Academic Guardians UK

Child Sexual Exploitation Policy

This document outlines - The specific form of child abuse called Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE); the need for staff, local coordinators, homestay host families and drivers to be aware of statutory guidance; the policy and procedure to follow if a member of the Academic Guardians UK (AGUK) team receives a report of a child being at risk of or involved in CSE or if they have concerns about a child or young person in general. The Child Sexual Exploitation policy and procedures should be seen as part of AGUK's wider and existing safeguarding framework.

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Academic Guardians UK Ltd – Child Sexual Exploitation Policy

Policy:	Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
Summary:	This document outlines - The specific form of child abuse called Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE); the need for staff, local coordinators, homestay host families and drivers to be aware of statutory guidance; the policy and procedure to follow if a member of the Academic Guardians UK (AGUK) team receives a report of a child being at risk of or involved in CSE or if they have concerns about a child or young person in general. The Child Sexual Exploitation policy and procedures should be seen as part of AGUK's wider and existing safeguarding framework.
Policy Owner:	Andrew Kettle (Designated Safeguarding & Prevent Lead) Update: August 2024
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1. Policy

1.1 Legislation & Understanding

The Department for Education's 'Working Together To Safeguard Children 2018' describes child sexual exploitation 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.

The Department for Education –'Child Sexual Exploitation – Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers' (February 2017) go on to say that -

A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. Throughout this advice the terms 'child' and 'children' are used to refer to all those under the age of 18. The duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people (under 18) including the keeping them safe from sexual exploitation is a key part of the Government's drive to improve outcomes for children and young people. This is supported in the core Government guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'.

Children and young people in sexually exploitative situations and relationships are persuaded or forced to perform sexual activities or have sexual activities performed on them in return for gifts, drugs, money or affection. CSE can take place in person, online, or using a combination of both. Perpetrators of CSE use a power imbalance to exploit children and young people. This may arise from a range of factors including:

- Age
- Gender
- sexual identity
- cognitive ability
- physical strength
- status
- access to economic or other resources (Department of Education, 2017).

Sexual exploitation is a hidden crime. Young people have often been groomed into trusting their abuser and may not understand that they're being abused. They may depend on their abuser and be too scared

to tell anyone what's happening because they don't want to get them in trouble or risk losing them. They may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for sexual exploitation.

Academic Guardians UK staff, homestay host families and drivers should be alert to changes in reports of changes in children's behaviour which could indicate that they may need help or protection. All organisational members are encouraged to use their judgement in identifying children who may be at risk of CSE and to report any concerns to the Designated Safeguarding & Prevent Lead (as per the reporting procedure outlined in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy).

1.2 AGUK - Policy

Staff members, local coordinators, homestay host families and drivers are expected to have a general understanding of the risks affecting children and young people, how to identify individual children who may be at risk of or involved in CSE, and what to do to support them. This policy outlines a clear procedure for protecting children at risk of CSE or those who are involved in CSE.

Academic Guardians UK understands that the duty to protect children from CSE must build on existing partnerships. For example - with schools, parents and Local Safeguarding Children Boards. This policy considers the need for effective engagement with partners who are in key positions to spot signs of CSE, (where this would not expose the child to further risk), and the need to be able to offer assistance and advice to those who raise concerns or who require signposting to the right support mechanism. Academic Guardians UK understands the importance of awareness training for staff, homestay host families and drivers to identify children at risk of being drawn into CSE. Company training needs are assessed internally with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) being the point of advice and support for staff, with regular safeguarding updates being circulated.

The Academic Guardians UK Policy references recent HM Government Reports of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019' and 'Child Sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners, to ensure that there is an organisational wide awareness of the advice, support and directive that is being given to schools:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-sexual-exploitation-definition-and-guide-for-practitioners

Who is vulnerable to child sexual exploitation?

Any child, in any community: Child sexual exploitation occurs across the country but is often hidden so prevalence data is hard to ascertain. However, areas proactively looking for child sexual exploitation are uncovering a problem. All practitioners should be open to the possibility that the children they work with might be affected.

Age: Children aged 12-15 years of age are most at risk of child sexual exploitation although victims as young as 8 have been identified, particularly in relation to online concerns. Equally, those aged 16 or above can also experience child sexual exploitation, and it is important that such abuse is not overlooked due to assumed capacity to consent. Account should be taken of heightened risks amongst this age group, particularly those without adequate economic or systemic support.

Gender: Though child sexual exploitation may be most frequently observed amongst young females, boys are also at risk. Practitioners should be alert to the fact that boys may be less likely than females to disclose experiences of child sexual exploitation and less likely to have these identified by others.

Ethnicity: Child sexual exploitation affects all ethnic groups.

