



BASHH



British Association for
Sexual Health and HIV



USING THE STS TOOL

Guidance for
frontline professionals

Guidance on using the Spotting the Signs Tool for Frontline Professionals

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Preface

Childhood should be a time for fun. It should also be a time for growth, exploration and self-actualisation, supported by loving, safe and trusting relationships. Young people's lives and circumstances should be enriched by an abundance of diverse experiences and opportunities, and they deserve to be inspired and championed by those who have their welfare and best interest at heart.

For far too many children and young people, this is not their reality. For some, they are harmed, mistreated and exposed to events or situations that erode their potential and their spirit. This harm can take many forms and can present itself in a number of ways.

The sexual and criminal exploitation of children and young people remains prevailing and pervasive. Too many children and young people continue to be at risk from serious and significant harm. Those responsible for exploiting children and young people have become more deceptive and manipulative in how they initiate relationships, and more decisive and sophisticated in the ways that they take advantage of those relationships.

It is therefore imperative that as individuals, institutions and communities, we all acknowledge, understand and commit to tackling child exploitation together and with steadfast determination. Everyone has a duty to keep our children and young people safe.

Frontline professionals have a vital and core role in safeguarding children and young people at risk of or experiencing child sexual exploitation (CSE) or child criminal exploitation (CCE).

Sometimes frontline professionals are invited into the world of a child or young person and find themselves part of it. Sometimes professionals are invited into the world of a child or young person only briefly, and other times frequently and consistently. Whatever the reason that brings them together, working with and supporting children and young people as a professional is a privilege and should be treated as such.

Every interaction should be approached as an opportunity to gain better understanding of a child or young person's unique circumstances, making the most out of any opportunity to enhance their life or protect them from harm. Being able to effectively identify and respond to any harm, or risk of harm faced by a child or young person, requires a relationship that is built on respect, empowerment, compassion and trust. It also requires cultivating a safe space for children and young people so that they feel emotionally and physically secure enough to talk about their experiences.

Child Sexual and Child Criminal Exploitation is complex and evolving. This updated Spotting the Signs Tool aims to amplify the existing skills, knowledge and values of frontline professionals and safeguarding communities, bringing together best practice with the ongoing determination to combat child exploitation.

Thank you to the project team BASHH, representing Adolescent Special Interest Group (ASIG):-

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Foreword from Dr Karen Elizabeth Rogstad

Dr Rogstad is a Consultant in Communicable diseases and Academic Director of Studies(3b) Organisation at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and the University of Sheffield. She was involved in the development of both the 2014 and 2023 versions of Spotting the Signs.

Since the initial Spotting the Signs Tool was produced in 2014, we have learned more about CSE and improved how we spot the signs of exploitation. However child sexual exploitation (CSE) continues to be a problem; it takes many forms and can present to different professionals in a myriad of guises. The patterns of exploitation have changed and there is now increasing understanding of its prevalence and nature, of the increasing role of the internet and social media in abuse and that older young people may also be exploited and require safeguarding. The investigation of the Office of the Children's Commissioner into CSE by gangs and groups – along with high profile cases in the press – have led services to consider how we can further improve how we recognise and respond to CSE. More recently there has been an increased awareness of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE).

An update of the Tool was therefore required.

With a grant from the Department of Health and Social Care, a review of the existing Tool was conducted with stakeholders including health care professionals, professionals involved with young people, the voluntary sector and young people themselves of the existing Tool and how it should be developed in the light of new knowledge about CSE and to encompass children at risk of or involved in being criminally exploited. Brook collaborated with BASHH with the support of a multi-agency advisory board and working group to produce an updated Tool that can be used whenever a young person accesses a service. Services shared their experiences and learning, and we are particularly grateful to the sexual health services, the GPs and other health and wider professionals involved in its development and piloting.

The most important input has, of course, been from young people themselves. Focus groups led by AYPH and Brook, have provided vital input from young people. Their input helped us to develop a Tool that meets their needs. They told us how the Tool should be used, and reminded us that individual young people prefer different approaches.

