

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION

Date and Time :- Tuesday 30 January 2024 at 10.00 a.m.
Venue:- Town Hall, Moorgate Street, Rotherham.
Membership:- Councillors Pitchley (Chair), Cooksey (Vice Chair), Atkin, Bacon, Baker-Rogers, Barley, Bennett-Sylvester, Z Collingham, Griffin, Haleem, Hughes, Khan, McNeely, Mills, Monk and Wilson.

This meeting will be webcast live and will be available to view [via the Council's website](#). The items which will be discussed are described on the agenda below and there are reports attached which give more details.

Rotherham Council advocates openness and transparency as part of its democratic processes. Anyone wishing to record (film or audio) the public parts of the meeting should inform the Chair or Governance Advisor of their intentions prior to the meeting.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive the apologies of any Member who is unable to attend the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 18)

To consider and approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 December 2023, as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

3. Declarations of Interest

To receive declarations of interest from Members in respect of items listed on the agenda.

4. Exclusion of the Press and Public

To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any part of the agenda.

5. Questions from Members of the Public and the Press

To receive questions relating to items of business on the agenda from members of the public or press who are present at the meeting.

6. Communications

To receive communications from the Chair in respect of matters within the Commission's remit and work programme.

7. Corporate Parenting Panel - Update

To consider any updates from the Corporate Parenting Panel.

8. Child Exploitation Update (Pages 19 - 322)

This item agenda will provide a high-level update on Child Exploitation. The report provides a summary of key Child Exploitation activity, including performance information and trends, awareness raising and safeguarding, undertaken in the year 2023.

9. Post Child Sexual Exploitation Support Services Update (Pages 323 - 330)

This agenda item will provide an update on the Post Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Support Services, following the transfer of the Post CSE Support Services from Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) to Adult Care, Housing and Public Health (ACH&PH) on the 1st December 2022.

10. Neglect Strategy Update (Pages 331 - 367)

This agenda item will introduce the Neglect Strategy 2024-2026. It is a Partnership Strategy and is governed by the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP). It is owned by the Neglect Delivery Group which reports directly to the RSCP Executive Partnership Group.

11. Work Programme (Pages 369 - 370)

To consider and approve the Commission's Work Programme.

12. Improving Lives Select Commission - Sub and Project Group Updates

For the Chair/project group leads to provide an update on the activity regarding sub and project groups of the he Improving Lives Select Commission.

13. Urgent Business

To consider any item(s) the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

14. Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on 5 March 2024, commencing at 10.00 am in Rotherham Town Hall.

Sharon Kemp.

Sharon Kemp,
Chief Executive.

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IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 5 December 2023

Present:- Councillor Pitchley (in the Chair); Councillors Cooksey, Bacon, Baker-Rogers, Z. Collingham, Griffin, Haleem, Hughes, McNeely, Monk and Bennett-Sylvester.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Wilson and Mills.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-
<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

131. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 31 OCTOBER 2023

Resolved: - That the minutes of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 31 October be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

132. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair invited Members to declare any interests in the items of business on the agenda.

Councillor Griffin declared a non-pecuniary interest (Minute 138, Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2027 Update). He remained in the meeting but did not participate in the debate or vote.

133. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items of business on the agenda that required the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting.

134. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or press.

135. COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair provided the following update in respect of matters within the Commission's remit and work programme:

- Members were reminded that the Children's and Young People's Service Members Report had been circulated for information and

comment. Members were asked to raise any queries via email and either a written response would be arranged, or if appropriate it would be requested that officers attend the next meeting in January to provide further information.

136. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL - UPDATE

The Chair advised that the Corporate Parenting Panel met on 13th November 2023 and consideration was given to the following items during the meeting:

- An update on the One Adoption South Yorkshire Annual Report, which included a high-level overview on progress during the period of 2022-2023.
- An update on the Fostering Service Annual Report 2022-2023.
- An update on the Fostering Rotherham Plan 2023-2028.
- An update on the Rotherham Care Leavers Local Offer.
- An update on the Leaving Care Action Plan.
- A Performance Monitoring Report, which included trend data, graphical analysis, and latest benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages.

The next meeting would be held on the 12 December. A further update would be provided to the Commission, at the next meeting in January.

137. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY UPDATE

This agenda item provided an update on the delivery of the new Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027, over the past year.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Councillor Cusworth, the Cabinet Member for Childrens and Young Peoples Services, Helen Sweaton, Joint Assistant Director of Commissioning and Performance and Mark Cummins, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Transformation Project Lead.

The Chair invited Councillor Cusworth and Helen Sweaton to introduce the report and the following was noted:

- The Strategy set out how the local authority would fulfil its role as corporate parents and meet the statutory sufficiency duty, by providing good quality care, effective parenting, and support to children and young people, in and leaving care.
- The Strategy was a high priority for the local authority and set out the principles applied when seeking to commission the provision of secure, safe, and appropriate accommodation and support to children in and leaving care over the next four years.
- There were pressures nationally on local authorities to meet the required duty. The local authority was in a good place, in relation to provision of placement mix, ensuring it could meet everyone's need.

The Chair invited Mark Cummins to lead on the presentation. The presentation gave an overview of the following content:

- Strategy Overview and Priorities-
 - The Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027, was approved at Cabinet in October 2022.
 - The Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy was developed in line with the duty to provide or procure placements, for children looked after by the local authority. The duty of 'sufficiency' required local authorities and children's trust partners, to ensure that there was a range of sufficient placements which could meet the needs of children and young people in care.
- Key Priorities 2023 to 2027-
 - More young people would be able to be cared for safely in their families and communities.
 - Children and young people would have access to a range of homes with both internal and external options, that would meet their needs and improve their outcomes.

- All services would take the Rotherham family approach, to ensure all Rotherham children and young people would be resilient, successful, and safe. This would be evidenced by quality assurance activity.
- Children and young people would be able to access the support they need, when they need it by ensuring Health, Education and Care Services would share a joint understanding of the needs of children and young people in Rotherham and would use this to inform commissioning and service delivery.
- Children and young people, their families and carers would be able to access Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) assessments and intervention when needed.
- Children, young people, families, and carers were benefiting from additional social value in Rotherham. An example was provided of more employment opportunities.
- More children, young people and families benefited from additional support to improve outcomes and access to employment.
- A residential Case Study-
 - BB had resided in an external residential provision at distance from Rotherham, since 2021. BB was placed in a residential provision after several fostering moves. The residential provision offered care and education, the external placement cost at the time that BB left was £6436.00 per week.
 - BB's progress had been monitored via various children in care panels over the duration of his placement and an agreement was in place to continue to support BB's placement at a distance from Rotherham, due to concerns about the availability of an appropriate local education provision.
 - The latest review focused more on permanency, BB's Social

Worker provided an update on the progress that BB had made and a possible change in care planning, due to developments with family networks, which identified that it would be easier for BB to reside locally.

- Through the Permanence Panel, it was agreed to explore the possibility of BB returning to Rotherham into one of the services in-house residential homes. Following several planning meetings, BB was suitably matched to a home.
- Working collaboratively with education colleagues, the service was able to secure an in-house residential home for BB. This allowed attendance at a local education provision and brought BB back into the Borough with the right support around BB. This was done over an agreed transition period where BB was integral to planning and leading the change. This was a very positive outcome for BB and saved the Council more than £100k a year.
- Short Breaks Innovation-
 - The project supplemented the services existing short break provision, by developing a Short Break Hub and incorporating community-based care and support for children aged ten years old and upward, with complex Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
 - The short break offer was a maximum of twelve weeks and would provide an opportunity for overnight respite with an intensive behavioural offer. This would link the school, community, and home-based support, and would reduce the likelihood of care entry and placement in out-of-borough education placements.
 - Nine young people were supported this year and eight young people had started a new or sustained an existing education placement, with a sustainable short break in place.
 - Following a competitive application process, Rotherham was

successful in receiving funding to expand the project between the period of 2024 to 2025. This would include an opportunity to develop solo overnight short break provision, improve access to community short break facilities and develop work with Personal Assistants.

- Fostering Rotherham-
 - Fostering Rotherham was a collaboration of digital on-line marketing and place based foster carer recruitment, support and retention of local foster carers.
 - Fostering Rotherham worked with local foster carer heroes, who offered up their homes and hearts to young people in and around the Borough. The service worked with over one hundred and twenty fostering families from across Rotherham and South Yorkshire and were aiming to improve the lives of local children and young people.
- A Fostering Case Study-
 - Through the Fostering Rotherham recruitment process, JW had recently transferred from an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA).
 - The foster carer was already caring for a Rotherham child when they applied to be part of the fostering rotherham family. The assessment and approval processes were completed in twelve weeks. As well as improving the support network for the foster carer and the child, it had also achieved significant savings for the Council.
 - The foster carer had been approved to care for two children. The foster carer also had a spare bedroom, therefore there was scope for further growth of this foster carer.
 - The child in the foster carers care had other siblings who were placed with in-house foster carers, this meant that there were now better opportunities to promote sibling relationships and develop peer support between the different foster families. The child did not experience any

disruption to their education.

- Challenges-
 - Children's home acquisitions remained challenging due to a variety of factors, including successful progress through planning, community engagement and timescales for implementation.
 - Recruitment for residential workforce remained extremely competitive.
 - Recruitment and retention of foster carers remained an ongoing challenge due to the competitive nature of the market.
 - Shortage of available externally commissioned placements across fostering, residential and sixteen plus remained a challenge.
- Opportunities-
 - There was an opportunity for continued, improved awareness and local support for looked after children with opportunities in relation to developing new provision.
 - There was an opportunity for development of place-based marketing and recruitment, to complement the online presence.
 - There was an opportunity to continue to develop the short breaks provision to ensure a continuation to meeting needs locally.
 - There was an opportunity for continued promotion on what's working well and sharing good new stories.

The Chair thanked the relevant officer for the presentation and invited questions, this led to the following points being raised during discussions:

- The service was working towards increasing the percentage of children looked after in the local authority's in-house provision. In comparison to other local authorities, the service was doing well in this area.

- The number of children that must be looked after, that are children in care in general, had reduced from 514 (noted in the report) to 507. This number was significantly lower in comparison to last year.
- The service was investing in family support to prevent family break downs for teenagers. In August 2022 there were eight teenagers whose relationships at home had broken down during the school holidays, in summer 2023 this figure had reduced to zero, by investigating in the Engage Service.
- The Permanence Panels main priority was to agree the appropriate permanent arrangement for the child or young person. Eight weeks after a child becomes a child in care, the Social Worker and Team Manager would attend the Permanence Panel and assess a permanent plan. The Panel was chaired by the Assistant Director for Commissioning and Performance.
- There was a challenge in recruitment and retention of workers in residential homes, this was a national challenge and would continue to be monitored.
- CAMHS would be presenting at the Health Select Commission on the 25th of January and all members would be invited to attend this meeting.
- Work was on-going to ensure that all foster carers would know who their local Councillors were. It was advised that the Community Leadership Fund could be used to support children in care, in situations where it was requested and appropriate to do so.
- The short breaks innovation project was available for any children or young people with complex SEND needs. Social Workers and Early Help Workers would identify potential children who could be eligible and refer them into the project. Eligibility for the project could change, if the complexity of the child's needs changed.
- In relation to placement stability comparison (on the graph at 2.4), the service was working to improve this number. It was also noted that even a positive move, was a move.

- Bridging payments were provided to foster carers between placements. Until recently the offer for Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) was different to the offer provided to in-house carers. Cabinet had now approved more flexibility for the service, to ensure that they could match the payments provided to IFAs, to in-house carers also.
- When the service was looking at acquisition of properties that could be utilised as residential homes, all options were assessed. Planning created challenges in relation to community engagement and additional parking places to support the change of usage to the building, this reduced potential suitable and available properties. The Planning Team would make the Commissioning Team aware when a planning application was approved for an in-house or private residential home provider, in future this information would be shared with elected members.

Resolved:-

- 1) That the Improving Lives Select Commission note the progress made against the delivery plan for the Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy.
- 2) That invitations to the Health Select Commission on the 25th January (CAMHS update) be circulated to members of the Commission.
- 3) That the request for specific data in relation to children and young people, who move on to alternative independent living arrangements and remain in contact with previous carers, be assessed.
- 4) That the Commissioning Team notify Elected Members when a planning request is submitted by a private residential care home provider.
- 5) That Appendix One, referenced in the body of the report, is circulated to members.

138. DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY 2022-2027 UPDATE

This agenda item provided an update on the progress towards the Rotherham Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2027.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Councillor Cusworth, the Cabinet Member for Childrens and Young Peoples Services, Emma Ellis, Head of Service for Community Safety and Regulatory Services and Kayleigh Charlton, Community Safety Officer for Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

The Chair invited Councillor Cusworth and Emma Ellis to introduce the report and the following was noted:

- The Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2027 that was approved by Cabinet in 2022, aimed to ensure that the pathway into services would be seamless and that people would have one point of contact, with support provided.
- It was advised that 44% of the actions within the plan were completed and the Strategy was on track.

The Chair invited Kayleigh Charlton to lead on the presentation. The presentation gave an overview of the following content:

- Developing a Single Abuse Pathway which followed the below process-
 - A domestic abuse incident would occur.
 - There would either be a victim self-referral or an agency referral with victim consent.
 - Rotherham Rise would complete a triage process and identify the most appropriate support.
 - If the case was highly complex, a domestic abuse assertive outreach case worker would be assigned or alternatively a Rotherham Rise case worker would be assigned.
 - The victim would be supported.
- Changing Rotherham's Engagement Rate Definition-

- The definition had been changed to ensure that there was a clear definition of engagement and a methodology to work out engagement rates that was consistent.
- The new definition was for any referrals that had engaged in any support offered, for example one to one support or attending programmes and/or interventions.
- The change would provide a more accurate and reflective engagement rate figure, as inappropriate referrals and/or uncontactable referrals would not be included in the engagement rate calculation.
- Victim Barriers to Accessing Services-
 - National domestic abuse charity, Safe Lives confirmed that families lived with domestic abuse for a significant period before seeking effective help.
 - There were many reasons why families lived with domestic abuse or returned to their abuser after attempting to leave. It may not have been apparent to the victim that a relationship was abusive.
 - On average high-risk victims lived with domestic abuse for 2.3 years and medium risk victims for a period of 3 years, before getting help.
 - On average victims experienced fifty incidents of abuse, before consenting to effective help and support.
- The Strategy Update So Far-
 - There had been a focus on driving change together by prioritising the strengthening of governance processes and improving ways of working. As a result, there had been the development of the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group and awareness training with schools and General Practices (GP's).
 - There had been a focus on prevention and early intervention, with a review conducted of all multi-agency meetings such as MARAC and MADA.

- There had been a focus on justice and on-going protection and as a result 60% of victims were engaging with domestic abuse services.
- There had been a focus on minimising harm by providing Early Help support.
- There had been a focus on providing safe accommodation and support, as a result the number of specialist domestic abuse houses had increased from eleven to twenty-four. There had been an increase in refuge spaces from eight to ten, and one hundred and eighteen victims had been supported financially to be able to remain in their own homes.
- There had been a focus on responding to changing need and demand, with a focus on weekly safe accommodation meetings and working on complexities.
- The Cranstoun Programme-
 - From the commencement of the program in September 2021 there had been five hundred and seventy-three referrals, with a 55% completion rate.
 - 88% of victims and/or survivors reported feeling safer on exit from the service.
 - 68% of victims and/or survivors reported that the abusive behaviours had stopped or reduced.

The Chair thanked the relevant officer for the presentation and invited questions, this led to the following points being raised during discussions:

- In relation to Rotherham Rise case workers, there were male case workers and male counsellors available to support male victims.
- Rotherham Rise consulted with service users frequently, in order to shape their service offer and gather feedback. The local authority had regular commissioning meetings with Rotherham Rise, where case studies were provided.
- Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPO) had changed and the

length of the DVPO had increased from eight weeks to thirty-one weeks.

- There were now thirteen furnished properties, specifically used for domestic abuse victims, that provided a homely environment.
- Evidence based behavioural programmes such as Inspire to Change, would always require an element of voluntary engagement, to ensure people engaged and were ready to change. There were mandatory programmes for offender prevention in custody and in the community.
- Operational Encompasses aim was to ensure that a notification was provided to schools where there had been any domestic abuse incident.
- The process for referrals into the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was changed last year, so that referrals could only be received by phone calls. This had ensured that the right information was captured throughout referral conversations.
- The domestic abuse training was delivered online only and regular feedback on the training was reviewed at the Domestic Abuse Priority Group.

Resolved:-

- 1) That members of the Improving Lives Select Commission note the progress towards the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2027.
- 2) That hard copies of the Feel Safe Leaflet are provided to members for circulation.
- 3) That a visit to Rotherham Rise is arranged for members of the commission next year.

139. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Work Programme.

Resolved: - That the Work Programme for 2023/2024 be approved.

140. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - SUB AND PROJECT GROUP UPDATES

The Chair provided a progress report on sub and project group activities which outlined the following:

- There had been a successful visit to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) by members on the 22nd November.
- There had been a successful workshop held on the Early Years Strategy on the 27th November where Members provided feedback on the draft Early Years Strategy.
- The Chair and Vice- Chair visited the CHANCE Group on the 30th November, to capture user feedback and experiences.
- There would be an additional meeting on Monday 11th December, where the Rotherham Parent Carers Forum would present their Annual Report.
- There would be an additional meeting on Tuesday 12th December, where members could provide feedback on the Elective Home Education Consultation, as resolved in September's meeting.
- There would be an additional meeting on the 22nd January, where the Rotherham Safeguarding Childrens Partnership Board would present their Three Year Plan, as resolved in September's meeting.

Resolved: - That the update be noted.

141. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

142. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on 30 January 2024, commencing at 10am in Rotherham Town Hall.

Public Report
Improving Lives Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 30 January 2024

Report Title

Report on Child Exploitation

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Nicola Curley – Strategic Director, Children & Young Peoples Service

Report Author(s)

Laura Gough - Head of Service Safeguarding Quality and Learning
Laura.Gough@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This briefing provides a summary of key Child Exploitation activity including performance information and trends, awareness raising and safeguarding, undertaken in the year 2023.

Recommendations

That the activity undertaken with regards to Child Exploitation is noted.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy, 2021. National Strategy
Appendix 2 Working Together 2023
Appendix 3 Rotherham Child Exploitation Priorities
Appendix 4 Supporting Information

Background Papers

There are no background papers for consideration.

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Report on Child Exploitation

1. Background

- 1.1 The National Strategy, Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy 2021 defines Child Sexual Exploitation: forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, or whether the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, and may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children 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.
- 1.2 Home Office Guidance defines Child Criminal Exploitation as: where an individual or group coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 to take part in criminal activities, including but not exclusively County Lines. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.
- 1.3 The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 set out specific duties: section 17 of the Children Act 1989 puts a duty on the local authority to provide services to children in need in their area. Section 47 of the same Act requires local authorities to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.
- 1.4 Rotherham is one of only a small number of Local Authorities that continue to have a dedicated service focused on child exploitation. Ofsted stated 'the Evolve service works proactively with children to reduce risks associated with sexual and criminal exploitation. The co-location of partner agencies means there is effective sharing of information. Exploitation assessments and plans are live documents that are drawn together with the child, their family, and the multi-agency network. These are comprehensive and child-focused and ensure that the right safety plan is in place for children'.
- 1.5 Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Children and Young Peoples Services provide Good services to children in need of help and protection. (Ofsted June 2022). Quality assurance activity, performance data and external evaluation inform us Rotherham Children's Services and Partnership, and specifically the Evolve service continue to provide good and outstanding services to children at risk of exploitation.

2. Responding to Child Exploitation:

- 2.1 This report provides information on key activity in relation to Child Exploitation over the year 2023. The report demonstrates how we ensure that children, both individual and groups, that are at risk of or who are experiencing exploitation are identified, safeguarded, and supported. And

that there is a partnership approach to raising awareness and preventing exploitation of children and young people in Rotherham.

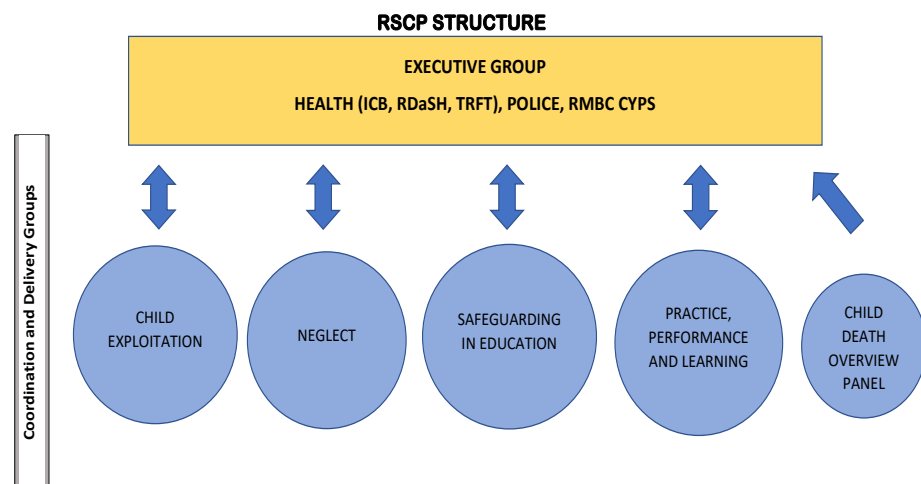
2.2 Key Document:

2.2.1 In 2023, Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Child Exploitation Priorities 2023 - 2028, A Plan to Tackle and Prevent Child Exploitation in Rotherham was published. This followed the conclusion of the Child Exploitation Strategy 2019 – 2022. The priorities focus on local key drivers: **Prepare, Prevent, Protect, Pursue**, which are derived from the National Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy and draws from research into established use.

2.2.2 It provides clarity on roles and responsibilities of key partner agencies, how they work together to deliver the key priorities and how success will be measured. The Strategy will be driven by the Child Exploitation Delivery Group and have strategic oversight from the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership. The governance arrangements can be seen in the diagram below.

2.3 Graph - Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership structure:

2.3.1



2.3.2 The priorities will support and underpin the new Child Exploitation Strategy, due to be published in 2024.

2.3.3 In 2023, a new scrutineer, Darren Downs was appointed. This role differed from the independent chair role in that it has a greater focus on scrutiny and holding the partnership to account. And a new Strategic Director for Children's Services, Nicola Curley was appointed bringing a fresh approach to child focused practice.

2.4 Child Exploitation Delivery Group (CEDG):

- 2.4.1 The CEDG is a strategic group, reporting directly to the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership and has a strong link to the Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP).
- 2.4.2 In 2023 the group underwent a review. The Terms of Reference were updated, a new Chair was appointed, and attendee roles were reviewed and refreshed to ensure the right people are in attendance to effect change and drive progress. Attendees include workers and leaders from across the partnership, Social Care, Police, Health agencies, voluntary sector, and the meeting is chaired by Police - Chief Superintendent Andy Wright.
- 2.4.3 The group has the responsibility for the strategic overview of Child Exploitation, the Priorities, Strategy, and its development. It has an action plan with leads specific for:
- OBJECTIVE 1: PREPARE - Ensure we have in place effective early identification services and intervention embedded across the partnership and that the voice of the victims and survivors drives service improvement.
 - OBJECTIVE 2: PREVENT – Give children the best start in life; raising awareness amongst parents, carers, families, and partners to stop the problem at source and to prevent children being subjected to CE.
 - OBJECTIVE 3: PROTECT – To ensure that the processes and practices in place effectively protect children when Child Exploitation is suspected or confirmed, or where risk factors are present with local and national good practices being used to reduce the risk of CE in Rotherham
 - OBJECTIVE 4: PURSUE – There is relentless disruption and targeted action against those seeking to exploit children in Rotherham, led by intelligence utilising criminal justice and other outcomes to leave no safe spaces for offenders.
- 2.4.4 The leads for each objective have key responsibilities which ensure that intelligence is gathered, there is awareness raised and information shared with communities and partners, training made available, children at risk are identified and safeguarded, and perpetrators are brought to justice. Each meeting focuses on these objectives, offering support and holding to account the leads on progress. A significant activity in 2023 was the development of a partnership scorecard. This has allowed the group to collect data across Rotherham, to definitively focus on key areas, and aid the prioritisation of preventative activity.
- 2.4.5 The CEDG is responsible for the oversight of quality assurance, and the ongoing audit and quality assurance document (appendix 4) shows, there is an abundance of activity happening to ensure that the work undertaken is to the highest quality and is child focused, and that we know our business, areas we are successful in and areas we focus on.

- 2.4.6 This group oversees the development of the plan and will use it to ensure that we are focused on identification and reduction of Child Exploitation across the borough.

2.5 Child Exploitation Steering group:

- 2.5.1 The steering group reports to the Child Exploitation Delivery Group. This is an operational group, made up from operational staff from across the partnership and chaired by the Evolve Service Manager.
- 2.5.2 The group receives direction from the delivery group and undertakes activities such as providing assurance through audit and quality assurance activity, reporting on disruption activity, and leading on training, make safe and keep safe activities.

2.6 Evolve:

- 2.6.1 **Social Workers / Exploitation Worker Youth Justice Service and Evolve Family Support** take a lead role in working directly with young people affected by CE where this is identified during the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE, is a multi-agency case management forum coordinating support and interventions to reduce the risk of child exploitation), or strategy meeting (which discusses the child's welfare and determines a plan of rapid future action if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm).
- 2.6.2 They contribute to the assessments for individual children and the investigation of CE related activity, including contributing to strategy discussions/meetings and section 47 (CA89) investigatory processes. They contribute to mapping activity, collating information, and analysing the prevalence of CE in the borough in relation to children & young people, perpetrators, and locations. They support professionals and partners such as schools, through providing guidance and advice and a comprehensive training package.
- 2.6.3 **Police Officers** contribute to the completion and updating of Multi-Agency Risk Assessments in individual children's cases. They take a lead role in the investigation of incidents of CE in the borough, by way of collection of intelligence, formal investigation, disruption, and prosecution of offenders. They contribute to plans to keep children safe, by way of protection and disruption activity, including working together to obtain a legal resolution considering all available means.
- 2.6.4 The **Child Exploitation Nurse** contributes to the completion and updating of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment in individual children's cases. They provide links to the broader health community by way of information sharing, liaison and awareness raising. They identify the most appropriate person to undertake direct work with young people where health implications arise from risks of CSE, in line with broader multi-agency plans for intervention. They provide a health-related service directly to children who have suffered, or are at risk of suffering, CSE in the borough.

2.6.5 **Missing Advocates** undertake Return Home Interviews within 72 hours, advocate the wishes and feelings of children to try and reduce the missing episodes, and develop missing safety strategies with the child. They share immediate safeguarding concerns, attend strategy meetings and input on the Find Me plans, and undertake group work to educate and reduce risks.

2.6.6 Collectively they work together as one service to identify, and they protect children and reduce risk across the borough. In 2023, the Evolve Service won a regional award, in recognition by the police force for their commitment to keeping children safe from exploitation.

2.7 **Work with Children and Young People:**

2.7.1 During 2023, 77 young people were referred and opened to the Evolve service. This was following them being assessed as medium or high risk of Child Exploitation at either at a Multi-Agency Child Exploitation meeting (MACE) or strategy meeting. In comparison, 73 young people closed to the Evolve service following a successful intervention with Evolve and reduction in risk of exploitation to low.

2.7.2 These numbers demonstrate a consistent throughput of young people into the service and evidences the dynamic flow of young people being opened and then the risk reducing because of Evolve intervention.

2.7.3 Evolve have completed 344 child exploitation risk assessments in total in 2023. Please note these are assessments and not a count of children, some children and young people will have received more than one assessment as part of the monitoring of intervention planning and success. A breakdown of assessments show:

141 identified risks in relation to child criminal exploitation.

107 identified risks in relation to child sexual exploitation.

50 identified risks in relation to both criminal and sexual exploitation.

46 identified no risk (this is for the young people where the exploitation risk has reduced and there is no identified risk).

2.7.4 Risk assessments are completed and then updated every 12 weeks to ensure that progress is recorded, risks addressed, and the plan is up to date in terms of need and level of risk.

2.7.5 Missing children can be an indicator of risk of child exploitation. In Rotherham we have dedicated missing advocates who undertake interviews with children that go missing. Additionally, they are co-allocated to children that are high risk, persistently missing and open to the Evolve service to support the safety planning for that child. Most young people are located within the same 24-hour period. However, some children do go missing for longer periods. Find me plans are activated in these circumstances and a strategy meeting is held with the police to ensure that these young people are located as soon as possible.

- 2.7.6 There has been a reduction in the number of children reported missing since 2020/21. Q1, (2023/24) was the lowest Q1 since recording. See Appendix 1.
- 2.7.7 The multi-agency operational Missing meeting takes place fortnightly to identify ways to reduce the number of young people who go missing. This meeting focuses on the most regularly missing young people. Preventative work is undertaken with these children on 1:1 basis to safeguard, provide intervention, build a relationship, and look at diversion activities. We continue to monitor this, and review trends quarterly and yearly.
- 2.7.8 Throughout 2023 the Evolve team have been collecting feedback and producing appreciative enquiries. See appendix 4. This helps us to identify successes and what works and learn as part of ongoing development.

2.8 Intelligence Gathering:

2.8.1 Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE)

MACE meetings are held to provide a clear and consistent identification and assessment of children at risk of child exploitation. Individual Children /young people are discussed at the meeting for information sharing across a variety of agencies across the local area to highlight vulnerabilities, threats, and to establish and reduce risk by increasing safety around a child/young person. The meeting will discuss concerns about child and young people who may be at risk from child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, gang related crime, and human trafficking.

- 2.8.2 There are three initial MACE meetings held each week to consider new referrals and level of risk to individual children, and three to four review MACE meetings held each week to review safety for children open to the service where there are new or increased concerns and safety planning.

2.8.3 Child Exploitation tactical group (CETG)

CEDG is a weekly multi-agency group that is police led, which brings key partners together including the police, social care, and key health colleagues to agree on response and next steps to concerns of intelligence around CE.

- 2.8.4 The police bring on average 6 to 8 new pieces of intelligence to each meeting. This is then reviewed and cross referenced via an intelligence log each week until partners are satisfied that all aspects of disruption and investigation have been considered and they can be discharged. Actions can include:

- police investigation
- neighbourhood police undertaking community work, visits to specific areas
- Child Abduction Orders
- Warrants
- Operation Keepsafe activity
- phone works, including checking of contacts, calls and texts messaging, locked social media and online activity

- car stop and searches
- intelligence building and research
- Referring children to Children's Social Care

2.9 **Police Exploitation intelligence, and Offences:**

2.9.1 **SY Police**

The number of intelligence reports for criminal exploitation has continued to increase significantly above previous years. Staff across the partnership are reminded through the Child Exploitation Tactical Group meeting to continue prioritising the submission of intelligence reports and these are then discussed at the meeting. This increase also coincides with the increase in awareness raising (Spot the Signs, CE awareness day, Any Childhood police campaign) and children at risk of criminal exploitation being viewed as children at risk of harm. In 2023 the number of linked offences to criminal exploitation (where a crime is being committed (theft offences for example) and there are concerns that there may also be a child exploitation element increased and then declined. This in part can be explained by the increase in intelligence reports and the disruption activity taking place to prevent exploitation.

2.9.2 The number of intelligence reports for sexual exploitation has fluctuated since 2020 to the present. Staff across the partnership are reminded through the Child Exploitation Tactical Group meeting to continue prioritising the submission of intelligence reports and these are then discussed at the meeting.

2.9.3 **NCA Operation Stovewood**

In 2024, operation Stovewood will cease to accept new referrals, and instead will focus on the ongoing investigations and prosecutions which are expected to conclude in 2027. All new cases will be referred to SY Police going forward.

2.9.4 **Operation Morph Charlie**

Operation Morph Charlie is a non-recent child sexual exploitation investigation being conducted by South Yorkshire police in Rotherham. The enquiry has been ongoing throughout 2023 and resulted from a referral from West Yorkshire Police after disclosures were made to them.

2.9.5 The Crown Prosecution Service are now in the process of completing reviews of case submissions and have revised their initial view of the scope of charges that are possible in this case. A final charging decision is awaited.

2.9.6 **Operation Keepsafe**

Operation Keepsafe is well established multi-agency targeted activity, which focus on working areas to engage with young people to raise awareness of exploitation.

2.9.7 To date, keep safe activity has engaged in with over 1700 children and young people in the community since the start of April 2021. This has potentially impacted positively on both individual and groups of children and

supported communities in keeping their children safe. Keepsafe is delivered to groups of children in the 18:00-22:00pm engagement frame, and 22:00 – 2:00am tends to work with safeguarding individual children and young people and is more focused on the CE element and general safety / risk issues.

2.9.8 Examples of safety work includes returning children home and speaking with parents when children are found out late at night. Groups of children have been engaged with in the community to talk about safety, and sessions also run at weekends following any national and local concerns. Going forward, the CEDG will use data and intelligence information to inform Keepsafe targeted activity and have a structured approach.

2.9.9 Moving into 2024 the Child Exploitation delivery group has requested a Keepsafe task and finish group. This group will lead on booking in regular Keepsafe activity, and closer to the time identify the areas that would benefit from Keepsafe activity. This includes areas identified by the Child Exploitation Tactical group, and other forms of intelligence. They will also ensure that other local community resources and groups are linked in for awareness raising and community support.

2.10 Awareness raising activity and campaigns:

2.10.1 Members Session

On the 21 February, the Annual Workshop on Child Exploitation for members took place. Councillor Cusworth introduced the session, with presentations from the Police, District Commander Kosciwicz, Detective Inspector Blakemore, Children's Services Heads of Service Laura Gough and Kelly White, and Assistant Director for Safer Communities Sam Barstow.

2.10.2 The session, **Introduction to Child Exploitation, tackling it Together in Rotherham**, focused on the strength of partnership working, awareness, training and early interventions, response from each service and organisation and pathways. And the different meetings that are held operationally and strategically to tackle Child Exploitation.

2.10.3 The session was a success, lots of questions were asked throughout and at the end. In total it was attended by 29 Members (11 in person and 18 virtually).

2.10.4 Child Exploitation Awareness Day, 18th March.

Information was shared throughout the Council via the Monday Briefing and through the Chief Executives Friday Briefing. This included how staff can access and complete the mandatory e-learning modules, **Safeguarding is Everyone's Business (General Awareness)** and **Keep Them Safe**. Screensavers were also used on all council laptops and posters were circulated digitally to schools for display in staff areas. All Councillors received a poster and Spot the Signs information cards via the Town Hall and social media posts were shared throughout the day on Community

Safety and corporate RMBC channels. This was an ambitious endeavour and considered successful thanks to its reach across a large workforce.

