

Draft Brothel Multi Agency Guidance

1. Introduction

Violence Against Women and Girls is a key priority for the Safer Kingston Partnership. This guidance/protocol has been developed to improve the identification of brothels and ensure relevant information is shared to safeguard and support adults who are at risk of sexual exploitation/modern slavery.

Selling or buying sexual services in the UK is not in and of itself illegal. The current UK legal framework criminalises antisocial behaviour that has an impact on society and those who profit from, control or coerce others.

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) guidance states: "*The police focus will be on reducing vulnerability and criminality. We will seek to maximise safety and increase trust and confidence. This will encourage those in the sex industry to report crimes and abuse. This approach will shift the focus onto safeguarding those being harmed in the sex industry.*" (p.4 National Policing Sex Work and Prostitution Guidance 2019).

The promotion of a person's human rights should also be at the forefront of our practice, and there should be strong professional commitment to autonomy in decision making and to the importance of supporting the individual's right to choose their own way of life. However other value positions, such as the promotion of dignity, or a duty of care, are sometimes also advanced as a rationale for interventions that are not explicitly sought by the individual (SCIE Report 46, 2001).

This process should not affect an individual's human rights but seeks to ensure that the relevant agencies exercise their duty of care in a robust manner and as far as is reasonable and proportionate.

This work is complex and requires a multi agency response to make an impact. No single agency or individual can see the complete picture to be able to identify and manage risks, but all may have insights that are crucial to safeguarding victims. Links will be established with other multi agency meetings and processes to safeguard children and manage the behaviour of perpetrators.

The guidance should be used flexibly and in a way that achieves best outcomes for adults at risk. It does not, for example, specify which agencies need to be involved in the process, or prescribe any specific actions that may need to be taken as this will be decided on a case by case basis.

2. Definition

There is currently not a statutory definition of sexual exploitation for Adults. However, one that applies to both children and adults is:

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.

(Statutory Definition of Child Sexual Exploitation - 'Working Together to Safeguarding Children').

Sexual exploitation involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where a victim (or a third person or persons) receives 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Victims may be forced into prostitution, pornography or lap dancing for little or no pay. They may be deprived of their freedom and be subject to threats and violence. Exploitative relationships are characterised in the main by the imbalance of power and control to the victim(s) from the perpetrator(s).

If there are any associated concerns about the exploitation of children here is the [local guidance](#) in relation to suspected child sexual abuse.

3. Signs and indicator

Common signs that someone is being sexually exploited include those listed below. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list and that warning signs will show themselves differently in each person. It is important to explore all concerns over someone's behaviour and personal circumstances and to consider whether these could be signs of exploitation.

- evidence or suspicions of sexual assault
- self-harm or significant changes in emotional wellbeing
- developing inappropriate or unusual relationships or associations, including relationships with controlling or significantly older people
- displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour, language or dress
- being isolated from peers and social networks
- unexplained absences, including persistently being late or going missing
- unexplained acquisition of money, clothes and mobile phones.
- using more than one phone, especially if both are used to communicate with different people (for example, if one phone is used exclusively to communicate with a specific group of 'friends')
- receiving an excessive amount of texts or phone calls – these may be from multiple callers, some of whom may be unknown.

4. What is a Multi Agency Planning (MAP) Meeting

This guidance has been developed to improve the identification of brothels and ensure a coordinated multi agency response to safeguard and support adult victims who are at risk of sexual exploitation.

The MAP meeting will form part of the pre-visit planning of Operation Moontwist.

When a brothel is identified or an adult at risk appears to be a victim of sexual exploitation, the lead agency (i.e. the agency initiating this guidance) should scope which agencies need to be involved in planning meetings. This should be based on which agencies should be involved in meeting the person's care support needs or may hold information connected to modern slavery or sexual exploitation concerns particularly where there are multiple adults at risk. Agencies should not decline to be part of the planning meeting on the basis that they are not currently actively working with the person. It is important to note that any agency can lead the multi-agency planning meetings.

The lead agency will usually be determined by which agency has the most knowledge about the person and their situation, the most current or previous engagement and based on the needs of the person given the risks within the person's situation. It is expected that agencies will prioritise attendance at MAP meetings wherever possible. When agencies are not able to attend the meetings, it is expected they will provide all relevant information.

When scoping invitees, consideration should be given as to which person might be best to work with the adult/s at risk; this is particularly important where there are multiple adults involved.

The role of agencies at the MAP meeting are as follows:

- Share relevant and proportionate information on current risks - all agencies should search all systems for information about the victim(s), perpetrator and any children.
- Identify options to increase the safety of the victim(s) and other vulnerable parties.
- Look at practical and on the ground measures in relation to any Brothel premises or those at risk of sexual exploitation..
- Create a multi-agency plan to address the identified risks and increase the safety and wellbeing of all those at identified.