One of their key points was the importance of a conversational tone – this has been reflected in the Tool and how it should be used. Through the pilots we now know that 16 and 17 year olds who previously may not have been asked questions to detect CSE/CCE – are happy for us to do so.

We hope this new Tool will be useful to any frontline practitioner working with children and young people.

My final thanks goes to the young people who participated in the focus groups, for helping to protect other young people from harm.

Introduction and background

1.1. The new Spotting the Signs Tool

Spotting the Signs (STS) was first launched by Brook and BASHH in 2014 and broke new ground in supporting frontline professionals to spot the signs of CSE. This new version of Spotting the Signs updates and replaces the original Tool from 2014 building on and developing the good practice that has been established. The new Tool is aimed at all frontline professionals and includes spotting the signs of criminal as well as sexual exploitation .

This guidance aims to support frontline professionals to use the Spotting the Signs Tool in practice.

1.2 The development of the new version of Spotting the Signs

Since the Tool's launch in 2014, the legal, policy and practice landscape has changed. How services engage with young people and our understanding of CSE and CCE has evolved. There is an increased awareness of the ways in which children and young people are sexually and criminally exploited.

It is recognised that CSE and CCE are complex, with children and young people often experiencing or being at risk from more than one form of exploitation. Legislation, policy and guidance are in place to support and guide professionals to address CSE, CCE, County Lines, Trafficking, Radicalisation, and Modern Slavery. However, it is acknowledged that the full extent of both criminal and sexual exploitation is unknown.

The criminal and sexual exploitation of children and young people involves serious and organised crime with adaptive business models, which make responses and detection challenging.

In addition, children and young people will very often have other needs and be at risk of harms other than exploitation. [*Working Together*](#) makes clear the requirement for a holistic assessment of vulnerabilities and risk, which also identify strengths and protective factors to inform decision making and action planning.

As a result, children and young people remain at risk from serious and significant harm. It is imperative that frontline professionals spot the signs of exploitation, and safeguarding children and young people remains a strong priority and is as urgent as ever.

Consultation and engagement

Young people have played a central role in ensuring that this revised version works for them, is sensitive to their needs and reflects the complexities of CSE and CCE.

Effectively protecting children and young people from the harms of sexual and criminal exploitation is a multi-agency endeavour and working collaboratively with frontline colleagues and experts in the safeguarding field was a key part of the process undertaken to update the Spotting the Signs Tool.

Professionals from a wide range of disciplines and organisations shared learning, challenges and wisdom from their experiences to help shape the new version.

2. About CSE and CCE: Key points that informed the Tool

2.1 CSE and CCE are both complex forms of abuse which can be difficult for children, young people and professionals to identify and it can be challenging for the level of risk faced by children and young people to be accurately assessed. In addition, CSE and CCE often occur without the victim being aware that they are being exploited and involves children and young people being coerced, encouraged, manipulated, deceived or threatened to engage in sexual activity and/or to carry out various criminal acts for the benefit of others. In return, they are offered something, (for example money, goods, friendship, a sense of belonging) as a 'reward'.

2.2 Children and young people are groomed into both sexual and criminal exploitation and as a result, the activity that they engage in, can appear consensual and that it has been entered into freely. Young people themselves often do not recognise or understand what is happening to them as exploitation and or abuse. One frequent comment from young people was that "a lot of young people don't realise something is an issue until they come out the other end."

2.3 Fear, shame and guilt are powerful barriers to young people accepting help. Young people told us that early help and knowing where they could turn to get help was important when they were experiencing or at risk from exploitation. Victims of both CSE and CCE are often fearful of getting others into trouble and getting into trouble themselves, for the very actions they have been exploited into carrying out. They may also be living with the threat of harm to themselves and their families/loved ones if they speak out.

Not recognising exploitation as such and the fear of repercussions can make it extremely difficult for young people to come forward and speak to professionals about their situation. The process of identifying whether and how young people are being exploited or are being groomed or at risk of being exploited is complex and layered.

2.4 Young people want and need guidance and support through the process of risk identification from the adults around them. This requires a relationship of trust to be built so that young people feel emotionally and physically safe enough to talk about their experiences and enter into a conversation that will enable the circumstances of their life to be sensitively and respectfully explored, in order that harm and the risk of harm can be identified and effectively responded to.