- 2.10.5 A series of posts were produced aimed at the public and focusing on the signs people may see in their everyday lives. Posts included a link to further information and local and national reporting mechanisms as well as a link to the YouTube Spot the Signs awareness session (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI8iYn-HE6M>). The presentation has been recorded and is available on YouTube. This is a 15-minute presentation aimed at people who do not necessarily work directly with children and young people but may come into contact with them. The session provides an overview of child exploitation and the signs that people may see in different situations and environments. The session also contains information on how to report concerns and it is hoped it will increase confidence in reporting. So far, the presentation has been viewed over 700 times. All social media was posted on the Community Safety channels which saw increased reach and engagement and shared via RMBC corporate channels.
- 2.10.6 The link to the video was circulated via email to colleagues and partners and through social media for the public, including in the lead up to and on Child Exploitation Day on the 18th March.
- 2.10.7 Throughout the week leading up to Child Exploitation Day, social media posts, and screensavers showed images such as those below demonstrating how anyone and everyone can spot the signs and be the person that reports concerns.
- 2.10.8 **Spot the Signs**
Awareness raising has continued the potential signs of exploitation through Spot the Signs on Community Safety social media and shared a week of focused social media posts to promote the Children's Society 'Look Closer' campaign and to coincide with County Lines Intensification Week in March. These posts reached over 5,700 people through Facebook and Instagram with most followers being women in Rotherham and the surrounding areas. These posts are also shared through corporate social media channels to reach a wider audience.

2.10.9



2.10.10



2.10.11 County Lines Intensification week

National County Lines Intensification week for 2023 took place from 27th February to 3rd March, this was a week of action specifically addressing county lines and child criminal exploitation including: 'Spot the Signs' campaign and use of the Children's Society 'Look Closer' campaign. Look Closer is a national partnership campaign with the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre and Children's Society, aiming to raise awareness of child exploitation and abuse, with a particular focus on public spaces. The campaign also sought to challenge assumptions and stereotypes of victimhood and highlighted that child exploitation can happen anywhere, and any young person can be a victim, and focused on educating staff, partners, and members of the public about what county lines is and the signs to look out for. The week also involved specific enforcement and disruption

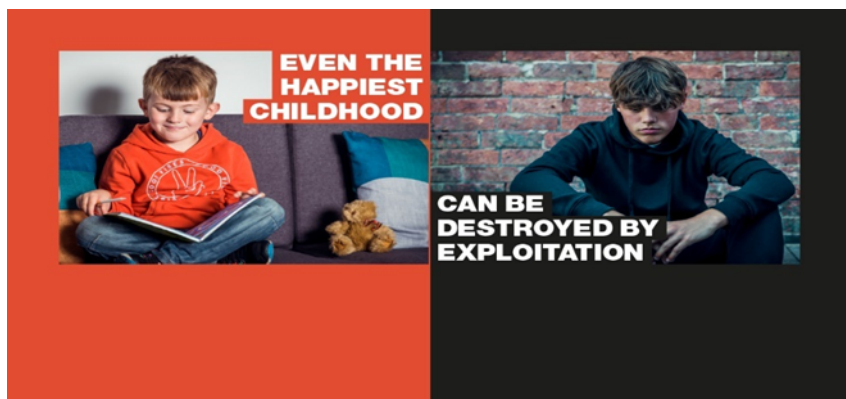
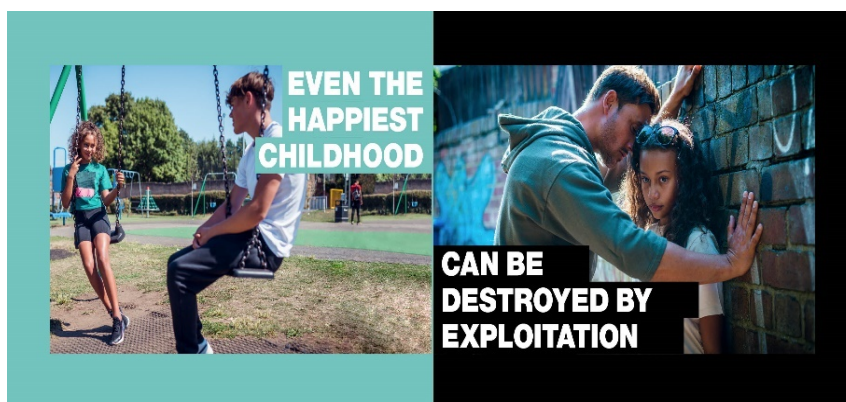
work targeted at the activities of those involved in county lines/child criminal exploitation, including several warrants carried out which resulted in 5 arrests for drugs supply and money laundering offences. Large quantities of drugs and various weapons included two firearms and £50,000 in cash were recovered because of targeted police activities.

2.10.12 Specific activities included:

- Neighbourhoods and police to identify areas that would benefit from Keepsafe activity
- Missing Advocates are delivering early intervention/preventative work with a group of vulnerable children at a primary school.
- Throughout the month of March Family Support Workers visited both primary and secondary schools delivering early intervention and preventative work around Child Exploitation.
- A week of focused social media posts for Child Exploitation were shared to promote the Children's Society 'Look Closer' campaign and to coincide with County Lines Intensification Week.

2.10.13 SY Police Campaign

On the 17th of March SY Police launched their new regional child exploitation campaign, Even the Happiest Childhood Can be Destroyed by Exploitation. Following this the campaign was then launched across various SYP channels. Below are two of the images that have been produced to support the campaign which focuses on all aspects of Child Exploitation.



2.10.14 **Child Exploitation Stakeholder Event**

On the 20 June 2023 27 delegates from across the partnership, Social Care, Police, NCA, Health, and the Voluntary sector attended a stakeholder event to look at Rotherham's journey through Child Exploitation.

2.10.15 MASH Head of Service Kelly White and Detective Chief Inspector Sam Blakemore provided a presentation on Rotherham's journey, 2014 to present day. The group were then set two tasks:

- Task 1. key achievements within their organisations and across the partnership 2014 – 2023. A timeline of key events was provided to aid discussion.
- Task 2. What do we do differently, how do we know we are keeping children safe compared to 2014.

2.10.16 The information gathered will supported the development of the priorities and will support the Child Exploitation strategy.



2.10.17 Feedback on the day was immensely powerful, with newer and long-term workers commenting on how the event provided an outlet to explore the impact of Stovewood on staff as well as service delivery, and that they would welcome further events to explore the issues in the lead up to 10 years after the Jay report.

2.11 **Training:**

2.11.1 **Evolve training awareness raising activity.**

The Evolve service raises awareness through attending meetings and events, delivering training and presentations. This includes presenting at the Child Exploitation delivery group, attending Operation Fortify meeting, attending the CCE Tracker meetings with Police, Social Care, Health, Early Help, YOS and Barnardo's, attending the weekly CETG intelligence

meeting. The manager also attends the Elective Home Education governance group.

- 2.11.2 In addition, they provide Child Exploitation training every three months. These are multi-agency sessions. Attendance at these sessions is positive, with on average 20 delegates attending each session. Requests for training increases usually after an awareness raising event such as Safeguarding Awareness Week, and Child Exploitation Day.
- 2.11.3 Additional training is provided as when requested, for example the RMBC safeguarding champions. These are staff from across the council with an additional responsibility for sharing information to their colleagues and supporting safeguarding activity. The meeting is chaired by the Safeguarding Heads of Service, Laura Gough, and Andrew Wells.
- 2.11.4 **Police Staff Training and Development**
There has been a renewed focus on ensuring officers working in safeguarding roles including the child exploitation investigation team are qualified to a national standard by undergoing training and assessment on the Specialist Child Abuse Investigators Development Programme (SCAIDP) and the Specialist Sexual Offences Investigator Development Programme (SSAIDP) from the College of Policing.
- 2.11.5 A proportion of officers have undergone this training programme already and more training courses are being held this year with plans for a rolling programme of training across the organisation to ensure skills are maintained and new staff are trained to this standard. Both these qualifications also require annual reaccreditation.
- 2.11.6 The police are training all their staff to qualified College of Policing PIP2 serious and complex investigation standard, this is an intensive training and development programme that includes seven weeks of classroom training, and a 1-year structured assessment programme requiring portfolio accreditation to be signed off as competent.
- 2.11.7 **Police Briefing Sessions**
Several initiatives including awareness raising, and targeted briefing sessions have taken place for 165 staff across CYPS and Housing in 2022/23. These initiatives are ongoing both internally to SYP and to partners to continue to drive intelligence submissions, these include:
- Creation of training package and partners' intelligence submission form which is covered quarterly at the Criminal Exploitation Tactical Group meeting with the intention that representatives from partner agencies cascade this training to their staff.
 - Inputs from Child Exploitation DI and DS at Sergeants away days to drive importance of submissions.
 - Revamped briefing site giving details of hotspot locations, children at risk.
 - Plans for new weekly email around the above information to go out to district supervisors to drive intelligence gathering from frontline staff.

- Hotspots, children at risk, and regular exploitation related missing child episodes are also discussed fortnightly with all district inspectors as a standing agenda item at the fortnightly district Threat, Harm & Risk meeting.

2.11.8 The feedback has been that 97% of attendees feel they understand more and are likely to submit more intelligence submissions in the future.

2.11.9 This is a real success story and provides direct evidence of how awareness raising and briefings targeting specific staff has affected the system leading to a response directly safeguarding children from CCE and CSE.

2.11.10 **Online Safety**

The training around online safety continues to be delivered, and developed as this issue becomes more prevalent.

2.11.11 Training continues to be delivered virtually to parents and carers across the borough. The training was developed and delivered by Community Safety and South Yorkshire Police and covers the risks to young people online, how parents/carers can help minimise these risks and how to access support or report concerns. The training dates available throughout the academic year have been advertised across the borough through Primary Schools. Training in 2024 will be delivered to specific schools at their request, or offered via Community Safety and Education Safeguarding Lead if a need is identified. This training will be shared at the Schools Forum meetings. In addition, for Safer Internet Day Safer Communities Partnership will be presenting to all Education Safeguarding Leads at the Forum on online bullying.

2.11.12 A video is being produced to promote online safety for young people by Remedi through a Restorative Action Project (RAP). This focused on image sharing and the risks to young people aged 7 to 18 years using social media and the focus for younger children around the use of mobile phones. The project is being led by the Reparation Supervisor for Youth Justice collaborating with young people so they can include their own experiences and concerns.

2.12 Conclusion Summary:

2.12.1 This report demonstrates the ongoing focus on child exploitation in Rotherham.

2.12.2 Rotherham continues to be one of only a small number of authorities to have a dedicated child exploitation service. The commitment by partners to this issue is evident in the continued multi agency approach to tackling this issue.

2.12.3 The Ofsted inspection further highlighted how far Rotherham has come over the last ten years, with a second solid 'Good' rating, evidencing safeguarding practice in Rotherham is effective, child focused and with embedded partnership working arrangements in place.

- 2.12.4 There is a keen eye on quality assurance through several mechanisms, by members, the Partnership boards and arrangements, and the delivery groups. Scrutiny is intense, part of the business, and welcomed by all involved.
- 2.12.5 Awareness raising continues to deliver results, with increases in intelligence, and increases in positive outcomes for children, and outcomes for the police.
- 2.12.6 There are plans in place to continue this work, and increase activity, through the new strategy, through the scrutiny of the new partnership arrangements and scrutineer, and the ongoing safeguarding activity that is demonstrating effectiveness.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal:

- 3.1 This report is for information and to provide feedback on the progress made to date.

4. Consultation on proposal:

- 4.1 There are no specific proposals as the report is for information purposes.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision:

- 5.1 There are no specific timetables as the report is for information purposes.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications:

- 6.1 There are no specific financial or procurement implications arising from this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications:

- 7.1 The relevant legal framework for the considerations set out in this paper is the Children Act 1989 which highlights the duty the Local Authority has to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in its area. Section 17 relates to the provision of services to achieve this. In addition, the recent statutory guidance dated December 2023, "Working Together to Safeguard children 2023", which is a guide to multi- agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children emphasises this need and is issued under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970. This is to be complied with unless exceptional circumstances arise. This is relevant to this report as the recent Working Together guidance strengthens the shared responsibility that successful outcomes "depend on strong multi-agency partnership working across the system of help, support, and protection". Such partnership working has been explained in this report and therefore there are no legal implications that arise from this update and progress made.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications:

8.1 There are no HR implications arising from this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults:

9.1 This report details the activities undertaken with regards to identification and safeguarding of children and young people from child exploitation 2023. It details our ongoing responses and commitments to providing a robust system within the council and across the partnership from the statutory, Health, Education, Police, and Voluntary sectors to keeping children safe.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications:

10.1 There are no Equalities and Human Rights implications arising from this report.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change:

11.1 There are no Implications for CO² Emissions or Climate Change

12. Implications for Partners:

12.1. Working together 2023, National and Local Priorities places statutory responsibility on organisations to work together to keep children safe. Whilst this report identifies activities undertaken by the Council, we are committed to working together across all organisations to keeping children safe.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Any deterioration in the commitment to the strategy both internally and the wider partnership including the delivery group, could lead to a deterioration on the robust arrangements for keeping children at risk of CE safe.

14. Accountable Officers

Laura Gough - Head of Service Safeguarding Quality and Learning

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This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy

2021



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Home Secretary Foreword



Throughout my career in politics, I have campaigned relentlessly for the victims of crime. I firmly believe that we have a duty to protect and support those who are targeted, exploited and harmed by criminals. I am absolutely clear that keeping our children safe is one of the State's most fundamental roles. And, as Home Secretary, it is a responsibility that I take extremely seriously.

Across the United Kingdom and the world, children are subjected to horrific sexual abuse which has a devastating impact on their lives. I have seen at first-hand how our National Crime Agency is targeting the most heinous online offender networks engaged in the rape and torture of children. I have spoken to victims and communities ravaged by groups of predators in towns and cities across the country, where high-profile investigations have exposed child sexual abuse on a truly shocking scale. This has only hardened my resolve to do all we can to support police and other frontline professionals to bring offenders to justice and support the victims and survivors. Cases like those in Rotherham are a stain on this country's conscience – and they must be acted on. In the past, a culture of denial that failed to recognise that offenders exist in all parts of society emboldened those committing these heinous crimes. We must never let this happen again. I will do everything in my power to ensure we learn the lessons of the past – and we will leave no stone unturned in our fight to root out the perpetrators and protect children from these abhorrent crimes.

To tackle child sexual abuse in all its forms, we need everyone to play their part. That is why I am delivering a national strategy to drive action across every part of Government, across all agencies, all sectors, charities, communities, technology companies and society more widely. As the first strategy of its kind, this will be our blueprint for relentlessly pursuing abusers whilst placing victims and survivors at the heart of our approach.

The UK has a proud record as the global leader in tackling child sexual abuse. Yet despite progress in drawing this devastating abuse out of the shadows, in safeguarding children and in supporting victims and survivors, we owe it to those impacted by these crimes to do more to stop them from happening in the first place. It is vital that we disrupt all forms of offending and provide victims and survivors with the support they need to rebuild their lives – whether that abuse is within the family, organised by criminal networks, within institutions, or orchestrated by those hiding online.

I will not tolerate these crimes, whether they take place at home, in communities or online. I am absolutely clear that those who abuse children remotely from across the world should not be treated with any less seriousness than those who abuse children in person.

We know that COVID-19 has had a profound impact on our society. The pandemic has created significant challenges for frontline services, and measures implemented to stop the spread of the virus have potentially increased the risk of child sexual abuse online and within the home.

This Strategy recognises those issues and the Government has acted swiftly to mitigate the risks. The additional £30 million of funding announced in the 2020 spending round, continuing 2019's funding uplift, reflects our unwavering commitment to bolstering our response to child sexual abuse.

Above all, this Strategy sends out a clear message to those who abuse our children: if you think you can access child abuse imagery with impunity, groom children, abuse positions of trust – think again, you will pay for your crimes. We are investing in the best technology, best intelligence and best law enforcement capabilities. We will find you and we will bring you to justice. And to victims, survivors and those at-risk – we will hear your voice, we will protect you and we will ensure you get the support you need.



Priti Patel

Home Secretary

Executive Summary

This ground-breaking Strategy sets out the Government's ambition to prevent, tackle and respond to all forms of child sexual abuse. It focuses on three key objectives which overlap and reinforce one another, recognising the complex, interconnected nature of this crime and the whole-system response it requires. The objectives outlined are not set out in order of prioritisation. All three are inextricably linked and we will drive all three forward with the same focus to protect children, tackle offending and support all victims and survivors.

We will hold ourselves to account and learn from data and insight gathered across the system to demonstrably show that we are:

- Drawing these hidden crimes out of the shadows by identifying more abuse and safeguarding more children through police recorded crime, children's social care data and independent inspectorate reports;
- Bringing more offenders to justice and increasing effective trials for child sexual abuse, based on data from across the criminal justice system;
- Improving the quality and availability of support for victims and survivors, drawing on insight from delivery and third sector partners; and,
- Preventing these terrible crimes from happening in the first place based on law enforcement threat assessments and survey data from the Office of National Statistics.

Objective 1. Tackling all forms of child sexual abuse and bringing offenders to justice

1. **To reduce the threat of child sexual abuse, the Home Office will ensure law enforcement, intelligence agencies and relevant departments collaborate and coordinate their work effectively**, making the best use of our collective resources to relentlessly pursue offenders. The National Crime Agency (NCA) will continue to lead the law enforcement operational response, in partnership with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC).
2. Using increased Home Office investment, we will draw together data and insight from across law enforcement, intelligence agencies, industry and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to uncover the full scale and true nature of child sexual abuse, **enabling all partners combatting this crime to target interventions effectively and tackle the highest-harm offenders.**
3. **The Home Office will build the capacity of law enforcement at local, regional and national levels**, overcoming the barriers to progressing child sexual abuse cases by investing to process the backlogs in digital forensic evidence faster to identify more victims and offenders. These efforts are reinforced by wider improvements to the criminal justice system through an additional 20,000 police officers, 10,000 prison spaces and investment of £85 million in the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

4. **The Home Office will ensure law enforcement and intelligence agencies have the right tools and legal powers to combat this crime**, by improving law enforcement's understanding and response to vulnerability through delivery of the [National Vulnerability Action Plan](#), as well as exploring new or updated powers and civil orders to tackle offending.
5. **Our goal is to ensure there are no safe spaces online for offenders to abuse and exploit children**. Across the NCA, Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), National Cyber Force (NCF) and wider law enforcement, the Home Office will invest in the development of new technological capabilities to bring more technically sophisticated offenders to justice and help our partners identify and safeguard more victims and survivors. This includes enhancing the use of the UK's world-leading Child Abuse Image Database (CAID).
6. **To bring more offenders to justice, we will work across Government to improve the criminal justice system response to all forms of sexual abuse**, challenging myths around this type of offending, updating guidance for prosecutors and training them on the impact of trauma on memory. We will ensure victims and survivors going through the court process are treated appropriately and work to increase the number of effective trials for child sexual abuse cases.
7. **We will equip local agencies to develop place-based strategies that respond to threats within their communities, such as group-based child sexual exploitation**. Building on the findings of our recent policy paper on group-based offending, we will engage with criminal justice partners, academics, think tanks, charities and frontline professionals on improving the range, quality and analysis of data collected. Through investments in police intelligence and analysis of exploitation, we will improve government policy and inform local level responses. This is alongside enhancing our Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit, and supporting community engagement to improve safety in public places, deter offenders and encourage reporting by bystanders.

Objective 2. Preventing offending and re-offending

8. **The Home Office will work to deter individuals from abusive behaviour whenever possible**, investing in evidence-based public education campaigns that can prevent offending by providing advice and information to potential offenders and those close to them. We will also develop our understanding of offender motivations and pathways, using evidence-led interventions to stop these crimes.
9. **We will protect victims and survivors and the wider public through stronger sentencing commensurate with offenders' crimes**, making sure serious sexual and violent offenders remain in prison longer, as outlined in the White Paper [A Smarter Approach to Sentencing](#) led by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).
10. **We will seek to prevent re-offending through our extensive reforms to probation and actions to strengthen management of sex offenders**, including more effective training of prison and probation staff, risk assessment and deployment of interventions.

11. **The Home Office will ensure that police management of registered sex offenders (RSOs) in the community is as effective as possible under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)**, including detection of offending and reoffending. Management of RSOs in the community will be made more robust by giving law enforcement the power to apply positive conditions on offenders' actions through civil orders, as well as piloting technology to help law enforcement identify re-offending online.
12. **The MoJ and its key partners in offender management will improve multi-agency working and information sharing so that services work together better to protect children from harm**, including enhancing the MAPPA information database used to manage offenders, as well as strengthening safeguarding standards in prisons and probation.

Objective 3. Protecting and safeguarding children and young people, and supporting all victims and survivors

13. **We will improve the information provided to parents, carers and the wider public about child sexual abuse**, deploying Government communications and reviewing Sarah's Law (the Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme), so that key adults are empowered with the advice and tools they need to identify risk and keep children safe from sexual abuse.
14. **We will educate children and young people about healthy relationships and the digital world**, including through the roll-out of Relationships, Sex and Health Education and the Media Literacy Strategy. For those who may be at increased risk, **we will provide targeted support that protects children and young people from offenders seeking to exploit their vulnerabilities**, including through the Home Office-led Trusted Relationships Fund, and the Troubled Families Programme.
15. **Recognising the profound impact of COVID-19 and measures to prevent its spread, the Government will continue to prioritise the welfare of children in our response.** This means putting in place additional support for children and teaching staff to enable children to be educated safely during this period, as well as helping local and third sector partners support vulnerable children and families whose situations may have been made more difficult by the pandemic.
16. **The Home Office and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) will reduce the prevalence of online child sexual abuse and make the UK the safest place in the world to be online through the forthcoming Online Harms framework**, instigating a new statutory duty of care for tech companies and driving the adoption of an interim voluntary code of practice to ensure companies take action to improve the safety of all their users, especially children.
17. **To prevent child sexual abuse in local areas the Government will improve safeguarding standards in institutions and out-of-school settings**, making sure that the places where children and young people spend their time are safe, and continuing

Home Office funding for the Children's Society's Prevention Programme to help local and regional agencies better understand and prevent child exploitation.

18. Too often, child sexual abuse goes undetected. **The Government will strive to ensure professionals working with children have the skills and information they need to recognise and respond appropriately to all forms of child sexual abuse**, so that more children and young people are identified and get the support they need. We will help safeguarding partners to work together by continuing improvements to new multiagency safeguarding arrangements and expanding the Child Protection Information Sharing System.
19. **Continuing the UK's role as the world leader in tackling child sexual abuse, we will strengthen the international response and protect children overseas by driving common global standards and enhancing safeguarding and law enforcement systems in key at-risk countries.** In response to individuals who travel overseas to sexually abuse vulnerable children, we will invest in the NCA's international capability and maximise the use of existing powers, such as civil order restrictions and notification of foreign authorities in order to disrupt perpetrators' activities and bring them to justice.
20. **We will help victims and survivors of recent and non-recent child sexual abuse to rebuild their lives by improving the support available and developing and embedding best practice**, including boosting investment in specialist sexual violence support services delivered by the voluntary sector, Sexual Assault Referral Centres and the Child Sexual Abuse Support Services Transformation Fund. We will raise awareness of support for victims and survivors and provide local commissioners with the resources to meet their needs wherever they live in the country.
21. **For victims and survivors who choose to pursue a criminal justice outcome, whether they are a child or an adult, we will support them to remain engaged in the court process and reduce the risk of re-traumatisation**, protecting their rights and bolstering the support they receive through the MoJ's new and revised [Victims' Code](#), consulting on a Victims' Law, and increasing the use of the full range of special measures for vulnerable victims.
22. **Delivering on all three of these objectives will require a dedicated communications approach that focuses on priority audiences.** In line with this Strategy, the Cabinet Office is developing a programme of communication activity to counter child sexual abuse. The programme will build on existing Government campaigns and comprises four strands: preventing offending, protecting children and supporting victims and survivors, partnering with third parties and enhancing the role technology companies play in keeping their users safe. This work will bring together communication disciplines in digital, data, threat leadership insight, behavioural science and national security to better understand the different ways that child sexual abuse happens and guide delivery of communication campaigns to achieve the greatest impact.
23. The diagram below provides a summary of our vision for a whole-system response to all forms of child sexual abuse:

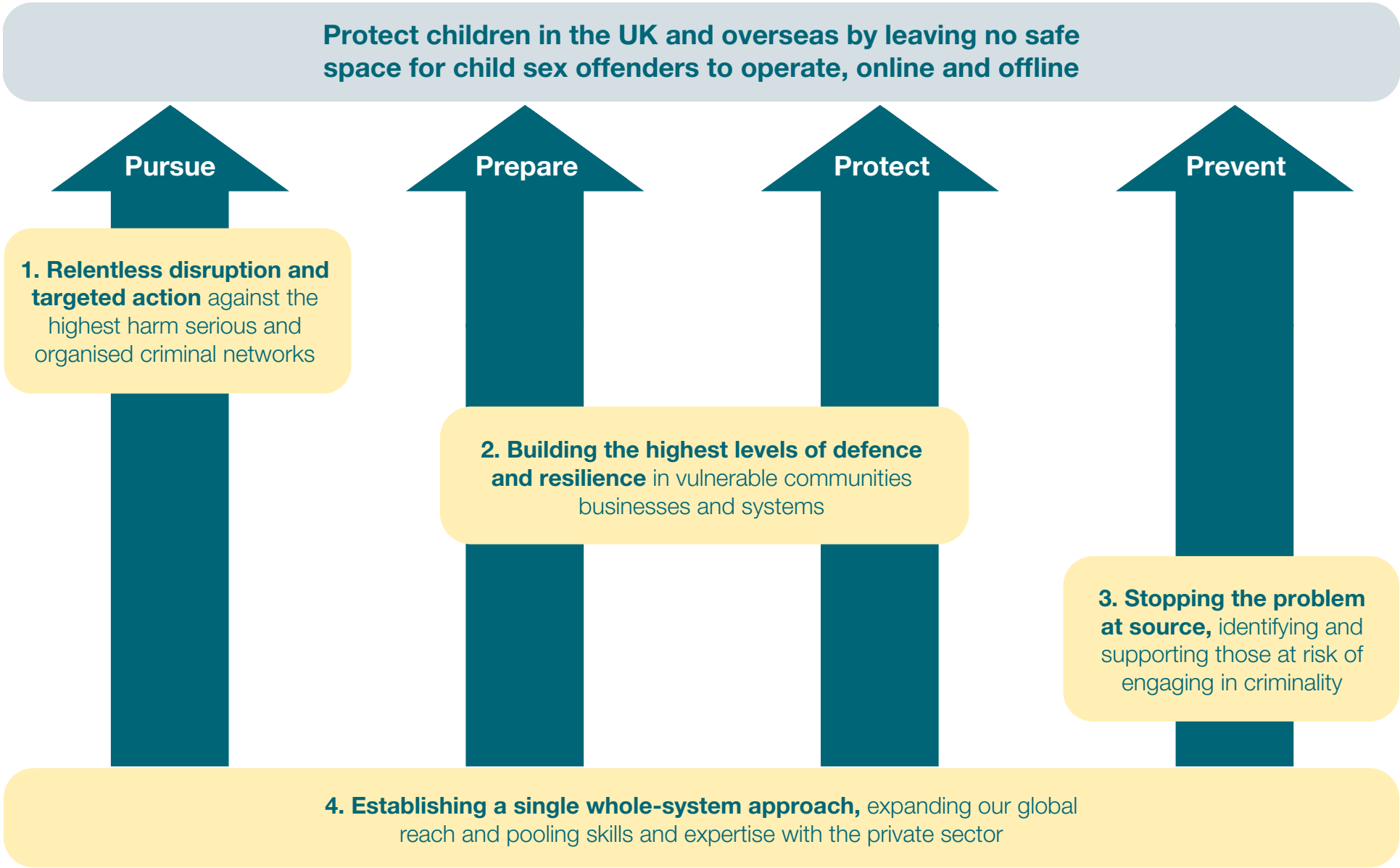
Figure 1

Safeguarding children and young people		Tackling offending and managing offenders	
Safeguarding partnerships drive better multi-agency working, with practitioners able to identify and intervene effectively in child sexual abuse cases		Intelligence is enhanced, ensuring resources are prioritised most effectively	Sex offender management in prison and the community is strengthened
Institutions that work with children prevent offenders from accessing children, and identify and support those at-risk	Law enforcement have an understanding of safeguarding and vulnerability in order to support victims and survivors appropriately	Law enforcement and intelligence services have the capability to disrupt offending at scale, leaving no safe spaces for offenders	
Supporting victims and survivors		Bringing offenders to justice	
Child and adult victims and survivors have access to the support services they need	Child and adult victims and survivors are better supported throughout the criminal justice system	The criminal justice system responds more effectively and efficiently to all forms of sexual offending	
All agencies share information effectively to safeguard children and tackle offending			
Targeted support for those at-risk		Deterring offending	
National and local actors are able to identify and effectively support children, young people and families who are at-risk, including those facing greater risk due to COVID-19	Our evidence base for preventative measures, including for harmful sexual behaviour and peer-on-peer abuse, is more robust	Our understanding of offender pathways and motivations is developed and drives interventions to deter offending in the first place	
Giving children the best start in life, raising awareness amongst parents, carers and families, and protecting children and young people in their communities			
Offenders are less able to take advantage of children and young people through raising awareness amongst parents, carers and families, and giving children and young people access to safe spaces and trusted adults		Children are given the best start in life, including access to information and education around healthy and abusive behaviours	
Working with industry to build resilience to abuse online			
Online services are safe by design and all users know where to report concerns		Online platforms prevent, uncover and stop grooming, livestreaming and sharing of child sexual abuse material	
Working internationally to raise global awareness and standards			
The global profile of child sexual abuse is raised, helping to prevent abuse in key at-risk countries and international sectors, and disrupt cross-border offending both on and off line			

Part 1: Our principles and framework

24. The Government's [Serious and Organised Crime \(SOC\) Strategy](#) (2018) provides the overarching framework for our response to all forms of SOC, including child sexual abuse, and is already driving change and improving our approach.
25. The implementation of the SOC Strategy is driven through the National Strategic Implementation Group on SOC and overseen by the National Security Council, and the Domestic Affairs and the Union Committee. This Strategy will be overseen by the same system, as a subset of the SOC Strategy. The Home Office will provide robust governance to support implementation of this Strategy and hold all partners to account for progress, bringing together relevant Government departments, such as the Department for Education (DfE), the MoJ, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), and the DCMS, in addition to key delivery partners, including the NCA, the GCHQ and the NPCC, with working groups established on specific issues as necessary.
26. The relationship between this Strategy's objectives and the SOC delivery framework, also known as the '4Ps' – Pursue, Prepare, Protect and Prevent – is illustrated by the diagram below:

Figure 2



27. Our whole-system response to child sexual abuse is underpinned by four core principles which run through the objectives and actions outlined:

Figure 3

Principle 1: Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and everyone has a role in preventing child sexual abuse

The central aim of our whole-system response to tackling child sexual abuse is preventing it from happening at all. We must challenge the taboo and silence surrounding child sexual abuse. Everyone has a role to play. We need to ensure all institutions providing services to children are equipped with the right safeguards to intervene as early as possible and build protective factors in families and local communities to impede offenders' efforts. Effective prevention must involve agencies across the public, private and third sectors as well as academia, and work at local, national and international levels.

Principle 2: We need to work across agencies and systems to uncover and respond to child sexual abuse

The complex nature of child sexual abuse means tackling it is beyond the capacity and capability of any one body. Multi-agency working and information sharing at strategic and operational levels are key to all parts of our response. It will need all Government departments, as well as leaders in different systems, including SOC, safeguarding, health, education, offender management and more, to come together and work towards a common vision.

Principle 3: We need a collaborative response which empowers local partners to respond to local issues

This Strategy outlines a whole-system approach to tackling child sexual abuse, whilst recognising the need to provide local leaders with the flexibility to respond to the local issues they understand best. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of this, and local leaders need to be empowered to adapt to changing circumstances.

Principle 4: Tackling child sexual abuse is a global issue

The UK has ratified the United Nations (UN) [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and the [Lanzarote Convention](#), demonstrating our commitment to protecting children from sexual exploitation and abuse. We are committed to the UN [Sustainable Development Goals](#), including target 16.2 to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against, and torture of, children. We have a responsibility to tackle UK offenders who abuse children abroad and to engage with international partners to prevent and tackle abuse online. Continuing to provide global leadership on tackling child sexual abuse and driving common international standards is our legal and moral duty, and key to achieving all our strategic aims.

28. 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. We will use them to inform our policy thinking and direct our investment in the next Spending Review. However, we cannot wait to protect our children from abuse. The Strategy therefore describes the concrete steps we will undertake now to drive a step-change in our response. We will update this Strategy to ensure it takes into account emerging evidence and intelligence.
29. This Strategy complements the detail provided in the [Government's paper on group-based child sexual exploitation](#) specifically, which was announced in May 2020 and published in December 2020. This Strategy also builds on previous work to tackle child sexual abuse, such as the [Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Report](#) (2015) and the [Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Progress Report](#) (2017), recognising the scale of the problem warrants a new, comprehensive approach. It also draws on wider relevant strategies and sector reforms, such as the [Victims Strategy](#) (2018) and the [Strategic Direction on Sexual Assault Abuse Services](#) (2018). We will also ensure that this strategy is complemented by the forthcoming Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, due to be published in 2021.
30. Throughout the Strategy, reference is made to wider reforms happening across Government that will help to strengthen our response to child sexual abuse. It will work in parallel with interventions to reduce risks to children and young people in the community, through programmes tackling child criminal exploitation and the new legal duty to prevent Serious Violence; as well as wider changes to safeguard children from all forms of abuse, through continued improvement to the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and the forthcoming Review of Children's Social Care. The Strategy complements interventions to give children the best start in life by investing in early years and improving mental health provision for children through the [Healthy Child Programme](#) and the [Prevention Green Paper](#). This is in addition to systemic improvements to the criminal justice system as a result of the police recruitment programme, investment in prisons and the CPS, as well as extensive reforms to probation.

Geographic Scope of the Strategy

31. The aspects of this Strategy relating to policing and justice apply to both England and Wales. The actions relating to health, social care and education are devolved and apply only to England.
32. In Wales, the partner agencies engaged in the response to tackling child sexual abuse such as social care, health and education, are devolved and are the responsibility of the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government has published its own strategy, the [National Action Plan for Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse](#) (2019), which sets out actions for the Welsh Government and Safeguarding Boards in Wales on devolved matters in order to prevent child sexual abuse, protect children from child sexual abuse and support child victims and survivors of sexual abuse.

33. In Scotland and Northern Ireland the principal agencies engaged in the response to tackling child sexual abuse, such as policing and the criminal justice system, social care, health and education, are devolved and are the responsibility of the Scottish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.
34. As outlined in the White Paper [The Overseas Territories: Security, Success and Sustainability](#) (2012), the UK government is committed to working in partnership with the Overseas Territories to tackle threats arising from SOC. Although the Governments of the Overseas Territories are responsible for their responses to SOC and safeguarding, the UK Government will support and collaborate with them where necessary in their efforts to tackle child sexual abuse and exploitation.
35. Whilst this is a UK Government Strategy, the global nature of child sexual abuse requires efforts at an international level to tackle and prevent this crime. We will therefore continue to engage with international partners and organisations to address all forms of child sexual abuse (see [Objective 3.7](#)).