Where possible the adult/s at risk should be advised of the meeting and their views should be sought in advance and be recorded as part of the multi-agency meeting. Careful consideration should be given about what information can be shared especially where there are multiple adults involved based on risks within the situation. The decision and reasons for this should be clearly documented. If there is uncertainty, then the lead agency should consider seeking legal advice within their agency about whether information should be shared.

Capacity or lack of capacity is a vital element in safety planning with, or on behalf of, adults who are at risk of sexual exploitation. Therefore, the adult at risk's mental capacity in respect of the specific concerns associated with the case should be discussed at the beginning of each meeting. If there are doubts raised about the person's capacity, then a mental capacity assessment should be undertaken in relation to this decision.

5. Multi Agency Planning Meeting

The main purpose of the initial support planning meeting is to agree a plan to try to reduce the level of risk to the person/s within their situation. Whilst the risk is shared on a multi agency basis it may be agreed that only one agency will be taking the lead. This should be the agency that the group agrees will have the best chance of reducing risk to the person/s.

The purpose of the subsequent multi-agency meetings is to review whether the plan is working to reduce the level of risk and if not agree whether the plan needs to change or to try another approach. If it is known that a number of adults have been affected by sexual exploitation in the area, the meeting should also try to 'map' any common themes and patterns in relation to the perpetrators.

The meetings should be chaired by someone who has an appropriate level of authority to agree actions on behalf of their agency and appropriately challenge other agencies if they are not participating as required in the process. It is important to agree timescales for each part of the process (to prevent the case 'drifting'). This will be different for each case dependent on individual circumstances.

Within the support plan, it should be clear what the agreed actions are, who is responsible for carrying out the actions and the timescales involved and the date of the next meeting. Disagreements should also be clearly documented.

The lead agency is responsible for ensuring that the notes and actions from the meeting are sent in a timely manner to all those present at the meeting, and also those people or agencies not present but where actions have been identified for them. Arrangements must be agreed as to how the adult/s at risk will be updated about the outcome of the meeting.

There are templates for the [Multi Agency Planning meeting](#) and the [Multi Agency Review Meeting](#)

6. Professional Disputes and Escalation

It is recognised that at times there will be disagreements over the handling of concerns. These disagreements typically occur when:

- the adult at risk is not considered to meet criteria for safeguarding process;
- the person's capacity to make decisions about their risk within their situation is disputed;

- professionals feel that meeting the needs of the adult at risk sits outside of their work remit;
- partner agencies are consistently not providing input to the process, or following up on their actions;
- professionals are in dispute about aspects of information sharing and / or confidentiality.

Professionals involved in this process should always try to work out their differences and put the adult's needs at the centre of the process. Where there are irreconcilable and significant differences between professionals it may also be necessary to consider escalating the case to more senior decision makers within organisations and ultimately the Safer Kingston Partnership.

7. Legal Considerations

The [Care and Support Statutory Guidance \(Department of Health and Social Care\)](#) lists modern slavery as a type of abuse. This is the first time that it has been categorised as an adult safeguarding concern and it recognises the abusive nature of such situations.

[Modern Slavery Act 2015](#)

Includes:

- Sexual exploitation
- Slavery, Servitude and Forced or Compulsory Labour
- Human Trafficking

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 specifies that public authorities have a **duty to notify** the Home Office of any individual encountered in England and Wales who they believe is a suspected victim of **slavery or human trafficking**. More information can be found [here](#).

8. Relevant Guidance

[Resource Pack](#)

National Referral Mechanism

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying victims of Human Trafficking or Modern Slavery, and ensuring they receive the appropriate support.

The NRM provides potential victims with a number of support services, including accommodation, medical care, legal advice and counselling. The NRM further allows for a period of reflection where a person cannot be removed from the UK. The recovery period is intended to give the victim time to recover and escape the influence of their traffickers, and to make an informed decision on cooperating with the authorities.

- Refer all children into the NRM if it is suspected that they are victims of Modern Slavery offences. You do not need their consent. Liaise with Social Services/consider police protection.
- Persons aged 18+ must give their consent to enter the NRM.

- If an adult declines to enter the NRM, a MS1 Duty to Notify form must be completed if it is suspected that they are a victim of Modern Slavery offences.

Referrals are completed online: <https://www.modernslavery.homeoffice.gov.uk>

National Ugly Mugs

Safety is a key issue and support to prevent risks to an individual or improve the general safety of the community – in particular by disseminating intelligence about dangerous individuals and apprehending perpetrators – is a key element in responding effectively to adults at risk of sexual exploitation.

National Ugly Mugs scheme circulate alerts to people involved in prostitution and have also developed report forms and formal information-sharing and partnership arrangements (which protect client confidentiality and consent) with local police forces. This aids intelligence gathering, victim support, detection, and conviction of offenders. It also allows third party reporting and provides an extra source of intelligence to police.