Paying attention to and observing children and young peoples' behaviour is important in helping to pick up concerns that may need further discussion and exploration. During the consultation process this was highlighted by young people as being important to them when they were in situations where they couldn't cope.

“After I was assaulted, my behaviour was really crazy. No adults or teachers noticed or if they did, no one asked me why”

We can view the nonverbal clues that we observe in children and young people as invitations to open conversations, using the questions within the Tool to build trust and explore their circumstances further.

2.3 Spotting the Signs: The value base

Spotting the Signs is underpinned by a set of values, informed by best practice which embodies a commitment to:

1. Placing an emphasis on the importance and necessity of the development of purposeful, collaborative and trusting relationships between children and young people and frontline professionals, based on openness, empowerment, respect, safety and protection
2. Understanding children and young peoples' lived experience and considering the links between the places and contexts in which young people experience harm/the risk of harm and how these are shaped by the wider context of young peoples' lives, protected characteristics and social and health inequalities
3. Considering the wider context of the child or young person's circumstances (e.g. care leaver, learning needs, neurodivergent etc.) to enable necessary adjustments to be made in the application of the Tool
4. Being mindful that the child or young person might already have experienced various childhood traumas and may already have been groomed and or sexually/ criminally exploited
5. Maintain a focus on children and young people by asking “what's happened to you?” rather than “what's wrong with you?”
6. Being firmly rooted in and upholding children and young peoples' rights, informed by robust evidence, best practice and the voice and lived experience of children and young people
7. Supporting children and young people to identify, value and build on the strengths and positives in themselves, their relationships and in their lives.
8. Professionals working with and supporting children and young people is a privilege and should be treated as such. Every interaction should be approached as an opportunity to gain an insight or understanding of a person as a unique individual, making the most of any and all reachable moments to enhance or improve a child or young person's life or where necessary, protect them from harm.

4. The structure of Spotting the Signs

The Spotting the Signs Tool comprises of three sections:

- Essential safety questions
- Exploration and assessment questions
- Assessment of risk, decision making and action planning

Section 1: Essential safety questions

This section comprises of questions for professionals to ask all children and young people which may prompt professional curiosity, highlight concerns or signs of exploitation or the possible risk of exploitation which require further exploration.

Section 2: Exploration and Assessment Questions

This section comprises a set of questions to enable further exploration of children and young peoples' individual circumstances to identify and assess risk of exploitation and any additional needs.

The questions cover the following areas.

- Education, employment and training
- Family relationships
- Friendships
- Sexual activity and intimate relationships
- Substance/alcohol use
- Mental and emotional health and physical changes

Section 3: Assessment of risk, decision making and action planning

This section provides the space for professionals to reflect and make sense of what has emerged during the conversation and the observations made, to review what else they know about the child/young person and consult relevant guidance and indicators in order to assess the level of risk of harm, any additional needs and to develop an action plan.

5. Using Spotting the Signs in Practice

General points

1. We recommend that professionals invest some time in familiarising themselves with the structure and purpose of the Spotting the Signs Tool and with the questions within each section. This allows professionals to follow the flow of the conversation with children and young people, rather than just moving through each section in order.
2. Spotting the Signs can be used in its entirety or key questions/sections can be selected and integrated into existing relationship building and assessment procedures.
3. Spotting the Signs should be used as a prompt to generate a conversation around the child or young person's situation, rather than as a checklist of direct questions.
4. Where organisations do not routinely record their contacts with children or young people in detail, we recommend the Spotting the Signs Tool is used as a record of the conversation and actions.
5. Using Spotting the Signs may increase contact/consultation time. This should be managed in a way that makes it usable within services. It is important to ask these questions to help safeguard children and young people.
6. Where no risk of exploitation is identified but other support/care needs have emerged, it can be used as a starting point for further support for the child or young person.
7. Confidentiality must be explained clearly to children and young people at the earliest opportunity, including the fact that you will need to seek advice, share information and take appropriate action if you believe they or any other child or young person are at risk of significant harm. You may need to reiterate and reassess confidentiality in subsequent contacts with young people depending on the specifics of the situation.
8. Give consideration to whether children and young people have any protected characteristics or additional vulnerabilities which would inform the way you use the Tool and be as aware as possible of any protected characteristics. These include race, culture, religion/beliefs, gender and sexual identity and physical and learning disabilities. Also be mindful that young people may not be neurotypical, that they may be care experienced or live within a blended family and adapt your conversation accordingly.
9. The Spotting the Signs Tool is most effective when it is personalised at each use. The Essential safety questions should be revisited at each contact and followed up with the Exploration and Assessment questions, Risk Assessment, Decision Making and Action Planning as indicated.
10. Be aware that even if you have no concerns at the time of the consultation/contact, the child or young person's circumstances may change. Always keep contemporaneous, detailed and informed notes and complete the decision making and action planning section in the Spotting the Signs Tool.