Heightened vulnerability factors: Working Together makes clear the requirements for holistic assessment. Sexual exploitation is often linked to other issues in the life of a child or young person, or in the wider community context. Practitioners should be alert to the fact that child sexual exploitation is complex and rarely presents in isolation of other needs and risks of harm (although this may not always be the case, particularly in relation to online abuse). Child sexual exploitation may be linked to other crimes and practitioners should be mindful that a child who may present as being involved in criminal activity is actually being exploited.

Key indicators of children being sexually exploited

Staff members who have direct and indirect contact with students and young people in public and private sector organisations should be aware of the key indicators of children being sexually exploited. CSE can be very difficult to identify. Warning signs can easily be mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour which can include:

- going missing for periods of time or regularly coming home late
- regularly missing school or education or not taking part in education
- appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions for example mobile phones, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes;
- spending time at places of concern, such as hotels or known brothels;
- get involved in gangs, gang fights, gang membership;
- not know where they are because they have been moved around the country;
- associating with other young people involved in exploitation;
- having older boyfriends or girlfriends;
- suffering from sexually transmitted infections
- mood swings or changes in emotional wellbeing;
- drug and alcohol misuse; and
- displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour.

The following vulnerabilities are examples of the types of things children can experience that might make them more susceptible to CSE:

- Having a prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse;
- Lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past (domestic violence or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example);
- Recent bereavement or loss;
- Social isolation or social difficulties;
- Absence of a safe environment to explore sexuality;
- Economic vulnerability;
- Homelessness or insecure accommodation status;
- Connections with other children and young people who are being sexually exploited;
- Family members or other connections involved in adult sex work;
- Having a physical or learning disability;
- Being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories); and
- Sexual identity.

Not all children and young people with these vulnerabilities will experience child sexual exploitation. Child sexual exploitation can also occur without any of these vulnerabilities being present.
Children and young people who are victims of CSE may also show signs of sexual abuse or grooming. Details of these abuse types can be found on the NSPCC website. Practitioners should also be aware that many children and young people who are victims of sexual exploitation do not recognise themselves as such.

A significant number of children who are victims of sexual exploitation go missing from education or home at some point. Return interviews for children or young people who have been reported as absent or missing can help in establishing why they ran away and the subsequent support that may be required, as well as preventing repeat incidents. The information gathered from return interviews can be used to inform the identification, referral and assessment of any child sexual exploitation cases.
Academic Guardians UK staff members may receive reports or have concerns that a child or young person is being abused because of unusual or changes in behaviour. Staff may notice that the child or young person:

- has a sudden change in behaviour
- is withdrawn and/or anxious
- is depressed
- is aggressive
- has problems sleeping and/or nightmares
- has eating disorders or changes in eating habits

- wets the bed or soils clothes
- takes drugs and/or drinks alcohol
- self harms and/or has thoughts about suicide
- isolation from family and friends
- criminal activity

Potential indicators of risk can include:

- Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc without plausible explanation;
- Gang-association and/or isolation from peers/social networks;
- Exclusion or unexplained absences from school, college or work;
- Leaving home/care without explanation and persistently going missing or returning late;
- Excessive receipt of texts/phone calls;
- Returning home under the influence of drugs/alcohol;
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age/sexually transmitted infections;
- Evidence of/suspicions of physical or sexual assault;
- Relationships with controlling or significantly older individuals or groups;
- Multiple callers (unknown adults or peers);
- Frequenting areas known for sex work;
- Concerning use of internet or other social media;
- Increasing secretiveness around behaviours; and
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being.

Staff should remain open to the fact that CSE can occur without any of these risk indicators being obviously present. Practitioners should also be alert to the fact that some risk assessments have been constructed around indicators of face-to-face perpetration by adults and may not adequately capture online or peer-perpetrated forms of harm. Risk assessments only capture risk at the point of assessment and that levels of risk vary over time, and that the presence of these indicators may be explained by other forms of vulnerability rather than CSE.

Staff members, homestay host families and drivers should discuss any urgent concerns with the Designated Safeguarding & Prevent Lead - Director Andrew Kettle, who can be contacted on 0203 515 8880 or 07823 321 993. Non-urgent concerns can be submitted to Andrew Kettle on andrew@academic-guardians.co.uk. The reporting procedure is detailed in full in the section below titled 'Academic Guardians UK Procedure'

In assessing whether a child or young person is a victim of sexual exploitation, or at risk of becoming a victim, careful consideration should be given to the issue of consent. It is important to bear in mind that:

- a child under the age of 13 is not legally capable of consenting to sex (it is statutory rape) or any other type of sexual touching;
- sexual activity with a child under 16 is also an offence;
- it is an offence for a person to have a sexual relationship with a 16 or 17 year old if they hold a position of trust or authority in relation to them; ƒ where sexual activity with a 16 or 17 year old does not result in an offence being committed, it may still result in harm, or the likelihood of harm being suffered;
- non-consensual sex is rape whatever the age of the victim; and
- if the victim is incapacitated through drink or drugs, or the victim or his or her family has been subject to violence or the threat of it, they cannot be considered to have given true consent and therefore offences may have been committed.

