

Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (CERAF) Quick guide

What is it?

The Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (CERAF) is a child exploitation risk assessment. It has been developed and agreed for use across all four of the Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton (HIPS) Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) areas.

Why is it important?

Recognising the signs of child exploitation is crucial because early identification and intervention can prevent severe and lasting harm. Like any form of abuse, child exploitation can have long-lasting consequences that can impact on every part of a child's life and their future outcomes. Children who are exploited often suffer from physical, emotional, and psychological trauma that can persist into adulthood. They may experience:

- poor mental health and wellbeing
- poor physical (including sexual) health
- substance abuse
- difficulty forming healthy relationships
- an increased risk of becoming involved in criminal activities

By recognising and addressing the signs early, we can provide the necessary support and protection to help safeguard these children and young people. This proactive approach not only safeguards the well-being of the children but also helps break the cycle of exploitation and abuse.

When should a CERAF be completed?

A CERAF should be completed as soon as potential concerns regarding any form of child exploitation are identified. This may include Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), County Lines (CL), Modern Slavery or Child Trafficking concerns. The concerns may arise from information following a missing episode, or increased occasions of a child being missing from school, including reduced school attendance, staying out late, associating with new peers/associates where there may be some concerns or known intelligence of risk.

If a referral to children's social care is needed, the completed CERAF should be attached to the [Inter-Agency Referral Form](#). This enables information to be assessed against information held with partner agencies. This enables information to be assessed against information held with partner agencies.

Any child is potentially at risk of [Child Sexual Exploitation](#) but children who might be at increased risk include those between the ages of 10 – 17 years where there are one or more of these concerns present:

- Contraception or STI testing/treatment (including emergency contraception/pregnancy testing)
- Pregnancy
- Drug or alcohol abuse, including overdose
- Self-harm
- Disclosure of sexual assault or sexual activity that raises concern

School staff should consider completing a CERAF when a child is suspended or excluded from school or when attendance is of concern.

Who should complete a CERAF?

Professionals **from all agencies** (except for health settings listed below) should complete the full [CERAF](#) for **any child** who is thought to be at risk of, or known to be at risk of, one or more forms of exploitation.

- Emergency Department staff and paramedics
- Opticians
- Sexual health practitioners including condom distributors
- Paramedics/ Ambulance service
- Dentists
- Primary care, including GPs, practice nurses, advanced nurse practitioners / Out of Hours service
- Pharmacists

The above health settings should use the [Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Questionnaire \(CSERQ4\)](#). The CSERQ4 is intended to help health practitioners who have ‘time limited’ contact with children in assessing a child’s risk and to support their professional judgement in deciding whether a referral to children’s social care is required.

How should a CERAF be completed?

Please note: your professional judgement is as equally important as the score.

- ➡ Best practice indicates that information from multiple sources (including family members, the child concerned, school, other professionals) is needed to ensure that you have as much information as possible on the vulnerability and risk indicators and any explanations for these.
- ➡ Give timeframes for when indicators have been identified – the frequency and extent of concerns/incidents should be informing your view of the level of risk.

- ➡ You should provide relevant details for each vulnerability and risk indicator identified, as this will be informing your understanding of the nature and extent of risks – including how it may be linked to exploitation.
- ➡ Be mindful of your language.
Children are not responsible for their own abuse/exploitation and often they do not recognise the risks we may be concerned about.
Remember: Children who are groomed are unable to give consent to their abuse.
- ➡ Use the scoring guides on the form to ensure that you are scoring the CERAf correctly.
- ➡ A CERAf should be carried out at regular intervals to record any increase or reduction in risk and should inform appropriate intervention. As a minimum, it should be updated every three months or following a change in circumstances (e.g. change in placement) as this can have a significant impact on risk. High cases will be reviewed monthly by the multi-agency METRAC (Missing, Exploited, Trafficked Risk Assessment Conference) group.
- ➡ If the young person already has a social worker, please share the updated CERAf with them so the internal exploitation process can be followed.
- ➡ Note if the CERAf that is being completed is an **initial** CERAf or if it is a **review** CERAf.

For further details on identifying and assessing exploitation risks, please access the [HIPS Guidelines for full CERAf](#) and access the [Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework guidance video](#)

How can using the Community Partnership Information (CPI) Sharing Forms support responding the exploitation?

Sharing information is critical in reducing threat, harm and risk. To help improve information sharing, the Community Partnership Information (CPI) form gives professionals a safe and direct way to share non-urgent information with police relating to children/adults at risk.

For further details please visit the [HIPS Spotlight on... Community Partnership Information](#) or the [safe4me website](#)

Supporting resources:

[Child Exploitation toolkit](#)

[Serious Violence toolkit](#)

CERAF completion process chart

