# Stoke on Trent Children’s Services: Multi Agency Child Exploitation Panel – Terms of Reference

**Overarching Principles**

1. This document should be read in conjunction with the following:

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| [**Joint Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy**](https://www.staffsscb.org.uk/Professionals/Procedures/Section-Four/Section-Four-Docs/CSE-Strategy-ISSUE-1-October-2016.docx) |
| [**Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Information Sharing Guidance for Practitioners**](https://www.staffsscb.org.uk/Latest-News/Briefings/Archive/SSCB-Briefing-21-Information-Sharing-Guidance-for-Practitioners.doc) |
| Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Child Exploitation Strategy (currently being drafted) |
| Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Serious Violence Strategy |
| Child Exploitation Risk Factor Matrix |

2. The Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) panel will be the forum where children are protected from exploitation through a partnership approach to disruption. MACE Panels will be implemented in conjunction with Contextual Safeguarding which will change the way that we safeguard children who are at risk of child exploitation.

3. The following definition of Child Exploitation will be used.

*Child exploitation is a form of child 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 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 exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur using technology*

4. The MACE panels recognise and discuss children within their context rather than as individual Children who require safeguarding from exploitation. This is linked to the ‘See Me, Hear Me’ Framework as published by the Office of the Children’s Commissioner.

* **Seen**; *in the context of their lives at home, friendship circles, health, education and public spaces (including social media).*
* **Heard***; by professionals taking time to hear what children and young people are saying and put themselves in their shoes and think about what their life might truly be like.*
* **Helped**; *by professionals remaining curious and by implementing effective and imaginative solutions that help children and young people and make them safer.*

(i)**The Child’s best interests must be the top priority**

The best interests of children and their rights to protection must drive all decision making. The paramountcy principle (Children Act 1989) must be adhered to where applicable and children’s rights under UNCRC Article 3 fully honoured.

(ii) **Participation of children and young people**

Services need to involve children when decisions are being made about their care, protection and on-going support and be kept informed on any issues that affect them throughout. Professionals must be mindful of children’s needs and equalities. Their UNCRC Article 12 rights must be honoured.

(iii) **Enduring relationships and support**

Support must be tailored to meet the needs of the child, according to their age, identity, ethnicity, belief, sexual orientation, disability, language, and stage of development. Children and young people have told us that a consistent person who sticks with them throughout the whole period of their protection and on-going care is crucial to their recovery.

(iv) **Comprehensive problem profiling**

The Joint Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Child Exploitation Strategy highlights the need for comprehensive problem profiles. MACE Panels contribute towards this by providing detailed information in relation to local trends, locations and persons of concern.

Area intelligence is co-ordinated by each district panel and shared as appropriate with panel members to inform disruption activity and allow professionals to effectively safeguard children. This includes sharing of information with Staffordshire Police to support local problem profiling and contribute towards wider regional profiles.

(v) **Effective information-sharing within and between agencies**

It is expected that all areas will hold a cross sector information sharing protocol, based around the safe handling and sharing of information. Protocols should focus upon the best interests of the child and their welfare and should take guidance from all relevant safeguarding and information governance legislation; all relevant agencies and services should be signatories, with expectations of signatories made clear within the document. Supporting these protocols the Multi Agency Child Exploitation Panel operates under its own confidentiality agreement, all present are expected to adhere to the agreement both within and outside of panel.

(vi) **Supervision, support and training of staff**

Services should invest in the development and support of staff including providing regular supervision and the opportunities for them to reflect on practice. Those professionals who offer direct support to exploited children and young people might require further intensive training and must have regular opportunities to reflect on their practice with a skilled consultant or supervisor.

(vii) **Evaluation and review**

Evaluations and regular reviews of the effectiveness of the Child Exploitation Strategy is necessary to ensure services and interventions are achieving their intended outcomes and meeting the child and young person’s needs. Children and young people must be directly involved in this process in compliance with Article 12 of the UNCRC. This will ensure that performance is driven continuously by a cycle that leads to improvement.

**MACE Panel Purpose**

5. The MACE Panel is not intended to replace or replicate existing statutory mechanisms for managing our planned work with individual children or linked groups of children, which will be via a multi-agency Early Help (EH), a Child in Need Plan (CIN Plan), a Child Protection Plan (CP Plan), a Youth Offending Service Plan or a looked after child Care Plan or Pathway Plan.

6. Where it is felt there is a clear escalation in Child Exploitation risk or concern for a young person, Child Protection procedures need to be followed or if threshold for Child Protection is not met, agencies should discuss at other meetings including CIN Meetings, Early Help meetings. If required these meetings should be moved to an earlier date to address the concerns and support needs of the child/family by using a multi-agency meeting and completing a Risk Factor Matrix.

