

# Salford Child Sexual Abuse Strategy

2023–2026



Salford City Council

Salford  
Safeguarding  
Children Partnership

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# 1. Introduction and purpose

In 2021, Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) was identified as a strategic priority for the Salford Safeguarding Children Partnership. The CSA sub group was established in February 2022. The group includes key members from across the partnership who work with children and young people affected by child sexual abuse. The sub group embarked upon the mission to develop a whole system response to CSA and to oversee practice to ensure all children affected are effectively safeguarded in Salford.

The first priority for the sub group was to develop a child sexual abuse strategy to set out the clear priorities for children and young people in Salford.

The SSCP welcome this strategy which sets out how the partnership intends to achieve specific improvements in respect of the work of all agencies who work with children and young people affected by CSA in Salford.

This strategy is aligned with the overall ambition for the Safeguarding Children Partnership and governance for the strategy which sits within the SSCP arrangements.



This strategy sets out Salford's ambition for a whole-system response to all forms of child sexual abuse as defined in Working Together (2018):

**“Child sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.**

**The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.**

**They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse.**

**Sexual abuse can take place online and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males, women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.”**

The challenges and aims set out in this strategy will direct our work to improve the response to child sexual abuse in the long-term. However we cannot wait to protect our children from abuse. The CSA sub group work plan will detail the steps that will be undertaken and in what order to drive a step-change in our response. We will update this strategy to ensure it takes into account emerging evidence and intelligence. The CSA

sub group will work in parallel with the exploitation sub group to reduce risks to children and young people in Salford and to safeguard them from all forms of abuse.

In recognition that some people who have experienced child sexual abuse will identify as victims and others as survivors, we use both terms throughout this document to refer to those who have been sexually abused.

## 2. SSCP Strategic business priorities (2023 to 2026)

In Salford we recognise safeguarding children can only be achieved by inter-agency and community partnership working. All children, regardless of their age and background deserve high quality and effective support as soon as a need is identified.

Professionals working with children and their families in Salford take their responsibility to keep children safe very seriously. All partners are committed to working together so every child in Salford is safe, well and able to reach their full potential.

**In July 2022, the SSCP came together to agree the strategic business priorities for the partnership for the next three years (for 2023 to 2026).**

- 1 We are committed to working together to **prevent** abuse.
- 2 Where necessary partners will take action to **protect** children from harm.
- 3 We will work together with other partnerships in the city to ensure there is **effective communication and engagement** activity, identifying cross-cutting themes and targeting communications activity to share learning and key messages to improve safeguarding children practice.
- 4 Listening and responding to the **voice** of children and young people, their families and communities is a core thread throughout our partnership, all relevant sub-groups and associated work streams.
- 5 We will continue to evaluate practice and its impact to ensure professionals and organisations within Salford are **effective in keeping children safe**.



## 3. Child sexual abuse (CSA)

### Prevalence

Across the UK and the world, children are subjected to horrific sexual abuse which has a devastating impact on their lives. Recent high profile investigations have exposed child sexual abuse on a truly shocking scale.

**7.5 per cent of adults are estimated to have experienced sexual abuse before they were 16 approximately 3.5 cent of men and 11.5 per cent of women.**

Latest prevalence survey by Office of National Statistics (ONS).

It is difficult to understand the scale of offending and how many victims and survivors remain unidentified because of under-reporting, under-identification of victims and survivors by agencies and lack of robust data.

**In Salford, in April 2022, 334 children were subject to Child Protection Plans.**

**Of these, 1.24 per cent were under the category of sexual abuse.**

**This figure is lower than the national average of 4 per cent (ONS, March 2020).**

### The hidden nature of CSA

The nature of CSA means that often, this abuse remains hidden and under-identified. There are many reasons why children will not or cannot disclose abuse. The Crime Survey for England and Wales undertaken in March 2019 found the most common reasons given by adults for not telling anyone about the abuse they experienced in childhood were embarrassment and thinking they would not be believed.