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

36. The Government established the [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse](#) (IICSA) in 2015 to consider the extent to which State and non-State institutions have failed in their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse in England and Wales. The IICSA is also considering how far these failings have since been addressed and what further action may need to be taken to protect children from such abuse in future. The Inquiry has already issued a number of reports which have informed this Strategy. We will continue to carefully consider the Inquiry's findings and recommendations and will incorporate them into our whole-system response and Strategy where appropriate.

Part 2: What do we know about child sexual abuse?

37. This Strategy sets out the Government’s ambition for a whole-system response to all forms of child sexual abuse as defined in [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) (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 term child sexual abuse encompasses child sexual exploitation. References in the Strategy to child sexual exploitation refer to this form of abuse specifically. See the [Glossary](#) for more information on the definitions used.

38. Child sexual abuse takes many forms and can be labelled in different ways depending on where it occurs, how it is perpetrated and by whom. It is important to recognise that different types of offending overlap. Offending should not be viewed in terms of discrete, distinct categories or tackled in a siloed way. For example, child sexual abuse material (CSAM) accessed by online offenders is often the result of ‘contact abuse’, where a child has been abused in person.
39. Having a robust understanding of child sexual abuse is crucial for driving effective prevention, improving our law enforcement response, and ensuring all victims and survivors are safeguarded and supported. To understand the challenges that this Strategy addresses, we first need to outline what we already know about the scale and nature of this abuse. This section will cover:
- I. the scale of child sexual abuse;
 - II. the victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, and the impact of this offending;
 - III. the types and contexts of offending, and how this has evolved; and,
 - IV. the perpetrators of child sexual abuse.
40. We have a better understanding of child sexual abuse than ever before. Since 2016, the Home Office has invested over £7 million in the independent [Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse](#) (the “CSA Centre”) to support evidence-informed practice in

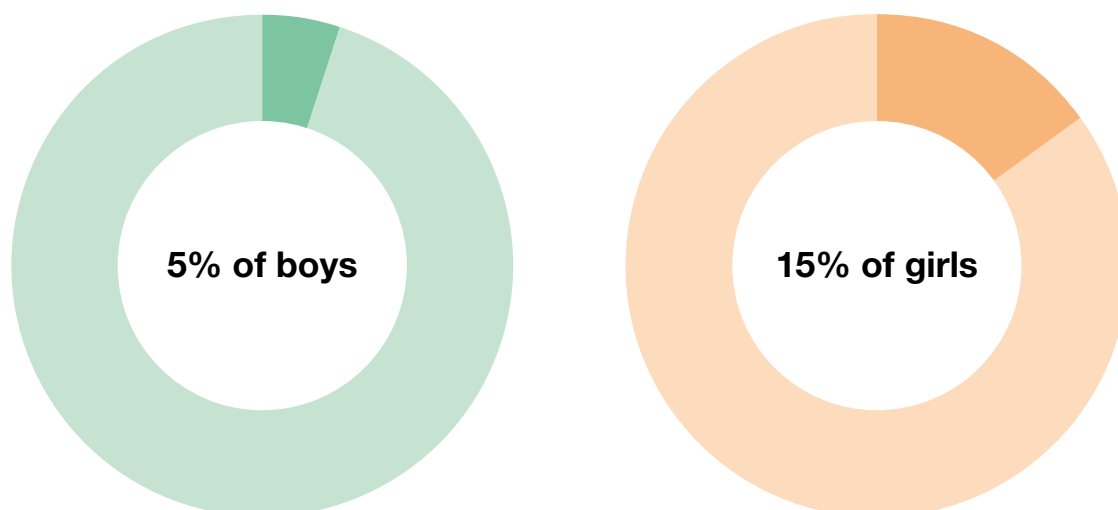
response to child sexual abuse. We have also contributed to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) research, gathered learning from evidence generated by the IICSA, and listened to victims and survivors who have shown great courage in coming forward to share their experiences, for example as part of the [IICSA Truth Project](#).

41. However, we know that there is more to do to ensure that our response is fully evidenced. [Part 2.9](#) outlines the key evidence gaps that we have identified and how we will address them.
42. Child sexual abuse is a complex issue. Recognising and articulating this complexity, and being sensitive and reflexive in the way we respond to it, is essential. This applies to the identification and disruption of child sexual abuse, as well as to supporting the victims and survivors. It is only by embracing and understanding this complexity that policy and practice can make the progress that is needed.

2.1 Scale and prevalence of child sexual abuse

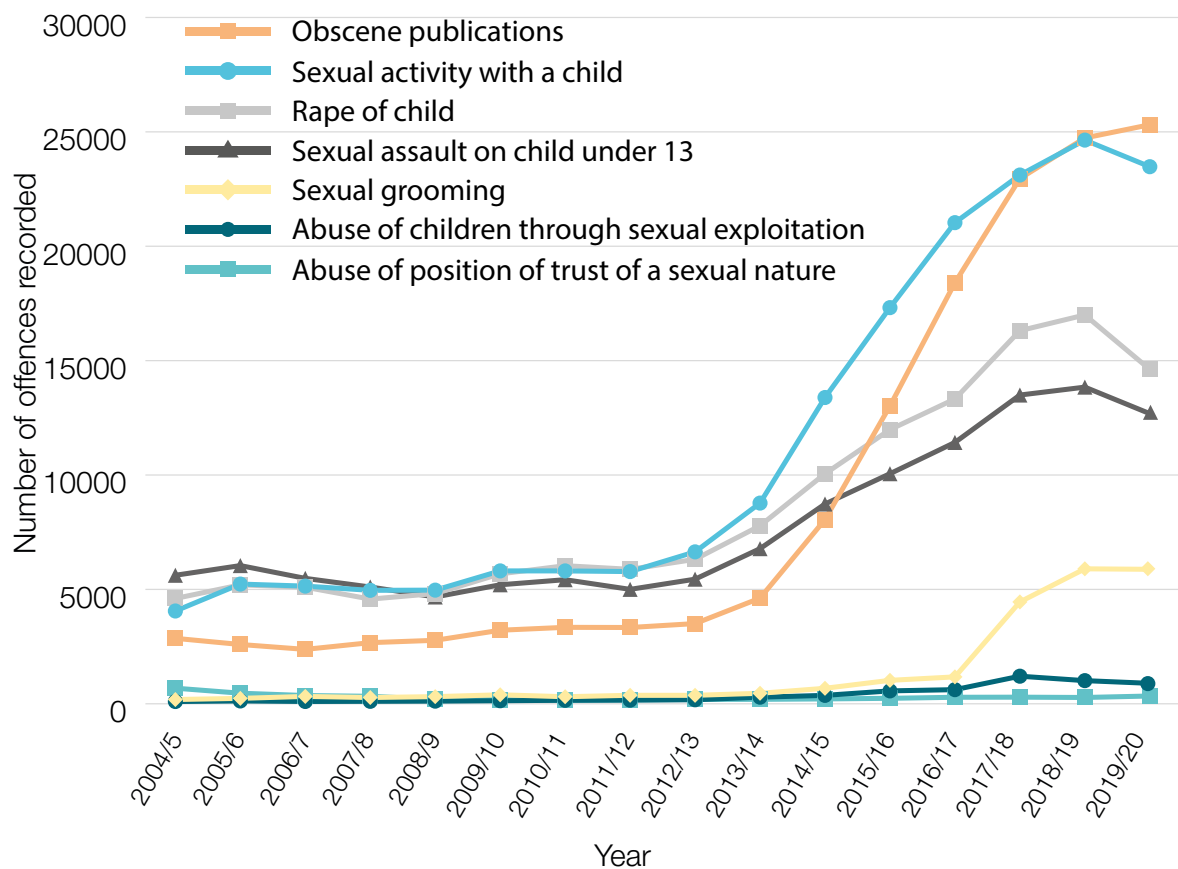
43. 7.5% of adults are estimated to have experienced sexual abuse before they were 16 – approximately 3.5% of men and 11.5% of women – according to the latest prevalence survey by the ONS. This represents an estimated 3.1 million people having experienced child sexual abuse in England and Wales – 700,000 men and 2.4 million women. Looking more widely at a number of different surveys that ask children and adults about their experiences of child sexual abuse, the CSA Centre suggests the prevalence could be higher, estimating that, at a minimum, 15% of girls and 5% of boys experience some form of child sexual abuse.

Figure 4



Child sexual abuse prevalence estimate drawn from CSA Centre: Measuring the scale and changing nature of child sexual abuse

44. Over recent years, we have seen steep increases in reporting of child sexual abuse to the police. Over 83,000 child sexual abuse offences (including obscene publications) were recorded by police in the year ending March 2020, an increase of approximately 267% since 2013. Of these, around 58,000 would be considered contact offences, which have increased by 202% in the same period. Due to the way this data is collected, and different sexual offences defined, these figures do not capture certain sexual offences committed against 16 and 17-year-olds, such as rape, as well as sexual assault committed against children over the age of 13. In January 2020, the ONS published exploratory data looking at sexual offences where there is data to identify the victim or survivor was a child, showing that for the year ending March 2019 there were approximately 73,200 offences. This gives a sense of the number of additional sexual offences there may be that are not captured under child-specific sexual offences.
45. However, few of these recorded crimes result in a charge. There were 5,116 charges for child sex offences (excluding indecent images of children) and 3,135 charges for obscene publications offences (a proxy for indecent images of children) in the year ending March 2020. Many recorded obscene publications offences do not result in a charge as they relate to young people sharing images consensually between themselves. In instances like these, it is commonly deemed not in the public interest to charge. Instead, other out-of-court options may be used, with safeguarding measures and advice provided.
46. The total number of prosecutions and convictions for all child sexual abuse offences have fallen from a high in 2016. In the year ending December 2019, around 3,700 defendants were prosecuted for contact child sex offences and of those, around 2,700 were convicted. Conviction rates are higher for indecent images of children offences than contact offences: In the same period, around 2,700 defendants were prosecuted for indecent images of children offences and, of those, nearly 2,500 were convicted.

Figure 5: Police recorded CSA offences in England and Wales, 2004/5 to 2019/20

Home Office 2020: Police Recorded Crime statistics showing trends in activity from year ending March 2003 to March 2019

Note: Operation Yewtree in 2012 led to an increase in victims' willingness to report and an increase in recorded crime.

Obscene publications is used as a proxy for indecent images of children offences. The majority of obscene publications offences have been recorded against codes that cover indecent images of children offences. These offences will, however, also include lesser offences specifically the sending of explicit images between consenting minors.

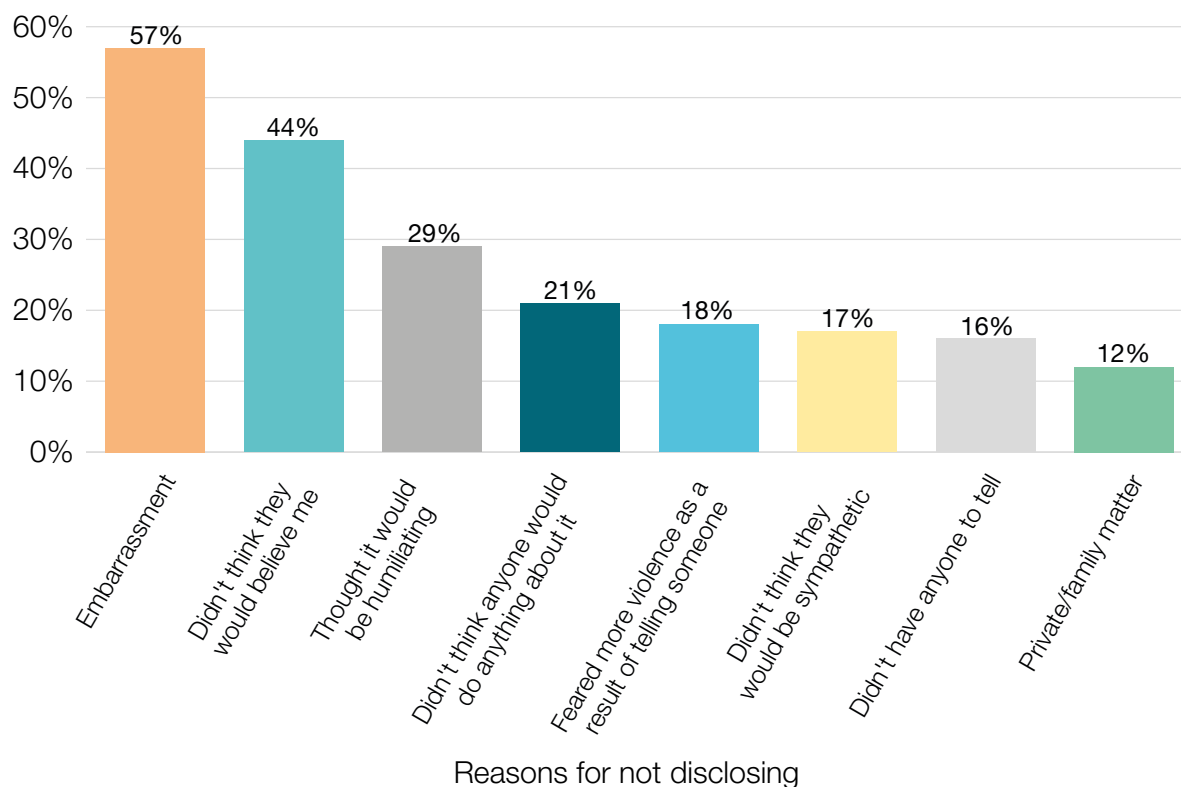
Following the implementation of a new IT system in July 2019, Greater Manchester Police have been unable to supply data for the period July 2019 to March 2020. Figures for Greater Manchester are not included in the National and Regional totals for the years ending March 2019 and 2020.

47. In April 2020, the NCA estimated that a minimum of approximately 300,000 individuals in the UK pose a sexual threat to children, either through contact abuse or online. This figure is based on the NCA's developing understanding, including Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements data (approximately 35,000) and the number of offenders on the dark web (approximately 250,000). Recognising the difficulty of developing definitive estimates in this area, the Home Office and NCA continue to work together to refine and improve our methodologies and understanding. Future estimates will be included in the NCA's annual National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime.

48. However, it is difficult to truly 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 a lack of robust survey data. The picture is further complicated by the fact that many victims and survivors only disclose the abuse they have suffered many years, or even decades, later. Research by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse indicates that the average time for victims and survivors to disclose abuse is 26 years.
49. The 2018/19 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) found that younger adults were less likely or willing to report having experienced child sexual abuse than older adults. Those aged 18-24 were the age group least likely to say they had experienced child sexual abuse (6%), and those aged 45-54 and 55-64 were the most likely (9% for each group). However, we cannot conclude whether this is due to a reduction in the prevalence of child sexual abuse in recent years, or whether it is due to victims and survivors being more willing or able to disclose abuse the longer it has been since the experience.
50. To improve the quality of data, the ONS are undertaking a [feasibility study](#) to establish how to reach a more robust understanding of the prevalence of child abuse, including child sexual abuse. The results of the first phase of this work were published in January 2021. At the same time, the ONS continue to develop and refine survey tools that support respondents to share their information in a way they are comfortable with.

2.2 The hidden nature of child sexual abuse

51. The majority of child sexual abuse remains hidden and under-identified. As outlined in [Part 2.1](#), we know that in many cases victims and survivors disclose the abuse they have suffered decades later, making it harder to bring perpetrators to justice. The CSEW estimates that 76% of adults who experienced rape or assault by penetration did not tell anyone about their experience at the time. People were even less likely to tell the police - only an estimated 7% of victims and survivors informed the police at the time of the offence and only 18% told the police at any point. Non-recent cases (where the abuse occurred 12 or more months prior to being reported) accounted for 34% of all sexual offences against children recorded by the police in the year ending March 2019.

Figure 6: Reasons for not disclosing abuse during childhood

Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey England and Wales - Why adults who experienced sexual abuse before the age of 16 did not tell anyone at the time, year ending March 2019

52. There are many reasons why children will not or cannot disclose abuse. The CSEW found that the most common reasons given by adults for not telling anyone about the abuse they experienced in childhood were embarrassment and thinking that they would not be believed.

"I always felt guilty that it was my fault and was ashamed... two reasons I never said anything"

Adult victim/survivor

53. We know that certain groups may face barriers to disclosure which affects our understanding of overall prevalence. For example, we know that boys are less likely than girls to disclose abuse during childhood, which may be linked to sexual abuse of boys being under-identified by professionals rather than lower overall prevalence. Similarly, children with disabilities are also less likely to disclose, and yet may be at greater risk of being targeted by perpetrators (see [Part 2.4](#)). Research, [including that commissioned by the IICSA](#), has highlighted that people from ethnic minority groups can face barriers

to disclosing or reporting abuse. Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) victims and survivors are under-represented compared to local demographics, but there is no evidence to suggest this is because the incidence of abuse is lower. Sadly, we know that when children do disclose, they are not always believed.

54. Professionals working with children have a responsibility to raise concerns and identify children who are at-risk of, or experiencing, sexual abuse. However, this can be difficult. In 2015, the Children's Commissioner reported that just one in eight children who are sexually abused are identified by professionals. There is concern that professionals do not have a good enough understanding of the signs of child sexual abuse and lack the confidence and skills to talk about it.
55. The 2020 [Multi-agency response to child sexual abuse in the family environment: Joint Targeted Area Inspections](#) (JTAs - undertaken by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service, and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation) looked at six local authorities to review the effectiveness of frontline safeguarding and how well different agencies work together. It found that there is too much reliance on children to disclose verbally, and that practitioners 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.
56. Assessments conducted by children's services show an increase in identification of child sexual abuse and exploitation as a risk factor. Assessments with a risk factor of child sexual abuse rose by 28% in the year ending March 2020 from the year ending March 2015 (from 23,800 to 30,460), and those with a risk factor of child sexual exploitation rose by over 50% in the same period (from 12,200 to 18,700). However, the number assessed remains lower than best prevalence estimates.
57. The number of children on child protection plans under the category of sexual abuse is comparatively low, at 1,970 – approximately 4% of all plans – at the end of March 2020. Whilst this has remained relatively stable since 2014/15, it represents a major reduction in proportion over the last 20 years. The Children's Commissioner has highlighted that many victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in the family environment are not placed on a child protection plan for sexual abuse, but instead may be placed on a plan for another type of abuse (such as neglect or emotional abuse). Many children identified as having experienced, or being at-risk of, child sexual abuse will also be placed in the care of a local authority rather than being on a child protection plan.

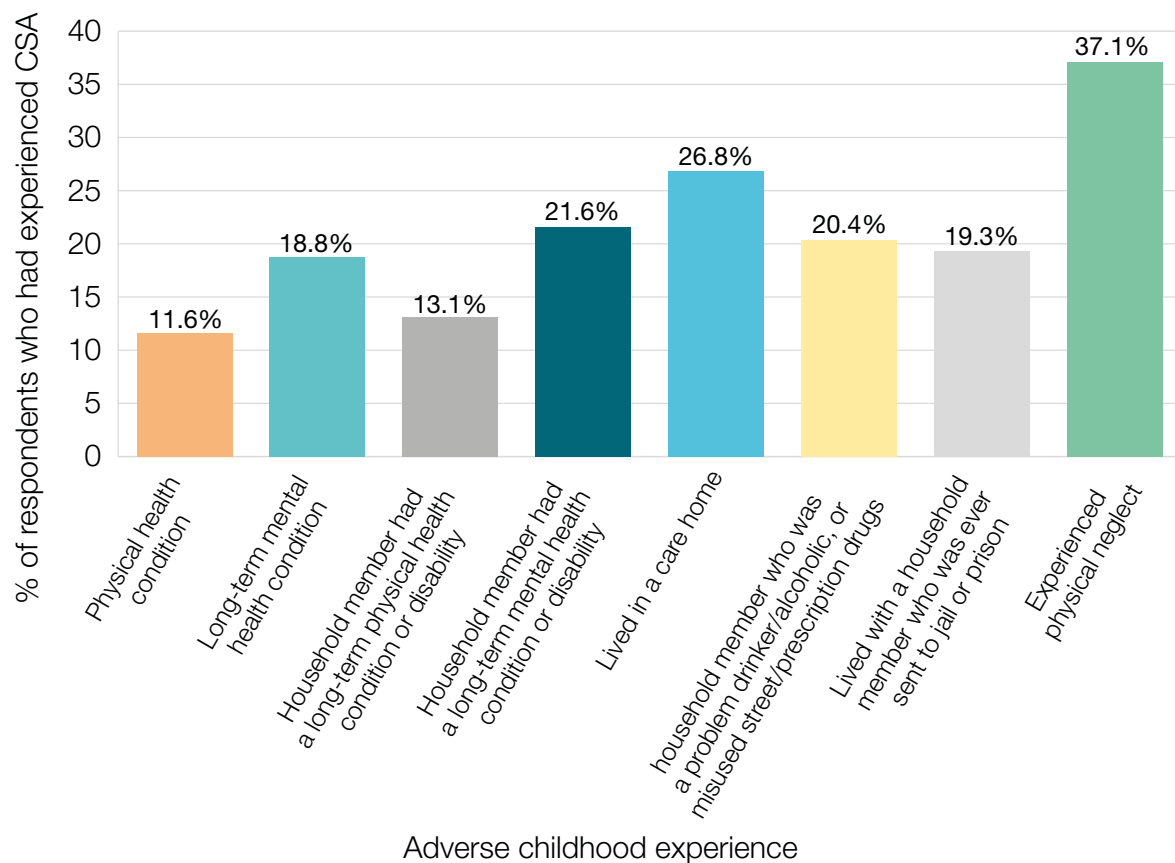
2.3 What do we know about victims and survivors?

58. In recognition that some people who have experienced child sexual abuse will identify as victims and others as survivors, we utilise both terms throughout the document to refer to those who have been sexually abused.
59. It is not the responsibility of a child to stop sexual abuse and it is never a child's fault if they are targeted. Children of all ages, socio-economic backgrounds, sexes and abilities are targeted by offenders who abuse children on and offline, yet because of the challenges set out above concerning identification and reporting, we have a limited picture of 'who' victims and survivors are.
60. There appear to be differences in the ages at which children are most at-risk, depending on the type of abuse. In the family environment, victimisation appears to peak at the age of 9, and victimisation online peaks before age 13. A range of sources suggest that victimisation for child sexual exploitation peaks between 14 and 15 years-old, and that older teenagers are more likely than younger children to receive sexual messages online. However, our understanding of when victimisation peaks may be impacted by a lack of data around the overall prevalence of child sexual abuse. For example, this data is unlikely to accurately capture the scale of sexual abuse experienced by very young children as we know that professionals sometimes rely on children to verbally disclose their abuse (see [Part 2.2](#)).

2.4 Some might be more likely to be abused than others

61. For the avoidance of doubt, it is worth clarifying that abuse does not occur because of a child's vulnerability, but rather because of an offender's inclination and ability to take advantage of this vulnerability. All children are inherently vulnerable by virtue of their age, as well as the power imbalance that exists between children and adults. While it is clear that there are factors that make some children more vulnerable to being targeted than others, there is no factor which makes any group of children uniquely vulnerable. Although awareness of vulnerability can be helpful, it is important to acknowledge that it can also contribute to stereotypes about what a victim and survivor of child sexual abuse looks like, with the consequence that victims and survivors who differ from that picture are overlooked or unwilling to come forward for fear of not being believed.
62. The relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and child sexual abuse is complex and not yet fully understood. ACEs appear to be more prevalent in children who experience sexual abuse. For example, the CSEW found that those who experienced physical neglect were more likely to have experienced sexual abuse, or another form of concurrent abuse such as domestic abuse. These experiences may interact with one another to compound and exacerbate the victim's vulnerability. However, some ACEs may be as a result of previous abuse. One example of this is where children may be in the care of a local authority as a result of experiencing sexual abuse. Offenders may seek to exploit the intersecting vulnerabilities of a child in care, potentially putting them at particular risk of sexual abuse from people outside their home.

Figure 7: The proportion of those who experienced adverse childhood experiences who also experienced child sexual abuse



Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey England and Wales - Whether adults experienced sexual abuse before the age of 16, by adverse childhood experiences, year ending March 2019

63. Children with disabilities or long-term health problems may also be more likely to be targeted. The CSEW shows that adults who reported having a long-term health condition or disability during childhood were twice as likely to have experienced sexual abuse during childhood.
64. The CSEW further suggests that children who live in a household where someone has a long-term physical or mental health condition or disability; or someone who has a drug and/or alcohol problem; or who has ever been to prison, are more likely to have experienced child sexual abuse.
65. Children who are socially isolated, and those who are exploring their sexuality online (particularly LGBTQ+ young people), may also be more likely to be targeted by offenders according to research commissioned by the IICSA.
66. Children in care may also be at higher risk of being targeted by perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Some research indicates that frequent changes to a child's care placement, the absence of consistent trusting relationships, and an overall lack of stability or place to call 'home' may heighten a perpetrator's ability to abuse children in care. The IICSA have highlighted that children in residential settings may be especially

vulnerable to sexual abuse by adults working in such settings, but it is also the case that abusers from outside the home may target children in care.

67. According to [CSA centre research](#), prior experience of abuse and neglect can also heighten the risk of a child or young person engaging in harmful sexual behaviour. This includes behaviour that can increase the risk of victimisation of others or behaviour which has a negative impact on the child themselves. The [2020 JTAI report](#) highlights that, sometimes, professionals do not consider that harmful sexual behaviour may be a result of a child having suffered sexual abuse and so may not always consider their safeguarding needs.

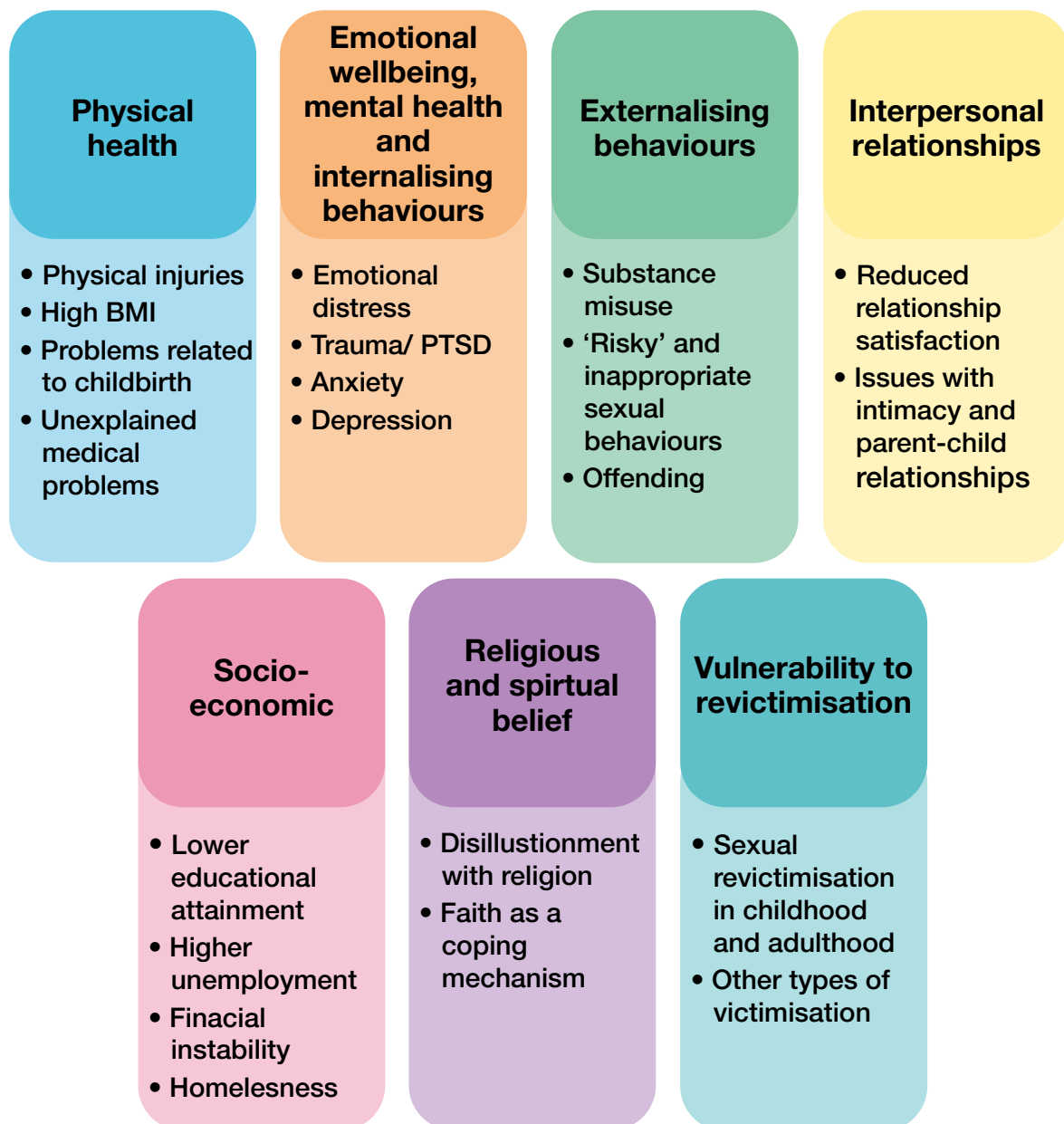
CASE STUDY

During his early childhood, Joseph lived in the care of his mother. Joseph witnessed domestic abuse between his parents and often needed to stay with other relatives because of his mother's mental health issues. Joseph was subsequently placed in the care of his father who began physically and sexually abusing him. After going missing from his father's care, Joseph moved again to live with his maternal aunt, but the living arrangement broke down as his aunt struggled to manage his inappropriate sexualised behaviour. At 14, Joseph went into the care of the local authority. When living in his second placement, Joseph got involved with a gang who seemed to offer a sense of belonging and security, but he went on to suffer violence and exploitation by other gang members.

2.5 What is the impact of child sexual abuse?

68. Whilst the impact of child sexual abuse on victims and survivors can vary significantly, there is strong evidence that child sexual abuse 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, socioeconomic outcomes, and vulnerability to revictimisation. The impact of child sexual abuse can be significant, regardless of the type of abuse suffered (including where the abuse takes place in an online environment), and can be influenced by a range of factors including the duration of the abuse, an individual's coping mechanism, and the support they receive.
69. Research by the IICSA demonstrates that the impacts of child sexual abuse can last for a lifetime, sometimes resulting in long-term illness and disabilities. These can include a wide range of physical health conditions, as well as mental health issues such as depression, anxiety disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Rates of self-harm have been shown to be as high as 49% among adult victims and survivors in treatment, and the risk of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse attempting suicide can be as much as six times higher than the general population.
70. The IICSA's Rapid Evidence Assessment highlights the following key impacts of child sexual abuse:

Figure 8



Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (2018) The impacts of child sexual abuse: A rapid evidence assessment

CASE STUDY

“In my first week at school, the headmaster got me into his study alone. I knew it was wrong and I struggled to get away from him. I was sexually abused on multiple occasions over a number years. I could never tell anyone because by then I had been badged as ‘trouble’ and I didn’t want to let my parents down.

When I was 16, I left boarding school and ran away from home. I ended up drifting between squats addicted to heroin. Every day of my life, I have had intrusive memories of abuse, except when I took a lot of hard drugs.

Individual and group therapy was the hardest thing I have ever done. For years, it seemed like I was getting nowhere. But then one day I realised the nightmares had stopped. There are still many areas of my life that I am not satisfied about, but I have come a long way since that scared and abused little boy 50 years ago.”

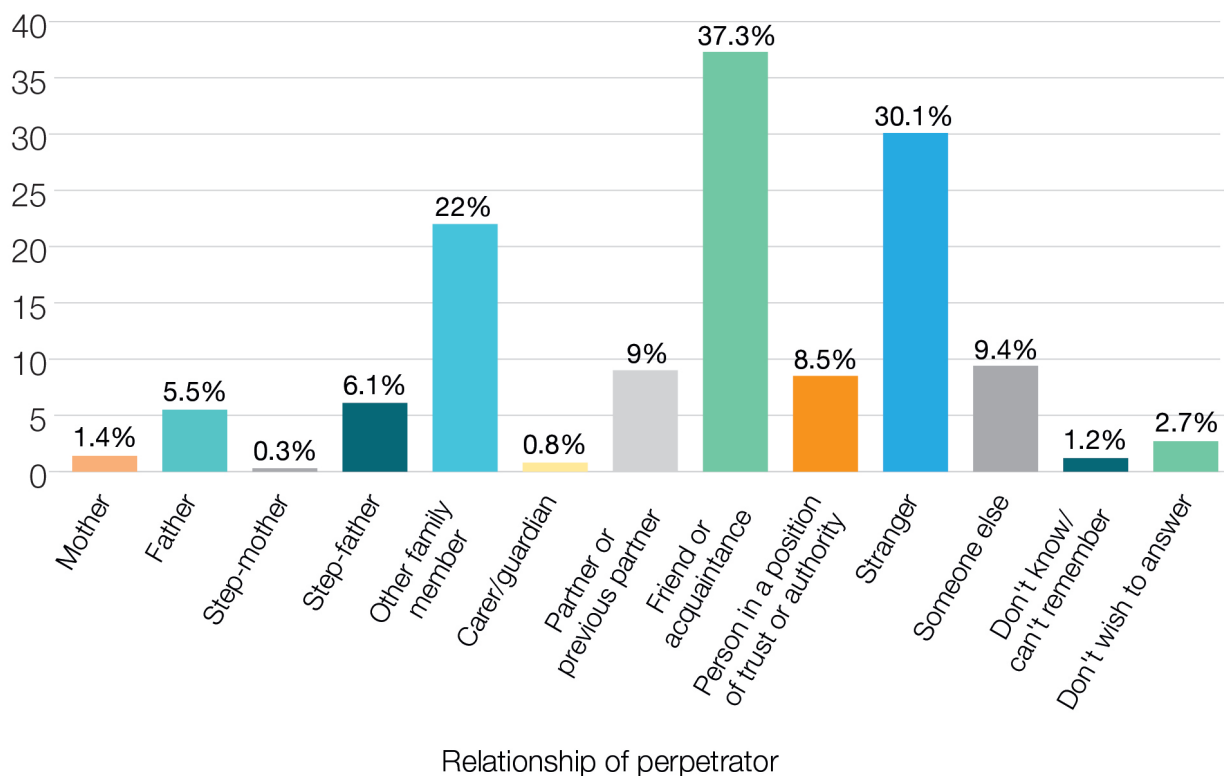
71. Victims and survivors may face barriers to progression in education and to their careers, with research suggesting, on average, victims and survivors have higher rates of unemployment and long-term sickness. They may also use negative coping mechanisms to deal with the impact of abuse. Research points to higher rates of substance misuse amongst victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.
72. Experiencing child sexual abuse can also increase the likelihood of further victimisation. The CSEW has shown that those who experienced child sexual abuse were significantly more likely to experience domestic abuse and further sexual abuse as adults.
73. It is also important to acknowledge that child sexual abuse and subsequent criminal investigations can have a profound impact on the family members of both victims and perpetrators, including social, psychological and financial consequences. There is a need to develop our understanding of the impact of these crimes and investigations on the wider family, and we will work with law enforcement partners and voluntary sector organisations to explore these issues further.
74. Child sexual abuse also has an impact on society and the economy more widely, including pressure on the criminal justice system, healthcare and social services. The Home Office has recently completed work that estimates the financial and non-financial (monetised) cost relating to all victims who continued to experience contact sexual abuse, or who began to experience contact sexual abuse, in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2019. This is estimated to be at least £10 billion and includes the costs of this cohort being victimised in previous and future years, in addition to lifetime consequences as a result of experiencing child sexual abuse. (It should be noted that due to the way some costs are incurred over a victim’s lifetime, this cannot be used as an annual or an in-year cost). The estimate includes costs:

- In anticipation of child sexual abuse (expenditure on protective and preventative measures such as costs of education and training);
- As a consequence of child sexual abuse (physical and emotional harms to victims and survivors, lost economic output, and costs to health and victim services); and,
- In response to child sexual abuse (costs incurred by the police and criminal justice system, as well as the cost of safeguarding victims).