Guidance: The Essential Safety Questions

These questions were developed in response to what both children and young people and frontline professionals asked for, particularly in circumstances where contact time is short.

The questions are designed to explore physical, emotional, relational and environmental safety and are structured in a way to guide the professional to where they need to go next (if they need to go anywhere at all), so that if there are concerns, they can move on to the exploratory and assessment questions.

There are the six key questions in Section 1. The first three questions ask directly about concerns and worries that children or young people may have and the next two questions ask how children and young people are feeling and coping generally, and if they want to talk about anything else. These questions conclude with an opportunity to identify strengths and positives.

These questions are intended to be integrated by frontline professionals into assessment/consultation procedures where they exist within a service and into conversations with children and young people where there are no or less formal assessment processes in place.

1. Be open and transparent with children and young people about the reasons why you are asking the questions and explain that all children and young people are asked these four or five questions to ensure that they are getting the support and care they need to keep them safe. You may also want to explain that it can be difficult to answer the questions and that you are here to listen and to help. When asking each question you can add concrete examples if that would be helpful.
2. Reiterate explanations of your confidentiality policy prior to asking the questions if that is necessary and helpful.
3. The initial risk and safety and the exploration/assessment questions should be embedded within the way you work with children and young people to minimise the time associated with its use. The time required is likely to shorten as you become more familiar with the questions within each section.
4. These questions should be used at every contact with children and young people. This will enable them to build up trust and be more open. Children and young people may be unaware that they are experiencing or at risk of exploitation. Asking these questions at every contact also ensures that new and emerging risk can be identified.
5. Exercise your professional judgement as to when you ask these questions during your contact with children and young people. Adapt the language to fit with your professional style and the setting you work in.
6. Traditionally, many services do not question young people aged 16 and 17 about risk factors, but there is increasing evidence that young people of this age group are being exploited. Feedback from research, young people and frontline professionals has shown that it is acceptable to ask the initial risk and safety questions to young people in this older age group.

7. If a child or young person is unable for whatever reason to answer the questions on Spotting the Signs, a note should be made but they should not be pushed into answering. They may be prepared to respond at a subsequent visit/contact and with another professional.

Depending on the answers and how your professional curiosity is prompted, you can either conclude the conversation or move on to ask the relevant questions from the Exploration and Assessment section.

The Exploratory and Assessment Questions

The purpose of these questions is to enable the child or young person and the professional to explore the lived experience and context of their life in order to identify the signs and indicators of exploitation and the risk of potential exploitation and any additional need.

In order to facilitate the conversation, a range of questions and styles of questions are used including open/closed, reflective, strategic third person, and directive questions.

The first set of questions opens the topic and explores the young person's circumstances and lived experience. The second set of questions focus more explicitly on an exploration of the risk of exploitation and facilitates an assessment of actual and potential risk and any other additional needs.

Throughout the Spotting the Signs Tool, specific questions have been intentionally designed to elicit a third party perspective. For example, "What do the people around you think of your boyfriend?"

This type of question aims to assist in the recognition of risk and also support children and young peoples' understanding and perception of risk.