Certain groups may face barriers to disclosure which affects understanding of overall prevalence. Boys, children with disabilities and those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups (BAME) are under-represented in official statistics (ONS, 2019). Sadly, we know when children do disclose, they are not always believed.

Child sexual abuse is evolving and perpetrators are increasingly using technology and the internet to offend. Online exploitation is an area of focus for the SSCP Exploitation sub group.

### The impact of CSA

While the impact of child sexual abuse on victims and survivors can vary significantly, there is strong evidence CSA is associated with an increased risk of adverse outcomes in many areas of a person's life. This can include physical, emotional and mental wellbeing, relationships, social economic outcomes and vulnerability to re-victimisation. The impact of CSA can last for a lifetime.

## National context

In 2021 the government published the Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy which detailed three key objectives:

1. Tackling all forms of child sexual abuse and bringing offenders to justice
2. Preventing offending and re-offending
3. Protecting and safeguarding children and young people and supporting all victims and survivors

In June 2021 the Department for Education commissioned Ofsted to undertake a review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges and funded the NSPCC to create a specific helpline for victims to report abuse in education. The review recommended:

**“Multi-agency partners should work to improve engagement with schools of all types in their local area, tailoring their approach to what their analysis (produced in partnership with schools/colleges and wider safeguarding partners) indicates are the risks to children and young people in their local area.”**



In October 2022 the statutory report was published by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse which details the extent to which state and non-state institutions failed in their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation. The work of the inquiry over seven years found:

- **Child sexual abuse and exploitation takes many forms**
  - **Children, particularly those who are exploited, are often degraded and abused by multiple perpetrators**
  - **Historically, inadequate measures were in place to protect children from the risk of being sexually abused - sometimes there were none at all**
  - **Individuals and institutions often thought children were lying when they tried to disclose what was being done to them**
  - **Victims were frequently blamed as being responsible for their own sexual abuse**
  - **Within statutory agencies with direct responsibility for child protection, there was too little emphasis on the complex and highly skilled work of child protection. Decisions about children were not unequivocally based on the paramount interests of the child**
  - **Multi-agency arrangements still lack focus on child protection**
  - **There is still not enough support available to both child and adult victims and survivors**
  - **Child sexual abuse is not a problem consigned to the past, and the explosion in online-facilitated child sexual abuse underlines the extent to which the problem is endemic in England and Wales**
  - **The devastation and harm caused by sexual abuse cannot be overstated. The impact of child sexual abuse, often lifelong, is such that everyone should do all they can to protect children**
  - **This is not a national crisis, but a global one**
- The Inquiry made 20 recommendations and reinforces there needs to be a greater priority and focus, politically and across society, on protecting children from sexual abuse.



## 4. Child sexual abuse priorities for Salford

To tackle child sexual abuse in all its forms, we need everyone to play their part and we owe it to those impacted by these crimes to do more to stop it from happening in the first place. It is vital we work together to disrupt all forms of offending and provide victims and survivors with the support they need to rebuild their lives, whether the abuse is within the family, organised by criminal networks, within institutions, or online.

Child sexual abuse is a complex issue. Recognising and articulating this complexity, and being sensitive and reflexive in the way that we respond to it, is essential. It is only by embracing and understanding this complexity that policy and practice can make the progress needed.

Equality, diversity and the voice of the child is a golden thread running throughout all of our priorities.



## PRIORITY 1

# Preventing child sexual abuse (CSA)

**“We want everyone who comes into contact with children and young people to recognise when a child is vulnerable to sexual abuse and know how to respond. We want to prevent child sexual abuse from happening, so all children and young people in Salford are able to reach their full potential.”**

In Salford, we will adopt a whole system approach to tackling child sexual abuse, underpinned by the key principle that safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility. The central aim of our whole system approach is to prevent CSA from happening at all. We must challenge the taboo and silence surrounding CSA and ensure all institutions providing services to children are equipped with the right safeguarding knowledge and skills to intervene as early as possible. Effective prevention must involve agencies across all sectors and work at local, national and international levels.

