and someone tries to touch you in a sexual way.”*

*“Girls are pressured by boys and forced to take pictures etc.”*

*“When young people are made to do sexual things. Not consent.”*

*“Yeah, I’ve heard of it before. It’s accepted amongst young people and something that is common.”*

*“Sometimes I see it. Guys approach young women in their cars and show them what they can give them.”*

# 4 why is safeguarding in public spaces important?

Large shopping centres have always been places where young people congregate. As well as being considered safe and warm with things to do and see, young people use shopping centres as a place to socialise with their peers and interact with others.

The purpose of this toolkit is not to discourage young people from accessing shopping centres but to find ways to identify risks and support them to be safe in these places. We want all young people to live free from violence, exploitation and crime, and this places a responsibility on all sectors to understand young people's experiences and what plays out in the environments they occupy.

It is important to remember that young people under the age of 18 are still children, and as such, they must be responded to appropriately when they are at risk of harm. Young people's behaviour in public can sometimes be seen as a nuisance and they can be considered troublesome. If this attitude is held, not only do we risk missing the signs that they are in danger and in need of help, we also fail to create an environment where they can seek help. It is important to remember that young women experiencing CSE and those who are missing (see below) from home often frequent shopping centres and popular eateries, as they provide an anonymous warm space accessible 24/7 with free Wi-Fi.

Young women can face sexual harassment by way of young men approaching them and making inappropriate and offensive comments. We have been made aware of young people filming videos within shopping centres where they record young women without permission or ask other young people to make sexually explicit comments about young women they

know. These 'bating out skets' videos are then uploaded to YouTube without consent and are directly associated with an increase of risks of targeted sexual violence to the young women filmed or mentioned. This is one of the issues addressed during the pilot:

*"They [young women] feel horrible. [It] Happened to a girl in my school and she didn't come in for months." – young person*

## 4.1 Missing young people and public spaces

The police define missing people as anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established or their well-being cannot be otherwise confirmed. Any missing person is considered to sit within a spectrum of risk that starts with 'no apparent risk' and moves through to 'high-risk', which requires immediate and intensive action.

Shopping centres and other public spaces such as transport hubs are places where young people go when missing, so it is important for members of staff to understand the vulnerabilities young people are exposed to when they go missing and the risks they face. Running away or going missing is often a sign that some things are not going well in their lives: it is a consequence or indicator of a problem rather than the problem itself.

If you come across a young person who is missing from home, care or school, remember that it's the police's job to investigate the level of risk this young person is at.

Research has evidenced there is a link between young people being sexually exploited and young people who go missing<sup>1</sup>. Going missing makes a young person, and in particular young women, even more vulnerable to CSE. Potential perpetrators of CSE offer missing young people accommodation in exchange for sexual favours. Conversely, young people experiencing sexual exploitation may go missing to escape abuse.

Young people spending time in public spaces during school hours, or late at night, might be missing from home, care or school and might be at risk of exploitation. It will, of course, not be the case for every young person using a public space, but it is good practice to be aware of these issues and make a plan for how you would support a young person in this situation. There may also be a specific procedure for missing young people developed by your local authority.

Your job is to do your best to ensure their safety. This will always involve a caring and patient response. It is crucial to remember that difficult, aggressive or impolite behaviour can be a symptom that the young person has had a frightening experience or is afraid and may need your help (see section 5.1).

## 4.2 Online safety in public spaces

Some public spaces offer free Wi-Fi access, which is an attractive feature for young people. Whilst the topic of this toolkit is safeguarding in the public domain, some organisations may need to consider the free Wi-Fi they provide and how it could be used to groom and abuse young people and vulnerable adults.

Social media is a huge part of how young people conduct their friendships and relationships, therefore it is important to make sure that we include strategies to safeguard them when they are online. This includes acknowledging this importance and allowing space for young people to talk if something has happened to them online

Social media use in UK (2016)

- The number of children with a social media profile doubles between the ages of 10 and 11
- One in ten 11-15s are still communicating via social media at 10pm
- 11% of 8-11s and 28% of 12-15s say they access their main social media account more than ten times a day<sup>2</sup>.