1. Rather than work through the questions in the manner of a checklist to be fully completed, we recommend that frontline professionals familiarise themselves with the questions in each of the sections so that they can:
 - Follow the flow of the conversation with the child or young person
 - Avoid repetition of questions which children or young people have already answered
 - Select the questions that are most relevant to the child or young person's - circumstances.
2. Young people have told us that they prefer to be asked sensitive questions in a professional but conversational manner, which is effective for both you and them. It is important to check that young people understand the questions and any specific words used. You may need to rephrase questions to suit individuals, and avoid using language that may be unfamiliar to children or young people, such as professional jargon/shorthand.
3. Children or young people may answer more than one of the questions at a time so it is important to listen carefully to what they are saying and move around the questions in a way that stays as close as possible to what they are saying. There is no need to ask all the questions in order or ask them all if they have already answered the questions.

4. Children and young people may be very fearful of the risk to themselves, their families and others when asked about criminal or gang related activities. Where possible try to ask questions about criminal activity in a way that allows young people to answer or not answer in a way that feels comfortable. If they conceal the truth it may be harder for them to open up at a later point. Professionals may well pick up on non verbal and behaviour clues that indicate fear and discomfort which can be noted.
5. Young people asked us to remember that there may be things that they don't tell their parents and carers because they want to protect their privacy rather than because they are hiding risky relationships and activities from them, so they asked us to remember that there might be a 'normal' level of privacy between them and their parents and carers which may not indicate risk. In particular, they highlighted that they may, from choice, discuss romantic relationships with parents and carers but not the sexual aspects of their relationships.
6. In relation to CSE, never assume that because a young person does not present as being sexually active they are not at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation. Young people who do not disclose sexual activity may still be at risk of CSE or be sexually active. It is also vital to clarify what a young person's understanding of sex is.
7. Always ask young people to clarify what they understand by sexual activity - for example, penetrative vaginal or anal sex, or oral sex. It is important to explain to young people whether you are referring to vaginal, oral or anal sex, and that, where there is risk of sexual exploitation, it may involve multiple partners.
8. When asking the young person about who they are having sex with, find out what term they feel comfortable using, as they may not consider that person to be a partner.
9. Be aware that a young person may perceive their situation as consensual when in fact they are being groomed, as this is the nature of sexual exploitation.

The closing question

The closing question recognises that we will draw the conversation to a close at some point and acknowledges that we are offering a further opportunity for the child or young person to say anything else. This closing question is important as it offers them an opportunity to talk about anything else or revisit anything they have touched on.

However, this question may also open up the need to repeat previously asked questions or for further questions to be asked as the child/young person may have built up trust during the conversation and now feels more comfortable to share more details of their circumstances before the conversation ends.

Assessment of Risk Decision Making and Action Planning

The purpose of this section is to enable professionals to review all the information they have in order to assess the level of risk and to make an action plan which most effectively safeguards the child or young person.

1. Look out for any unusual patterns within the child or young person's history so a professional judgement about their needs and the risk they face can be made.
2. This decision must be based on the professionals' judgement if they suspect the child or young person is experiencing, has experienced, or is at risk of CSE and/or CCE.
3. It may be helpful to consult indicators of CSE and CCE to help identify any less obvious signs of exploitation. Local Safeguarding Partnerships will have additional guidance along with details of referral pathways which you will need to follow; here are some additional useful links to indicators:

National Working Group

stop-ce.org/what-is-ce/spot-signs

NHS

nhs.uk/live-well/how-to-spot-child-sexual-exploitation

[Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health Safeguarding guidance for under 18s accessing early medical abortion services](#)

NSPCC

nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/child-sexual-exploitation
nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/gangs-criminal-exploitation

4. It is important for professionals to remember that identifying a low level of risk does not mean that there is no risk. Prevention and interventions at the earliest point are key. Professionals need to be mindful that identifying and responding to any unmet need that may have no direct link to indicators of CSE or CCE should still be considered and planned for. Optimising protective factors, including continuing to build a trusting relationship with the child or young person and harnessing resources, including parents and carers and wider family members will prove valuable for any child or young person in need or who requires protection.
5. If a professional considers a child or young person is at risk from their replies to the questions within Spotting the Signs, it is essential that they quickly follow up any concerns or disclosures using their organisational and local Safeguarding Partnership procedures. This includes keeping contemporaneous records of who they were referred to and when, as the child or young person may not disclose again.