75. This estimate does not include the costs incurred as a result of indecent images of children or other non-contact offending, and so the true cost of child sexual abuse will be higher than this estimate.

2.6 Understanding child sexual abuse perpetration

76. Victims and survivors may experience different types of abuse across different settings and by different perpetrators. It is crucial to recognise that some offenders will commit both child sexual abuse in person ('contact abuse') and child sexual abuse online. Nevertheless, it is also likely that there are some who will offend online but will never contact offend (see [Part 2.7](#) for more detail on online offending).
77. To further expand our understanding of offending, in March 2020 the CSA Centre published [A new typology of child sexual abuse offending](#) focusing on the contexts and patterns of offending, rather than the characteristics of the perpetrator or the victim or survivor.
78. Child sexual abuse in the family environment constitutes the largest portion of all contact offending. Although the majority of this abuse remains hidden, the Office of the Children's Commissioner estimates that, excluding indecent image offences, approximately two-thirds of child sexual abuse reported to the police is perpetrated by a family member or someone close to the child. The CSEW provides further evidence for this, with most offences perpetrated by friends, acquaintances or family members.
79. Child sexual abuse is also perpetrated in institutions, including by those in positions of trust within those institutions. The IICSA has highlighted the extent of non-recent institutional abuse where teaching or educational staff, clergy or church-related staff, medical practitioners, residential care workers and others, have used their power to systematically abuse children. Although much of this is undetected, ONS research shows that 16% of men and 6% of women who had experienced sexual abuse as children had been abused by a person in a position of trust outside of the family environment.

Figure 9: Relationship of perpetrator to victim/survivor

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100 as respondents could choose more than one answer to the question.

Office for National Statistics: Crime Survey England and Wales – Relationship of perpetrator to adults who experienced any sexual abuse before the age of 16, year ending March 2019

CASE STUDY

In 2014, Operation Sanctuary was launched: a police-led multiagency investigation responding to an increased awareness of the prevalence of sexual exploitation in the Newcastle area. This resulted in the arrests of over 30 men and the identification of numerous victims, including children and adults with learning disabilities. The survivors' accounts, and subsequent inquiries, confirmed that sexual exploitation was happening in Newcastle on a much larger scale than previously recognised. In October 2015, the Newcastle Safeguarding Children Board and Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board decided to carry out a joint thematic Serious Case Review to look beyond the specific incidents or individuals, and understand patterns or themes in the sexual exploitation cases likely to apply in other circumstances.

The learning from this Review and from Operation Sanctuary is now embedded into Newcastle's services, particularly in the form of the Multiagency Sexual Exploitation Hub. Awareness has been raised about the nature and impact of sexual exploitation, which has had a positive impact on identification and prevention, as well as support for victims and survivors.

80. A particular type of child sexual abuse is group-based child sexual exploitation. A number of large police operations in recent years have uncovered the scale of this type of offending in the UK. In Rotherham alone, at least 1,400 children were sexually exploited between 1997 and 2013. These offenders tend to be in loosely connected networks formed through pre-existing social connections, such as work or family. Offender groups do not have a single defining structure. It is difficult to draw conclusions around the representation of different ethnic groups in the offending population as data on ethnicity is not consistently collected by the police and other agencies. The limited data that exist suggests that whilst offenders operating within the same group tend to be ethnically homogenous, offending is not unique to any particular ethnic group. The dynamics and peer reinforcement present in such groups can enable and encourage offending behaviour towards a large number of victims. The motivations for such abuse are hard to pinpoint, but likely extend beyond a sexual interest in children to wider motivations relating to misogyny, a desire for power and control, and in some cases financial gain. A separate paper on [Group based child sexual exploitation: characteristics of offending](#) was published in December 2020 (see [Objective 1.3](#) for further detail).
81. Whilst this form of abuse can often be perpetrated by small and loosely associated groups of individuals, there are also some more organised criminal groups which traffic children into the UK to sexually exploit them. 638 victims of this cross-border manifestation of child sexual abuse were identified in 2018, according to statistics from the National Referral Mechanism, an increase of 16% on the previous year.
82. Crucially, we know that forms of exploitation often overlap. For example, some gangs both sexually and criminally exploit their victims, or force victims to abuse one another as a means of control.
83. A proportion of abuse is perpetrated by children and young people themselves, with some prevalence studies suggesting that a third to two thirds of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by under 18s, and the Children's Commissioner estimating that 25% of intra-familial abuse is perpetrated by under 18s. Children, particularly in younger age groups, may engage in developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour, which can be harmful towards themselves and/or others. Harmful sexual behaviour exists on a spectrum from inappropriate through to problematic, abusive and violent. It is important to recognise that harmful sexual behaviour may be an indicator of prior abuse, neglect or trauma, with one study finding that two thirds of young people who display this behaviour were known to have had such experiences. Ensuring the safeguarding and welfare needs of children who display harmful sexual behaviour are met is paramount. In some cases, responses may also involve criminal justice pathways.

2.7 The evolving nature of child sexual abuse offending

84. We know that child sexual abuse is evolving and that perpetrators are increasingly utilising technology and the internet to offend. Online exploitation and grooming can be perpetrated both by strangers and those known to the victim, with the intention of coercing children into sexual conversations or activity online, or into meeting in person to perpetrate abuse.

CASE STUDY

Aged 13, Jenny used her computer to download music and chat to friends. A friend introduced Jenny to someone claiming to be a teenage girl online. This person was friendly to Jenny, asking her questions about her life and things she was interested in. Eventually, the person asked Jenny to send a photo of herself, which Jenny did.

“I felt safe because “she” was telling me things about her as well and she had sent me a photo of herself. I thought I had been careful because I hadn’t given out my home address, but I had already given away much more than I thought, for example my local area by saying which school I went to.”

“I was boosted by her compliments, so when she sent another photo, so did I. She said that she had sent my photos to her boss and he liked them. He wanted to come and meet me to take some professional photos. That’s when I was frightened of what I had already done, and I didn’t know how to take it back or what to do next.”

When Jenny was threatened with her photos being shared, she agreed to give her address. Jenny waited at home on her own. *“I remember him pushing his way into the flat and into my bedroom and then he indecently assaulted me.”*

85. Through both open and dark-web sites and forums, offenders communicate and organise. They create and distribute CSAM, live-stream abuse, share victims’ or survivors’ information, and swap strategies to commit offences. Anonymisation technology becoming more accessible is also enabling more offenders to avoid detection.
86. There is evidence that online offending has increased since 2018, enabled by a growth in social media and new internet technologies. Intelligence from law enforcement suggests it is possible that this may result in further contact offending, for example with online behaviour acting as a precursor to a contact offence (in the case of online grooming), or driving contact offending (such as with livestreaming). Offenders are exploiting opportunities online, including social media, to reach out to multiple children and, in some cases, blackmailing victims and survivors into engaging in further and

more extreme acts by threatening to circulate images of their abuse. We know that some offenders who abuse children in their family environment or local community share images or videos of the abuse online. Research by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) shows that 67% of online CSAM imagery detected appears to have been taken in a home setting. Intelligence also suggests that there is a rising monetisation of CSAM and live-streaming of abuse.

87. Child sexual abuse is an international issue, with CSAM websites hosted in countries around the world. The IICSA has heard that live-streaming of child sexual abuse is an increasing threat. This type of abuse is made more complex by the way it can straddle multiple jurisdictions, with offenders and victims located in different countries.
88. The 2019 [Global Threat Assessment](#) by the WeProtect Global Alliance shows that the majority of commercial live-streamed abuse perpetrated in person targets children in the Philippines, and in nations of the Global South more broadly, where there are higher levels of poverty and children with vulnerabilities that offenders may seek to exploit. Some offenders travel to abuse children in areas that have limited capacity and/or capability to prevent child sexual abuse and pursue offenders.
89. However, live-streaming is also a threat to children in the UK. Offenders will often coerce or force children within a home setting into live-streaming. The IWF found that the vast majority of live-streamed abuse the organisation has identified has involved the child alone in a home setting.
90. In the context of children leading more of their lives online, combined with changing attitudes to dating and relationships, the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes (also known as “youth-produced sexual images”) are also increasingly normalised and there is an issue around the growing volume of, and a falling age-range in, nudes and semi-nudes produced by young people and children.
91. Some young people generate images in a consensual way with age-appropriate peers. However, consensually produced nude or semi-nude images or videos can be shared more widely without consent, adding to the volume of material available for offenders. In the first six months of 2020, 44% of all child sexual abuse content dealt with by the IWF was assessed as containing self-generated images or videos, compared to 29% in 2019. Other nudes or semi-nudes are created in a coercive and abusive context, and offenders can use self-generated imagery to blackmail and further abuse victims and survivors.

2.8 Characteristics, motivations and life experiences of perpetrators of child sexual abuse

92. Our understanding of offenders is limited to those we have identified, who likely form a small proportion of all offenders. We do know that offenders come from all walks of life, all age groups, all ethnicities and all faiths. Generally, it is difficult to identify characteristics of sex offenders that would distinguish them from the general population.

93. Conceptualisations of motivations to offend often centre on an offender having a sexual interest in children. This is important to consider, as those offenders who report a sexual interest in children tend to re-offend at higher rates. However, it is likely that a wider range of factors may contribute towards an individual's offending behaviour, including other sexual motivations (such as sexual gratification, a sexual interest in illegal sexual activity, problematic attitudes towards sex, and the use of sex as a coping mechanism) and non-sexual motivations (such as financial motivations, misogyny, or those relating to entitlement, power, and control).
94. An offender's circumstances and life experiences will also play a role in the onset and maintenance of their offending behaviour – for example, consumption of alcohol, peer influences, issues in self-management, or relationship breakdown may be risk factors. Collectively or separately, all of these may put someone on a path to offending. It is important to note that having a sexual interest in children does not guarantee an individual will become an offender.
95. We know that the vast majority of people who experience abuse and neglect in childhood do not go on to abuse as adults. At the same time, early abuse, trauma, rejection and attachment difficulties are considered to play a role in offending, with some research suggesting that child sex offenders are more likely to have experienced abuse and adverse experiences in childhood compared to non-sexual offenders, and non-offenders.
96. Although we suspect that some combination of these factors come together to become relevant to an individual's offending behaviour, much more research is required to understand how they contribute.
97. Based on research in England and Wales, child sex offenders typically tend to be male and white (in line with general population demographics). Different data sources suggest different ages of offenders. A study by the NSPCC found a large proportion of offending was committed by adolescents, whilst the MoJ conviction data suggests many offenders are aged in their early 30s to mid-40s. However, this may reflect when offenders come to the attention of the authorities, rather than the true age of child sexual abuse offenders.

2.9 Driving an evidence based, victim-centred response

98. Although we have better insight into child sexual abuse than ever before, it is imperative that we keep up with the evolving threat. Further research is needed to better understand how to prevent and tackle all forms of child sexual abuse, as well as to provide effective support for victims and survivors. We want to ensure that all aspects of our response are fully informed by the latest data and research, whether from policy, inspectorates, academia or the third sector. We also recognise the importance of ongoing engagement with young people, and victims and survivors themselves, and will be engaging with young people as the Strategy is implemented.

99. The CSA Centre and IICSA have carried out a useful exercise with stakeholders [mapping evidence gaps and identifying those of most importance](#). We will continue to work with partners and stakeholders to drive forward research to inform our work and fill the gaps identified.
100. As part of this, the Home Office has carried out work to estimate the costs of contact child sexual abuse (see [Part 2.5](#)). We will continue to develop our understanding of the cost of wider forms of child sexual abuse and explore new approaches to develop our understanding of its prevalence. The Home Office will also invest in developing and embedding best practice for the provision of support to victims and survivors; as well as building our understanding about who is committing these offences and why; what offender pathways look like; and what works in terms of preventing and disrupting offending.

2.10 How has COVID-19 impacted on child sexual abuse?

Whilst we cannot yet know the true impact of COVID-19, and the harm inflicted by offenders during lockdown, it is recognised that necessary measures to stop the spread of the virus may have increased the risk of certain forms of child sexual abuse. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, reports to police for all types of sexual offences have decreased and referrals to children's social care have been below average when compared to the same periods over the past three years. However, we know that child sexual abuse often remains hidden for a long time.

There is evidence from third sector partners to suggest that child sexual abuse may have increased during the pandemic. The NSPCC saw a threefold increase in Childline counselling sessions about child sexual abuse within the family between March and May 2020, from an average of eight sessions per week before the restrictions were imposed to an average of 23 per week. Over a quarter of Childline counselling sessions about sexual abuse within the family related to abuse that has happened recently. Between April and August 2020, NSPCC also saw an 11% increase in Childline counselling sessions about online sexual abuse, as well as a 60% increase in contacts from adults concerned about children experiencing online sexual abuse.

Offenders and potential offenders are likely to have spent more time online, with limited or no access to usual employment, recreation or social networks that may prevent harmful or abusive behaviour. The Lucy Faithfull Foundation have seen an increase in use of their preventative resources for child sexual abuse, which support those with concerns about their own or another's behaviour. Between Spring (5 Mar – 27 May) and Autumn (10 Sep – 2 Dec) 2020, the average number of weekly users of their offender-focused website - *Stop It Now! Get Help* - increased by 128%.

The risk to children of online sexual abuse, alongside other forms of online harm, is likely to have increased as a result of isolation measures, with children being educated and spending more time online. There was a sustained increase in public reports to the NCA's Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) command between April and August

2020, with 29% more reports received compared with the same period in 2019. The level of reports from children graded high-risk was also elevated between early April and August 2020, at around 64% compared with around 35% in 2019. In 2020, the Internet Watch Foundation also processed 16% more reports containing child sexual abuse material compared to 2019, equating to millions of images and videos. Of these reports, there was an increase of 77% in images and videos containing self-generated child sexual abuse content compared to 2019's total. This may indicate an increase in children being groomed or forced to perform sexual acts and/or an increase in "sexting", which can constitute harmful sexual behaviour and make children and young people vulnerable to blackmail and abuse.

Home is not the safe space it should be for all children and lockdown measures may have increased the risk around forms of intra-familial abuse. However, children may also have had some protection from intra-familial abuse because of the presence of non-abusing parents, carers or family members in the home.

At the height of lockdown restrictions, the risks around contact child sexual exploitation outside of the home may be decreased due to children, young people and perpetrators being forced to stay at home. As restrictions are eased, risks around contact exploitation in the community may rise as children and young people spend more time in public spaces again.

We have worked closely with law enforcement, the UK intelligence community, safeguarding partners and the third sector to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the threat of child sexual abuse and ensure they have the resources they need to tackle offending, protect children, and support victims and survivors. This Strategy details some of the ways in which we have bolstered our response as a result of COVID-19, alongside our long-term vision for ensuring the whole system is equipped to tackle the threat.

Part 3: Our ambition for the future

Objective 1: Tackling all forms of child sexual abuse and bringing offenders to justice

101. We must go further in our actions to protect children from sexual abuse and be relentless in our pursuit of offenders - ensuring perpetrators are identified, stopped and brought to justice. Children may suffer abuse at the hands of a family member or person in a position of trust; be targeted by strangers in their local community; exploited by groups or gangs; or abused by peers, who may themselves be victims. Increasingly, children are being targeted online by perpetrators who can reach them anywhere through digital devices, even in seemingly safe home environments. Law enforcement and other key partners tell us that offenders groom and blackmail children to engage in sexual acts online, or to meet so that they can abuse them in person. Some of these offenders are becoming more organised and making use of sophisticated technology to swap child sexual abuse imagery and tips to evade detection.
102. We continue to make vital progress in our efforts to tackle offenders, bolstering the capability of our law enforcement agencies to keep pace with the evolving nature of the threat. In the year ending March 2020, arrests relating to online child sexual abuse increased by 50% compared to the previous year, reaching 7,212 arrests, and 8,329 children were safeguarded. Over 1.3 million unique indecent images of children (including over 45,000 videos) were added to the Child Abuse Image Database (CAID) in the six months up to early January 2021, enabling faster and more effective identification of victims, survivors and offenders. Our progress is demonstrated by the increase in the number of victims and survivors identified in indecent images of children in 2019/20 compared to the previous year – up 43% to 793 victims and survivors, the highest number to be identified in a single year.
103. We will nevertheless go further to equip our law enforcement agencies with the tools, resources and powers necessary to uncover and tackle more child sexual abuse, continue to promote a child-centred and trauma-informed policing approach, and make sure prosecutors have the capacity and capability to bring more offenders to justice.

Measures for improvement

- There will be an increasing number of disruptions leading to a reduction in the overall threat of child sexual abuse, as evidenced by assessed intelligence reporting
- Prioritisation of offenders will become more robust, enabling law enforcement to target those assessed as highest harm
- We will process digital forensics of child sexual abuse material faster, as well as identify more victims and offenders, and reduce access to child sexual abuse material
- There will be an increase in the number of effective trials for child sexual abuse
- We will maximise the effectiveness of Sexual Harm Prevention Orders, Sexual Risk Orders and Child Abduction Warning Notices

1.1 Building capacity in the criminal justice system

104. Transforming our approach to pursuing offenders will require additional resources, prioritised to have the greatest impact across all types of child sexual abuse and agile enough to respond to change. In recent years, we have made significant investment to expand the capacity of national and regional law enforcement to tackle and disrupt offending at scale, and will continue to do so.
105. **In 2019, we announced an unprecedented drive to increase police officer numbers by 20,000 over three years to ensure that policing have the workforce they need to tackle all crime types, including child sexual abuse.** We provided £750 million in 2020 to support forces to recruit up to 6,000 additional officers onto our streets by the end of 2020/21, the first stage in this uplift. Ministers are backing the use of a share of the Police Uplift Programme in years two and three to support policing's response to serious organised crime (SOC), and we are working with the sector to determine how these officers can be deployed to achieve maximum impact against the most serious forms of criminality, including child sexual abuse. **We are also continuing to provide funding to several child sexual abuse-related investigations and operations through the Police Special Grant, amounting to just over £16.25 million in 2019/20.**
106. Inspection reports stress that rising numbers of public protection cases, including child sexual abuse cases, are placing pressure on the health, wellbeing and capacity of staff. We will work to provide high-quality support for officers and staff through the National Police Wellbeing Service and the Police Covenant, recognising the role this plays in enabling a sensitive, victim-led law enforcement response, and ensuring expertise is not lost through secondary trauma or burnout.

We will disrupt the highest harm offenders online and safeguard more children through investment in undercover online officers and the NCA's dark web capabilities

107. Undercover online officers (UCOLs), working within Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) and the NCA, are a key capability for law enforcement comprising specially-trained teams and infrastructure to target and disrupt the highest-harm offenders. To ensure UCOL capabilities are maintained and strengthened, we provided another £9.81 million investment in 2020.
108. **In 2020 we invested £20.76 million to build the workforce capacity and technical capability of the NCA.** £9.86 million was used to improve the NCA's ability to tackle perpetrators seeking to offend against children via the dark web. We will also enhance the NCA referrals bureau with an investment of £2.35 million, making processing of industry referrals for online abuse faster and enabling NCA-led activity to safeguard more children.

CASE STUDY

In 2019, after an NCA investigation, an offender was convicted of child sex offences and was sentenced to 15 years in prison and an indefinite Sexual Harm Prevention Order. He had been viewing indecent images of children for two years and, during this time, joined discussions with like-minded individuals on online forums, sharing tips to commit offences and evade detection.

To join an online private paedophile discussion group, which had a condition that new members post new abuse images, he went from viewing child sexual abuse material to producing and sharing it online, uploading footage of himself raping a six-month-old baby girl and sexually assaulting a two-year-old boy.

1.2 Maximising resources, strengthening intelligence and driving collaboration

109. Child sexual abuse is often highly complex, involving sophisticated technology and organised networks and crossing local force and national boundaries. Our response therefore requires co-ordination at international, national and regional levels.
110. We need to use the full force of the State to counter the growing scale and impact of child sexual abuse. To effectively combat this threat requires new data, intelligence and assessment capabilities that build our understanding of offending behaviours, alongside prioritising and maximising the use of our existing national security capabilities.

111. Employing our world-leading analytical and intelligence tools, we will continue to use the unique capabilities of GCHQ, working alongside the NCA and policing, to take a system-wide approach to tackling child sexual abuse and offending.
112. **We will enhance our intelligence capability, building on existing assets to develop a thorough and up-to-date understanding of the threat that utilises data, insight and analysis from across organisations working to combat child sexual abuse.** One component of this will be further investment in the National Assessments Centre, housed within the NCA, which uses its unique positioning to provide up-to-date threat assessments. Alongside this, GCHQ will provide expert, cross-sector threat insights, informing operational delivery and keeping policy-making ahead of the threat. These activities will inform and enable the entire counter-child sexual abuse community.
113. **The Government will drive co-ordinated activity that maximises our whole-system response to child sexual abuse, agreeing clear roles and responsibilities for operational partners who together are positioned to deliver a rapid, proactive and comprehensive response.** The Home Office will set and own strategic policy, with the NCA leading the national law enforcement operational response. The NPCC will drive effective local responses and GCHQ will lead on identifying and developing solutions to systemic internet problems. This will build on the [Public Accounts Committee's 2019 recommendations](#), with the Home Office ensuring collaboration and providing the tools for partners to deliver unique value and the best outcomes for victims and survivors.

We will fuse capabilities across agencies by investing in the Joint Operations Team, combining NCA and GCHQ intelligence and analytical skillsets

114. We will capitalise on opportunities to fuse capabilities across agencies by continuing to invest in the Joint Operations Team, which combines GCHQ and NCA intelligence and analytical skillsets with national law enforcement capability to target the most technologically sophisticated offenders online. **The National Cyber Force will work in support of the Joint Operations Team, using its capabilities and technical knowledge to help detect, disrupt and prevent child sexual abuse online.**
115. Drawing on lessons from across national security, we will work with delivery partners to improve our ability to acquire, analyse and share data so that intelligence be effectively generated and disseminated between Government, intelligence agencies, NGOs and policing. Moreover, we will develop and align the cloud computing systems for these sectors in order to share data, information and insight that helps combat child sexual abuse.
116. It is clear that the quality and extent of data that is collected on offender and victim characteristics, including, but not limited to, age, gender and ethnicity, is inadequate. There is also a need to improve the quality and extent of data collected in relation to

the modus operandi of offending. This was highlighted by the Home Office's recent publication of the [paper on group-based child sexual exploitation](#), which was unable to draw robust conclusions around some characteristics and came as a disappointment to some, including victims and survivors. More robust data collection on characteristics, as well as further analysis of this data, is therefore needed to better understand offenders and victims because community, cultural, and other factors are clearly relevant to understanding and tackling offending. **The Home Office will engage with criminal justice partners, academics, think tanks, charities and frontline professionals on improving the range of data currently collected, the quality of data collected, and drawing out insights from the data to help protect children by preventing and detecting offending.**

117. **The Home Office is also investing to strengthen place-based responses to group-based child sexual exploitation by improving the collection and integrity of police data at regional and national levels.** This includes investment in analysts in each of the policing regions who will continue to develop a quarterly data collection on the totality of the child sexual abuse cases undertaken by police forces, as well as refreshing the Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Operations Database which will capture details of victims and offender numbers, characteristics, and modus operandi.
118. **In addition, the Home Office will provide funding in 2021/22 to scope delivery of a Tackling Organised Exploitation project,** through which the police - working in collaboration with the NCA's National Data Exploitation Capability and the National Assessments Centre - will improve intelligence, analytics and tasking to respond more comprehensively to the organised exploitation of vulnerable people.
119. We also need to address the increasingly global nature of child sexual abuse, including through our international preventative work, the setting of shared global standards and an action plan to tackle transnational child sex offenders, as outlined in [Objective 3.7](#).

1.3 Enhancing the tools and powers available to law enforcement

120. As a Government, we need to ensure that law enforcement officers who work relentlessly to tackle child sexual abuse have the understanding and legal powers necessary to tackle offending and safeguard children.
121. **We have equipped law enforcement with legal powers to tackle all forms of child sexual abuse, including Sexual Harm Prevention Orders (SHPOs), Sexual Risk Orders (SROs) and Child Abduction Warning Notices, and will go further by considering what additional or updated powers and civil orders would enhance law enforcement's response** (see [Objective 2.3](#)). In addition, we are making reforms to the pre-charge bail system, including encouraging greater use of pre-charge bail where necessary and proportionate, to ensure that bail is being used effectively to protect witnesses and victims and survivors, to support the police in the timely management of investigations, and to encourage increased engagement with victims and survivors to allow them to play a greater role in the process.

122. Recognising the need to reform the law governing search warrants, particularly with regards to accessing electronic evidence such as that relating to child sexual abuse material online, the Home Office invited the Law Commission to conduct its recent [Search Warrants](#) review. We welcome the report and will consider its recommendations carefully to ensure police have the powers necessary to effectively gather evidence to prosecute offenders.

Tackling group-based child sexual exploitation in the community

Over the last decade, there has been growing awareness of cases of child sexual exploitation perpetrated by groups of offenders within local communities. High-profile investigations in places like Rotherham, Oxfordshire, Huddersfield and Newcastle have highlighted complex situations where child sexual offending has proliferated through networks (sometimes referred to as ‘grooming gangs’) over years or even decades. The Home Office has been pursuing work on a number of fronts to understand the scale and nature of group-based child sexual exploitation to promote and support more effective prevention, disruption, law enforcement and safeguarding work by local agencies. To date, this has included: a review of published evidence on this type of offending, the conducting of interviews with police officers who have investigated group-based offending, and exploratory data analysis.

On 15 December 2020 we published a [paper](#) summarising the insights from this work, following a period of engagement with an external reference group made up of subject matter experts. The paper makes clear that there is a lack of robust data and evidence in this space, which makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions. Findings indicate that offenders involved in group-based child sexual exploitation are predominantly but not exclusively male, and often under the age of 30, though in some cases much older. The networks offenders operate in tend to be loosely connected and based on pre-existing social connections, such as family and work. On the specific question of how different ethnic groups are represented in the offender population, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions, as this data is not consistently collected by the police and other agencies. This type of offending is not restricted to any one ethnic group. Most research has found that group-based child sexual exploitation offenders are most commonly white, whilst some research has suggested an over-representation of Black and Asian offenders relative to national population demographics. It is important to stress that all research in this area is subject to the same limitations in poor quality data. Motivations between offenders differ and may include financial gain, sexual gratification or a sexual interest in children. Misogynistic views as well as a group dynamic where victims are disregarded and offenders think they can act with impunity may contribute to creating a permissive environment for this abuse. Frequent elements of this offending include initiating contact with children and young people in a shared local area, grooming them (as well as significant adults, such as parents) into believing the child is in a legitimate relationship with the offender, and using parties, drugs and alcohol to take advantage of them. The abuse itself often takes place in private or commercial locations, but has also been seen to take place in public spaces.

This Strategy has been informed by our growing understanding of group-based child sexual exploitation, and the policies outlined throughout - to strengthen safeguarding, support victims and survivors, and be tougher in our law enforcement response - will directly help us to address it. These actions will complement specific measures to target group-based offending, producing stronger local and regional responses that inform and benefit from an enhanced national policy response. These measures include:

- Enhancing the Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit to provide strategic guidance to local agencies in profiling, preventing and disrupting this form of offending ([Objective 3.4](#));
- Continuing to support local agencies to combat exploitation through the Children's Society's Prevention Programme ([Objective 3.3](#));
- Building on the Prevention Programme by working with other sectors, particularly businesses, to create safer local spaces ([Objective 3.3](#)), as well as supporting focused engagement with communities to deter potential offenders and support bystanders in spotting the signs of exploitation and how to report concerns ([Objective 2.1](#));
- Engaging with criminal justice partners, academics, think tanks, charities and frontline professionals on improving the range, quality and analysis of data collected on offender and victim characteristics to help protect children by preventing and detecting offending ([Objective 1.2](#));
- Investing in regional analysts to continue to develop a quarterly data collection on the totality of the child sexual abuse cases undertaken by police forces, as well as refreshing the Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Operations Database ([Objective 1.2](#));
- Working with the police to develop innovative approaches to tackling organised exploitation through improved analysis and sharing of data, with a £760,000 investment in a scoping phase in 2020/21 ([Objective 1.2](#)); and,
- Continuing to fund a number of major investigations into group-based child sexual exploitation through the Police Special Grant ([Objective 1.1](#)).

123. **The Home Office is working to improve law enforcement's understanding and response to vulnerability, as well as enhance safeguarding practice.** We are funding the NPCC-led Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme, which implements the [National Vulnerability Action Plan](#), draws law enforcement learning from serious case reviews and other reports, and collates and disseminates practice examples. We are also funding the College of Policing to deliver evaluations and feasibility studies on selected practice examples to improve our evidence of interventions that work to tackle violence and vulnerability. The Home Office will continue building child safeguarding capability by funding the College of Policing to roll out their Public Protection and Safeguarding Leaders Programme to eight further cohorts of senior officers throughout the course of 2020/21.

1.4 Employing world leading technology to tackle child sexual abuse material online

124. The scale of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) online is vast. It can be accessed on common search engines within three clicks and is being viewed by large numbers of individuals in the UK and globally, re-traumatising victims and survivors. 3.45 million global registered accounts have been uncovered by the NCA across the ten worst child sexual abuse dark web sites, with around 5-7% of these hosted in the UK. During a one-month period in the course of the first 2020 lockdown, the Internet Watch Foundation estimate there were 8.8 million attempts by UK internet users to access child sexual abuse imagery. The scale and patterns of online abuse raises questions around the potential for normalisation of this kind of behaviour among offenders, including through discussions with like-minded individuals on internet forums, and the potential for escalation into contact sexual abuse of children.

We will invest in the UK's world-leading Child Abuse Image Database (CAID), which in early January 2021 contained over 16.8 million indecent images of children (including over 323,700 videos), to help law enforcement to identify more offenders and safeguard more victims and survivors

125. **Starting with an initial investment of £7 million in 2020/21, the Government's five-year CAID Transformation programme will help law enforcement to manage the scale of CSAM by further enhancing the CAID system, enriching data and allowing greater sharing of data and capabilities.** We will use funding to develop CAID's 'backbone' system, as well as to introduce and incorporate new capabilities, such as automating the classification of videos and images to speed up investigations and reduce the need for visual categorisation by officers. In addition, we have recently rolled out a facial matching capability to enable identification of individuals in images and videos. These actions will help to safeguard more victims and survivors, bring more offenders to justice and better support officers' wellbeing. In the future, a Fast Forensics Triage capability will be rolled out to all UK forces to greatly accelerate the scanning of devices to identify CSAM.

CASE STUDY

In March 2019, an offender was sentenced to 22 years imprisonment and made subject to a Sexual Harm Prevention Order for raping a five-year-old boy and sexually abusing a three-year-old girl. Images of the abuse were identified through an operation in which the NCA, working with partners in South Korea and the United States, supported the takedown of a dark website containing 145,000 videos of child sexual abuse.

The man's face was not visible in the videos, but NCA investigators were able to use the Child Abuse Image Database's specialist identification capabilities to piece clues together to identify him and both the victims.

126. Improvements to CAID's processes and infrastructure will enable CAID hashes (the unique 'fingerprint' of an image or video of child sexual abuse) to be shared nationally and internationally. This will be used to drive increased cooperation between the private and third sectors to identify images, prevent their spread online, and remove them from websites.
127. **To help law enforcement prioritise their activity, we will continue to invest in a suite of risk assessment tools for all forces in England and Wales and the NCA**, including designing and building a robust, flexible and evidence-based system for prioritising anonymous online child sexual abuse suspects based on risk and likely geographical location.
128. **We will also equip law enforcement with the capability to gather, store and assess large volumes of digital evidence at pace**, recognising the significant bottleneck caused by processing digital forensics in bringing child sexual abuse offenders to justice and that online child sexual abuse cases take up 60% of all law enforcement digital forensics capacity. We will support the [NPCC Digital Forensic Science Strategy](#) to deliver greater efficiency and effectiveness, speed up investigations and improve safeguarding.

1.5 Bringing offenders to justice

129. We need to charge, prosecute and appropriately sentence child sexual abuse offenders wherever possible to provide victims and survivors with the justice they deserve and to stop offenders from committing further abuse. Whilst we have made progress in bringing offenders to justice, the overall number of prosecutions for contact child sexual abuse offences has fallen by 29% since 2017.
130. **To increase the number of effective trials for child sexual abuse, we will drive a cross-criminal justice system response**, using supporting governance structures to facilitate collaboration between Government departments and delivery partners, and hold the system to account.

131. More widely, we are investing to build capacity across the criminal justice system. Alongside investments in law enforcement, the Government will use the additional £85 million granted to the CPS to respond to shifting operational trends, including the rapid growth in digital evidence and any increase in caseloads as a result of the increased number of police. We will also deliver 10,000 additional prison places, utilising up to £2.5 billion to create safe and secure prisons that support both offender rehabilitation and the modernisation of the prison estate.
132. **Recognising the importance of swift case progression for victims' and survivors' wellbeing, the Government will work with the CPS, NCA and the police to better understand case progression for child sexual abuse cases in the criminal justice system and opportunities for improvement.** We will also develop more granular data on child sexual abuse cases through engagement with the cross-Criminal Justice System Rape Data Task and Finish Group. This has been set up to significantly enhance how the criminal justice system collects, shares and draws insight from currently available adult rape data, and support better understanding and monitoring of rape and serious sexual offences throughout the criminal justice system. We will explore opportunities to apply learning from this work to child sexual abuse cases.
133. **The Government's end-to-end review into the criminal justice response to rape, which will report in early 2021, is investigating the decline in referrals, charges, prosecutions and convictions we have seen for rape cases in recent years.** Although the review focuses on adult rape cases, its findings will help us to understand how to drive a better response to all forms of sexual assault and abuse, including child sexual abuse. We will work with law enforcement and the CPS to apply any relevant learning to child sexual abuse.
134. As part of the review, the [2019 Rape Inspection – A thematic review of rape cases by Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate's \(HMCPSI\)](#) highlighted the need to strengthen communication and joint working between law enforcement and prosecution. We are committed to increasing the effectiveness of early engagement between the police and prosecution to build the strongest possible cases for court. The CPS has accepted all the recommendations in the HMCPSI rape inspection report and, together with the police, a joint Rape and Serious Sexual Offences action plan will be launched in 2021. This will address issues raised in the report and, in due course, any relevant findings from the cross-Government review. We will also look to the review to help us to understand any potential gaps in police training on sexual offending and work with the College of Policing to address any recommendations.
135. **To ensure prosecutors have the understanding necessary, the CPS will continue to update training and guidance for prosecutors who handle child sexual abuse cases,** including through new training on the impact of trauma on memory, and reviewing and updating the guidance for prosecutors on rape myths to reflect the changing nature of sexual behaviours in the digital age.