<sup>1</sup>The Children's Society (2017) <https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/resources-and-publications/making-connections-understanding-how-local-agencies-can-better>

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0034/93976/Children-Parents-Media-Use-Attitudes-Report-2016.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0034/93976/Children-Parents-Media-Use-Attitudes-Report-2016.pdf)

# 5 what can you do?

Some of the challenges for young people to come forward are: that they don't know what CSE is, and that they have rights and choices, including the right to recovery and be protected against further harm. As professionals, we have a responsibility to Work Together (2015) to keep young people safe.

Whilst local authorities play a lead role, safeguarding children and protecting them from harm is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;
- and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

Everybody has a responsibility to keep young people safe and respond to concerns. If you work in a retail space, shopping centre or transport hub you are responsible in some part for that young person's presence. This place is appealing for young people and will draw them. This makes a direct link between you and the young people.

Here are five key things you can do:

1. Do your job the best way you can but with awareness of these issues

2. Make sure you are up to date with safeguarding procedures in your work place, find out who to talk to if you need help (e.g. line manager, safeguarding officer, security)
3. If you see something that concerns you, raise it with the appropriate person and do it as soon as possible
4. Be mindful of stereotypes and try not to make assumptions too quickly. For instance, many young people look 'grown up' but they are still children under the age of 18 and it is everyone's responsibility to help safeguarding children. If you find yourself making assumptions about a young person based on their behaviour, their dress or the 'volume' of their presence, it is important to question yourself. A good way to check yourself is to ask, 'Would I be responding in the same way if that was my daughter/son/niece/nephew/friend's child?'
5. Recording: If an incident occurs, be clear and specific about what has happened. If someone had to read the record, would they be able to misinterpret what you have written? Make it clear what is opinion and fact.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/592101/Working\\_Together\\_to\\_Safeguard\\_Children\\_20170213.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/592101/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children_20170213.pdf)

## 5.1 Behaviours and factors you might observe in young people who are experiencing CSE

Being a victim of sexual exploitation is a traumatic and life changing experience for anyone. When young people have experienced sexual exploitation, they can often behave in ways that appear irrational or aggressive. These behaviours are normal reactions to abuse or trauma and are often used to protect themselves from the risk they face. It is important to be aware of this and think about what a young person might be experiencing if they appear to be 'acting out'.

It is also good to know the common factors that might make young people more vulnerable to exploitation. The lists below aim to help you be more aware of these. However, this is not a definitive list; someone may be being sexually exploited and show none of the below behaviours or vulnerabilities. As previously highlighted, young women are at more risk from CSE and this may be from peers or adults. We have included the factors and behaviours that may be more observable to a professional working in a public space rather than those that a parent/carer or teacher may see with regular contact, such as unexplained gifts and changes in mood<sup>4</sup>. Always use your judgement: if you have a feeling a young person is in danger or needs help, speak to the appropriate person in your organisation.

Behaviours that could be observable:

- Making disclosures and then withdrawing them
- Asking for help then rejecting it
- Acting out, appearing to be difficult, angry or aggressive
- Refusing to acknowledge that an event has occurred, even if you have just seen something happen

Common factors you may observe that could indicate a young person is more vulnerable to CSE:

- Missing from home or care
- Missing from school
- Using drugs or alcohol
- Being involved in offending such as shoplifting
- Bullying in or out of school
- Having learning disabilities
- Being associated with gangs.

*"[CSE is] really really scary and it's not obvious to spot." – young person interviewed by Peer Advisors*

## 5.2 What to do if a young person comes to you for help

- Identify a safe space to talk where you won't be interrupted.
- Don't interrogate, let them tell you at their own pace.
- Don't assume – ask.
- Take what they are saying seriously and believe them. In the rare instance that something isn't true, there will still be a reason they have to tell you something. There will be someone else who can look into this. It is not your role to 'investigate' what has happened.
- Explain to the young person what you will do. What will happen next? Who will be informed? Don't make promises you can't keep. If you aren't sure – say so.
- Be flexible, and take things slowly. It's really hard to tell someone about something, especially if it makes you feel ashamed or embarrassed.
- If you need to get advice, be open about this and try and keep the young person there with you. It's hard to track them down if there is something else you need to ask or do.
- Please remember, it isn't your job to investigate 'who, where, when'; there are police officers and social workers who are trained to do just this. As a general rule, if you want to ask 'why', it's probably not helpful.

Everyone's roles are different, but if we all have an awareness of these issues and of safeguarding, then we are helping to ensure that public spaces become safe spaces for young people as well.