6. Professionals must follow their service's safeguarding policy, including the application of Fraser guidelines where relevant and discuss with or inform their safeguarding lead.
7. It is important that professionals are aware of their organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures, and can follow local referral pathways and Department of Health and professional body guidance on confidentiality.
8. It may also be appropriate to *share intelligence within appropriate multi-agency networks* to help combat criminal and sexual exploitation to keep other children and young people safe and communities safe. It is important that any decisions to share intelligence include a careful assessment of the risk of any potential retaliatory action or escalating of threat and danger and are made with due consideration to the safety and protection of all involved.

There is some helpful guidance on the *Children's Society website* regarding intelligence sharing, including information on reporting locally.

Using Spotting the Signs

Structure of Spotting the Signs

1. Essential safety questions
2. Explanation and assessment questions
3. Assessment of risk, decision making and action planning

Your context

Why children and young people are using your services, what they have come to you for

Explain confidentiality

At appropriate point explain confidentiality and safeguarding within your organisation. Ensure children and young people understand

Introduce essential safety questions

Explain these are important questions we ask children and young people to see if they need any support or are at risk of harm

No concerns
Continue to deliver your service

Professional curiosity prompted/concerns identified

Exploratory and assessment questions
Sensitively move to ask further questions following the flow of the conversation or in the order presented: education, employment & training, family relationships, friendships, sexual activity and intimate relationships, substance/alcohol use, mental and emotional health and physical changes

Assessment of risk
What do we know? What are the concerns and risks? What are the strengths, positives and protective factors? Consult indicators and guidance

Decision making
Assessment of risk and harm based on what is known.
Record who has been involved including young people

Action planning
Signpost/referral for additional support
Social care referral
Information/intelligence sharing

Applying Spotting the Signs during online contact

Communicating and working online may be a different environment for professionals but the message we got from young people, which was also highlighted in the review of existing research, is that there is little distinction between 'real life' and 'online life' and the mix of the two is just how it is for the majority of children and young people. In that context we wanted to include some considerations when using Spotting the Signs in a remote delivery context.

Overall remote interactions between children and young people and professionals, depending whether it is audio or audio and visual, loses some of the visual and non verbal clues that would be picked up in face to face contact and relies mostly on clear verbal communication, attentive listening and setting as safe a context for the contact as possible.

Points to consider for remotes contacts;

- Checking where the child or young person is, who else is there, is it safe to talk and are they free from distraction
- Explaining confidentiality clearly and reiterating boundaries as appropriate
- If the contact has a visual option e.g. Zoom, consider asking the child or young person to agree to keep their camera on
- Preparing your response if the young person ends the call abruptly – agree how you will follow this up
- Explaining very clearly that you need to ask some questions to ensure that they are safe
- Prioritising and selecting the most pertinent and useful questions while the young person is still engaged on the call
- Paying close attention to what young people say, picking up on any audio or visual clues that may need to be explored further
- Discontinuing the call and putting alternative contact arrangements in place if you have any concerns that the young person is in an unsafe situation, for example that someone else is with them and directing their answers
- Providing additional information on where else young people can get support from your service or any other relevant service

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Background and context to the refresh

- The Spotting the Signs Tool and Guidance has been produced by BASHH and Brook with funding from the Department of Health.
- Spotting the Signs, developed in partnership between Brook and BASHH, is widely used and trusted by a wide variety of healthcare professionals as a standalone Tool or as a broad framework to support the identification of CSE and the potential risks of CSE.
- At the time of its development, Spotting the Signs broke new ground in supporting frontline professionals to recognise and respond to CSE, however, since its launch in 2014, how services engage with children and young people and our understanding of CSE has evolved and Spotting the Signs required an update to ensure that it continues to support professionals to recognise CSE and support effective responses in the current context. In addition, the understanding and assessment of digital and online risks, the support of young people increasingly accessing services in an online or remote context and to address the risks and signs of criminal exploitation needs to be addressed.
- This has been prompted by the rapid move to digital sexual and reproductive health (SRH) (including abortion care/[RCPCH Safeguarding guidance for children and young people under 18 accessing early medical abortion services](#)) and other children's and young peoples' frontline services during the Covid-19 pandemic. This shift in service delivery is likely to continue in the longer term. Practitioners have expressed concerns that they lack the skills and confidence to identify and address safeguarding concerns in digital consultations.
- Young people have played a key role in ensuring that the updated Tool works for them, is sensitive to their needs and reflects the complexities of CSE and CCE.
- Brook and BASHH are clear that effectively protecting children and young people from the harms of sexual and criminal exploitation is a multi-agency endeavour and working collaboratively with frontline colleagues and experts in the safeguarding field was central to the process undertaken to update the Spotting the Signs Tool.