We will legislate to ensure that the legal framework is fit for purpose in meeting the challenge of child sexual abuse in the 21st century

136. Any work to improve the capacity and capability of the criminal justice system must be complemented with efforts to ensure that the legal framework and sentencing keeps up with the evolving nature of this heinous crime. In 2019 guidance on online grooming, offending involving indecent images of children, and offending identified through undercover online operatives was updated. The majority of child sexual abuse offences are also included in the [Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme](#), allowing victims and survivors to challenge decisions that do not abide by current standards or guidance and are technically lenient.
137. **To build on this work, we will legislate to give the courts sufficient powers to sentence child sexual abuse offenders in a way that reflects the severity of their crimes and matches the level of risk they pose to the public.** We are already strengthening the preparatory legislation that is used most often following undercover online officers' deployments to ensure that those who attempt to commit child sexual abuse on children under 13 receive sentencing befitting the increased vulnerability of intended victims.
138. **We have also published [A Smarter Approach to Sentencing](#), a White Paper setting out our plans for a sentencing and release framework that better protects the public, including proposals to ensure that serious violent and sexual offenders are kept in prison for longer.** For example, we will abolish automatic halfway release for an additional cohort of sexual and violent offenders, and those serving a discretionary life sentence will also spend longer in prison before being considered for release. Moving forward, it is vital that the courts are fully equipped to deal with changes in technology, such as the use of social media platforms, in this sensitive and important area. We will continue to work with the MoJ to keep the criminal law on sexual offences under review.

Objective 2: Preventing offending and re-offending

139. Our central aim is to prevent child sexual abuse from occurring in the first place. The number of child sexual abuse offenders managed by probation and the police is growing on an annual basis. Inspection reports also highlight the need to improve the management of registered sex offenders (RSOs) and the risk they pose to children. Prevention is crucial in safeguarding children, as well as reducing the burden on law enforcement and other agencies working tirelessly to pursue offenders. We will therefore drive work to stop offending before it happens, and ensure that those who have offended are subject to quality risk assessments and risk management plans to mitigate the threat they pose.

Measures for improvement

- Inspection reports will highlight improvements in prison, probation and police offender management and safeguarding practice.
- Law enforcement will become more adept at detecting offending and reoffending, including breaches of notification requirements and civil orders.
- We will have a more advanced understanding of what increases and decreases the risk of child sexual abuse offending.
- More people, including potential offenders, those close to them and professionals, will seek advice and information on avoidance and deterrence.
- The tools and processes available to law enforcement to effectively manage offenders will become more robust and well-evidenced.

2.1 Deterring potential offenders

140. Deterring individuals from perpetrating child sexual abuse is vital to preventing child sexual abuse from happening, ensuring the safety of children and reducing demands on law enforcement.

We will invest in information and advice to deter child sexual abuse offending and improve our understanding of it

141. **Firstly, we must make sure that potential offenders know that they will be caught and face serious consequences if they engage in any form of child sexual abuse, whether it is contact or online sexual abuse.** Potential offenders must understand that we are using the full force of the law, including our intelligence capabilities outlined in [Objective 1](#), to find and prosecute those who sexually abuse children.

142. Some potential offenders can be deterred from perpetrating abuse with the right intervention at the right time. In recent years, we have expanded the evidence base on what works in terms of desistance to encourage people to abstain from offending, and invested in initiatives to intervene with individuals who seem to be at risk of offending. The Lucy Faithfull Foundation aims to prevent child sexual abuse by offering advice and support to people who suspect abuse and to those who are concerned about their own thoughts or behaviour. In 2019 alone in the UK, the organisation's website and helpline were contacted 94,342 times by people seeking help.
143. **We will support national and local initiatives to divert people away from offending, including by continuing to invest in the Lucy Faithfull Foundation's *Stop It Now!* campaign and services and its confidential helpline.** We will support the organisation to expand the signposting and reach of its services, focusing on at-risk groups, high-risk online environments, and impactful settings in the local community.

CASE STUDY

A 27-year-old male called the Stop It Now! helpline concerned about his sexual thoughts towards his 8-year-old niece. He had not accessed any indecent images of children online, but reported he was viewing increasingly extreme adult pornography.

He was encouraged to think about the consequences of his behaviour and what would happen if he acted on his inappropriate thoughts. Over a series of calls, he was supported to cut all unsupervised access with children, make positive changes to his lifestyle, and talk to family members about his thoughts. He continues to use the helpline for ongoing support and advice, to update helpline staff on his progress and share any concerns he has.

144. Research conducted with the Lucy Faithfull Foundation suggests that individuals concerned about their sexual urges would most likely seek advice about this from health practitioners. **We will work to ensure that healthcare professionals are informed about child sexual abuse and have the confidence and ability to direct those seeking help to the right sources of support to help prevent them from abusive behaviour, whilst also recognising their responsibility to safeguard children.**
145. A clear picture of offending can help to drive more informed approaches to deter and prevent offending in the first place, as well as a more effective law enforcement response. Improving our understanding of offenders and offending behaviour is therefore crucial. **We will work closely with key stakeholders in drawing together research and operational insights to develop the evidence base on child sexual abuse offending and maximise the potential of activity to prevent it.**

146. The Home Office will bring together the existing evidence and intelligence on child sex offenders, alongside a general understanding of how people with a previous pattern of offending come to abstain from offending, to ensure these insights feed into our policy-making. We will also expand our research on offenders, including the use of behavioural science and consultation with our international partners.
147. **Building on our [paper and findings relating to the characteristics of group-based child sexual exploitation in the community](#), we will work with local safeguarding partners and community-based organisations to develop and promote strategic approaches to community engagement**, to help to identify, target and prevent offending in communities and encourage bystanders to report concerns.

2.2 Improving offender management in prisons and probation

148. Incarcerating offenders is an important way to provide justice to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse as well as to protect the wider public. **As of 1 April 2020, the most serious sexual and violent offenders who are given a standard determinate sentence of seven years or more have been required to serve two-thirds of their sentence in custody, rather than being released halfway through their sentences.** As outlined in [Objective 1.5](#), we have also gone further through the [A Smarter Approach to Sentencing White Paper](#).
149. We have further legislated to ensure that, when making decisions about release, the Parole Board consider any failure by an offender to disclose the whereabouts of their victim's remains or the identity of children who are the subject of indecent images.
150. Preventing re-offending by child sex offenders requires a strong and effective probation service. We have set out the Government's [extensive plans to reform the probation system](#) and tackle re-offending, support victims of crime and keep the public safe. This will include bringing all probation services under the management of the National Probation Service and strengthening processes for monitoring offenders in the probation system by managing the risks they pose, keeping victims and survivors informed, enforcing licence conditions, and investing in skilled probation staff.

We will reform probation and work to improve the management of all sex offenders, including child sexual abuse offenders

151. We take our responsibility to protect the public from those convicted of sexual offences extremely seriously and have taken steps to respond to the gaps in our response identified in a thematic inspection report from 2019, which looked at the management of men convicted of sexual offences, including child sexual abuse offences.

152. **In 2019, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) published an [action plan](#) explaining how we will strengthen and improve our management of those convicted of sexual offences.** This includes reviewing and strengthening risk assessment processes; improving the way those in custody are supported throughout their sentence; ensuring rehabilitative interventions are targeted at the right people at the right time; and providing robust training for probation staff working with those convicted of sexual offences. Whilst COVID-19 and subsequent restrictions have impacted on this plan, we have adapted our approach to ensure its delivery, such as by providing 'virtual' staff training.
153. **The MoJ is committed to engaging in impact evaluations of HMPPS-accredited programmes,** whilst recognising that re-offending outcomes often take years to determine and can only be measured once a programme is fully implemented. It is our ambition that all accredited programmes will have a long-term impact evaluation to measure proven re-offending outcomes, recognising dependency on large enough sample sizes, availability of comparable controls, and suitable follow-up periods to detect statistically significant change between treatment and comparison groups.

2.3 Improving offender management in the community

154. The UK has some of the toughest powers in the world to deal with those convicted of sexual offences, and we are committed to ensuring that the system is as robust as it can be. All individuals convicted or cautioned for a relevant sexual offence automatically become subject to notification requirements (commonly referred to as the 'sex offenders register') and are managed in the community by the police. Many sex offenders have to register for long periods of time therefore the number of RSOs is increasing each year, and it is crucial that law enforcement agencies at all levels are equipped with the tools and skills needed to monitor offenders and identify and manage re-offending.
155. **As such, the Home Secretary will ensure that the police management of RSOs in the community under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) works effectively,** building on previous inspectorate reports which have considered management in prisons and probations to make sure that the police have the powers, capabilities, governance and funding required to manage these individuals in the community as effectively as possible.
156. Evolving technology is making it easier for those convicted of child sexual abuse offences to hide their activity and re-offend online. The technological capabilities of law enforcement need to be maximised to ensure that they have all the equipment required to monitor sex offenders' internet use. **We will invest to extend a pilot providing law enforcement with improved technology to monitor the online activity of RSOs being managed in the community.**

We will ensure that police management of registered sex offenders in the community under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements works effectively and invest in technology to identify re-offending online

CASE STUDY

Cumbria Police use the Cumbria Police Digital Forensics Unit to assist in the management of registered sex offenders. On an unannounced home visit to a registered sex offender, police offender managers asked to see any digital devices the individual possessed. He produced a mobile phone and a laptop, indicating that he had no other devices. Data Forensic Unit officers assisted the police offender manager to locate a further digital device. The registered sex offender was subsequently arrested, remanded in custody, recalled on licence and was sentenced for the breach of his Sexual Harm Prevention Order.

157. Law enforcement agencies also need to be equipped with the right powers to manage offenders effectively. The police and NCA can apply to the courts to place certain restrictions on the activity of RSOs and those who pose a risk of sexual harm via civil orders. For example, Sexual Harm Prevention Orders (SHPOs), Sexual Risk Orders (SROs) can restrict internet use, interaction with children, access to certain professions and more. We will continue to promote best practice in relation to these orders.
158. **We will look to strengthen these civil orders in a number of ways**, as well as monitor their use on an ongoing basis through close collaboration with operational partners and MAPPA Annual Reports:
 - **We will enable courts to impose positive obligations upon RSOs and those who pose a risk of sexual harm requiring them to engage in certain action.** For example, where proportionate and necessary, law enforcement agencies could apply to the courts for an SHPO or SRO to compel an individual to undertake a behaviour-change programme, alcohol or drug treatment, or submit to polygraph testing as part of risk management while under police management in the community.
 - **We will broaden the power of application for SHPOs and SROs beyond the police and NCA**, allowing the British Transport Police and the Ministry of Defence Police to also apply for them.
 - **We will provide in legislation for the civil standard of proof required for civil order applications**, as well as clarifying this within official guidance.

- **We will introduce express provision within legislation for electronic monitoring of individuals subject to SROs and SHPOs**, clarifying that, where deemed appropriate and necessary by the courts, they may provide law enforcement agencies with an additional means of monitoring compliance with the order's conditions.

CASE STUDY

When the NCA searched the laptop of a 70-year-old British male, they found conversations discussing the live streaming of child sexual abuse on demand, as well plans to travel abroad to commit abuse in person.

The NCA was subsequently able to prove that the offender made 49 payments totalling £15,009 between January 2015 and July 2017 to an individual in the Philippines. Information was passed to the Philippine authorities, which led to the arrest of a Filipino female and the safeguarding of six children aged between three and 13.

In May 2019, the offender was sentenced to three years and six months in prison, put on the sex offenders register indefinitely and issued with a Sexual Harm Prevention Order with travel restrictions.

159. **We will simplify the process for registering individuals convicted of relevant sexual offences overseas as sex offenders upon entering England and Wales**, helping law enforcement to manage these individuals as effectively as possible.
160. Beyond managing offenders in a prison or probation context, **we will review and expand the evidence base for managing RSOs who have completed their sentence in the community to reduce the risk they may pose to the public and the burden on law enforcement**. This will include exploring best practice that enables the commissioning of corrective programmes and health services to manage the risk offenders pose and deter offending behaviour.

2.4 Improving multi-agency working and information sharing to manage offenders effectively

161. Ensuring agencies work together and share information in a timely way is key to the effective risk management of child sexual abuse offenders. We are already driving multi-agency working through MAPPA that helps to monitor offenders and share information about them within the criminal justice system and with safeguarding partners.
162. **We will improve the MAPPA process by supporting consistency in the thresholds applied by local strategic management boards**, and will support strategic management boards to improve the training available for those working within the arrangements. We will also strengthen and streamline processes for information-sharing under MAPPA by creating a clear and lawful basis for disclosure.
163. **We will improve the MAPPA shared database (also known as ViSOR) used to manage offenders**, including through exploring alternative digital offender management systems, building on the success of the existing system in bringing agencies together to share information, as well as strengthening risk assessment, management and mitigation.
164. Effective offender management also requires prisons and probation to work together and share information with safeguarding partners to recognise when an offender may place a child at risk. **We will therefore set out clear expectations for staff in prisons and probation by producing a new policy framework on child safeguarding and updating the prison public protection manual.**

Objective 3: Protecting and safeguarding children and young people, and supporting all victims and survivors

165. A key component of protecting children and young people from child sexual abuse is ensuring that the communities and institutions where they spend their time, both online and offline, are safe. Our efforts to give children the best start in life, strengthen and educate families, and provide targeted support for those at-risk will be crucial to stopping offenders from taking advantage of children and young people, and must work alongside systemic changes to improve multi-agency working and cross-border collaboration. We will also continue to raise awareness, deploying Government communications in different forums, to help prevent child sexual abuse and protect children and young people.
166. Despite knowing more than ever about child sexual abuse, a large portion remains hidden. Victims and survivors tell us they most commonly experience abuse in their own or someone else's home, but this is under-identified and shrouded in taboo. We want reporting of child sexual abuse to continue rising to bring this heinous crime out of the shadows.
167. Where abuse does take place, it needs to be identified early and children safeguarded from further harm. It is also fundamental that child and adult victims and survivors have access to high quality, timely support through universal and specialised services that meet their varied needs.

Measures for improvement

- Our understanding of prevalence of all forms of child sexual abuse improves, and prevalence will decrease over time.
- Victims and survivors of child sexual abuse will increasingly feel able to disclose abuse as reflected in rising reporting rates.
- More children and young people experiencing child sexual abuse are identified, as demonstrated through a rising number of children referred to, assessed by and receiving support from children's social care due to all forms of child sexual abuse risk.
- Inspection reports and thematic reviews of police, health and children's social care will highlight improvements in safeguarding, multi-agency working and a strengthened response to child sexual abuse.
- Industry partners will adopt the interim code of practice and will be compliant with the new regulator, leading to better quality referrals to law enforcement in the short-term and a reduction in the prevalence of online abuse in the long-term.
- An increasing number of countries will sign up to the WeProtect Global Alliance and the Model National Response, and we will have a clear assessment of key countries at-risk.

3.1 Giving children the best start in life, and raising awareness amongst parents, carers and families

168. It is not the responsibility of a child to stop sexual abuse and it is never a child's fault if they are targeted. We know that offenders take advantage of the inherent vulnerability of children and young people, exploiting their age and the power imbalance between children and adults in order to abuse them. We also know that offenders gravitate towards individuals who are perceived to be vulnerable, in situations where safeguards around them may be lower. Early experiences of abuse are associated with the risk of harmful sexual behaviour, which can be damaging to children displaying this behaviour as well as those around them.
169. **A key part of protecting children from child sexual abuse is therefore giving them the best start in life.** There are ongoing efforts across Government to ensure this, from the [Healthy Child Programme](#), to the [Prevention Green Paper](#), to transforming mental health provision for children and young people. Recognising the critical importance of children's early years, the Government is undertaking a review to improve outcomes for children in their first 1,001 days including looking at the impacts of vulnerability and adverse childhood experiences.
170. **We are also going further in the services we provide to children, including creating more opportunities for young people to develop trusting relationships with a key adult through investing in the Youth Investment Fund.** Up to £220 million is being invested in our holiday activities and food programme, providing enriching activities and a healthy meal for disadvantaged children in the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021. This support the Government's commitment to establish a flexible childcare fund to increase the availability of high quality and affordable flexible childcare. The Government is also committed to championing the family hub model – as set out in its [2019 Manifesto](#). In December 2020 procurement began for a [National Centre for Family Hubs and Integrated Family Services](#) to work with councils to develop and spread best practice, as well as a [Family Hubs Evaluation Innovation Fund](#) to build the evidence base on integrated family service models.
171. **This Strategy complements broader initiatives to address domestic abuse and tackle all forms of violence that particularly affect women and girls.** The Government will pass the landmark Domestic Abuse Bill, representing our commitment to transform the response to this abhorrent crime. The Home Office will also develop a separate Domestic Abuse Strategy, building on existing work to drive down domestic abuse-related crimes, better support victims and survivors, and reduce costs that fall to the individual, communities and public services. The Domestic Abuse Strategy will sit alongside a new Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, seeking to reduce the incidence and severity of violence against women and girls, including through prevention and identification, and to improve the response to increasingly prevalent forms, such as online.

172. **Through the introduction of compulsory Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), we will empower teachers to deliver high-quality, age-appropriate teaching about all types of abuse**, including child sexual abuse. RSHE's focus on healthy relationships in both primary and secondary education will enable teachers to provide children with information covering concepts of, and laws relating to: sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment and domestic abuse, and how these can affect current and future relationships – messages that will help to challenge victim-blaming around abuse. As a result, the pathways for children to receive help and support will be more effective. Teachers will be better informed and education settings better equipped to identify child sexual abuse, as well as risks associated with harmful sexual behaviour, sharing of nude and semi-nude images, and peer-on-peer abuse.
173. Teachers and staff should also be equipped to support children in the online world to enjoy all its benefits, as well as to respond to online harm and to safeguard children. **The Government will help the general public critically engage with online content, including children and young people, through an online Media Literacy Strategy.**

“At school everything was about straight relationships but that was no good to me, I knew I was gay. I used the internet to try and find out. I met this guy who told me he would help me get in touch with other guys and he did, but they hurt me really bad.”

Male, age 16

174. Recognising the central role education plays in protecting children and the disruption to schools and colleges caused by COVID-19, the Government is committed to prioritising the safe return of all children to classrooms and to ensuring that children, families and school staff have the support they need. The DfE is working with key partners and voluntary sector organisations to deliver the Wellbeing for Education Return initiative, an £8 million project training local experts to provide additional advice and resources to schools and colleges to support the wellbeing, resilience and recovery of students in light of the ongoing impact of the pandemic. The information and support provided are as relevant to remote provision as they are to face-to-face teaching. Alongside this, the DfE has funded a pilot with Education Support to provide professional supervision from experts and peer support for school leaders.

Schools will be empowered to educate children about healthy relationships, and we will raise awareness of child sexual abuse amongst parents, carers and families

175. **As Government, we will build the evidence on what works in reducing the risk of children and young people sharing nudes and semi-nudes**, and we will continue to support further development of a [Report-Remove tool](#) that gives young people the power to remove nude and semi-nude images of themselves online. **In 2020, the UK Council for Internet Safety and DCMS published [advice](#) for education settings working with children and young people on how to respond to an incident of nudes and semi-nudes being shared**, replacing the [Sexting in schools and colleges: responding to incidents and safeguarding young people](#), published in 2016. We will also continue to develop online learning resources that help children, their parents and professionals to identify online risks and access safeguarding support when needed by building on the NCA's Education Programme, [Thinkuknow](#).

CASE STUDY

Thinkuknow is the national online safety education programme, delivered by child protection and education specialists at the NCA. Between April 2017 and March 2019, Thinkuknow resources were downloaded over 81,000 times. In 2018/19, over 31,000 professionals were trained by the NCA's [Thinkuknow CEOP ambassadors](#). 2019 also saw the launch of Jessie & Friends, the first Thinkuknow learning resource designed for children as young as four.

176. Although a large proportion of offending occurs in the family environment, non-abusing parents and carers are key to protecting children inside and outside of the home. The importance of this has been stressed by children spending more time at home and online as a result of COVID-19. In response, the Government has driven efforts to share information with parents and carers through publishing advice on GOV.UK on [keeping children safe online](#) and from [wider forms of abuse and harm](#). The NCA has increased messaging to parents and carers through their [#OnlineSafetyAtHome](#) campaign and resources, which has been downloaded over 500,000 times. **As Government, we will continue exploring opportunities to disseminate consistent and up-to-date tools and information to parents and carers from all communities about all forms child sexual abuse, including around risks within the home.**
177. **The Home Office will also review Sarah's Law (the Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme)** - under which anyone can ask the police if someone with access to a child has a record for child sexual offences - to ensure it is being used consistently by police, and consider whether we can extend its scope and raise awareness of its function.

3.2 Strengthening the role of industry

178. A key aim of this Government is to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online and COVID-19 has further emphasised the need to ensure the internet is a safe space for children to explore. We expect the tech industry to play its part. Industry partners need to be at the forefront of preventing online services and platforms from being used to facilitate child sexual abuse, including the viewing and sharing of child sexual abuse material, online grooming and the live-streaming of child sexual abuse. Significant progress has been made by companies to protect children online, but there is much more to be done.
179. **The UK, with our Five Country partners (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) have developed a set of [Voluntary Principles](#) that provide a framework for companies to combat online child sexual abuse and drive collective action.** Together, the Five Country Partners have also pivoted to respond to COVID-19, effectively engaging industry around the need to communicate with their users about heightened online risk. As a result, Microsoft, Google, Facebook, SNAP, Roblox and Twitter, among others, developed an information campaign aimed at parents, carers and children on staying safe online. Industry will assess the impact of this work and we will continue to collaborate with them to see what more can be done to ensure safe use of their platforms.
180. **We will develop legislation to improve internet safety for all through the forthcoming Online Safety Bill, to be introduced in 2021.** The [Online Harms White Paper](#), published in April 2019, and Government's subsequent [full response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation](#), published in December 2020, provide detailed proposals for the introduction of a statutory duty of care to ensure that companies have appropriate systems and processes in place to improve the safety of their users, especially children, and confirms that Ofcom will be named in legislation as the independent regulator. Alongside the consultation response, **the Home Office published the [voluntary interim codes of practice on online child sexual exploitation and abuse](#), setting out our expectations for what companies should do to identify, address and prevent child sexual abuse on their services.**
181. We recognise that tackling online harms, including child sexual abuse, is a global problem, and that legislation in the UK, and elsewhere, forms only part of the response required. The UK, with its strengths in digital innovation, long tradition in the rule of law, business-friendly environment and world class regulators has an opportunity to act as a global leader in this space. That is why we are also working closely with many of our international partners to address this shared challenge and work towards common approaches to tackling online harms (see [Objective 3.7](#)).

We will compel industry to stop the proliferation of online child sexual abuse through our victim-focused Online Harms framework

182. **In advance of regulation, the DCMS is delivering a range of business and user-support to help develop a safer online environment for children.** This includes publishing a ‘safety by design framework’ that will include practical guidance for companies to support them to design safer online services and products. The Government is also strengthening the UK’s safety tech sector so that the UK has world leading safety technology.

CASE STUDY

In 2017, the LEGO Group launched the app LEGO® Life. LEGO® Life utilises ‘safety by design’ principles, whilst showing children how to use online social platforms in a positive way, such as sharing moments with family and friends.

This approach has been strengthened recently with the introduction of Captain Safety. The character provides a safety tutorial and acts as a child’s guide throughout their time on the app, delivering safety messages at critical points, such as before sharing certain data or commenting on public posts.

183. **We will promote industry efforts to develop technology that prevents and tackles child sexual abuse online**, such as tools to identify and block online child grooming conversations, and we will continue to share information with industry partners so they can stay ahead of the threat.
184. The Government will continue to urge tech companies to prioritise the safety of children on their platforms and services alongside users’ privacy. In particular, Facebook’s proposals to apply end-to-end encryption to their messaging platforms by default presents significant challenges. While the Government supports strong encryption for protecting personal data, privacy and services such as banking, commerce and communications, we are concerned that end-to-end encryption has created significant and avoidable barriers to companies being able to identify and prevent illegal activity by child abusers. **We will continue to stress that Facebook should only implement its proposals for end-to-end encryption if the safety of its users will not be reduced, including ensuring a means for law enforcement to obtain lawful access to the content of communications.**
185. **The Government has [responded](#) to the recommendations made in the [IICSA’s Internet Investigation Report](#)**, outlining ongoing work across Government to tackle online child sexual abuse, including setting expectations for companies to keep children safe on their platforms through implementation of the [Voluntary Principles](#) alongside the

development of forthcoming Online Safety legislation. We will continue to take forward work on the Inquiry's findings on this issue.

3.3 Preventing abuse in local communities

186. As well as reducing the opportunity for perpetrators to offend online, child sexual abuse needs to be prevented where children and young people spend their time in local communities. The Government recognises that local safeguarding partners are best-placed to understand risks in their area and to implement strategies that address them, such as robust safeguarding standards in all local settings and situational prevention strategies (changing the contexts and environments in which offending can occur).
187. The Children's Social Care Innovation Programme, launched by the DfE, is already supporting the efforts of local actors, using cross-sector working to build the evidence base on innovative approaches to preventing abuse. This includes funding Hackney Council to test approaches to preventing exploitation of young people through contextual safeguarding, which seeks to address the wider social, environmental and community factors that may put a child at risk. [Evaluation reports](#) from the Programme have been published and disseminated widely to inform policy development and practice.
188. **We are also driving targeted action through the Home Office-funded Prevention Programme.** Delivered by The Children's Society, the Programme involves coordinators in each of the ten policing regions driving local and regional work to combat different types of exploitation by: collating intelligence; identifying hot spot locations; developing prevention strategies; delivering targeted interventions using contextual safeguarding, and; coordinating activity across local agencies. This work has helped increase professionals' understanding of all forms of exploitation, leading to increased victim identification and a more holistic local response.

CASE STUDY

In partnership with local forces, the prevention officers in the Wales and Yorkshire regions engaged with Currys PC World to raise awareness and upskill staff around the risks of online exploitation, providing them with safety messages to share with parents and carers at the 'point of sale'.

The prevention network has also worked with the British Transport Police (BTP) to improve their responses to child exploitation and abuse within their London custody suite. This work focused on the staff, environment and interactions with detainees, recognising the risks exploitation and abuse posed to children and young people. A number of recommendations are now being explored by BTP, including reviewing the approach to recording and sharing safeguarding and exploitation concerns in custody.

189. **Recognising findings from a number of independent reviews into child sexual abuse, the Department for Transport has introduced [Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards](#).** Focussed around safeguarding, these standards help to prevent abuse in local communities by clearly highlighting the important role of licensing authorities in protecting vulnerable children and young people.
190. **The Home Office will also work with the Contextual Safeguarding Network, National Business Crime Centre and other actors to consider what support can be given to help staff in key business sectors identify and respond to safeguarding concerns,** including risks of child sexual abuse and exploitation. We will publish guidance for businesses on contextual safeguarding principles and will consider what further training and support can be provided to key staff such as security guards.

We will strengthen local areas' understanding of and response to child sexual exploitation in communities by strengthening the Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit for safeguarding partners

191. The Home Office will strengthen the response to exploitation in communities, and to group-based child sexual exploitation specifically, by building on the findings of our research paper on this form of offending and developing an enhanced version of our widely-adopted [Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit](#). This will support safeguarding partners to develop stronger local threat assessments and place-based responses, through comprehensive guidance on prevention and disruption strategies that reflect best practice. The toolkit will promote innovative approaches and support all partners to build effective problem profiles, as well as to understand and make use of legislative and non-legislative powers that target specific risks.
192. Sadly, child sexual abuse can happen anywhere and to any child, but by raising the standard of safeguarding in institutions that work with children, we can stop offenders from getting access to children and help practitioners to identify and respond to risk. We will ensure legislation and policy is updated to support organisations to keep our children safe in the most effective way.
193. As outlined in [Objective 3.5](#), the DfE will strengthen safeguarding practice in schools through consulting on guidance and supporting Designated Safeguarding Leads.
194. **The DfE will also strengthen safeguarding standards in non-statutory settings, or “out-of-school settings”, in which children spend their time,** such as after-school clubs, faith groups and sports groups. In October 2020, the DfE published a [voluntary code of safeguarding practice](#) to help these out-of-school settings understand what they need to do to keep children safe in their care. Alongside this, the DfE the [published guidance for parents and carers](#) to help them to understand which settings are safe

and has also invested over £3 million in trialling ways for local authorities to identify and intervene in out-of-school settings of concern. The final phase of this work is due to conclude in Autumn 2021 and the DfE will use its findings to disseminate best practice on the effective use of existing legislative powers and to inform consideration of further legislation that strengthens local authorities' ability to intervene.

195. We know that children in care may be at a higher risk of experiencing child sexual abuse (see [Part 2.4](#)) and must continue to do all we can to safeguard them. **The Government will make best use of the findings from the upcoming independently-led Review of Children's Social Care**, which will reshape how children interact with the care system, looking at the process from referral through to becoming looked after. It will address major challenges such as the increase in numbers of looked after children, the inconsistencies in children's social care practice, outcomes across the country, and the failure of the system to provide enough stable homes for children.
196. We must ensure that care and support settings for children who are looked after meet their needs and keep them safe. The DfE has consulted on reforms to the use of independent and semi-independent provision for children in care and care leavers, including introducing national standards and banning the placement of children under the age of 16 in this provision. **The DfE will also consider the need to strengthen standards in residential care homes and register care home staff in response to recommendations made by the IICSA.**
197. **The Government will consider findings from the MoJ's internal review of existing legislation on abuses of positions of trust.** [The Sexual Offences Act 2003](#) contains a number of offences criminalising sexual activity with children over the age of 16 but under the age of 18, by people who hold a "position of trust" even if the activity appears consensual. This aims to stop people from abusing their position to manipulate young people into sexual activity. In 2019, the MoJ carried out a review into this legislation and are committed to ensuring the law in this area works effectively.
198. **The Government has carried out work to improve faith leaders' understanding of child sexual abuse and will explore the need to support safeguarding training initiatives for faith leaders.** Through engagement with the Charity Commission, the Government has strengthened safeguarding guidance for charities and trustees in the third sector and continues to support these organisations' work, including by publishing training, resources and guidance on handling and reporting of allegations for Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations.
199. Alongside raising the standards of safeguarding in institutions that work with children, **the Home Office and the MoJ will lead a cross-Government feasibility study looking at ways to create eligibility for criminal record checks for those who are self-employed**, so that all those working with children and vulnerable people are subject to the same standard of Disclosure and Barring Service checks.

3.4 Targeted support for children and young people at-risk

200. It is important to stress again that, by virtue of their age, as well as the power imbalance which exists between children and adults, all children are inherently vulnerable and can be abused. Abuse does not occur because of a child's vulnerability, but because of an offender's inclination and ability to take advantage of vulnerability. Offenders may be more likely to target children who are perceived to be particularly vulnerable and where safeguards around them may be lower (see [Part 2.4](#)). Safeguarding partners, local agencies and the Government need to work with these children and their families to raise awareness and provide support. In understanding where the most vulnerable children are situated, the Government welcomes the contribution made by the Office of the Children's Commissioner to move towards a [better understanding of regional variation](#) of vulnerabilities experienced by children and young people.
201. **To extend our targeted support for vulnerable children and families with complex needs, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has provided a further £165 million of funding for the Troubled Families Programme until 2021.** The Home Office will also work with the MHCLG to embed child sexual abuse-related outcomes and resources into the Troubled Families Programme to support prevention and early intervention.
202. COVID-19 and measures to stop its spread have made the lives of many vulnerable children and families harder. The Government has provided £3.7 billion of additional funding to local authorities to help them address the pressures they are facing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including in children's social care. The Government also announced an extra £750 million of funding for frontline charities, from which the Home Office and the DfE launched the £7.6 million Vulnerable Children National Charities Strategic Relief Fund. In addition, **the DfE provided funding to Barnardo's for the [See, Hear, Respond](#) programme to provide vital support to vulnerable children, young people and families affected by COVID-19 and its restrictions.**
203. **In 2020/21 the Government is investing £9.5 million into projects aimed at boosting the educational outcomes of vulnerable children and keeping them safe from harm,** which includes £2.4 million to scale and test interventions for children with a social worker. We will also continue to drive improvements in alternative provision (AP), recognising that many children in AP have experienced trauma and adversity and require tailored support. The DfE has invested £4 million into the AP Innovation Fund, delivering projects for children in AP to achieve better outcomes, and £7 million in an AP Transition Fund to support Year 11 pupils in the context of COVID-19 to make successful transitions from AP. This sits alongside an ambitious programme to rapidly improve the availability of good AP so that permanently excluded children and children at-risk of exclusion receive a high-quality education suited to their individual needs.

The Home Office has invested a further £3.7 million into the Trusted Relationship Fund, helping children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse to develop trusting relationships with a responsible adult

204. To provide targeted support to children and young people at-risk of child sexual exploitation or abuse, as well as criminal exploitation and peer-on-peer abuse, the Home Office is investing a further £3.7 million into the Trusted Relationships Fund in 2020/21. The fund, which was launched in 2018, aims to protect children and young people by fostering healthy, trusting relationships with responsible adults. The eleven local authority-led projects vary in focus, offering a range of support: from providing direct one-to-one support and group-based activities through to system-level change. Findings from the first two years show that the demographics of the cohort supported are broadly representative of the wider local community, with some overrepresentations compared to the national average (for example, children with special educational needs (SEND)). **Through an independent, programme-wide evaluation of the Trusted Relationships Fund, we will continue to build the evidence base on what works to protect young people, as well as the impact of COVID-19 and any adoptions projects have made.**
205. Assessing the impact of interventions such as these can be challenging. When assessing a young person's risk, an unchanged or increased risk level may not indicate a negative outcome. It may, for example, indicate a higher level of trust as the young person has disclosed more information to the professional. Building a trusting relationship between a child and project worker is not a linear process and can require time. Evidence suggests that a trusted relationship can support improved wellbeing and personal development such as engagement with education and employment opportunities, and having enhanced relationships with peers, family and professionals.

CASE STUDY

Having twice been placed on a care plan, firstly for neglect and then emotional abuse, Suzy was referred to a Trusted Relationships project after being assessed as at risk of sexual exploitation. Agencies were concerned about regular missing episodes, poor school attendance and about older men whom may have been grooming her. Work began with regular catch ups and time together to build up rapport, including activities to build Suzy's confidence in learning new skills, such as cooking. The team worked holistically with Suzy and her mum, her school and social worker to make a plan to stabilise her school attendance and to support her to remain in education post-16, help Suzy develop positive relationships with peers her own age, and to stop arguments at home that had previously resulted in her going missing. Suzy is now closed to Children's Social Care and the risk to her of sexual exploitation has been reduced.