<sup>4</sup> Guidance for parents on spotting the signs can be found at: [https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/our\\_work/sexual\\_exploitation/about-cse/cse-spot-the-signs.htm](https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_work/sexual_exploitation/about-cse/cse-spot-the-signs.htm)

## What young people told us they wanted from professionals in public spaces:



### 5.3 Raising a safeguarding concern/who to speak to in your organisation

Our experience working with and training shopping centres' staff revealed it is important that management teams are clear about how they will support frontline staff if they raise a concern about sexual harassment, CSE or safeguarding. To protect young people and vulnerable adults, frontline staff need to feel confident about raising concerns. It is unhelpful if staff are worried complaints could be made against them for offending colleagues or customers in those circumstances.

#### Information Sharing / Escalating Concerns

- Is anyone in danger? If immediate, dial 999
- Can you speak to the young person directly and remove them from harm?
- Do you know who the perpetrators are?
- Get as much detail as possible
- If the young person is wearing a school uniform, make a note of what this looked like
- Descriptions: gender, height, size, skin colour, clothing, any distinguishing features
- Detail of any technology/internet use or misuse
- Can you ask questions?
- Be curious. It is always better to ask a question and find out that everything is OK than to remain unsure.

#### And remember: Always inform line manager / supervisor and safeguarding lead

If a safeguarding concern is confirmed, it needs to be reported to social services. If you have a safeguarding policy and procedure, make sure this is followed. If you are unsure, you should always seek advice of the safeguarding lead within your company/organisation, or if they are not available, you may be able to speak to a lead within the local authority – Duty Social Workers or CSE Coordinators are sometimes able to give advice on potential concerns even if you are not making a full referral.

*“The teams are more aware about these issues [CSE] and said it was very helpful when dealing with young people. Now they're thinking about it and being more aware, they think “what if this is something else, what if there are deeper issues?” and they speak to someone about their concern, so it was an eye-opener really.”*

*– Feedback on Safer London CSE Safeguarding for Public Spaces Pilot from Rebecca Bird, Marketing Manager, The Mall, Walthamstow*

# 6 good practice for public spaces

All safeguarding policies should be developed in response to need and therefore, rather than a specific template policy, below we provide links to guidance to safeguarding policy writing, alongside suggestions of good practice specific to public spaces.

- **Have a clear safeguarding policy that is accessible to all staff.** Safer London can provide assistance on how to write a safeguarding policy.
- **Part of any good safeguarding policy involves** having safeguarding lead(s) within your company or organisation.
- **Make sure all members of staff, contractors and volunteers understand their role in safeguarding** and know how to report concerns they might have about a young person.
- **Engage with businesses, community caretakers** (CCTV/security/wardens) and regularly come together to discuss risks, concerns and actions you can take.
- **Display key contact numbers in staffrooms for safeguarding referrals (to safeguarding lead as above, as well as to police and local authority's social services and CSE coordinator).** Good to have established named contacts in these departments and invite them to your team meetings.
- **Link with the local police neighbourhood team** to enable direct contact with dedicated ward officers and local safeguarding team.
- **Establish links and/or partnerships with local youth clubs / organisations** to facilitate detached youth workers or peer advisors within the public space.
- **The spaces young people identified in our research as places they go when at risk (cafés, shops and, particularly for young women, toilets) need** information available with details of safe spaces, advice and helplines, and reassurance that the security staff or other local staff are trained and able to support them.
- **Responses from both young people and adults in our research suggested a need to provide a safe (and well-advertised) space for young people who feel at risk to go to.** Make sure there is information available and trusted and suitably skilled professionals there to help.
- **Raise awareness and, if possible, provide training to all public-facing members of staff** (including contractors) on safeguarding and recognising the signs of sexually exploited young people.
- **Ensure both male and female security staff can respond to any incident involving a young person.** In our research almost half of young women had a preference for female staff.
- **Businesses in public spaces need to be further engaged with and encouraged to be a part of creating a safe space,** working alongside and involving young people. There is potential to link into corporate social responsibility to fund this work.