7. The primary purpose of the MACE Panels will be to ensure strategic oversight is enabled at a city-wide level to enable problem profiling and to ensure prevention and targeted interventions aimed at groups and communities can be planned for and routinely monitored. The panels will thus support actions to safeguard children and to disrupt and reduce the opportunity for them to become victims of abuse as a result of Child Exploitation. This will be achieved via review of all locally held individual cases. Additional actions to existing Early Help Assessments, CIN, CP, YOS Plans or looked after children plans may be agreed as part of the panel’s primary strategic objectives.

8 It is intended that professionals receive an oversight of the level of Child Exploitation activity through hearing submissions from Team Managers, Service Managers or Lead Professionals in relation to all cases identified as medium or high within their area of work.

9. The MACE Panels will provide performance management oversight of practitioner responses to individual Child Exploitation cases and ensure that the Risk Factor Matrix is routinely used.

10. The MACE Panels will receive aggregated information about children who go missing from home or care in a given area to ensure any links between missing activity and Child Exploitation are made and acted upon.

11. The Panels will identify examples of best practice and disseminate learning from this across agencies.

12. The Panels will collect data to support the Children’s Safeguarding Board to achieve the desired outcomes specified within the Child Exploitation Strategy.

13. Children and parents/carers will normally be informed by the professional/agency identifying the Child Exploitation concerns that they are to be discussed at the Panels. Their views will be ascertained by the lead practitioner and shared with the Panel by the presenting professional.

**Accountability**

14. Panels will be reviewed annually, and findings from this review will be presented by report to senior managers, Responsible Authorities Group and the Safeguarding Children’s Board.

15. Alongside annual review, panel data is collated and analysed throughout the year in line

with Stoke on Trent City Council and the Safeguarding Children Boards internal reporting timeframes. This will include a bi-monthly panel data report.

16. Practitioners are responsible for ensuring existing planning mechanisms for managing EH, CIN, CP, YOS Plans and looked after children Care Plans/Pathway Plans are effectively in place, in line with statutory requirements and the needs of the child. Each agency represented at the Child Exploitation Panel remains accountable to their internal structure and safeguarding policies/practices.

**Outputs of the MACE Panels**

17. Review of individual Child Exploitation cases via the sharing of intelligence, wider agency information and case information. This will be used to aid multi-agency disruption activity.

18. Identification of any links between individual victims/offenders that have not been made apparent via individual case planning. This will be used to aid multi-agency disruption activity. Mapping will be a key output of the panels.

19. Make recommendations for enhancing actions identified within existing EH, CIN, CP, YOS Plans and looked after children Care Plan/Pathway Plan.

20. Monitoring of information with regards to practitioner compliance in completing the Risk Factor Matrix.

21. Aggregating data from all collated Risk Factor Matrix’s.

22. Classifying all known Child Exploitation cases according to agreed local classification systems:

* High Risk
* Medium Risk
* Low Risk

23. Agree multiagency plans for global prevention activity, including enhancing public awareness of Child Exploitation.

24. Agree multiagency plans for awareness raising activity encouraging the outcome that children and young people are aware of the risks of Child Exploitation and able to make good choices and know where to go to report abuse.

25. Agree multiagency plans for targeted prevention and disruption activity where the incidence of Child Exploitation is high (e.g. in relation to pupils attending a certain school or socialising in a certain geographical area).

26. Agree any multi-agency responses to disruption activity. This will include a clear focus on ensuring there are “safe spaces” for children across Stoke on Trent.

27. Hear the voice of the child and their parents/carers via the presenting professional.

28. Share information on locally available services for children discussed at the panel and identify any gaps in provision to Commissioners and the Safeguarding Board.

29. Promote available training across panel members and their wider organisations. Act where awareness training is identified as required by professionals.

30. All professionals invited to the MACE panel will be required to sign a confidentiality form at the start of each meeting and comply with the information sharing protocol.

31. There is an expectation that MACE panel members and attendees, as representatives of their agency, will attend prepared to share information about children, their families, associations and any people, locations or trends of concern.

All information discussed, and documents shared at the Child Exploitation Panel are strictly confidential and matters discussed should only be disclosed to professional colleagues in accordance with existing arrangements for safeguarding children consistent with the Children Act 2004 and Working Together 2015.

32. All partner agencies contributing to the MACE Panel process are required to ensure that their own procedures for information sharing and confidentiality support the ethos of Working Together 2015 and Staffordshire Safeguarding Board’s commitment to that.