206. We know that offenders also take advantage of children's perceived vulnerabilities online and that certain groups of children can be particularly at-risk. **The Home Office has provided funding to South West Grid for Learning and Internet Matters to develop their [Inclusive Digital Safety Hub](#), designed to decrease the risk of online abuse, including child sexual abuse, perpetrated against children with vulnerabilities such as children with special educational needs (SEND), LGBTQ+ children, and children in care.** The Hub provides support for children themselves, their parents and carers, and the frontline professionals who work with them to keep them safe online. We will continue to deepen our understanding of vulnerabilities to child sexual abuse, how they play-out online and what works to reduce risk, including for LGBTQ+ children and those with SEND.

“Everyone kept telling me stuff was wrong or bad - to stop doing it. Trouble was I didn't know what was ok. I knew things were wrong because I was being told that but not why or even what was ok. I kept making mistakes until I was told what was healthy. Once I knew, it really helped to get things right instead.”

Male, age 16

207. We know that children and young people displaying harmful sexual behaviour also need targeted support to ensure their safeguarding and welfare needs are met, and to reduce the risk they may pose to themselves and others (see [Parts 2.5](#) and [2.7](#)). Harmful sexual behaviour exists on a spectrum, and professional responses need to be tailored accordingly. **The Home Office has funded the Lucy Faithfull Foundation to develop and expand their child sexual abuse preventative resources, including a [harmful sexual behaviour toolkit](#) to help parents, carers and professionals recognise and respond as well as know where to go for support.** We will expand our evidence base on best practice in responding to harmful sexual behaviour, including peer-on-peer abuse in schools.
208. Through the CSA Centre and Support for Victims of Child Sexual Abuse fund, **the Home Office is also supporting work to develop our understanding of the nature and consequences of sibling sexual abuse**, and to improve the response to this form of abuse which professionals can find particularly challenging.
209. It is important to recognise that some children and young people remanded or sentenced to youth custody will have been subject to sexual abuse; their position as victims and survivors should be acknowledged, and their safeguarding and support needs must be met. Separately, there are also a group of children held in the secure estate for welfare reasons under [the Children Act 1989](#). These Children and young people, who may also have been subject to sexual abuse, often have complex physical, mental, and emotional behavioural needs. They may require support and intervention to address their behaviour, which may be a result of trauma, severe neglect, or multi-layered, unmet and complex needs.
210. We know that different forms of vulnerability often overlap, and that perpetrators may subject children and young people to multiple forms of abuse, such as criminal exploitation (including county lines) and sexual exploitation. Protecting children and young people from different types of exploitation therefore plays a key role in preventing child sexual abuse. **The Government will make significant investments into initiatives to prevent and tackle young people's involvement in violent crime, including through the £200 million Youth Endowment Fund to be distributed over 10 years, and £70 million across 2019/20 and 2020/21 into the establishment of Violence Reduction Units.** In addition, as part of the £25 million programme to tackle county lines, we are investing significantly in specialist support for young people who are affected by this form of exploitation.

Missing incidents as an indicator of child sexual exploitation

In 2018/19, the police responded to 199,634 missing incidents related to children, which accounted for 62% of the total missing incidents recorded in England and Wales. While most children who go missing will return home safely, missing incidents can be an indicator of a range of harms, including child sexual exploitation. Both the police and charities, including Missing People, list sexual exploitation as one of the most common reasons given by children for going missing. Repeated missing incidents indicate a particularly high level of vulnerability to child sexual exploitation and there is strong evidence linking children in care who go missing and those being groomed or sexually exploited.

While this Strategy seeks to tackle child sexual abuse in all its forms and address one of the key underlying factors behind children going missing, the Government will continue to work with the police, NCA and other statutory and non-statutory organisations to improve our response to children who go missing and to reduce the risk posed to these children. The relevant actions we are taking include:

- Working with the NPCC lead for missing persons to support effective, risk-based police responses to missing children incidents.
- Improving the quality of missing persons data that police can access, delivered as part of the new Law Enforcement Data Service.
- Improving the efficiency and reach of the Child Rescue Alert (CRA), delivered by the NCA on behalf of UK policing. The CRA is a partnership between the police, media and the public to safely locate a high-risk missing child, when there is a real, immediate risk to their life.
- Supporting the voluntary sector to provide vital support for missing children at risk of abuse and exploitation, for example Missing People's 24/7 helpline, TestSafe and SafeCall (supporting children, young people and families concerned about county lines exploitation) services.

3.5 Strengthening early identification and intervention in child sexual abuse cases

211. In recent years, there has been extensive work to drive the identification of, and intervention in, all forms of child abuse. **Recognising evidence (see [Part 2.2](#)) around historic difficulties identifying and responding to child sexual abuse, particularly in an intra-familial environment, the Government will work to equip professionals working directly with children with the understanding and skills they need to identify this child sexual abuse.** This is particularly important in the context of COVID-19 which may have exacerbated the risk of certain types of child sexual abuse (see [Part 2.10](#)).

We will invest in strengthening safeguarding practice across different sectors, including driving consistent standard of skills and knowledge in Children's Social Care to respond to child sexual abuse

212. **There is work to improve safeguarding across the health system.** NHSEI and Health Education England will review mandatory safeguarding training for all health professionals and strengthen the safeguarding component of the standard NHS provider contract. In addition, NHSEI will launch a new Safeguarding Commissioning Assurance Toolkit to support local commissioners to make improvements and embed a contextual safeguarding approach. The NHS has also injected £15 million to strengthen mental health support for its staff, recognising the importance of protecting the wellbeing of all NHS staff during this particularly difficult period of COVID-19, and to ensure they are able to deliver services effectively, including safeguarding.
213. To strengthen safeguarding practice in schools, the DfE will consult on proposed changes to guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education, including responding to child sexual abuse, harmful sexual behaviour and peer-on-peer abuse; this will build on updates made to the guidance in September 2020. **As well as updating guidance, the Government will seek to support school Designated Safeguarding Leads across England and Wales to identify and respond appropriately to child sexual abuse through sharing CSA Centre practice resources for education settings.**

CASE STUDY

After a school in Wiltshire introduced contextual safeguarding, staff noticed two female pupils with expensive bags. The school recognised this as a potentially concerning sign and contacted Wiltshire's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Emerald Child Exploitation team. A multi-agency meeting was held to understand the two pupils' peer networks, which identified links between a number of young people and an adult male. Using phone data, the Emerald team was able to locate the adult male and young people at a specific place and, after further investigation, prosecuted him for sexual exploitation.

214. To ensure youth workers are equipped to support children and young people and to identify and respond to all forms of abuse, the National Youth Agency is developing training for all youth workers to detect signs of trauma and exploitation, including child sexual abuse. In September 2020, it also published its [revised national curriculum for youth work](#) containing a dedicated section on 'healthy relationships' and information on specific safeguarding issues.
215. In Children's Social Care, the DfE will build on the [Putting Children First](#) strategy, collaborating with local authorities and across the workforce to drive a consistent level of skill, knowledge and understanding through workforce reforms, a stronger system of accountability and investment via the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme.
216. **The DfE will continue to improve children's social workers' ability to identify and respond appropriately to child sexual abuse by influencing pre and post qualification training and pathways.** This will include working in partnership with Government-funded fast track training programmes to improve provision of child sexual abuse content; working closely with Teaching Partnerships; ensuring child sexual abuse-specific material is included in the National Assessment and Accreditation System, and exploring a roll-out of harms-specific training, including through the CSA Centre.
217. Child and family social workers are an essential part of the workforce engaged in tackling child sexual abuse. Carrying out such challenging and sensitive work can impact on their wellbeing and, as a result, capacity to carry out their work. This is especially difficult during COVID-19. We are working with our high-performing Partner in Practice local authorities to identify and share good practice in providing the right support to staff to maintain their physical and mental wellbeing. We also continue to fund activity that promotes social worker wellbeing more broadly. This includes programmes to develop social work leaders who support the wellbeing of their teams, the Happier Healthier Professionals programme led by the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care, and social worker health check, providing local authorities with a better understanding of workforce wellbeing.

218. **Some victims and survivors of child sexual exploitation will also be victims of modern slavery. To ensure victims and survivors are supported, we have expanded Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs) to one third of local authorities**, providing advice and support to trafficked children and working with multi-agency partners to advocate on behalf of the child. The Home Office will continue the national roll out of ICTGs as part of the National Referral Mechanism Transformation Programme and we will continue to review how the needs of individual children are best met at a local level through the programme.
219. **To go further to identify child sexual abuse and support victims and survivors, the Home Office is funding the CSA Centre to develop and test a range of training programmes and resources, including trauma-informed approaches.** This work includes: [Practice Leads](#) training in multi-agency settings, one day training in local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, as well as work to strengthen initial training received by professionals.
220. **The Home Office has also funded the CSA Centre to develop a Child Sexual Abuse Pathway to clearly outline the process to follow and actions required to safeguard children where child sexual abuse is a concern.** It will bring clarity to key decision points, provide tailored resources to support practitioners undertaking this work, and further improve professionals' responses to child sexual abuse by providing a pathway grounded in evidence and centred on the needs and perspectives of children and young people.

CASE STUDY

The CSA Practice Leads Programme, delivered by the Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse, is an intensive programme of training and development which builds practitioners' understanding and confidence in identifying and responding to concerns of child sexual abuse, and supports them to share and spread their learning within their services:

"I feel the course has absolutely enhanced my practice. Recently, I had a referral that at first seemed quite "low level". However, following the course, I felt really confident in evidencing why the case needed to be escalated."

221. Whilst safeguarding partners often rely on professionals who see children regularly to identify changes in their behaviour and refer safeguarding concerns, anyone who interacts with children can help to identify abuse. The importance of this has become more pronounced in the context of COVID-19 and children spending less time with trusted professionals outside of their homes. **To build awareness during this period, the Government distributed a short guide to over 25,000 organisations and local community partners – including supermarkets, postal workers and transport providers – to help them identify and report safeguarding concerns during the pandemic.** The Government also provided the NSPCC with £1.6 million to expand and

promote their helpline for adults to report safeguarding concerns. The helpline saw an immediate 40% increase in contacts handled by the service, and levels have remained well above baseline levels.

222. **The DfE has also re-started activity based upon their existing [Together, we can tackle child abuse](#) campaign**, focusing on helping the public and professionals to understand and identify the complex signs of abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse, and to provide reassurance about discussing concerns and making referrals. The campaign's social media activity is supported by a toolkit and resources supplied to local authorities and other key stakeholders, amplifying the campaign's messages and enhancing the safeguarding potential of the public, including through an additional asset focused on identifying online child sexual abuse.
223. Recognising evidence that BAME victims and survivors of child sexual abuse are under-represented when compared to local demographics, and may face particular barriers to disclosing and accessing support (see [Part 2.2](#)), **we will seek to raise awareness within BAME communities of child sexual abuse and the support available through targeted community engagement.**

“I think I just played up a lot hoping that someone would ask me what was wrong. When they did, I told them and got some help.”

Female, age 15

3.6 Driving multi-agency working and information sharing to assess risk, intervene early and prevent harm

224. The responsibility for identifying and responding to child sexual abuse does not rest with one Government department or agency. Nationally, there is a duty on all Secretaries of State to promote the wellbeing of all children in England. **The DfE, DHSC and Home Office have a particular responsibility to work together to ensure that local leaders across health, police and local councils are operating effectively in the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements established in 2018.**
225. For children suffering sexual abuse, it is critical that safeguarding partners work with each other effectively to identify and protect them. The Government considers these multi-agency arrangements the bedrock of a higher-performing child protection system. Sir Alan Wood, who led the review of Local Safeguarding Children Boards, has been commissioned to support local partners with the reforms and review progress in implementing the new arrangements. Building on the recommendations from his interim report on implementation, Government departments have developed a delivery

plan to ensure continuous improvements at the local level by targeting: leadership and engagement; best practice and partnerships; and monitoring and evaluation.

As part of new local safeguarding partnership arrangements, we will introduce facilitators for each of the three statutory services now partnered together to drive continuous improvement

226. **Through the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme, the Home Office is also funding a national facilitator on safeguarding partnership reform to support police forces in implementing the new arrangements.** We will continue this funding, and the DHSC and the DfE have supported similar national facilitators for health and local authorities, helping us to drive forward our delivery plan.
227. **We will continue to support local authority safeguarding partners to work together more effectively in responding to all forms of exploitation and extrafamilial harm, including through the DfE's Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme.** This £2 million programme helps local areas improve their strategic response, identify risk and develop local solutions to safeguard children experiencing exploitation, including sexual exploitation.
228. Service transformation in local authorities will also continue to be supported by the Troubled Families Programme, using the Service Transformation Grant and Early Help System Guide to promote stronger partnership working and better use of data in early help services.
229. **The Home Office will place new duties on a range of agencies, such as the police, local government, youth offending, and health and probation, to work collaboratively to prevent and reduce serious violence.** When defining the scope of their plans, local areas will have the flexibility to consider other crime types, which may include child sexual abuse.
230. It is vital that safeguarding partners share information, knowledge and insight to assess risk and prevent harm. Nothing should stand in the way of sharing information when there are concerns for a child's safety. **Government departments commissioned a user-research project to better understand the barriers to information sharing between safeguarding partners and other agencies, and is taking forward recommendations on updating guidance and sharing best practice in this space.** We will also build on this user-research to explore how technology is currently being used to build a picture of the risk to a child and will make recommendations for how it can be made more efficient. This includes expanding the Child Protection Information Sharing system from unscheduled healthcare settings to all health settings, including GPs, by 2023, in line with the NHS [Long Term Plan](#).

231. At a national level, responsibility for learning lessons from serious safeguarding incidents sits with the independent Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, with oversight for all serious incidents notified by local authorities. The Panel commissions national reviews of serious child safeguarding cases, considering issues that are complex or of national importance, which can include child sexual abuse cases. It works closely with local safeguarding partners to identify and share learning that can enable practice improvements to better protect children from harm.
232. As outlined in [Objective 2](#), Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements also exists to provide for effective information sharing between Responsible Authorities and Duty to Cooperate agencies involved in the management of registered sex offenders and safeguarding of children.

3.7 Working internationally to prevent child sexual abuse and tackling transnational child sex offending

233. Child sexual abuse is a borderless crime. We know that offenders are increasingly targeting children in other countries by travelling abroad to perpetrate abuse, using the internet to livestream abuse from other countries and hosting images of abuse on online networks around the world. As set out in [Part 1: Our Principles and Framework](#), taking an international approach to tackling child sexual abuse is therefore key to our whole-system, strategic response.
234. The UK is proud to be recognised as the world leader in our response to child sexual abuse - the Independent Economist Intelligence Unit's [Out of the Shadows](#) Index on child sexual abuse and exploitation, published in 2020, gave the UK's response to child sexual abuse the highest score of all 60 countries assessed. We will remain at the forefront of international action.
235. **Central to preventing and responding effectively to child sexual abuse is adopting a global approach, combining international cooperation with common global standards**, such as the [Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#) (also known as the Lanzarote Convention) which the UK ratified in 2018 and will continue to report against.
236. The internet can be used to facilitate child sexual abuse across the world and online abuse can act as a precursor to offenders travelling abroad to abuse children. **As part of the Home Office's response, it has been the sole financial donor to the WeProtect Global Alliance since its inception, which plays an integral role internationally in driving awareness of, and best practice responses to, online child sexual abuse.** This includes by promoting the adoption of the [Model National Response for Preventing and Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) and the [Global Strategic Response to Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#). The Alliance is now an independent body, which the Home Office will continue to play an integral role in - galvanising action through our permanent seat on the WeProtect Global Alliance Board.

237. Outside of the WPGA, The Home Office has developed a network of multilateral and bilateral engagements to enhance the effectiveness of efforts to combat child sexual abuse both at home and around the world, including through the Five Country Ministerial - an annual conference bringing together the interior Ministers of Five Eyes Countries including the UK, United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. We have utilised this forum to drive work to tackle online child sexual abuse, including to collaborate with industry partners in develop the [Voluntary Principles](#) (see [Objective 3.2](#)).
238. **We will continue to use the Five Country Ministerial, as well as other multilateral and bilateral forums and our diplomatic network, to raise the global profile of child sexual abuse and advance efforts to tackle all forms of online child sexual abuse.** This includes building on our successful engagement with countries to combat the hosting of child sexual abuse material on the internet.
239. **Law enforcement will also continue to tackle child sexual abuse globally through the NCA's membership of the Virtual Global Taskforce,** an international alliance of law enforcement agencies, NGOs and industry partners working together to reduce the global threat from online sexual abuse and other forms of transnational child sexual offending.
240. Alongside work at the global level, it is key that the Government continues to drive efforts to prevent child sexual abuse at a country-level, including through sharing insight and technology with other countries where appropriate.
241. The UK's overseas diplomatic network supports access to governments, operational partners, multilateral institutions and NGOs to improve coordination and advocate for the adoption of best practice standards. The creation of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) will help to increase the UK's overall impact - strengthening and aligning efforts to tackle child sexual abuse by combining development and diplomatic expertise, levers and networks.
242. The Government will use relevant international initiatives to tackle child sexual abuse in a joined-up and cohesive way, and will work through the diplomatic network to raise the global profile of the issue. **This includes building the evidence base on innovative practices to prevent and respond to sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment of children and adults, including in the international aid sector, and sharing best practice through the FCDO-funded [Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub](#).**
243. In addition, the Government has bolstered its overseas response to child sexual abuse through the cross-government network known as SOCnet, jointly run by the Home Office and the FCDO. This network provides enhanced serious organised crime (SOC) policy coordination and advice in priority regions, coordinating a full-spectrum response that includes diplomatic and programme activity. We will leverage SOCnet's regional expertise to strengthen our overseas response to child sexual abuse.
244. **We will also work with global partners, including the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, and through relevant UK international aid programmes** to help improve child protection in key at-risk countries.

CASE STUDY

The End Violence Against Children Fund has invested in Thorn - an NGO using tech solutions to stop child sexual abuse online - to develop a tool to support investigations on the dark web and help law enforcement identify victims and survivors. Thorn has trained over 1,200 law enforcement officers in 55 countries to use this technology, which has played a key role in safeguarding 1,792 children and arresting 1,151 offenders.

Tackling transnational child sex offenders action plan

In January 2020, the IICSA [published the report](#) for phase 2 of its investigation into the extent to which institutions and organisations based in England and Wales have taken seriously their responsibilities to protect children outside the UK from sexual abuse. The report included recommendations for the Government, including developing a national plan of action to address child sexual abuse and exploitation perpetrated overseas by UK nationals and residents of England and Wales. The Government has accepted this recommendation in its response to the Inquiry's recommendations, published in January 2021; here, we set out what that plan comprises.

Activity outlined in Objective 3.7 will be key to tackling transnational child sex offenders (TCSOs). Preventative measures are central to protecting children from harm, as we know that offenders increasingly take advantage of areas with weaker child protection systems, law enforcement responses, or infrastructure and control (including following humanitarian disasters) to perpetrate abuse against vulnerable children abroad.

Effectively tackling TCSOs also requires a robust offender management system here in the UK. Objective 2 outlines the steps the Government is taking to strengthen multi-agency working to manage offenders, such as by improving the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) process and shared database, and commits to ensuring the police-led management of sex offenders in the community under MAPPA works effectively. These actions sit alongside the wider package of work to improve management of sex offenders, including their travel abroad, by strengthening existing civil orders and enabling a tailored approach to risk management. To specifically address the threat of sex offenders travelling to abuse children abroad, we will enhance these efforts through further actions:

- **The Government will build its understanding of key countries vulnerable to UK nationals and residents travelling to them to abuse children, and will continue to explore opportunities to strengthen the management of registered sex offenders prior to travel.** As recommended by the IICSA, the Home Office has commissioned the NCA to develop a list of countries where children are considered to be at high risk of sexual abuse and exploitation from UK nationals and residents.

The list will be made available to the police and courts to assist them when they are considering the need for foreign travel prohibitions as part of civil orders.

- **The Home Office has been investing over £4 million per year in tackling TCSOs through various partner organisations**, including £2.96 million to the NCA to target high-harm offenders in high-risk countries. A key part of this effort is the International Justice Mission's and NCA's work with the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center, set up in 2019 to tackle the live-streaming of sexual abuse.
- **The Government will drive work to reduce the opportunity for TCSOs to target children abroad, ensuring that organisations with footprints overseas, such as those working in the aid sector, have the right safeguards in place.** We will develop INTERPOL Threat Assessments to ensure that the aid sector is aware of key threats, including child sexual abuse, in priority countries. In September 2020, the Government also launched the [UK Strategy: Safeguarding Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment within the Aid Sector](#) (in line with the [Development Assistant Committee's Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment \(SEAH\)](#); the [Inter-Agency Standing Committee Minimum Operating Standards on Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#); UN international SEAH standards; and [Child Protection Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Action](#)). This sets out the UK's actions, across all Government departments that deliver Official Development Assistance, to prevent sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment from occurring, and to respond appropriately where it does.
- **The Home Office will ensure that explanatory guidance and communications are clear about the key role played by the International Child Protection Certificate plays**, supporting organisations to safely recruit individuals for work and volunteering outside the UK.
- **We will bring TCSOs to justice by supporting prosecutions by local law enforcement through the NCA's International Liaison Officer Network**, which enables the sharing of intelligence and coordination of the law enforcement response to support UK operational activity against child sexual abuse. This is alongside law enforcement partners' use of Section 72 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, where appropriate, to allow UK individuals who offend overseas to be prosecuted in the UK. **We will continue to notify overseas authorities of TCSOs' travel to or presence in a country, providing sufficient information for local law enforcement to take informed and appropriate action.**
- **As a Government, we will also continue to build our understanding of transnational child sex offending through collaboration with the NCA, intelligence community and the third sector.**
- **Law enforcement partners at the forefront of tackling TCSOs will continue to implement, review and update the law enforcement response through preventative and operational measures**, including updating guidance where necessary and through continuous professional development..

CASE STUDY

A UK citizen came to the attention of the NCA after a guest at the Kenyan hotel at which he was staying filed a report to the NCA's Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit in the UK sharing concerns about their behaviour while in the company of a number of young local girls. The NCA's investigation into the individual - which involved collaboration with the Kenyan National Police, the National Kenyan Police Child Protection Unit, the FCDO and CPS - led to him being charged under Section 72 with sexual offences including: multiple counts of rape of a female under 16 years; sexual assault on a female under 16 years; sexual assault by penetration of a female aged 13 and over; and, perverting the course of justice. On 18 July 2018, the individual was sentenced to 18 years and six months imprisonment.

3.8 Supporting all victims and survivors

245. The Government is absolutely committed to ensuring access to high quality support for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, wherever they live in the country and regardless of whether the the abuse is recent or non-recent (in this section, we use “non-recent” to refer to abuse experienced by adults before the age of 18). Improving the quality and consistency of support for all victims and survivors of sexual abuse is central to both the [Strategic Direction for Sexual Assault and Abuse Services](#) and the cross-Government [Victims Strategy](#).
246. Child sexual abuse can have devastating and wide-ranging consequences for victims and survivors (see [Part 2.5](#)). As a result, victims and survivors of both recent and non-recent abuse will require different forms of care and support depending on their circumstances, how they wish to access help, the pace of their recovery and the level of support they receive when they disclose their abuse. There is no ‘one-size fits all’ approach. The support accessed by victims and survivors encompasses a broad range of statutory and non-statutory services funded by several different local commissioners (local authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs)) and national commissioners (NHSEI, the MoJ, the Home Office). Regardless of the type of support being accessed, victims and survivors stress the importance of being listened to, respected, believed and not judged.
247. Unfortunately, we know that victims and survivors are not always able to access the support they need and that services can be disjointed and difficult to navigate. For service providers, particularly in the voluntary sector, there are also challenges operating in a fragmented commissioning landscape with funding available from multiple local and national commissioners.

248. **In response to this challenge, the Government is developing a Victims Funding Strategy to place the victim support sector on a more sustainable footing.** The Victims Funding Strategy will be underpinned by a new delivery model to ensure there is a joined-up approach to funding at both a national and local level to maximise the impact of the support we provide. A key part of this work will be to look at the barriers tailored services face in delivering the support that victims and survivors with protected characteristics rely on. **We will also work across Government to review the landscape of third sector sexual violence support services across England and Wales to identify gaps in provision for child sexual abuse and focus funding accordingly.**

We will utilise the £2.8 million Child Sexual Abuse Support Services Transformation Fund to embed best practice, improve the quality of support to children of all backgrounds, and build our understanding of what works to support victims and survivors

249. The Government has already provided significant additional investment in support services for child sexual abuse. **The Home Office and the MoJ have doubled the funding available to national voluntary sector organisations through the Support for Victims and Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse fund, to £2.4 million from 2020 to 2022.** This funding is enabling a range of vital national services to support child and adult victims and survivors, including: support lines; in-person and remote counselling; online psychoeducation resources; training for professionals working with victims; and specialist support to children with disabilities. Funding is also going to organisations providing support to non-abusing parents and carers, recognising the vital role that they play in the recovery of children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse.

CASE STUDY

Carly, who is autistic and non-verbal, was sexually abused by her maternal grandfather over several years. Carly's grandfather exploited her disability and it took time for the abuse she was suffering to be discovered and fully understood.

Funded through the Home Office's Support for Victims and Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse Fund, the NSPCC's Letting the Future In programme has developed therapeutic support for those aged 4 to 19 with learning disabilities who have been sexually abused. The programme provides support that pays particular attention to the child's preferred way of communicating, with more emphasis on creative play, art and drama, and allows therapy to be run at the young person's pace.

Carly's parents have seen a real change in their daughter since her time with her NSPCC practitioner: *"She is so different now. She smiles, goes to college and will go out to meet friends."*

250. In 2020 the Home Office launched a new £2.8 million Child Sexual Abuse Support Services Transformation Fund to enable statutory and non-statutory organisations to promote and embed best practice in supporting children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse, and to build our understanding of what works to support victims and survivors. Projects supported through the fund are helping to: improve the quality of support to children and young people, including for those from BAME backgrounds; address barriers to accessing pre-trial support; and improve multi-agency working between commissioners, providers and communities.
251. **In recognition of the vital role played by the voluntary sector, in 2020 the MoJ invested an additional £4 million in sexual violence support services through the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund – increasing it by 50%, from £8 million to £12 million a year from 2020.** Since 2019, the grant-funding period has also been extended to three years to provide greater security and sustainability in core funding for voluntary sector partners. £1.88 million of this funding is ring-fenced specifically for support for victims and survivors of recent and non-recent child sexual abuse.

“They [Barnardo’s] took the time to get to know me, not just what had happened to me or the thing I had done. That helped me the most, I think. Lots of other people had tried to talk to me about it but they just went straight to it, you know, like... “tell me about x” and I couldn’t. I just couldn’t do it that way”

Female, age 15

252. **The MoJ also allocated £4.8 million in 2020/21 to PCCs to specifically commission services for victims and survivors of recent and non-recent child sexual abuse across their communities, as well as an additional £4 million per year to recruit more Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) across England and Wales** – this includes the recruitment of children and young people’s ISVAs to provide children who have experienced sexual abuse with the support they need to cope and recover, and to navigate the criminal justice system.
253. As recognised in the [Prime Minister’s Virtual Summit on Hidden Harms](#) in 2020, the impact of COVID-19 and social distancing measures have exacerbated feelings of isolation amongst many victims and survivors of abuse. It has also presented significant challenges to those organisations providing vital support. As part of the additional £750 million announced by the Chancellor to support the charity sector during the COVID-19 crisis, **the MoJ invested £10 million to ensure that victims and survivors of sexual violence could continue to access advice and support during the pandemic and organisations could recruit more staff, adapt to remote counselling methods and keep helplines open for longer.**
254. Many victims and survivors will choose to access or be referred for support from Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) whose services include crisis care, forensic medical examination, sexual healthcare and referral for therapeutic counselling. **To improve support for victims and survivors accessing SARC services, including paediatric provision, we have increased spending from £31 million in 2018 to £39 million in 2020/21.**
255. Recognising that victims and survivors may first seek help through universal health services, like their GP, and require support from statutory mental health services, we want to encourage all healthcare professionals and organisations to take trauma-informed approaches. This includes understanding the wide-ranging impacts and manifestations of child sexual abuse, as well as how to respond to a disclosure of abuse. NHSEI are developing training materials on trauma-informed approaches, including spotting signs of violence, abuse and poor mental health.

256. **NHSEI has extensive plans in place to improve access to mental health provision for children and adults, and a key aspect of the [Strategic Direction for Sexual Abuse and Assault Services](#) is equipping the health workforce with the necessary knowledge and skills to work with all victims and survivors of sexual abuse.** NHSEI is planning to test and develop models of extended mental health provision for adults with complex mental health needs directly attributable to their experience of sexual assault or abuse, as part of its commitment to providing trauma-informed care to victims and survivors.

“It has taken ten years for a health professional to realise that I don’t have a personality disorder, rather that I need to unlearn skills I taught myself to survive child abuse.”

Adult victim/survivor

257. Whilst local commissioners are best placed to understand the level of need in their area and to commission services for victims and survivors accordingly, national Government has a role to play in helping them perform this duty. In 2019, the Home Office published a Commissioning Framework for all commissioners of child sexual abuse support services. We will review and update this framework and seek further opportunities to share knowledge and commissioning best practice from around the country. **We will support commissioners to deliver services that meet the needs of all parts of the local community, regardless of their racial, cultural or socio-economic background, including developing new guidance for PCCs on effectively supporting racial and ethnic minorities through the local victim support services they commission.**
258. As part of the forthcoming Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, we will also ensure that the National Statement of Expectation remains up to date and effective, setting out what actions local areas need to put in place to ensure victims and survivors of violence against women and girls, including sexual abuse, can get the help and support they need.
259. **The Government recognises that sexual violence also has a lasting impact on men and boys, and we will continue to work with partners across local and national government, the police, and the third sector to support male victims and survivors.** Through funding to rape and sexual violence support services, the number of PCCs across the country with Government-funded support for males has increased from 11 to 41. We have funded the National Male Survivor Helpline run by [Safeline](#); the [National Male Survivors Online Helpline and Webchat Service](#) run by Survivors UK; and supported a new [online resource](#) developed by Mankind UK, which offers self-help resources and signposts support for men who have experienced unwanted sexual experiences, including child sexual abuse. In addition, we will update the Male Victims

Position Paper and strengthen our commitment to support the increasing number of male victims and survivors who come forward to report crimes captured in the forthcoming Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Strategy, including non-recent child sexual abuse.

260. In response to the impact of sexual assault and harassment in the aid sector, highlighted in [Objective 3.7](#), we will implement a programme of support to victims and survivors related to the international aid sector, and work with the UN Victims' Advocate to develop international coherence on support for victims and survivors.
261. **To improve access to support, it is essential that victims and survivors, non-abusing parents and carers, as well as professionals working with children know about the support available. COVID-19 has reinforced this need and we are progressing several targeted initiatives to address it:**
- NHSEI will raise awareness about the role and accessibility of SARCs amongst all parts of the community, including LGBTQ+ and BAME communities.
 - The MoJ will deliver a communications campaign to raise awareness of sexual violence support services among victims and survivors, including adult survivors of non-recent child sexual abuse, as announced at the Hidden Harms Summit in 2020.
 - For children and young people at risk of sexual abuse, and with less access to trusted adults outside the family as a result of COVID-19, the Home Office in collaboration with other Government departments and third sector has developed a campaign - [Something's Not Right](#) - directing children via social media to advice and help from a trusted service, adult or friend.
262. **The Government is committed to providing victims and survivors of child sexual abuse with the support they need regardless of whether they have been able or have chosen to report their abuse. Where individuals do choose to pursue a criminal justice outcome, whether they are a child or adult survivor, it is essential they are supported throughout this process.** This is not only important for a victim's wellbeing but will help criminal justice agencies to gather best evidence, improving the prospect of charges and convictions.

"I told one person but then I had to tell some others too. I asked if my worker could sit in with me - she didn't say anything but just knowing she was there helped me. I didn't know, but I was squeezing her hand really tightly when I was talking to the police. She told me afterwards and said I did really well. We laugh about her red hands now. It helped having her there"

Female, age 11

263. **The MoJ has published a [new, revised Victims' Code](#) setting out twelve key overarching rights.** These are clear, concise and easy to understand, setting out the level of service that victims can expect to receive from criminal justice agencies. The Code also includes a new right for eligible victims to be automatically referred to the Victim Contact Scheme. It will come into force on 1 April 2021 to allow criminal justice agencies time to embed any changes. The MoJ has also committed to consult on a Victims' Law that will guarantee that victims receive their rights under the Code and agencies are held to account for delivering them.
264. **Recognising the need to provide extra support throughout the criminal justice process to children and vulnerable adult victims, we will continue to increase the use of the full range of special measures for them,** subject to judicial discretion on applications made to the Court. These measures include Visually Recorded Interviews (Achieving Best Evidence), live court links and registered intermediaries. During 2020, we extended the availability of Section 28 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 to be in every Crown Court in England and Wales, allowing vulnerable witnesses to visually record their cross-examination before trial. We have also introduced an updated protocol for remote video link sites alongside a new booking process, assisting witnesses to give their best evidence in an approved location away from court.
265. **Drawing on international best practice, we are also developing specialist child-centred support for victims and survivors of sexual abuse. [The Lighthouse in Camden](#) is a pilot initiative collectively supported by the Home Office, NHSEI, the DfE and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime.** Based on the Nordic 'Barnahus' ('Child House') model, the multi-disciplinary service offers a holistic assessment of a child's needs and provides advocacy, medical care, social care, therapeutic and criminal justice support to both children and their non-abusing parents and carers, delivered by a team of statutory and voluntary sector organisations within a single child-friendly setting. The Lighthouse uses innovative measures to support children with the criminal justice process, including Achieving Best Evidence interviews conducted by trained clinical psychologists (with police support); live-court links from the Lighthouse to minimise the trauma to children of appearing in court for cross-examination; and, embedded Police Liaison Officers providing advice and liaison with local agencies and services.
266. Building on the learning from the Lighthouse pilot phase, which is set to run until March 2022, we will publish guidance for local commissioners and service providers seeking to introduce 'Child House' models of support to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, and will consider how national and local funding can support the development of similar local initiatives.

CASE STUDY

Max, aged 11, and his sister Victoria, aged 10 with a learning difficulty, were taken to The Lighthouse for their Achieving Best Evidence interview after Victoria disclosed at school that her step-father had been sexually abusing her and her brother.

Victoria and Max were greeted by two advocates in a child friendly environment. Victoria gave an interview that day, but her brother was reluctant to talk. After a period of sessions with his own advocate, Max also felt able to give an Achieving Best Evidence interview. The Lighthouse were able to release all relevant notes (medical, therapeutic and advocacy) quickly to support a speedy police investigation, and the high quality evidence gathered in The Lighthouse environment meant that, within six months, the CPS were able to charge their step-father, who pleaded guilty and was convicted without the need for the children to be cross-examined in court.

