

Craig Barlow Consultancy & Training Ltd.

# **Introducing the Adapted Systemic Investigation, Protection and Prosecution Strategy (SIPPS) for Child Sexual Exploitation**

**Guidance and Training for a systemic approach  
to safeguarding against Child Sexual Exploitation**

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## Introducing The Adapted SIPPS for CSE:

### A Model of Assessment and Intervention

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#### An Emergent Constructivist Model of Assessment and Intervention

This Course and Guide provides practitioners with a new approach to the investigation / assessment of, and intervention in, cases of Child Sexual Exploitation. It draws on the Systemic Investigation, Protection and Prosecution Strategy (SIPPS) for Modern Slavery (Barlow, et al., 2015) and supports the Government's Modern Slavery Strategy (the central principles being Pursuit of offenders, Prevention, Protection and Preparation to reduce further harm, proactive identification of victims and enhanced victim support).

It begins with the approach to collecting and, importantly, analysing information in order to develop the next relevant question towards a theory of what has been, or is happening. This approach enables practitioners to account for the unpredictable dynamics of the abusive and exploitative relationship.

The model has 4 fundamental tenets:

1. Minimising preconceived ideas about the case and its characteristics.
2. Simultaneously uses information gathering and analysis to inform each other.
3. Remains open to varied explanations and/or understandings of the information
4. Focuses on information analysis to construct middle-range theories

When a systematic, comparative, and interactive approach is taken to the initial part of the investigation / assessment (gathering the immediate information and identifying the main concern) open ended strategies begin to emerge: The assessor / investigator can make conjectures and check them against empirical data, with colleagues and with witnesses. This inevitably leads to deductive reasoning as the assessment / investigation proceeds. It prompts early analytic thinking and keeps practitioners interacting with their information and sources as well as their initial, loosely formed analysis.

The Adapted SIPPS for CSE approach to Risk Assessment, Intervention and Management does not provide a rigid list of %Signs and Signals+and numerical rating systems or risk categories. Rather the items should be used as an *aides memoir*, prompting thought and analysis of the available information and using this to undertake the next step in their enquiry (finding gaps and questions, identifying the next relevant source of information).

The Worksheet facilitates the assessor / investigator in writing progressively analytic (as opposed to descriptive) notes and records.

Our model emphasises that CSE can be placed upon both a temporal and developmental continuum.

- **It presupposes a past:** Child Sexual Exploitation does not happen in a vacuum, it exists because there is a demand for children and young adults to abuse sexually and some children may be more likely to be exploited than others. Therefore it is crucial to make sense of the context from which the child and abuser have come. The context provides the %Conditional+Factors that contribute to the existence of a situation in which abuse can occur.

- **It assumes the immediacy of the present** and the situation or context in which all the protagonists now find themselves: How do they make sense of their predicament, what are their beliefs and relationships to and with each other? In this regard direct interaction with children, their support networks and even the perpetrators is essential to understand their respective constructs. This requires us to listen to and analyse the discourse of Child Sexual Exploitation.
- **Finally, this model implies a future:** What will happen in the short, medium and long term both with and without intervention? What are the most likely scenarios? What needs to happen in order to keep the child or children safe and reduce the likelihood of re-victimisation or transition from victim to perpetrator.

## USING THE ADAPTED SIPPS FOR CSE

CSE incorporates acts of sexual and non-sexual violence and intimidation. The acts can vary with respect to such things as relationship to the victim(s), severity of physical or psychological harm, use of weapons and implements, motivations etc.

Child Sexual Exploitation Assessment is defined as the process of evaluating individuals in order to:

1. Characterise the risk / threat that a child is being or is likely to be sexually exploited
2. Develop interventions to manage and reduce that risk

The focus is on decision making about what the individuals were trying to achieve and not simply what happened. It is the task of professionals to understand how and why a person has come to be harmed or to harm others in the past in order to determine whether the antecedents to that event might lead to similar events re-occurring.