About the working group

The working group was made up of representatives from Brook, the British Association for Sexual Health & HIV and The Association for Young People's Health.

Appendix 2 best practice guidance which informs the Tool

1. Contextual Safeguarding
2. Trauma informed approaches
3. Practice Principles
4. Child Sexual Abuse

1. Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding and responding to young peoples' experiences of significant harm beyond their families. Traditional approaches to protecting children/young people from harm have focussed on the risk of violence and abuse from inside the home and do not always address the time that children/young people spend outside the home and the influence of peers on young people's development and safety.

It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships. Contextual safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse beyond their front doors.

2. About Trauma Informed Approaches

"Trauma informed care is a strengths based framework that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasises physical, psychological and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment." (Hopper, Bassuk & Olivet 2014)

Trauma informed practice aims to increase practitioners' awareness of how trauma can negatively impact on individuals and communities, and their ability to feel safe or develop trusting relationships with health and care services and their staff.

It aims to improve the accessibility and quality of services by creating culturally sensitive, safe services that people trust and want to use. It seeks to prepare practitioners to work in collaboration and partnership with people and empower them to make choices about their health and wellbeing.

Trauma informed practice acknowledges the need to shift discussions to ask, 'What's happened?' and 'What does this person need?' rather than 'What is wrong with this person?'

3. Multi-agency Practice Principles for Responding to Child Exploitation and Extra-Familial Harm

The Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Support Programme has launched [*Practice Principles*](#) to shape and inform the work of multi-agency professionals responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm. The Practice Principles were developed by the TCE Support Programme consortium, led by Research in Practice, The Children's Society, and University of Bedfordshire as part of work funded by the Department for Education. They are supported by Home Office, the Department of Health and Social Care and Ministry of Justice

The eight [*Practice Principles*](#) build on the expertise of children, young people, parents, carers, and multi-agency professionals, as well as on key research. The Practice Principles are designed to support effective partnership working across different local contexts; providing a common language and framework to better respond to child exploitation and extra-familial harm.

No one set of local circumstances is the same as the next, and there isn't a single 'answer' for what to do to tackle child exploitation or extra-familial harm. The Practice Principles are not intended to be prescriptive guidance, nor do they provide a detailed map for every individual situation. Instead, the Practice Principles offer a compass to help navigate a complex landscape and guide local ways of working, with a focus on partnership behaviours and cultures that can support a coherent, collaborative and creative local response to child exploitation and extra-familial harm.

4. Communicating with Children Guide Child Sexual Abuse

Research and practice show that it can take years for a child to get to the point where they feel able to tell someone about their experiences. It's vital that anyone who works with children knows how to recognise what is happening and understands how to help the child to have that conversation. [*This guide*](#) brings together research, practice guidance to help give professionals the knowledge and confidence to act.

Appendix 3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Advisory Group

BASHH Adolescent Sexual Health Interest Group

The Lighthouse

Child Sexual Abuse Service for North Central London

University College London NHS Foundation Trust

Redthread Youth

Office for Health Improvement and Disparities National Adult and Young People Sexual Health Helplines

SERCO

Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, Safeguarding

Public Health Nurse Office

NWG Network

Child Exploitation and Missing from Home Team, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council,

NSPCC

Association for Young People's Health (AYPH)

Contributors to the Pilot

Brook Business Development

Brook Participation

Brook Forum Participation Members

Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust

Brook London

Brook Burnley

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