267. Victims and survivors of sexual abuse will often need access to therapeutic support through different stages of the criminal justice system. However, we know there can be a perception that providing pre-trial therapy will damage the prosecution's case, leaving victims and survivors without the support they need and are entitled to. **The CPS is updating guidance on this issue, emphasising the importance of victim wellbeing and encouraging prompt access to therapy to assist recovery and the provision of best evidence in criminal proceedings.**

"I was told I wasn't allowed to talk about my experiences with anyone because it could damage the live investigation and be used against me in court, as it is seen as coaching or rehearsing. So I was stuck by myself to try and comprehend and emotionally overcome the worst thing that has ever happened to me, without any support. This led to me battling with mental health issues"

Female, age 19

268. **Lastly, it is important that victims and survivors are aware of, and able to effectively access, redress for the abuse they have suffered, including through compensation where appropriate.** We have amended the state-funded Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme to abolish the pre-1979 “same-roof” rule. Following a broad review and a public consultation on reforms to the Scheme, the Government will publish its response in due course and lay a new Scheme in Parliament for approval. Work is also ongoing to speed-up the process of determining compensation and to improve handling of complex and sensitive claims, such as for child sexual abuse. We have [responded to the IICSA’s recommendations on accountability and reparations](#), including a proposal to explore why courts make low numbers of criminal compensation orders in cases of child sexual abuse, and how we can improve access to redress through the civil courts.

Glossary

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant for example in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. As taken from the Department for Education's [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

Child refers to any person under the age of 18 years.

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) 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. As taken from the Department for Education's [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) 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. As taken from the Department for Education's [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) refers to any representation by whatever means of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child primarily for sexual purposes. As used in the [Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography](#).

Child Protection is part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm. As taken from the Department for Education's [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

Contact Child Sexual Abuse describes when an abuser makes physical contact with a child and can include assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.

Extra-Familial Harms, or threats, are threats and/or vulnerability to abuse or exploitation from outside a child's family. These threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or from within the wider community and/or online. They can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including: exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines; trafficking; online abuse; sexual exploitation; and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation. As set out in the Department for Education's [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them. Groomers may also build a relationship with the young person's family or friends to make them seem trustworthy or authoritative. Children and young people can be groomed online, in person or both – by a stranger or someone they know. As set out by the [NSPCC](#).

Harmful Sexual Behaviour is understood as sexual behaviours expressed by children under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards themselves or others, and can in some cases be abusive (Derived from Hackett, 2014). Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum and when a child's sexual behaviour is problematic, abusive or violent, this can be developmentally damaging for the child displaying the behaviour and victimising others. Harmful sexual behaviours can take place both offline and online and, in some cases, may be classified as peer-on-peer abuse. Harmful sexual behaviours in children may also be a symptom of either their own abuse or exposure to abusive practices and/or materials.

Intra-Familial Harms, or abuse, refers to acts that occur within a family environment. Perpetrators may or may not be related to the child. The key consideration is whether the abuser feels like family from the child's point of view. Taken from the Centre of Expertise's [Key messages from research on intra-familial child sexual abuse](#).

Indecent Imagery of Children relates to photographs or 'pseudo' photographs of children. A pseudo-photograph is an image made by computer-graphics or otherwise which appears to be a photograph. This can include photos, videos, tracings and derivatives of a photograph or data that can be converted into a photograph. Whilst 'indecent' is not defined in legislation, it can include penetrative and non-penetrative sexual activity, as set out in [Indecent images of children: guidance for young people](#).

Modern Slavery includes human trafficking, slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour for the purpose of exploitation. Trafficking is defined within Article 4 of the Council of Europe Convention Against Trafficking in Human Beings. However, for the purposes of trafficking, in the case of a child there is no requirement to meet the 'means' component within that definition as a child is not able to give informed consent. Therefore, any child who is recruited, transported, transferred, harboured or received for the purposes of exploitation is considered to be a trafficking victim, whether or not they have been forced or deceived. As

taken from the Department for Education's [Care of unaccompanied migrant children and child victims of modern slavery](#) guidance.

Online Child Sexual Abuse is when child sex offenders use the internet to view and share Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), groom children online, and/or live stream the sexual abuse of children. As taken from the [Online Harms White Paper](#).

Peer-on-Peer Abuse occurs when a child is exploited or harmed by a peer of a similar age. This is generally referred to as peer-on-peer abuse and can take many forms. This can include (but is not limited to): abuse within intimate partner relationships; bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting and initiation/hazing type violence and rituals. As taken from the Department for Education's [Keeping children safe in education](#) guidance.

Safeguarding is the action that is taken to protect children from maltreatment. This also includes preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development; ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes. As taken from the Department for Education's [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

Safeguarding Partners are defined as: (a) the local authority; (b) a clinical commissioning group for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area; and (c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area. As defined under the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act, 2017) and referred to in the Department for Education's [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes meaning the sending or posting of nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams by young people under the age of 18 online. This could be via social media, gaming platforms, chat apps or forums. It could also involve sharing between devices via services like Apple's AirDrop which works offline. As set out in the UK Council for Internet Safety's [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#).

Transnational Child Sex Offenders refer to those UK nationals and residents who travel from and sexually abuse and exploit children overseas. As taken from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse's [Children Outside the United Kingdom Investigation Report](#).

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HM Government

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

**A guide to multi-agency working
to help, protect and promote the welfare
of children**

December 2023

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Introduction

Nothing is more important than children's welfare. Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, stable, and loving home. Children who need help and protection deserve high quality and effective support. This requires individuals, agencies, and organisations to be clear about their own and each other's roles and responsibilities, and how they work together.

In this guidance, a child is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'children and young people' throughout. The term practitioner is used in the guidance to refer to individuals who work with children and their families in any capacity, including a range of professionals, such as qualified social workers and those who work for the statutory safeguarding partners or in education settings.

Whilst it is parents and carers who have primary care for their children, local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. The Children Act 1989¹ sets out specific duties to provide services to children in their area if they are in need and to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm. The Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services in local authorities are the key points of professional and political accountability, with responsibility for the effective delivery of these functions. The Children Act 2004² placed a duty on the local authority to promote co-operation with partners and other agencies in order to improve the wellbeing of children in their area. It also placed duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure they too give sufficient regard to children in need of help and safeguarding.

Amendments made by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 to the Children Act 2004 strengthened this already important relationship by placing new duties on the police, integrated care boards (ICBs)³ and the local authority, as statutory safeguarding partners. Safeguarding partners are under a duty to make arrangements to work together, and with other partners locally including education providers and childcare settings, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge

¹ [Children Act 1989](#)

² [Children Act 2004](#)

³ [Statutory guidance for integrated care boards on executive lead roles](#)

- protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network⁴ through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework⁵.

Child protection is part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and is defined for the purpose of this guidance as activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suspected to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes harm that occurs inside or outside the home, including online.

Effective safeguarding means practitioners should understand and be sensitive to factors, including economic and social circumstances and ethnicity, which can impact children and families' lives.

About this guidance

1. This guidance covers:

- the legislative requirements that apply to individuals, organisations and agencies
- a framework for the three local safeguarding partners (the local authority, an ICB for an area, any part of which falls within the local authority area, and the Chief Constable for police for a police area, any part of which falls within the local authority area) to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children, including identifying and responding to their needs
- the framework for the two child death review partners (the local authority and any ICB for an area, any part of which falls within the local authority area) to make arrangements to review all deaths of children normally resident in the local area, and if they consider it appropriate, for those not normally resident in the area

⁴ A family network can be a blood-relative, or a non-related connected person, such as a family friend or neighbour.

⁵ [Children's Social Care National Framework](#)

2. This document replaces Working together to safeguard children (2018). Links to relevant supplementary guidance that practitioners should consider alongside this guidance can be found at Appendix B.

What is the status of this guidance?

3. This guidance applies to all organisations and agencies who have functions relating to children. Specifically, this guidance applies to all local authorities, ICBs, police and all other organisations and agencies as set out in chapter 4.

4. It applies, in its entirety, to all education providers, and childcare settings.

5. It applies to all children up to the age of 18 years whether living with their families, in state care, or living independently.

6. This document should be complied with unless exceptional circumstances arise.

7. The guidance is issued under:

- section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, which requires local authorities in their social services functions to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State
- section 10(8) of the Children Act 2004, which requires each person or organisation to which the section 10 duty applies to have regard to any guidance given to them by the Secretary of State
- section 11(4) of the Children Act 2004 which requires each person or organisation to which the section 11 duty applies to have regard to any guidance given to them by the Secretary of State
- section 16B(7) of the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which states that the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel must have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State in connection with its functions
- section 16C(2) of the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which states that local authorities must have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State in connection with their functions relating to notifications
- section 16K of the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which states that safeguarding partners and relevant agencies for a local authority area in England must have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State in connection with their functions under sections 16E to 16J of the Act

- section 16Q of the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which states that the child death review partners for a local authority area in England must have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State in connection with their functions under sections 16M to 16P of the Act
- section 175(4) of the Education Act 2002, which states that governing bodies of maintained schools (including maintained nursery schools), further education institutions and management committees of pupil referral units must have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State
- paragraph 7(b) of the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, made under sections 94(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, which states that the arrangements to safeguard or promote the welfare of pupils made by the proprietors of independent schools (including academies or free schools) or alternative provision academies must have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State
- paragraph 3 of the Schedule to the Non-Maintained Special Schools (England) Regulations 2015, made under section 342 of the Education Act 1996, which requires arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the health, safety, and welfare of pupils in non-maintained special schools to have regard to any guidance published on such issues

Who is this guidance for?

8. This statutory guidance sets out key roles for individual organisations and agencies to deliver effective arrangements for help, support, safeguarding, and protection. It should be read and followed by leaders, managers and frontline practitioners of all organisations and agencies as set out in chapter 4 of this document.

9. It is essential that these arrangements are strongly led and promoted at a local level, specifically by elected local area leaders, including Lead Members of Children's Services, Mayors, Police and Crime Commissioners and through the commitment of chief officers in all organisations and agencies, particularly those representing the three safeguarding partners. These are local authority Chief Executives, Chief Constables of police and Chief Executives of ICBs. Other senior leaders within organisations and agencies that commission and provide services for children and families, and education settings also have a key role to play in providing help, support, and safeguarding children in their local area. Members of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel should also read and follow this guidance.

Chapter 1: A shared responsibility

10. Successful outcomes for children depend on strong partnership working between parents/carers and the practitioners working with them. Practitioners should take a child-centred approach to meeting the needs of the whole family.

11. As set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework, the following principles apply here too:

- children's welfare is paramount
- children's wishes and feelings are sought, heard, and responded to
- children's social care works in partnership with whole families
- children are raised by their families, with their family networks or in family environments wherever possible
- local authorities work with other agencies to effectively identify and meet the needs of children, young people, and families
- local authorities consider the economic and social circumstances impacting children, young people, and families

A child-centred approach within a whole family focus

12. A child-centred approach is fundamental to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child. All practitioners should follow the principles of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004. These Acts make clear that the welfare of children is paramount and that they are best looked after within their families, with their parents playing a full part in their lives, unless compulsory intervention in family life is necessary.

13. Children are clear about what they want from an effective safeguarding system:

Children have said that they need:

- **vigilance:** to have adults notice when things are troubling them
- **understanding and action:** to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon
- **stability:** to be able to develop an ongoing stable relationship of trust with those helping them
- **respect:** to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not
- **information and engagement:** to be informed about, and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans
- **explanation:** to be informed of the outcome of assessments, and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response
- **support:** to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family
- **advocacy:** to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views
- **protection:** to be protected against all forms of abuse, exploitation, and discrimination, and the right to special protection and help if a refugee

14. Anyone working with children should see and speak to the child, listen to what they say, observe their behaviour, take their views seriously, and work with them and their families and the people who know them well when deciding how to support their needs. Practitioners should also be aware that children may find it difficult to always speak about what they need, what is happening to them or what has happened to them. Legal duties under the Equality Act 2010⁶ must be complied with, including putting special provision in place to support dialogue with children who may not be able to convey their wishes and feelings as they may want to. This might include, for example, those who have communication difficulties, unaccompanied children, refugees, those children who are victims of modern slavery and/or trafficking and those who do not speak English or for whom English is not their first language.

⁶ [Equality Act 2010](#)

15. This approach sits within a whole family culture in which the needs of all members of the family are explored as individuals and how their needs impact on one another is drawn out.

16. This child-centred approach is supported by:

- the Children Act 1989, which requires local authorities to give due consideration to a child's wishes when determining what services to provide under section 17 and before making decisions about action to be taken to protect individual children under section 47. These duties complement requirements relating to the wishes and feelings of children who are, or may be, looked after (section 22(4)), including those who are provided with accommodation under section 20 and children taken into police protection (section 46(3)(d)).
- the Equality Act 2010, which puts a responsibility on public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. This applies to the process of identification of need and risk faced by the individual child and the process of assessment. No child or group of children must be treated any less favourably than others in being able to access effective services which meet their particular needs. To comply with the Equality Act 2010, safeguarding partners must assess and where appropriate put in place measures ahead of time to support all children and families to access services, overcoming any barriers they may face due to a particular protected characteristic.
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)⁷ which is an international agreement that protects the rights of children and provides a child-centred framework for the development of services to children. The UK Government ratified the UNCRC in 1991 and, by doing so, recognises children's rights including to expression and receiving information.
- the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, section 3⁸ recognises that a child is a victim of domestic abuse in their own right if they see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse and are related to either victim or perpetrator of the abuse, or either the victim or perpetrator of the abuse has parental responsibility for that child.
- the Children's Social Care National Framework⁹, published in 2023, is statutory guidance that sets out the purpose of children's social care as existing to support children and families, to protect children by intervening decisively when they are at

⁷ [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

⁸ [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Section 3](#)

⁹ [Children's Social Care National Framework](#)

risk of harm and to provide care for those who need it, so they grow up and thrive with safety, stability, and love

17. In addition to practitioners shaping support around the needs of individual children, local organisations and agencies should have a clear understanding of the collective needs of children locally when commissioning effective services. As part of that, ICBs are required to have executive lead roles for children, children with SEND and for safeguarding (these could be individual roles or combined as part of one role). It is expected that these executive leads will work with key partners across public health, social care, justice, and education to ensure the interests of those groups are met, including appropriate resources are allocated for the provision of services and maintaining an overview of the quality of services. As part of that process, the Director of Public Health, informed by the relevant ICB Executive Leads, should ensure that the needs of children are a key part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) developed by the Health and Wellbeing Board. Safeguarding partners should use this assessment to help them understand the prevalence and contexts of need, including specific needs relating to disabled children and those relating to abuse, neglect and exploitation, which in turn should help shape services.

Principles for working with parents and carers

18. In the context of a child-centred approach, all practitioners should work in partnership with parents and carers as far as possible. Parents and carers need to understand what is happening, what they can expect from the help and support provided, what is expected of them and be supported to say what they think. This is particularly important when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, whether the harm is from inside or outside the home including online. Working collaboratively will mean parents and carers have the best chance of making changes, and practitioners can make fair and accurate decisions about how to support children and keep them safe. While collaborative relationships between practitioners and, parents and carers are important, the wishes and feelings of the child and what is in their best interest remain central to decision-making. Practitioners need to be particularly skilled in engaging and working with parents and carers whom services have found difficult to engage. Some examples may be parents and carers of disabled children, parents, and carers whose children are at risk of, or experiencing, harm from outside the home, fathers, and male carers, and those who are neurodivergent. Practitioners also need to recognise, engage, and work with parents and carers who are unwilling or unable to engage with services. Four principles underpin work with parents and carers:

- 1) Effective partnership working with parents and carers happens when practitioners build strong, positive, trusting, and co-operative relationships by:

- approaching families and their wider family networks and communities with empathy, respect, compassion, and creativity
 - avoiding reinforcing family shame, suffering, and blaming
 - using strength-based approaches, working with parents and carers to identify what is working well and how their strengths could support them to effect positive change
 - ensuring they work sensitively with parents, carers, and children, to identify and understand the impact of adversity and trauma in their lives. They seek to understand how adversity and trauma might manifest and affect children and parents' engagement and use their expertise to adapt their response with care and compassion
 - adapting their responses to meet the diverse needs of parents and carers, including fathers and male carers, and the specific challenges being faced, including parents and carers of disabled children, and where harm is outside the home¹⁰
 - ensuring they understand the families' background, ethnicity, religion, financial situation, ability, education, sex, ages and sexual orientation, and potential barriers these create in seeking and accessing help and support
 - being alert and recognising where parents or carers may not be acting in the best interest of the child or where children may be experiencing abuse, neglect, and exploitation as a result of actions by parents, carers, or other individuals in their lives. Practitioners use their skills and expertise to adapt their response to secure engagement
 - being mindful of negative stereotypes when making decisions which might lead to false assumptions
- 2) Verbal and non-verbal communication should be respectful, non-blaming, clear, inclusive, and adapted to parents and carers needs. Practitioners should ensure that all materials provided to children, parents, carers, and families are jargon free, developmentally appropriate and in a format that is easily understood. Where appropriate, material provided to children, parents, carers, and families should be made accessible and translated into their first language if necessary. Professional interpreters should be provided where needed. Practitioners should not need to rely on family members or partners for interpretation services, including British Sign Language.

¹⁰ [Multi-agency Practice Principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm \(researchinpractice.org.uk\)](https://researchinpractice.org.uk)

- 3) Practitioners empower parents and carers to participate in decision-making to help, support and protect children by:
- creating a culture of “no surprises”, for example, making parents and carers aware of who will attend meetings and discussions, if the child will be invited to participate and the format of the meeting or discussion
 - explaining that parents and carers can bring a family member, a friend or supporter to meetings
 - giving parents and carers adequate preparation at every stage, relevant information, a safe and appropriate environment for participation and suitable access arrangements
 - signposting parents and carers to sources of help and support available locally or through the local authority
 - helping parents and carers to understand what the issues are and how these impact on the child, what decisions could be made, what changes need to be made, why and how, timescales and possible outcomes
- 4) Practitioners involve parents, carers, families, and local communities in designing processes that affect them, including those focused on safeguarding children. They value their contributions, expertise and knowledge reflecting them in service design and continuously seek feedback from parents, carers, family networks, children, and local communities to inform service improvements. Practitioners use feedback from parents and carers to reflect on their own practice.

Expectations for multi-agency working

19. Strong multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working is vital to identifying and responding to the needs of children and families. The following expectations have been developed to underpin this multi-agency working. They apply to all agencies and practitioners involved in safeguarding and protecting children. Specifically, these include police, local authorities, health services, probation services, youth offending services, education providers and childcare settings, and voluntary and third sector organisations. The term practitioners used here refers to all those working in these services and settings.

20. The expectations are structured at three levels for strategic leaders, senior and middle managers, and direct practice.

21. Strategic leaders may include Chief Executives of local authorities, Chief Executives of ICBs, Chief Executives of NHS Trusts, Chief Constables, Police and Crime Commissioners, and Chief Executives of multi-academy trusts.

22. Senior and middle managers may include Directors of Children's services, heads of services and team managers in local authorities, designated and named professionals (GP, nurse, doctor, midwife) in health, the Chief Superintendent and Chief Inspector (and equivalents) in police, head teachers, designated safeguarding leads and nursery managers in education.
23. Those in direct practice may include frontline social workers, health visitors, police constables, teachers and those working in the voluntary and community sector.
24. The professions listed as examples for each level is not exhaustive, decision-making structures will differ by area, and local areas should consider how best to apply these standards to match their local approach.
25. Multi-agency expectations for **strategic leaders** are as follows:
 - **Collaborate:** leaders develop a shared vision for how their services work together to deliver shared goals
 - **Learn:** leaders use evidence from direct practice in their area so that they know and can evaluate what is and isn't working well for children and families
 - **Resource:** leaders are ambitious about helping, supporting, and protecting children in their area and jointly prioritise and share resources accordingly
 - **Include:** leaders create an inclusive culture where diversity is understood, and multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working is celebrated
 - **Mutual challenge:** leaders hold each other and their teams to account and are held to account by their teams for the quality of the partnership working
26. Multi-agency expectations for **senior and middle managers** are as follows:
 - **Collaborate:** decisions are based on a shared practice approach and constructive debate and analysis of information from all services
 - **Learn:** managers ensure their teams have time to engage in peer learning and knowledge exchange, peer audit, group supervision and observation
 - **Resource:** managers ensure children receive the holistic support they need, drawing in expertise from a wide range of agencies
 - **Include:** managers support staff to identify and challenge discrimination, disparity, and negative stereotypes
 - **Mutual challenge:** constructive challenge within and across agencies and disciplines is actively encouraged, independent judgements are valued and given space alongside collective decision-making to avoid groupthink

27. Multi-agency expectations for **direct practice** are as follows:

- **Collaborate:** practitioners working with the same child and family share information to get a complete picture of what life is like for the child. Collectively, they ensure the child's voice is at the centre and the right support is provided
- **Learn:** practitioners learn together by drawing on the best available evidence from their individual fields and sharing their diverse perspectives during regular shared reflection on a child's development, experiences, and outcomes
- **Resource:** practitioners build strong relationships across agencies and disciplines to ensure they support and protect the children with whom they work
- **Include:** practitioners recognise the differences between, and are confident to respond to, circumstances where children experience adversity due to economic and social circumstances and acute family stress, and situations where children face harm due to parental abuse and neglect
- **Mutual challenge:** practitioners challenge themselves and each other, question each other's assumptions, and seek to resolve differences of opinion in a restorative and respectful way

Information sharing

28. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances so effective sharing of information between practitioners, local organisations and agencies is essential for early identification of need, assessment, and service provision to keep children safe. Rapid reviews and child safeguarding practice reviews have highlighted that missed opportunities to record, understand the significance of, and share information in a timely manner can have severe consequences for children¹¹.

29. Practitioners should be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess, and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children. This may be when problems are first emerging (for example, persistent school absences) or where a child is already known to local authority children's social care. Sharing information about any adults with whom that child has contact, which may impact the child's safety or welfare, is also critical.

30. Information sharing is also essential for the identification of patterns of behaviour when a child is at risk of going missing or has gone missing, including being missing from education. When multiple children appear associated to the same context or locations of risk, or in relation to children in the secure estate where there may be multiple local

¹¹ [Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel 2021: annual report](#)

authorities involved in a child's care, it will be for local safeguarding partners to consider how they build relationships and share relevant information in a timely and proportionate way with each other, other local organisations, and other safeguarding partnerships.

31. The Data Protection Act 2018¹² and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) supports the sharing of relevant information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. To ensure effective safeguarding arrangements:

- all organisations and agencies should have arrangements in place that set out clearly the processes and the principles for sharing information. The arrangements should cover how information will be shared with their own organisation/agency and with others who may be involved in a child's life
- practitioners should not assume that someone else will pass on information that they think may be critical to keep a child safe. If a practitioner has concerns about a child's welfare or safety, then they should share the information with local authority children's social care and/or the police. All practitioners should be particularly alert to the importance of sharing information when a child moves from one local authority into another, due to the risk that knowledge pertinent to keeping a child safe could be lost
- UK GDPR provides a number of bases for sharing personal information. It is not necessary to seek consent to share information for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of a child provided that there is a lawful basis to process any personal information required. The legal bases that may be appropriate for sharing data in these circumstances could be "legal obligation" or "public task", which includes the performance of a task in the public interest or the exercise of official authority. Each of the lawful bases under UK GDPR has different requirements¹³. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to obtain consent to share data, but it is important to note that UK GDPR sets a high standard for consent which is specific, time limited and can be withdrawn (in which case the information would have to be deleted)

32. Practitioners must have due regard to the relevant data protection principles which allow them to share personal information, as provided for in the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. To share information effectively:

- practitioners should be confident of the lawful bases and processing conditions under the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR that allow them to store and

¹² [Data Protection Act 2018](#)

¹³ [Lawful basis for processing: Information Commissioner's Office](#)

share information, including information which is considered sensitive, such as health data, known under the data protection legislation as “special category personal data”

- where practitioners need to share special category personal data, for example, where information obtained is sensitive and needs more protection, they should consider and identify the lawful basis for doing so under Article 6 of UK GDPR, and in addition be able to meet one of the specific conditions for processing under Article 9. The Data Protection Act 2018 specifies “safeguarding of children and individuals at risk” as a processing condition that allows practitioners to share information, including without consent (where in the circumstances consent cannot be given, it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner obtains consent or if to gain consent would place a child at risk). However, practitioners should be aware of the risks of processing special category data and be mindful that a data protection impact assessment must be completed for any type of processing which is likely to be high risk¹⁴

33. Practitioners should aim to be as transparent as possible by telling families what information they are sharing and with whom, provided that it is safe to do so.

¹⁴ [Data protection impact assessments | ICO](#)

Common myths that hinder effective information sharing

Data protection legislation is a barrier to sharing information

No. The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prohibit the collection and sharing of personal information, but rather provide a framework to ensure that personal information is shared appropriately. In particular, the Data Protection Act 2018 balances the rights of the information subject (the individual whom the information is about) and the possible need to share information about them.

Consent is needed to share personal information

No, you do not need consent to share personal information. It is one way to comply with the data protection legislation but not the only way. UK GDPR provides a number of bases for sharing personal information. It is not necessary to seek consent to share information for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of a child provided that there is a lawful basis to process any personal information required. The legal bases that may be appropriate for sharing data in these circumstances could be 'legal obligation', or 'public task' which includes the performance of a task in the public interest or the exercise of official authority. Each of the lawful bases under UK GDPR has different requirements. It is good practice to be transparent and inform parents/carers that you are sharing information for these purposes and seek to work cooperatively with them, where it is safe to do so.

Personal information collected by one organisation/agency cannot be disclosed to another

No, this is not the case unless the information is to be used for a purpose incompatible with the purpose for which it was originally collected. In the case of children in need, or children at risk of significant harm, it is difficult to foresee circumstances where information law would be a barrier to sharing personal information with other practitioners¹⁵.

¹⁵ Practitioners looking to share information should consider which processing condition in the Data Protection Act 2018 is most appropriate for use in the particular circumstances of the case. This may be the safeguarding processing condition or another relevant provision.

The common law duty of confidence and the Human Rights Act 1998 prevent the sharing of personal information

No, this is not the case. In addition to the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR, practitioners need to balance the common law duty of confidence and the Human Rights Act 1998 against the effect on individuals or others of not sharing the information

IT systems are often a barrier to effective information sharing

There are many IT systems that support the sharing of information, such as the Child Protection Information Sharing project (CP-IS). It is important that the sector continues to work with IT suppliers to ensure that their user needs around information sharing are factored into priorities for system enhancement.

Chapter 2: Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

34. Protecting children from abuse, neglect and exploitation requires multi-agency join up and cooperation at all levels. Local organisations and agencies that work with children and families play a significant and often statutory role when it comes to safeguarding children.
35. Many of these organisations and agencies have a duty¹⁶ to ensure their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
36. The way in which these organisations and agencies work together is known as multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASAs). Robust arrangements help to ensure that information about a child and their family is shared effectively, risk of harm is correctly identified and understood, and that children and families receive targeted services that meet their needs in a co-ordinated way.
37. Strong, collaborative leadership and timely decision-making are crucial to the effectiveness of multi-agency working and to identify and address system issues. The three safeguarding partners are responsible and accountable for this in their local areas.

Safeguarding partners are defined in legislation as follows:

Safeguarding partners

A statutory safeguarding partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act, 2017) as:

- (a) the local authority
- (b) an integrated care board for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area
- (c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area

38. These three partners have a joint and equal duty¹⁷ to make arrangements to:

¹⁶ [Children Act 2004 Section 11](#)

¹⁷ [Children Act 2004 Section 16E](#)

- work together as a team to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area
- include and develop the role of wider local organisations and agencies (see chapter 2, paragraphs 65-75 on Relevant agencies) in the process.

39. Every local authority, ICB and constabulary in England must be covered by a multi-agency safeguarding arrangement¹⁸.

40. The purpose of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is to ensure that, at a local level, organisations and agencies are clear about how they will work together to safeguard children and promote their welfare. This means:

- there is a clear, shared vision for how to improve outcomes for children locally across all levels of need and all types of harm
- when a child is identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm there is a prompt, appropriate and effective response to ensure the protection and support of the child
- organisations and agencies are challenged appropriately, effectively holding one another to account
- the voice of children and families combined with the knowledge of experienced practitioners and insights from data, provides a greater understanding of the areas of strength and/or improvement within arrangements and practice
- information is sought, analysed, shared, and broken down by protected characteristics to facilitate more accurate and timely decision-making for children and families, and to understand outcomes for different communities of children
- effective collection, sharing and analysis of data, enables early identification of new safeguarding risks, issues, emerging threats, and joined-up responses across relevant agencies
- senior leaders promote and embed a learning culture which supports local services to become more reflective and implement changes to practice
- senior leaders have a good knowledge and understanding about the quality of local practice and its impact on children and families

¹⁸ [Children Act 2004 Section 16E](#)

Geography

41. Although the geographical boundaries for the three safeguarding partners may differ in size, multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should be based on local authority areas. Arrangements can cover two or more local authority boundaries by agreement and where this is in place local authorities can agree to delegate their safeguarding duties to a single authority¹⁹.

42. The geographical area of a local multi-agency safeguarding arrangement can be changed over time. Where changes are proposed, these should be agreed by all safeguarding partners, communicated clearly to relevant agencies and staff, and reflected in published arrangements (chapter 2, paragraphs 103-105 on Publication of arrangements).

43. As police and health boundaries often cover multiple local authorities, they are usually part of more than one multi-agency safeguarding arrangement. Reflecting this, engagement and collaboration through multi-agency safeguarding arrangements can extend beyond the geographical borders of their local area (for example, regionally or across different strategic arrangements and boards). There is an expectation that lead safeguarding partners should decide how best to contribute to the local arrangements they are responsible for.

44. There are interdependencies between local arrangements and other strategic partnership work happening locally to support children and families. This will include but not be limited to other public boards, including Health and Wellbeing Boards, Adult Safeguarding Boards, Channel Panels, Improvement Boards, Community Safety Partnerships, the Local Family Justice Board, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Strategic Management Boards, local drug partnerships, domestic abuse partnership boards, Corporate Parenting Board, Youth Offending Management Board and, where relevant, Violence Reduction Units. It is for local areas to decide how best to coordinate these boards and partnerships to reflect local need.

45. Local safeguarding arrangements will need to reflect health and care infrastructure such as ICBs, Integrated Care Systems, local maternity and neonatal systems, provider collaboratives, primary care networks and NHS specialised commissioning arrangements.

46. It is particularly important that all partners collaborate to ensure that children are placed as close to home as possible and are able to continue to access services in their local area which support their safety and wellbeing.

¹⁹ [Children Act 2004 Section 16J](#)

Strategic leadership and accountability

47. Strong, joined-up leadership and clear accountability is critical to effective multi-agency safeguarding, bringing together the various organisations and agencies. It is therefore important that the head of each statutory safeguarding partner agency plays an active role in these arrangements. They (hereafter 'lead safeguarding partner' or 'LSP') have been named because they are able to:

- speak with authority for the safeguarding partner they represent
- take decisions on behalf of their organisation or agency and commit them on policy, resourcing, and practice matters
- hold their own organisation or agency to account on how effectively they participate and implement the local arrangements

48. In relation to the police, the LSP is already defined as the Chief Officer of Police²⁰. For local authorities, the LSP should be the Head of Paid Service, also known as the Chief Executive²¹, and for ICBs the LSP should be the Chief Executive.

49. Each LSP is responsible for discharging their own statutory and legislative duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. As leaders of their organisations and the statutory safeguarding partners, it is for LSPs to assure themselves that their local arrangements are effective and keep children safe. This includes systems of assurance and accountability within each of their organisations, including inspection findings.

50. LSPs are jointly responsible for ensuring the proper involvement of and oversight of all relevant agencies, and should act as a team, as opposed to a voice for their agency alone. They should meet sufficiently regularly to undertake the following core functions: Through what mechanism and how often is for local decision.

²⁰ A chief police officer is the most senior police officer in a police force as defined in the [Police Act 1996 Section 101](#)

²¹ [Head of paid service: Local Government and Housing Act 1989 Section 4](#)

Joint functions of lead safeguarding partners

1. Set the strategic direction, vision, and culture of the local safeguarding arrangements, including agreeing and reviewing shared priorities and the resource required to deliver services effectively.
2. Lead their organisation's individual contribution to the shared priorities, ensuring strong governance, accountability, and reporting mechanisms to hold their delegates to account for the delivery of agency commitments.
3. Review and sign off key partnership documents: published multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including plans for independent scrutiny, shared annual budget, yearly report, and local threshold document.
4. Provide shared oversight of learning from independent scrutiny, serious incidents, local child safeguarding practice reviews, and national reviews, ensuring recommendations are implemented and have a demonstrable impact on practice (as set out in the yearly report).
5. Ensure multi-agency arrangements have the necessary level of business support, including intelligence and analytical functions, such as an agreed data set providing oversight and a robust understanding of practice.
6. Ensure all relevant agencies, including education settings, are clear on their role and contribution to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

51. LSPs should be clearly named in published arrangements (see chapter 2, paragraphs 103-105 on Publication of arrangements) and are accountable for the effectiveness and outcomes of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in their area.

52. In cases where the boundaries of the police and ICB extend over multiple local authority areas, LSPs may decide to meet at a more regional level so they can discuss all arrangements within their remit and ensure consistency of funding and resources.

53. LSPs should demonstrate how the experiences of children and families shape the delivery of local arrangements. They should consider in particular how those with protected characteristics²² engage in service design.

54. The LSP holds responsibility for the implementation of recommendations and learning from serious incidents, local child safeguarding practice reviews and national reviews whether or not they originate within their local area, although elements of monitoring these can be delegated.

²² [Equality Act 2010](#)

55. Delivery of multi-agency safeguarding functions and processes should be delegated to enable the LSPs to focus on their joint functions and maintain strategic oversight.

Delivering multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

56. Each LSP should appoint a delegated safeguarding partner (DSP) for its agency who should be named in arrangements.

57. DSPs²³ should be sufficiently senior to be able to speak with authority, take decisions on behalf of the LSP and hold their sectors to account. The DSPs should have the authority to carry out these functions, while ultimate accountability remains with the LSP as the individual responsible for the delivery of the statutory duties of the safeguarding partners.

58. The DSP should have oversight of the quality and compliance of the delivery of agreed shared priorities. They should have processes in place to provide assurance that multi-agency practice is reviewed and operating well. Where this is not evident, they should have the capacity and resource from their own agencies to engage, respond and improve operational systems and practice.

59. DSPs and LSPs should have regular interaction and communication to ensure that the LSP has sufficient oversight and detail on key topics and issues to maintain their statutory responsibilities. Where a key decision needs to be made that will impact arrangements and/or services, this should involve the LSP. DSPs should escalate risks and issues they cannot resolve between them to the LSPs for resolution. This will ensure that accountability is clear, that strategic decisions are achievable and deliverable, and that progress is driven at all levels.