The ultimate goal is the prevention of child sexual exploitation and resultant harm. This assessment and investigative procedure aims to be reliable in terms of replicable, consistent results. It should be used to identify, evaluate and prioritise health, social care and law enforcement / legal services that can work together to manage the risk of child sexual exploitation.

This process is one of structured professional judgment; it helps professionals make explicit, as far as possible, the basis for their opinions, decisions and interventions.

## Scope

The SIPPS for CSE is not a test or scale in the usual sense of the terms. Its purpose is not to provide a measure of risk using cut-off scores or norms as do actuarial tests and non discretionary scales. The Adapted SIPPS for CSE is designed to be accessible and useful to practitioners engaged in the assessment of risk in the child safeguarding arena, investigation and prosecution of suspected CSE cases and recovery programmes that reduce the risk of re-victimisation or transition to a perpetrator or recruiter role.

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The SIPPS is a structured assessment protocol intended principally for use in the assessment of risk of CSE and can be used to contribute to Single Assessments, ABE Interview Strategies and disruption and prosecution strategies when there are CSE concerns.

The assessment items are based upon empirically-derived risk factors. It contains 26 items that are supported by clinical research and consensus of practitioner experience. The Adapted SIPPS for CSE Assessment and Intervention training programme has been developed to establish reliability and consistency of approach to implementing the assessment.

It works especially well in the context of multi-disciplinary or team settings and is well suited to the systemic unit model of social work and Joint Police and Social Care investigations. Nevertheless it can also be an effective tool for individual practitioners. It can be used as an initial assessment tool, or as a method of monitoring and measuring progress by applying and coding the items periodically during the implementation of safety plans and direct working with children and families.

The Adapted SIPPS for CSE is a set of guidelines that have been developed to reflect current knowledge within the disciplines of Social Work, Policing, Civil and Criminal Law and Child Safeguarding. The guidelines attempt to define the risk being considered; discuss the necessary qualifications for conducting an assessment; recommend what information should be considered; identify a set of core risk factors that, according to academic and professional literature, should be considered as part of any comprehensive assessment. By so doing, this tool will improve the consistency and usefulness of decisions, as well as improve the transparency of decision making.

## Key Principles

1. The assessment / Investigation gathers information concerning multiple domains of the child and their family's functioning. It reflects the fact that families that are troubled or at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation are not a heterogeneous group. Child Sexual Exploitation is itself is a multi-faceted problem.
2. The procedure uses multiple methods to gather information: Over-reliance on a particular method can result in an incomplete or biased assessment.
3. The procedure gathers data from multiple sources because people minimise or deny the harm they have caused or experienced, are under pressure to present a positive self image or significantly over-estimate their strengths and abilities. Over-reliance on a particular source can result in an incomplete or biased assessment.
4. The procedure addresses vulnerability factors in children but also addresses risk factors associated with predatory adults and victim accessing behaviours.
5. The procedure allows practitioners to judge the credibility of various sources of information, reconcile contradictory information and judge whether information is sufficient to permit a valid decision.
6. The status of conditional and consequential factors fluctuates over time and such fluctuations can occur rapidly. Investigations and assessments should be re-evaluated at regular intervals or whenever there is a change to the status of the case.
7. The procedure aims to be comprehensible to people who must use the findings of the assessment.
8. The prevention of child sexual abuse through CSE is the primary goal of risk assessment. This procedure goes beyond making static predictions to develop responsive, flexible interventions

## **User Qualifications**

The CSE Risk Assessment tool is designed to assist in making clinical judgements and formulating safeguarding plans. Administration and Coding requires professional skill and judgement. It is anticipated that the CSE Risk Assessment Tool should be used only by professionals with qualifications, training and experience of working within statutory child safeguarding services.

The CSE Risk Assessment Tool is supported by a specific training programme. Practitioners should undertake the training prior to administering and coding the tool to ensure rater-reliability and consistency.

For further information please contact

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