## An example of safeguarding practice in a London shopping centre:

One of the shopping centres Safer London engaged with provided the following tips they felt worked well in their space to safeguard children and young people:

- Being part of the local safe radio scheme to enable staff at the shopping centre to contact other retailers and local businesses to pass along and receive information
- Provide training for staff (they received Safer London training as part of pilot)
- Being part of the Leisurewatch scheme, which helps reduce the risk of sexual offending in public spaces
- Patrolling security guards and regular contact and meetings with local police
- Have clear and reactive procedure for lost children.

### 6.1 Good practice for public spaces self-assessment

Safer London has developed a self-assessment framework that will help shopping centres, retail spaces and the business sector to evaluate and benchmark their own standards of safeguarding – see below.

You can use this tool to probe your current practices and establish what needs to be put in place to ensure you are doing all you can to keep young people safe in the domain you hold responsibility for. For any safeguarding policy to be effective, there needs to be ownership throughout the organisation from top to bottom and the self-assessment must present key lines of enquiry.

Whilst the pilot and toolkit are aimed at the business sector who manage public spaces, the toolkit and self-assessment can be applied to any business environment.

There are 6 areas covering:

- Accountability, Leadership and Commitment
- Internal Governance and Structure
- Empowering and supporting staff
- Prevention and Early intervention
- Tailoring operations to include Provision of Support for Young People
- Engaging customers and the Wider Community.

**Each area covers key lines of enquiry and the organisations can score themselves against each of the area from 0 to 2.**

Score	Criteria
2	The organisation is currently meeting the specific area
1	The organisation has some things in place
0	This is applied when the organisation cannot confirm it has any aspect of the enquiry line in place

Using the Safer London self-assessment tool, organisations can score their performance. There is a maximum of 44 points available. London-based organisations scoring over 34 points are considered exemplary and can apply to Safer London for an independent validation of their scoring and be awarded a Safer London safeguarding quality mark.

Organisations with 24 to 34 points are considered good and can be assisted to improve their overall score.

For organisations that score 23 points or lower, Safer London can assist with the development of their safeguarding policies, procedures and staff training. We can also deliver lunch-and-learn sessions for employees on keeping their own children safe online. For more information contact [info@saferlondon.org.uk](mailto:info@saferlondon.org.uk) or call 020 7021 0301

## 6.1 Good practice for public spaces self-assessment

		Score 0-2	Evidence	Action Required
1) Accountability, Leadership and Commitment	We demonstrate a commitment to safeguarding and creating a culture of respect and equality			
	We have named Safeguarding leads on the organisation's Board or at w Management level			
	Staff are assigned responsibilities and all staff are clear about their role and understand what is expected of them in regard to safeguarding			
	We monitor incidents and keeps records of safeguarding concerns, including when and where information is passed and shared			
<b>Subsection score</b>				

	Score 0-2	Evidence	Action Required
2) Internal Governance and Structure		Our Safeguarding policy and procedure is accessible to all staff. (If you don't have one, Safer London can assist your organisation to develop a safeguarding policy.)	
		We have trained safeguarding leads	
		Safeguarding is added as a standing agenda item at our group or staff meetings	
Subsection score			

		Score 0-2	Evidence	Action Required
3) Empowering and Supporting staff	All our staff are aware of what safeguarding is, their role and how to report a concern			
	Our public-facing staff (including security, contractors, CCTV operatives, wardens) have received training on safeguarding to identify the signs of grooming, sexually exploited young people, and our safeguarding procedure in action			
	We have established links with appropriate local community organisations and work with relevant stakeholders to consult on safety and ensure young people's safeguarding needs are catered for			
	We have contacts in place with relevant social services, police and other local support agencies and contact details are displayed. These contacts include CSE coordinators, police ward officers and safeguarding team, local youth organisations			
<b>Subsection score</b>				

		Score 0-2	Evidence	Action Required
4) Tailoring Operations to include Provision of Support for Young People	We make sure reporting of concerns is easy by offering access to staff and free phones			
	We make sure all staff are clear about what procedures should be followed when they receive a concern			
	We have both male and female staff available to respond to incidents involving a young person			
	As appropriate, we provide young people with regular updates of progress of any concerns they reported to us			
	We follow up reported concerns, particularly if the risk increases or situation has not changed			
	We have a safe (and well-advertised) space available for young people who feel at risk, where information is available and professionals can be accessed			
<b>Subsection score</b>				