33. All agencies in attendance at the Panels are responsible for securely filing documentation received.

**Proposed Core Panel Membership and Virtual Panel Members**

34. Core Panel Members: Service Manager of Adolescent Services (Chair), Child sexual exploitation and child exploitation social workers, EDT, Staffordshire Police CPET Team, Staffordshire Police Integrated Offender Management, Staffordshire Police Harm Reduction Hub, Health (Named Nurse), Schools and Education (as required), Youth Offending Service, Substance Misuse Services, specialist CSE services (including commissioned CSE and Missing service), FAST Team representative and the House Project.

35. Virtual Panel Members: As identified as relevant to individual children, or to allow oversight and feedback where appropriate, for example, Domestic Violence Services, Accommodation providers, Probation, MAPPA Representative, STAR sexual health services, Young Carers Hub, Representatives for out of county looked after children placed in Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire CSE / CE social worker, 3rd sector organisations.

**Locations of Panels**

35. Due to the close proximity of the localities in Stoke on Trent and the movement of children around the area we have decided to hold a city wide panel to consider high and medium risk. This will be chaired by the service manager of adolescent services who will have oversight of the citywide panels.

**Frequency of Panels**

37. MACE panels will be held fortnightly or as required, and will discuss all new cases presented. However, children will be reviewed on a bi-monthly schedule unless determined otherwise by the chair of the MACE Panel.

**Referral Pathway**

38. All cases to be discussed at panel must have a completed Child Exploitation Risk Factor Matrix (RFM) identifying their case as medium or high. Completed RFM’s should be submitted to the CSE / CE Coordinator’s.

39. The CSE / CE Coordinator’s will send a panel attendance scoping matrix to all CAST and CIC and YOS teams monthly to identify cases to be heard at the next local panel. In addition to this, partner agencies will be responsible for completing and sending any Risk Factor Matrix Forms to the CSE / CE Coordinators for inclusion within the panel.

40. The criteria for inclusion for discussion at a panel is that a child or young person is experiencing, or is at risk of suffering Child Exploitation, according to the definition provided previously. The Risk Factor Matrix must be updated at minimum 6 weekly intervals (or as a risk significantly increases or decreases) and should be reviewed prior to each panel.

41. The CSE or CE Coordinators will use the matrix to create a mapping document prior to each panel and from this will collate an agenda and invite presenting professionals to allocated time slots for case discussions.

42. **Panels are not an avenue for professionals to make new referrals to Stoke on Trent Childrens Services or partner agencies. Referrals should be made to the Safeguarding Referral Team at the point of identification of need or harm**

**Roles and Responsibilities of Panel Members**

**a) Panel Chair:**

The Panel will be chaired by the Service Manager for Adolescent Services. The Panel Chair will:

* Confirm the confidentiality statement and ensure that it is signed at each meeting by Panel members.
* Ensure that the discussion at the meeting remains focused, that the business of the meeting is achieved and that it is conducted within the time allocated.
* Ensure that members are able to contribute to the meeting.
* Agree the information collated from the meeting, the risk level of cases discussed; and the record of actions arising from the discussion, before distribution to Panel members.
* Ensure that allocated actions are carried out by agencies

**b) Panel Members**:

Core members of the Panel will:

* Attend the meetings and on any occasion when they are unable to attend, they should identify an appropriate representative from their agency to attend in their place.
* Attend ready to share any new or additional information over and above that already shared at the case management meetings. Contribute to the information sharing which enables the meetings to fulfil their purpose.
* Contribute to the actions agreed during the meetings and provide timely reports on progress and outcomes. This includes considering how their agency can contribute to wider disruption activity.

**c) CSE and CE Co-ordinator’s**:

The CSE and CE Co-ordinators will:

* Review panel attendance and will liaise with practitioners as appropriate to ensure attendance and arrange invite to panel.
* Link with other local authorities who have children placed in Stoke-on-Trent as necessary.
* Support Mapping of associations/links/risks/themes for each of the panels.
* Collate the agenda for the individual case discussions and invite the practitioners to allocated time slots for case discussion
* Distribute the agenda and any associated papers to Panel members one week in advance of the Panel meetings.
* Attend all the Panel meetings both to contribute to the discussion and to collate information provided at the meetings.
* Obtain agreement from Panel chair prior to profile information and actions agreed at the meetings being distributed to Panel members.

**d) Panel Attendees:**

Professionals will:

* Attend Panel at time invited and ensure all involved agencies are aware of attendance.
* Complete Risk Factor Matrix prior to the Panel and ensure these are sent within a timely manner to inform mapping.
* Come prepared to the Panel to present information about current worries, protective factors, intelligence of locations, associations or trends of concern.
* Follow up on any actions agreed prior to the next meeting.

**Review**

The terms of reference and operating principles of the MACE Panel will be reviewed annually.