Having a robust understanding of child sexual abuse is crucial for driving effective prevention. Professionals must be skilled in recognising and responding to the signs of child sexual abuse and be confident in talking about it. Often, there is too much reliance on children to disclose verbally, and practitioners may lack the confidence, knowledge and skills to talk about sexual abuse within the family environment. This results in sexual abuse not being identified as the main risk for the child and therefore not being a sufficient focus of service intervention.

## Actions to be taken

- Undertake a training needs analysis to understand the current workforce development offer and to identify any gaps in provision
- Ensure Salford's workforce and families have an increased awareness and understanding of CSA
- Consideration of developing a bespoke training package that can be delivered across the partnership
- Provide children and young people with information that helps them to understand what CSA is, in an age appropriate way and helps them to understand what is happening is wrong
- Help children and young people understand what to do if they are worried and how they can talk about sexual abuse and make a disclosure if necessary
- Have good quality Personal Social Health and Economic education (PSHE) in schools, to promote the importance of positive relationships and sex education from an early age
- Support children and young people to understand the complexities of consent

## Impact measures

- Once developed, we will monitor the number of professionals accessing training across the partnership and consider how this has directly impacted on their practice (through evaluation)
- Undertake a practitioner survey to understand the workforce confidence in responding to needs of children and young people and repeat this annually to measure progress and impact
- Review data in relation to number of children and young people accessing support services at an early intervention level

## PRIORITY 2

# Protecting children from child sexual abuse

**“We want to work together to protect children from the risk of sexual abuse. The SSCP will strive to ensure all professionals working with children have the skills and information they need to recognise and respond appropriately to all forms of child sexual abuse.”**

The complex nature of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) means tackling it is beyond the capacity and capability of any one agency. Too often, CSA remains undetected. Multi-agency working and information sharing at strategic and operational levels are key to all parts of our response. All partners will come together and work towards a common vision of protecting and safeguarding children and young people; supporting all victims and survivors.

We will proactively work together to horizon scan for emerging risks and threats to our young people and make sure we are in a position to respond appropriately.

We will seek to understand the effectiveness of our safeguarding practice to ensure information sharing is robust when CSA risk is identified and use this intelligence to strengthen our partnership approach.

We will learn from case review activity and seek to embed best practice approaches to support victims and survivors of CSA to rebuild their lives by improving the support that is available. We will highlight effective practice and share learning.



## Actions to be taken

- Develop a directory of services for those affected by CSA and all key professionals working with children and young people
- Review of Salford's Sexually Harmful Behaviour (SHB) pathway
- Work with education colleagues to review the PSHE provision in schools to ensure Salford children are educated about healthy relationships, the digital world and consent
- Ensure all designated safeguarding leads have access to SSCP CSA training
- Review the current support offer available to victims and survivors across Salford to ensure this is robust and fit for purpose
- Multi-agency audit of CSA cases to gain insight into practice approaches
- Undertake 'True to Us' exercises in response to national learning and local reviews.
- Review and update local practice guidance and pathways
- We will monitor data in relation to CSA (numbers of strategy meetings, assessments completed with CSA as a risk factor and number of Child Protection plans, number of prosecutions, Sexual Assault Referral Centre medicals) to understand the level of need in Salford and use this to guide our practice approaches and response

## Impact measures

- We will monitor the number of professionals accessing training across the partnership and consider how this has directly impacted on their practice (through evaluation)
- Victims and survivors will have access to appropriate support services that meet their needs and they will tell us they feel supported
- The SSCP will be assured the multi-agency response to CSA is robust and effective through analysis of qualitative audit activity and 'True to Us' exercises.
- S11 audit returns and practitioner survey findings will give assurance of the partnership response to CSA

## PRIORITY 3

# Communications and engagement

**“We want to improve the information provided to parents, carers and the wider public about child sexual abuse, so key adults are empowered with the advice and tools they need to identify risk and keep children safe.”**

To deliver on our objectives, the CSA sub group will have a dedicated proactive communications approach that focuses on priority audiences; building on existing government campaigns to share and reinforce key messages.