Child sexual exploitation is therefore potentially a child protection issue for all children under the age of 18 years and not just those in a specific age group.

1.3 Academic Guardians UK Procedure

1.3.1 Academic Guardians staff member receives the report about a child or young person displaying indicators of CSE from a student, member of staff at a school, parent or other source by face to face disclosure, email or telephone call, or staff member develops concerns that a child or young person is displaying possible indicators or CSE.

1.3.2 Academic Guardians Staff member adheres to the Child Protection Policy including contemporaneously recording the disclosure in the most appropriate format (using the Tell Explain Describe model if the information is being given by a student) or reporting their concerns in writing to the Designated Safeguarding & Prevent Lead - Director Andrew Kettle who can be contacted on 0203 515 8880 or 07823 321 993.

1.3.3 The record of the disclosure is reported verbally as soon as practicable to the Designated Safeguarding & Prevent Lead - Director Andrew Kettle who can be contacted on 0203 515 8880 or 07823 321 993.

1.3.4 The staff member must submit a written record of the disclosure or concern on a Safeguarding Referral Report Form to Andrew Kettle on andrew@academic-guardians.co.uk.

1.3.5 The DSL will hold an emergency strategy meeting to discuss the incident, assess the alleged threat and risk to the child, implement an action plan and continue to review the situation until a resolution has been achieved.

1.1. The meeting will be recorded with timed and dated entries within the 'APlus' portal / student record. An additional student folder will be created in the safeguarding teams (Directors) private secure portal to manage all correspondence and recorded actions.

1.3.6 The incident will be referred to a statutory agency for further review where this is a necessary, relevant and proportionate course of action where a child or young person may be at risk of suffering significant harm or in need of support.

1.4 Working with partners to protect children

Academic Guardians UK recognises the opportunity that the company has to support partners, including schools and medical professionals in helping to protect and support children and young people at risk of or involved in CSE. Disclosures and concerns can be reported to Academic Guardians UK staff in relation to our own students, and also in relation to other children and young people who our students may be in contact with.

Academic Guardians UK acknowledges the importance of early sharing of information being key to providing effective help where there are emerging problems. This is detailed in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Where possible confidential personal information is shared with consent. However, where there are concerns that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, consideration will be given to disclosing information without consent where the public interest served by protecting the child from harm outweighs the duty of confidentiality.

As CSE is a form of child abuse, Academic Guardians UK will report cases or concerns in line with the company's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and national guidance. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will make an emergency or non-emergency report to the police or other statutory organisation as appropriate. Local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are accessible to Academic Guardians UK. The process for referring concerns about the welfare of children to local authority children's social care is available to staff, homestay host families and drivers.

All organisation members should be aware that anonymous reports can be made through Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111, via police force websites or advice can be obtained by contacting the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000.

1.5 Awareness Training for Staff

The following sites provide online training for staff who can regularly self-brief on how to identify children and young people who are at risk of or involved in CSE. Staff are expected to use these tools annually to complement the safeguarding training provided by Academic Guardians UK.

Online Courses - Staff should register using the following link:
https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/training/safeguarding-children-training-course-levels

Following registration staff should select the course titled 'Keep them safe – protecting children from Child Sexual Exploitation: https://www.virtual-college.co.uk/resources/free-courses/keep-them-safe

Metropolitan Police videos:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STJ163BKOxQ

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoWLWS4-kU

Supplementary reading:

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-exploitation/what-is-child-sexual-exploitation/

1.6 Contacts:

Designated Safeguarding Lead & Prevent Lead – Director Andrew Kettle who can be contacted on 0203 515 8880, 07823 321 993 or andrew@academic-guardians.co.uk

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – Director Dawn Kettle who can be contacted on 0203 515 8880, 07931 954 106 or dawn@academic-guardians.co.uk

Concerns in relation to the Managing Directors should be addressed to the Director of Safeguarding, Andrew Kettle, Concerns in relation to the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be addressed to Dawn Kettle and vice versa, on a confidential basis without disclosing to the safeguarding officer the matter relates to. As the DDL & DDSL are connected parties, then concerns about either can also be addressed with the Safeguarding Partners as detailed below. Concerns about all Directors should be directed to Crimestoppers, which will remain confidential.

Safeguarding Partners - Academic Guardians UK registered office is within the borough of Islington whose current safeguarding contact details are as follows:

Website: https://www.islingtonscp.org.uk/are-you-worried-about-a-child

Children's Services Contact Team - +44 20 7527 7400

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) - +44 20 7527 8102

Information about services for children can be found on the Islington Family Directory https://www.islingtonscp.org.uk/

Police Referrals - Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) +44 20 8733 6495 or +44 20 8733 6500

For Emergencies - 999

All Local Safeguarding Partnerships & MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs) contact details are provided to Homestay Host families, attached to the student profile on confirmation of booking.

A link to the list of Local Safeguarding Partnerships can be found here.