		Score 0-2	Evidence	Action Required
5) Engaging customers and the Wider Community	We are committed to visibly upholding standards of safeguarding in public spaces and, wherever possible, challenge those who don't			
	We engage with our local community safety partnership and assist with mapping vulnerable locations and environmental problems that might increase risks to young people.			
	We provide customers with regular updates of actions both we and our and partner organisations have undertaken to safeguard vulnerable young people and how they might be involved in delivering solutions			
	We tailor services to take account of diversity so that no one is unduly excluded through barriers to involvement, information and advice			
	We reward positive 'community minded' behaviour in public spaces			
<b>Subsection score</b>				
<b>Total score</b>				

Scores	Overall rating	Safer London's recommended status
34+	Excellent	An exemplary organisation
24-34	Good	An organisation that is doing some good work to safeguard young people
Below 24	Needs improvement	An organisation that needs to develop safeguarding policies and procedures

# 7 useful websites/ sources of support

Local safeguarding team contact details are listed here:

[http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/contacts/london\\_local\\_safeguarding\\_children\\_boards/](http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/contacts/london_local_safeguarding_children_boards/)

- Contextual Safeguarding Network – specific resources and information and research about contextual safeguarding
- [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) – Offers children 24-hour telephone help. Tel no 0800 1111
- [www.child-safe.org.uk](http://www.child-safe.org.uk) – Initiated by Avon and Somerset Police
- [www.get.to/kids-in-crisis](http://www.get.to/kids-in-crisis) – Online service for children with problems
- [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk) – Helpline and child protection initiatives
- [www.ceop.police.uk/](http://www.ceop.police.uk/) The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre is part of the National Crime Agency (NCA) and can apply the full range of policing powers in tackling the sexual abuse of children. Report sexual abuse to CEOP online
- <http://www.londoncp.co.uk/> provides full child protection procedures and practice guidance for safeguarding children.
- <http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/> provides full contact details for safeguarding contacts in all London Boroughs.
- <http://www.paceuk.info/> PACE: Parents against Child Sexual Exploitation.
- <http://mesmac.co.uk/blast> Blast: Blast supports and works with boys and young men who have been, are being, or are at risk of being sexually exploited.
- <http://www.barnardos.org.uk/> Barnardo's: Children's charity.

The NSPCC provides a free 24-hour Child Protection Helpline, staffed by experienced social work counsellors, which provides confidential counselling, information and advice for those in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The telephone number is **0808 800 5000**. If using this service, please state at the outset that you are an adult seeking advice and information so that your call can be directed to an appropriate person.

# 8 key legislation and guidance

There are key pieces of legislation and guidance which set out the framework for all professionals working with children and which all community members should be aware of. These are:

- The London Child Sexual Exploitation Operating Protocol 3rd Edition (LSCB, March 2017)
- Working together to safeguard children (Government guidance) Working together guidance: Shared responsibility, 2015

## **The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

Article 19 states that 'every child should be protected from abuse'.

## **The Children Act 1989**

This Act is the foundation on which the protection of children is based. Of paramount importance throughout is the 'welfare of the child'. In essence, this means that the need to protect children comes before everything else and this principle needs to be at the forefront for all professionals.

## **The Children Act 2004**

This Act was a direct result of the findings by Lord Laming into the death of Victoria Climbié. The salient points of the Act include the need for co-operation between local authorities and all agencies working with children to improve their well-being.

## **The Sexual Offences Act 2003**

Sex offences are crimes that are covered by the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

The first part of the Act covers sexual offences. The second part covers offenders, with an emphasis on the protection of vulnerable individuals.

It gives a comprehensive list of sex offences to protect individuals from abuse and exploitation. Section 74 states: "A person consents if he/she agrees by choice and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice."



# 9 glossary

## **Child sexual exploitation (CSE)**

The Home Office (2017) defines Child sexual exploitation (CSE) as: Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity

- (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or
- (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

## **Peer Groups**

Small unorganised groups who share the same space and a common history. Their involvement in crime (if any) will mostly be at a low level and will not be important to the identity of the group.

## **Gangs**

As highlighted, the term 'gang' needs to be used with caution, and is often used interchangeably to describe very different groups, for instance:

- **'Street' Gangs**  
Can comprise street-based groups of young people for whom crime and violence is an essential part of the group's identity.
- **Organised Criminal Groups**  
Groups where crime is for personal gain and is generally their main occupation. These groups operate in the illegal market place.