### Actions to be taken

- CSA sub group to link with the SSCP Communications Sub Group to target messages using existing communications channels to ensure maximum reach and impact
- SSCP to continue to improve engagement with all partners and sections of the community including those who are deemed as hard to reach communities, to increase awareness and strengthen child safeguarding practice in Salford in relation to child sexual abuse
- The SSCP CSA sub group will ensure all communications are aligned with the SSCP communication standards and quality standards (avoiding jargon, ensuring accessibility, information is honest and respectful, user-friendly and offering documents in alternative formats)

- We will maintain a repository of learning that is accessible to partners on the website

### Impact measures

- The SSCP will observe an improvement in the work we do, adding to professional skills and experience and helping colleagues to improve (captured through existing Quality Assurance mechanisms, reviewing website analytics, stakeholder interviews and feedback channels).



## PRIORITY 4

# Listening and responding to the voice of children and young people

**“We want to listen to and engage with children and young people to ensure we understand what matters to them. We want to use this information to inform our services and we want to feed back to children and young people to give them some assurance.”**

We seek to drive an evidence-based, victim-centred response. We recognise the importance of ongoing engagement with children and young people and victims and survivors of sexual abuse, and we will seek to engage with them as this strategy is implemented.

We want this priority to consider the various methods in which we capture feedback and the lived experiences of children and young people. We want these approaches to be trauma-informed to try and prevent young people having to repeat their stories. We want the partnership to be culturally aware and to hold each other to account to make sure feedback and ideas from young people are taken forward to improve how we deliver services in Salford.

### Actions to be taken

- Regular consultation with key stakeholders (including children and young people) to understand what matters to them

- The CSA sub group will consider findings from existing feedback channels via the Listening Hub and Voice of the Child sub group and use this intelligence to inform the work plan
- Use listening loops to feedback to children and young people in a ‘You said, We did’ format
- Ensure the workforce is trained to listen (part of the Listening Hub work plan)

### Impact measures

- Children and young people will tell us they feel listened to and are able to contribute to the work of the partnership
- Services will adapt and develop based on feedback from children and young people

## **PRIORITY 5**

# **Safeguarding Effectiveness**

**“We will hold ourselves to account to learn from data and insight gathered across the system, quality assure safeguarding practice and monitor performance across the partnership to improve outcomes for children and young people in Salford.”**

The Salford Safeguarding Children Partnership is committed to quality assuring safeguarding practice and monitoring performance across the system. We will monitor the effectiveness of local, inter-agency safeguarding arrangements and identify and report on good practice and areas for improvement in an open and transparent manner.

The CSA sub group will consider evidence from local reviews and national inspection reports and inquiries and advise the SSCP on any action required to improve safeguarding standards in Salford.

### **Actions to be taken**

- The CSA sub group will embed the comprehensive set of processes which enable the partnership to be assured about the effectiveness of safeguarding in multiple ways including but not limited to:
- True to Us exercises in response to national and local case reviews
- Single agency audit
- Multi agency audit
- Section 11 self-assessment
- Practitioner forums
- Performance data reporting

### **Impact measures**

- Identification of more abuse and evidence we have safeguarded more children through police-recorded crime, children’s social care data and independent inspectorate reports



## Next steps

The SSCP will continue to seek assurance on the implementation of the Salford Child Sexual Abuse Strategy ensuring that it delivers on the key objectives.

The CSA sub group will be responsible for implementing the strategy within the work plan. The work plan will

detail the actions to be taken and detail SMART deliverable actions and evidence of impact.

The activity of the CSA sub group will be triangulated with the other partnerships and sub groups in Salford to ensure a robust response and to reduce duplication.

## References

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