60. DSPs should meet sufficiently frequently to undertake the following joint functions:

²³ For the DSP role, we expect that, for the police, there might need to be delegation based on local context. The responsibilities of the delegate should be no lower than that of Area Commander, Head of Public Protection or equivalent.

Joint functions of delegated safeguarding partners

1. Delivery and monitoring of multi-agency priorities and procedures to protect and safeguard children in the local area, in compliance with published arrangements and thresholds.
2. Close partnership working and engagement with education (at strategic and operational level) and other relevant agencies, allowing better identification of and response to harm.
3. The implementation of effective information sharing arrangements between agencies, including data sharing that facilitates joint analysis between partner agencies.
4. Delivery of high-quality and timely rapid reviews and local child safeguarding practice reviews, with the impact of learning from local and national reviews and independent scrutiny clearly evidenced in yearly reports.
5. The provision of appropriate multi-agency safeguarding professional development and training.
6. Seeking of, and responding to, feedback from children and families about their experiences of services and co-designing services to ensure children from different communities and groups can access the help and protection they need.

61. To support delivery of these functions, LSPs should appoint one of the DSPs as the partnership chair for the multi-agency arrangements. This role needs to be jointly agreed by the LSPs and in doing so given the full backing of all three partners. The role should be regularly reviewed, and any changes updated in published arrangements. The role can be rotated between the DSPs if deemed appropriate by LSPs. This is intended to mirror the joint and equal responsibility for the arrangements and increase shared understanding of the system. The function should facilitate partner discussions, working in conjunction with independent scrutiny which provides rigour and challenge.

62. The purpose of the partnership chair will be to provide greater continuity across local areas and act as the conduit between the DSPs and LSPs, providing feedback and escalating collective risk and issues to LSPs as necessary. It will allow for a single point of contact for the partnership but should not cut across existing formal complaints procedures. The functions of the partnership chair are separate and distinct from the functions of independent scrutiny. This arrangement removes any need for a local area to maintain another chair or independent chair.

Functions of Partnership Chair role

- To develop strategic links, support and hold to account all LSPs in fulfilling their safeguarding duties for children.
- Ensure that local arrangements are designed to work collaboratively and effectively by encouraging and supporting the development of partnership working between the LSPs, DSPs, independent scrutiny role and MASA sub-groups.
- Chair the meetings of the DSPs, including any additional meetings convened as a response to specific and exceptional circumstances, with the help of the business manager and independent scrutiny role.
- Offer appropriate challenge to ensure that the partners are accountable, and that the local arrangements operate effectively.

63. Strong leadership and clear accountability are crucial for effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. To strengthen accountability, local safeguarding arrangements should separate the roles of partnership chair and independent scrutiny and be clear about the three distinct functions within effective local safeguarding arrangements:

- the partnership chair has authority, is decisive and enables resource allocation, with risk escalation to lead safeguarding partners at the executive
- a business management function with adequate resources and capacity to support the partnership chair
- a rigorous and effective independent scrutiny function providing challenge to the safeguarding partners (see chapter 2, paragraphs 89-97 on Independent scrutiny)

64. The DSPs should ensure that, with the support of, the business management and independent scrutiny function (see chapter 2, paragraphs 89-97 on Independent scrutiny) the following activities and assurance will be delivered:

- oversee and be responsible for the analysis, intelligence, and timely collection of data to support functions, such as:
 - getting an accurate local picture of how effectively services are being delivered through regular communication across relevant agencies
 - advising the statutory safeguarding partners of the key challenges and emerging priorities

- coordinating the joint multi-agency strategic plan, ensuring that statutory safeguarding partners and their delegates feed into and own the plan in the local area
- overseeing the quality of practice and local outcomes for children and families
- review and promote consistent understanding and application of referral and intervention thresholds across agencies so that the right children receive the right support at the right time
- coordinate the views of children, and families about the services they receive and feed key learning, issues, and good practice to the LSPs
- support effective engagement with relevant agencies in their local area so that they understand their roles and responsibilities, which includes strengthening the input from education providers at operational and strategic level decision-making
- use learning from local practice and serious incident notifications to prompt reflection and analysis of where improvements need to be secured and action taken
- strengthen system conditions for effective multi-agency child protection work
- chair, attend or be reported to on regular multi-agency operational meetings and subgroups, to ensure common threads across the arrangements. Partnerships should decide the regularity of meetings at both a LSP and DSP level

Relevant agencies

65. Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider are required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. A list of organisations that meet the criteria to be included as a relevant agency is set out in regulations²⁴.

66. Strong, effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should be responsive to local circumstances and engage the right people in a collaborative way. This approach requires flexibility from all relevant agencies, to enable joint identification and response to existing and emerging needs, and to agree priorities to improve outcomes for children.

67. The LSPs should set out in their published arrangements which organisations and agencies they require to work with them as relevant agencies. It is expected all local education and childcare providers working with children up to the age of 18, including

²⁴ [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency \(England\) Regulations 2018](#)

alternative provision, pupil referral units and further education will be included because of the pivotal role they play in children's daily lives and amount of time they spend with them.

68. Early years provision within schools and maintained nurseries are relevant agencies and help to safeguard some of the most vulnerable children. There are also other providers such as nurseries and childminders whose role within local arrangements should be considered. All early years providers should have regard to this guidance and the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework²⁵. School-aged children may also attend a childcare setting or an out-of-school activity, and where children are home educated these settings are particularly significant. Therefore, LSPs should also consider including voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) organisations, childcare settings, and sports clubs in their published arrangements.

69. Local arrangements are expected to change over time to ensure they continue to work effectively for children and families, to keep pace with changing demographics and evolving social and economic challenges. Any changes should be reflected in updated published arrangements.

70. When identified by the LSPs as a relevant agency, an organisation must act in accordance with local safeguarding arrangements²⁶. As part of this, the organisation should:

- have a clear understanding of its responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children locally, and how it will discharge them
- co-operate with safeguarding partners to improve, implement, and monitor effectiveness of the local safeguarding arrangements
- share information and data about safeguarding issues and concerns affecting the children involved in their organisation to contribute to local priorities
- ensure local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are fully understood, and rigorously applied within their organisation

71. LSPs should consult with relevant agencies when developing safeguarding arrangements. This will ensure relevant agencies are aware of the expectations placed on them. Relevant agencies should actively promote and enforce the arrangements they have contributed to shaping.

72. Where a relevant agency has a national remit, such as the British Transport Police and Cafcass, LSPs should be clear on how these agencies should collaborate, what any

²⁵ [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage](#)

²⁶ [Children's Act 2004 Section16G \(4\)](#)

agency's individual responsibilities are, and how they might contribute towards local safeguarding arrangements. Where a body or organisation is not named in Relevant Agency regulations, such as a territorial or special police force, LSPs may still wish to consider inviting them to contribute to local safeguarding arrangements by agreement.

73. The published arrangements should set out clearly any contributions agreed with relevant agencies, including funding and budget contributions, accommodation, services, and any resources connected with the arrangements.

74. In setting out how they will work with relevant agencies, the LSPs should be clear how they will assure themselves that relevant agencies have appropriate, robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place and how information will be shared amongst all relevant agencies and the safeguarding partners.

75. DSPs and relevant agencies should be in regular communication about local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and their effectiveness. It is for the LSPs to determine when their list of relevant agencies should be reviewed. Local safeguarding arrangements should be shared with and be easily accessible to all partners and relevant agencies. Relevant agencies should be provided with information about how to escalate concerns and how any disputes will be resolved. This should include details of the independent scrutiny and whistleblowing procedures.

Working with schools, colleges, early years, and other education providers

76. Schools, colleges, early years and childcare settings, and other educational providers (including alternative provision) all have a pivotal role to play in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. Their insight and co-operation are vital to the successful delivery of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. People working in education settings play an important role in building relationships, identifying concerns and providing direct support to children. They may be the first trusted adult to whom children report safeguarding concerns. LSPs should give careful consideration to naming all local schools, colleges and education providers set out in the 2018 Regulations²⁷ as relevant agencies. The statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in education' and 'Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework' set out the safeguarding duties and expectations on schools, colleges and other education providers and should be read alongside this guidance.

²⁷ [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency \(England\) Regulations 2018](#)

77. LSPs should create an environment which enables all schools²⁸ (including independent schools and academy trusts), colleges, early years, and other education and childcare providers in the local area to be fully engaged, involved and included in local safeguarding arrangements. This means making sure that the views and contributions of education and childcare providers are articulated at the highest level of decision-making. Although it may be challenging for a single education or childcare leader to speak on behalf of all local providers, LSPs should have an education representative at strategic discussions representing the education sector. These local leaders will bring insights on the experiences of children locally, and on how arrangements impact on the education and childcare system.

78. Most local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements include systems to ensure engagement and collaboration at the operational level, such as through education sub-groups and networks, practitioner forums involving designated safeguarding leads²⁹, and nominated education representatives. Some safeguarding partners already recognise the need to ensure education providers have a voice at the strategic decision-making level and reflect this in their structures. Published arrangements and yearly reports should outline how education providers are engaged and consulted with at both the operational and strategic levels, how this then impacts on decision-making, what it means to be a relevant agency in their local area, and how they can escalate an issue.

79. Education providers, including multi-academy trusts, have a responsibility to play their full part in local safeguarding arrangements, including where their footprint extends across several local authority areas. This includes, but should not be limited to, responding to safeguarding audits of quality and compliance³⁰, as requested by the local authority and/or local safeguarding partners. This is to ensure that policies are consistent with the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and relevant legislation and/or regulations. They should also provide staff and governor training that meets local and national safeguarding requirements³¹. Education providers where required should report their audits to their governing bodies and proprietors to be shared as requested by the LSPs. Training for designated safeguarding leads and designated teachers should include shared understanding about different levels of need and how these need to be responded to. Education providers also play a vital role in sharing and contributing to key information about children, including attendance data, exclusions, concerns about abuse, neglect, exploitation, and wider social and environmental factors including extra-familial contexts, which are a key aspect of keeping children safe.

²⁸ [Statutory guidance Keeping children safe in education defines “all schools” as “maintained, non-maintained or independent schools \(including academies, free schools, and alternative provision academies\), maintained nursery schools and pupil referral units”](#)

²⁹ [Named child protection or safeguarding lead: NSPCC Learning](#)

³⁰ [Children Act 2004 Section 11, Education Act 2002 Section 157, Education Act 2002 Section 175, Children and Social Work Act 2017 Section 16H](#)

³¹ [Keeping children safe in education](#)

80. Where the LSPs have concerns about the safeguarding arrangements in a school, independent school or an academy, 'Schools causing concern' guidance³² should be followed.

81. Ofsted registered education and childcare providers' culture and their approach to safeguarding will be considered as part of all Ofsted inspections. While safeguarding is not graded separately, Ofsted will always make a written judgement in reports about whether the arrangements for safeguarding children are effective.

Working with voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) organisations and sports clubs

82. Many voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) organisations and sports clubs (see chapter 4 paragraphs 310-315) provide education and activities for children as part of their work. Similar to staff in schools and colleges, the staff and volunteers working with children in these settings will often play an important role in building relationships, identifying concerns, and providing direct support to children; they can often be the first trusted adult to whom a child reports abuse. Therefore, many of these organisations will have a crucial role to play in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

83. LSPs should consider the value of including VCSEs in their local arrangements, regardless of whether they are named in the 2018 Regulations. Where LSPs choose to name these organisations as a relevant agency in published local arrangements, it is important that they are engaged in developing these safeguarding arrangements and, where applicable, made aware of their statutory duty to co-operate with them. Beyond these local arrangements, non-statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in out-of-school settings'³³ sets out the safeguarding arrangements that these providers should have in place, including expectations on how to manage safeguarding concerns, and the importance of familiarising themselves with local arrangements and referral routes.

Information requests

84. Sharing of information between organisations and agencies within a multi-agency system is essential to improve outcomes for children and their families.

85. Safeguarding partners may require any person, organisation, or agency to provide them, any relevant agency for the area, a reviewer or another person, organisation or agency, with specified information³⁴. This should be information which enables and

³² [Schools causing concern.](#)

³³ [Keeping children safe in out-of-school settings \(Using after-school clubs, community activities and tuition: guidance for providers\)](#)

³⁴ [Children Act 2004 Section 16H](#)

assists the LSPs to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area, including local and national child safeguarding practice reviews.

86. The person or organisation to whom a request is made must comply with such a request³⁵. If they do not, safeguarding partners may take legal action against them.

87. As public authorities, safeguarding partners should be aware of their own responsibilities under the relevant information law and have regard to guidance provided by the Information Commissioner's Office³⁶ when issuing and responding to requests for information.

88. Safeguarding partners should have an agreement in place which outlines how information is shared safely and effectively between themselves and other relevant agencies.

Independent scrutiny

89. Safeguarding partners must ensure that there are arrangements for effective independent scrutiny in place for their local area.

³⁵ [Children Act 2004 Section 16H \(2\)](#)

³⁶ [For organisations: Information Commissioner's Office](#)

Functions of independent scrutiny role

- Provide safeguarding partners and relevant agencies with independent, rigorous, and effective support and challenge at both a strategic and operational level.
- Provide assurance to the whole system in judging the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements through a range of scrutiny methods.
- Ensure that statutory duties are being fulfilled, quality assurance mechanisms are in place, and that local child safeguarding practice reviews and national reviews are analysed, with key learning areas identified and effectively implemented across the safeguarding system.
- Ensure that the voice of children and families is considered as part of scrutiny and that this is at the heart of arrangements through direct feedback, informing policy and practice.
- Be regarded as a 'critical friend' and provide opportunities for two-way discussion and reflection between frontline practitioners and leaders. This will encourage and enable strong, clear, strategic leadership.
- Provide independent advice when there are disagreements between agencies and safeguarding partners and facilitate escalation procedures.
- Evaluate and contribute to multi-agency safeguarding published arrangements and the annual report, alongside feeding into the wider accountability systems such as inspections.

90. Independent scrutiny should drive continuous improvement and provide assurance that arrangements are working effectively for children, families, and practitioners. It should also consider learning from local child safeguarding practice reviews, national reviews and thematic reports. The independent scrutineer or scrutiny group should be able to demonstrate knowledge, skills and expertise in the area being scrutinised and consequently add value to the work of local agencies.

91. Scrutiny should be evidence-based, and feedback should be considered and acted upon by safeguarding partners. Scrutineers should consider the impact that the LSP and DSP make through their strategic oversight, if they are providing strong leadership, and the functioning of local arrangements.

92. Independent scrutiny contributes to the wider system of accountability which includes the independent inspectorates' single agency inspections, including Inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS), and Police Forces assessment of their effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy (PEEL), as well as Joint Targeted Area

Inspections, National Child Protection Inspections and annual reporting arrangements (see chapter 2, paragraphs 101-102 on Reporting).

93. The decision on how best to implement a robust system of independent scrutiny is to be made locally, and LSPs should be assured that the system in place leads to objective and rigorous analysis of local arrangements.

94. Statutory partners and relevant agencies should review progress against agreed priorities and identify areas for scrutiny, with a focus on achieving outcomes for children.

95. Scrutiny should be based on sharing and analysis of local and national data, intelligence, and information. This could include the development of multi-agency dashboards, joint needs assessments, multi-agency audits, reviews, and mapping of what is already being scrutinised by the statutory safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, identifying the gaps and aligning with agreed priorities.

96. Independent scrutiny can be delivered through a range of methods and structures. Local areas may choose to have an individual or an externally commissioned group delivering their scrutiny. Furthermore, scrutiny may be embedded within the structure of the arrangement or set apart from it. Scrutiny work can be undertaken through interviews, focus groups, data analysis, observations, and peer review. Scrutiny should take account of the voice and experience of children and their families.

97. The approach to independent scrutiny should be clearly set out and accessible. The published arrangements should state how independent scrutiny is delivered locally and by whom, how the arrangements are reviewed and how regularly, which areas will be scrutinised, and how any recommendations will be taken forward. This might include the process and timescales for ongoing review of the arrangements, and the effectiveness of learning following serious incidents. In the yearly report, the LSPs should review the impact and learning from scrutiny and how they are responding to the findings to improve the effectiveness of arrangements (see chapter 2, paragraphs 101-102 on Reporting).

Funding

98. The LSP should agree on the level of funding needed to deliver the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. This includes consideration of business and analytical support, independent scrutiny, infrastructure, and core functions including local children safeguarding practice reviews, multi-agency training and learning events. It is the responsibility of the LSP to ensure that adequate funding is allocated and spent in line with agreed priorities.

99. Funding contributions from the statutory safeguarding partners should be equitable and agreed by the LSP. Funding for the arrangements should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they can meet the financial needs of the arrangements.

100. The funding should be transparent to children and families in the area, and the individual contributions of safeguarding partners and relevant agencies should be clearly set out in reporting (see chapter 2, paragraphs 101-102 on Reporting).

Reporting

101. Safeguarding partners should be transparent in how they co-ordinate, deliver and fund services for children and families locally. In order that others can hold the safeguarding partners to account there are two mechanisms for reporting on service delivery and leadership:

- publication of arrangements
- a yearly report

102. Both documents should:

- be contributed to and signed off by all LSPs
- clearly demonstrate the links between them
- be easily accessible

Publication of arrangements

103. Once agreed, local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements must³⁷ be published and must include:

- arrangements for the safeguarding partners to work together to identify and respond to the needs of children in the area
- arrangements for commissioning and publishing local child safeguarding practice reviews (see chapter 5, paragraphs 356-359)
- arrangements for independent scrutiny of the effectiveness of the arrangements

104. They should also include:

- who the three safeguarding partners, their delegates and partnership chair are
- geographical boundaries, including if the arrangements operate across more than one local authority area
- the relevant agencies the safeguarding partners will work with, why these organisations and agencies have been chosen, and how they will collaborate and work together to improve outcomes for children and families

³⁷ [Children Act 2004 Section 16G](#)

- how all, schools (including independent schools, academies, and free schools), colleges, early years and childcare settings, and other educational providers (including alternative provision) will be included in the safeguarding arrangements
- how any youth custody and residential homes for children will be included in the safeguarding arrangements
- how the safeguarding partners will share information and data safely and effectively, using arrangements that clearly set out the processes and the principles for sharing
- how the safeguarding partners will use data and intelligence to assess the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families, including early help
- how multi-agency training will be commissioned, delivered, and monitored for impact, and how they will undertake any multi-agency and inter-agency audits
- how the arrangements will be funded
- the process for undertaking local child safeguarding practice reviews, setting out the arrangements for embedding learning across organisations and agencies
- how the arrangements will include the voice of children and families, including how to escalate concerns and how any disputes will be resolved, including whistleblowing procedures
- how the local threshold document in place aligns with the arrangements

105. The published arrangements should be easily available and updated when there are key changes, such as changes to the LSPs, to the yearly priorities or the list of relevant agencies. Any updates to the published arrangements should be sent to the Department for Education (safeguarding.reform@education.gov.uk).

Yearly report

106. Safeguarding partners must jointly report on the activity they have undertaken in a 12-month period³⁸. That reporting should be transparent and easily accessible to families and professionals. The focus of these reports should be on multi-agency priorities, learning, impact, evidence, and improvement. Reports must include:

- what partnerships have done as a result of the arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews

³⁸ [Children Act 2004 Section 16G](#)

- how effective these arrangements have been in practice

107. In addition, the report should also include:

- the contribution of each safeguarding partner to the functioning and structure of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
- any themes emanating from aggregated methods of scrutiny, for example, reviews and scrutineer activity and multi-agency audits
- evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families
- an analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities
- an analysis of learning from serious incidents
- a record of key decisions and actions taken by the safeguarding partners in the yearly cycle, including in relation to implementing the recommendations from any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews and the impact this has had
- ways in which the safeguarding partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision
- the breakdown of costs in delivering the arrangements for that period, including the financial contributions of individual partners, any changes to funding and an assessment of the impact and value for money of this funding
- evidence of how safeguarding partners are ensuring the adequate representation and input of education at both the operational and strategic levels of the arrangements
- an overview of how data is being used to encourage learning within the arrangements and evidence of how information sharing has improved practice and outcomes
- a review of the impact and learning from independent scrutiny arrangements to ensure the leadership is strong and the arrangements are leading to the desired and necessary impact
- any updates to the published arrangement with the proposed timescale for implementation
- evidence that national reforms have been implemented, taking into account key decisions and actions taken by safeguarding partners in response to reforms, and any issues or concerns encountered within the yearly cycle

108. Where there is a secure establishment in a local area, safeguarding partners should include a review of the use of restraint within that establishment in their report, and

the findings of the review should be reported to the Youth Justice Board, the Youth Custody Service, and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

109. Safeguarding partners should make sure the report is widely available. A copy should be sent to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (nationalreviewpanel@education.gov.uk) who will review it to identify any issues that may need escalation to a national level and Foundations (What Works Centre for Children and Families) (policy@foundations.org.uk), given its focus on learning within 7 days of publication. To allow for consistency across local areas, these should be submitted and published by the end of September every year, starting from 2024, and should be reflective of work undertaken the previous financial year (April to March). If partners fail to submit the yearly report this may be escalated to the Secretary of State.

Dispute resolution process

110. Safeguarding partners and relevant agencies must act in accordance with the arrangements for their area and will be expected to understand each other's differences of views and resolve such differences locally³⁹. LSPs should therefore agree a system to resolve disputes and issues between partners within multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

111. This may be applied to isolated issues or incidents as well as any intractable recurring ones.

112. At all stages LSPs and their delegates should make use of key stakeholders in their local systems, that might include Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), Mayors, lead members, and/or independent persons, who can be brought to the table to assist them to settle on a solution.

113. If the issue remains unresolved between the three safeguarding partners and their local networks the next stage of escalation is to the Secretary of State.

³⁹ [Children and Social Work Act 2017 Section 16G \(4\)](#)

Chapter 3: Providing help, support and protection

114. All families can face challenges that make parenting difficult. Often families are able to overcome challenges themselves or with the help of relatives, friends and services, such as schools, youth services, health visiting and mental health services. However, sometimes families will have more significant needs that require more intensive help and support.

115. This chapter outlines how agencies, organisations and individuals work together to provide help, support, and protection in early help⁴⁰, through statutory services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989⁴¹ and through section 47 of the Children Act 1989⁴² (child protection enquires and processes).

Local criteria for providing help, support, and protection

116. Safeguarding partners should agree with their relevant agencies the criteria for different levels of assessment to inform which services are commissioned and delivered in their local area and ensure that the right help is given to children at the right time. This should include services for children who have suffered or are likely to suffer abuse, neglect, and exploitation whether from within or outside the home. This should also include a range of appropriate services for disabled children and be aligned with the short breaks services statement⁴³.

117. The safeguarding partners should publish a threshold document, which sets out the local criteria for action in a way that is transparent, evidence-based, accessible, and easily understood. This should include:

- the process for early help assessments, and the type and level of early help and targeted early help services to be provided under sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Early help is a system of support which aims to support children and families as soon as problems emerge. Some early help support is described as 'targeted early help' and is provided to children and families who are identified by practitioners to have multiple or complex needs requiring a specialist and/or multi-agency response but where statutory intervention is not needed.

⁴¹ Child in need refers to the statutory support provided under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 for a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of children's social care services, or the child is disabled. The duty to provide support is on the local authority.

⁴² Under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, where a child is the subject of an emergency protection order or is in police protection or there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering or is likely to suffer, significant harm, the local authority must make or cause to be made enquiries to decide if any action must be taken to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.

⁴³ Required under the [Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011](#)

⁴⁴ [The Children Act 2004 Section 10](#) requires each local authority to make arrangements to promote co-operation between the authority, each of the authority's relevant partners and such other persons or bodies working with children in the local authority's area as the authority considers appropriate. [Section 11](#) places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to give regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

- the criteria, including the level of need, for when a case should be referred to local authority children's social care for assessment and for statutory services under:
 - section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (children in need, including how this applies for disabled children)
 - section 47 of the Children Act 1989 (reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm)
 - section 31 of the Children Act 1989 (care and supervision orders)
 - section 20 of the Children Act 1989 (duty to accommodate a child)
- clear procedures and processes for cases relating to:
 - the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children
 - children managed within the youth secure estate
 - disabled children

Section 1: Early help

118. Early help is support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. It is not an individual service, but a system of support delivered by local authorities and their partners working together and taking collective responsibility to provide the right provision in their area. Some early help is provided through "universal services"⁴⁵, such as education and health services. They are universal services because they are available to all families, regardless of their needs. Other early help services are coordinated by a local authority and/or their partners to address specific concerns within a family and can be described as targeted early help. Examples of these include parenting support, mental health support, youth services, youth offending teams and housing and employment services. Early help may be appropriate for children and families who have several needs, or whose circumstances might make them more vulnerable. It is a voluntary approach, requiring the family's consent to receive support and services offered. These may be provided before and/or after statutory intervention.

119. The Early Help System Guide⁴⁶ provides a toolkit to assist local strategic partnerships responsible for their early help system in their area. Effective provision relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:

- identify children and families who would benefit from early help

⁴⁵ Universal services are available to all children and families. They are provided by a range of agencies such as health and education. GPs, health visitors and school nurses are some examples of this type of service provision.

⁴⁶ [Early Help System Guide](#)

- undertake an assessment of the need for early help which considers the needs of all members of the family
- ensure good ongoing communication, for example, through regular meetings between practitioners who are working with the family
- co-ordinate and/or provide support as part of a plan to improve outcomes. This plan will be designed together with the child and family, and updated as and when the child and family needs change
- engage effectively with families and their family network, making use of family group decision-making, such as family group conferences,⁴⁷ to help meet the needs of the child⁴⁸

120. A lead practitioner should co-ordinate the activity around the family, ensure the assessment and the family plan responds to all needs identified, and lead on ensuring the family co-produce the plan. The plan might include the family network. The time commitment to deliver this role will vary family by family depending on the complexity of their needs. Where appropriate, local authorities should engage families, including children, to have a say in who their lead practitioner is, and have a process in place to collate feedback on their relationship with them.

121. The lead practitioner role could be held by a range of people. More details about which practitioners may act as a lead practitioner, their roles and responsibilities along with additional guidance, are provided in the Early Help System Guide⁴⁹.

Identifying children and families who would benefit from help

122. Local organisations and agencies should have in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs of individual children and families. Local authorities should work with organisations and agencies to develop joined-up early help services, which can be delivered through a Family Hub model where they exist, based on a clear understanding of local needs. Local authorities should use the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)⁵⁰ to inform their early help offer.

123. Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary training will be important in supporting this collective understanding of the demographics and needs of the local community, the local practice framework, and the services available to support children. All practitioners

⁴⁷ Family group decision-making is the umbrella term for a family-led forum where a family network makes a plan in response to concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing. These can take different forms; family group conferences are one model of family group decision-making. The Department for Education does not prescribe a specific model. There is further information in the glossary.

⁴⁸ The [statutory guidance on court orders and pre-proceedings for local authorities \(2014\)](#) highlights that family group conferences are an important means of involving the family early to avoid the creation of barriers between the local authority and the family.

⁴⁹ [Early Help System Guide](#)

⁵⁰ [Joint strategic needs assessment and joint health and wellbeing strategies explained](#)

working with children and families, including those in universal services and those providing services to adults with children, need to understand their role in identifying emerging problems. They need appropriate training so that they:

- know when to share information with other practitioners and what action to take to support early identification and assessment
- are able to identify and recognise all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation
- have an understanding of domestic and sexual abuse⁵¹, including controlling and coercive behaviour as well as parental conflict that is frequent, intense, and unresolved
- are aware of new and emerging threats, including online harm, grooming, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, radicalisation, and the role of technology and social media in presenting harm
- are aware that a child and their family may be experiencing multiple needs at the same time

124. Practitioners should be alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory education, health and care (EHC) plan)
- is a young carer
- is bereaved
- is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including being affected by gangs and county lines and organised crime groups and/or serious violence, including knife crime
- is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home⁵²
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual and/or criminal exploitation
- is at risk of being radicalised⁵³
- is viewing problematic and/or inappropriate online content (for example, linked to violence), or developing inappropriate relationships online

⁵¹ See Appendix A: Glossary for the statutory definition of domestic abuse set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

⁵² [Children who run away or go missing from home or care \(2014\)](#)

⁵³ [Managing risk of radicalisation in your education setting](#)

- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse⁵⁴
- is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- is suffering from mental ill health
- has returned home to their family from care
- is a privately fostered child⁵⁵
- has a parent or carer in custody⁵⁶
- is missing education⁵⁷, or persistently absent from school, or not in receipt of full-time education
- has experienced multiple suspensions and is at risk of, or has been permanently excluded

The role of education and childcare settings

125. All children aged 5 to 16 are legally entitled to a full-time education, suitable to any special educational need. Education is essential for children's progress, wellbeing and wider development and being in school is a protective factor against wider harms, including exploitation. Where children are not receiving education, either because they persistently missing school, or are not registered at a school and not receiving a suitable education otherwise, this could be a possible indicator of neglect, abuse or exploitation or could in itself constitute neglect in severe and sustained cases.

126. Young people aged 16 and 17, including those with special and educational needs and disabilities, are required to participate in education or training until they reach their 18th birthday. They are entitled to an offer of a suitable place in education or training under the September guarantee⁵⁸. Local authorities are therefore expected to identify and pay particular attention to young people who are not in education, employment or training or whose current activity is not known.

⁵⁴ [The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Section 3](#) recognises children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right when they see, hear or experience domestic abuse perpetrated by a parent, those with parental responsibility, or a relative.

⁵⁵ Private fostering occurs when a child under the age of 16 (or under 18, if disabled) is provided with care and accommodation by a person who is not a parent, person with parental responsibility for them or a relative in their own home. A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for and accommodating them has done so for less than 28 days and does not intend to do so for longer. This term is also used in Championing Kinship Care: The National Kinship Care Strategy, capturing private fostering arrangements as a type of kinship care. It holds the same meaning, but applies only to individuals, excluding organisations or bodies.

⁵⁶ [Farmer review for women \(2019\)](#) found that children impacted by maternal imprisonment are more likely to leave their family home and be separated from their primary carer, resulting in significant disruption to their lives.

⁵⁷ [Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)

⁵⁸ [September guarantee: education and training for young people](#)

127. Local authorities also have a statutory duty to secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people aged 16 to 19 and for those up to age 25 with a learning difficulty assessment or, EHC plan, in their area⁵⁹. They should make available to young people aged 13 to 19 and to those up to the age of 25 with a learning difficulty assessment or EHC plan, support that will encourage, enable or assist them to participate in education or training⁶⁰.

128. As education and childcare settings have daily contact with most children and families, they are uniquely placed to identify concerns and, with partners as appropriate, address them early. Safeguarding professionals, including safeguarding partners and their delegates, should work closely with education and childcare settings to ensure information about children is shared effectively, risks of harm are correctly identified and understood, and children and families receive the services they need. This includes, but is not limited to, information, such as increased absence or mental health problems, which may be indicators that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering neglect, abuse, and exploitation.

129. Those working in education and childcare settings need to be aware of how children's experiences can impact on their mental health, behaviour, attendance and progress at nursery, school, or college. Where children have suffered abuse, neglect and exploitation, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood⁶¹.

130. It is important that relevant information where children are home educated is shared between local authorities, schools, colleges, and other relevant partners. Parents have a right to educate their children at home providing the education is suitable⁶². When a child of school age is not a registered pupil at a school and is not receiving suitable education at home, this could be an indicator of neglect, abuse, or exploitation. Schools must notify the local authority of a child's removal from the school roll⁶³ at a non-standard

⁵⁹ Education Act 1996 [Sections 15ZA](#) and [18A](#) as inserted by the [Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009](#), and amended by the [Children and Families Act 2014](#)

⁶⁰ [Education and Skills Act \(ESA\) 2008 Section 68](#)

⁶¹ An example of where schools and local police forces work together successfully to better support and safeguard children after experiencing domestic abuse, is through the Operation Encompass notification scheme. Operation Encompass works by directly connecting the police with schools. When officers have attended a domestic abuse incident, police share the information with a school's trained Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) before the start of the next school day, so that school staff can provide appropriate emotional and practical support at the earliest opportunity to children affected by domestic abuse

⁶² The Education Act 1996 [Section 436A \(3\)](#) defines "suitable education" as efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs

⁶³ [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#), as amended by [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)

transition point⁶⁴, and they should also share information on a child's circumstances, especially if already known to children's social care or if they have an EHC plan⁶⁵.

Effective assessment of the need for early help

131. Where a child and family would benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one organisation or agency (for example, education, health, housing) there should be a multi-agency assessment. These assessments should:

- be undertaken with the agreement of the child and their parents or carers, involving the child and family as well as all the practitioners who are working with them
- take account of the child's wishes and feelings wherever possible which could include providing advocacy support where this is needed to enable a child to share their views, for example, if the child has communication difficulties due to a disability
- take account of the child's age, family circumstances and extra-familial contexts⁶⁶ and whether these factors are contributing to or preventing good outcomes
- take account of the needs of all members of the family as individuals and consider how their needs impact on one another which includes considering needs relating to education, early years development, mental health and physical health, substance misuse, financial stability, housing, family relationships, domestic abuse and crime as described in the Supporting Families Outcomes Framework⁶⁷.
Practitioners should be aware of situations where there has been a breakdown in relationship between the child and their family and engaging the whole family may not be appropriate
- cover both presenting needs and any underlying issues with the understanding that a family's needs can change overtime, for example, when a child moves up to secondary school
- be based on facts, and explore and build on strengths
- be clear about the action to be taken and services to be provided
- identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating

⁶⁴ [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 Regulation 12](#)

⁶⁵ Education, health and care (EHC) plans identify educational, health and social needs and set out the additional support to meet those needs. Further guidance on EHC plans can be found at <https://www.GOV.UK/children-with-special-educational-needs>

⁶⁶ See Appendix A: glossary

⁶⁷ [Supporting families programme guidance, 2022 to 2025: chapter 3, Supporting families outcomes framework](#)

- provide the basis for any future assessments if they are needed, for example, under sections 17 and 47 of the Children Act 1989

132. Practitioners should have consideration for specific needs, including, but not exclusive to, family members who may have learning difficulties/disabilities or those whose first language is not English, are care experienced, young parents⁶⁸, fathers or male carers, and parents who identify as LGBT.

133. If a family does not consent to an early help assessment, practitioners should seek to understand why this is the case, so that they can provide reassurance to the family about their concerns. They should ensure the family has understood the consensual nature of support, and range of services available to meet their needs. The practitioner should consider how the needs of the child could otherwise be met, for example, through provision by universal services that the family already engages with. Practitioners should still inform individuals that their data will be recorded and shared, and the purpose of this explained to them. If a family has chosen not to engage with support in the past, this should not act as a barrier to them accessing support in the future. If at any time it is considered that the child may be a child in need, as defined in the Children Act 1989, a referral should be made to children's social care. Practitioners should ensure that the family has understood that the support and services provided under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 are consensual. If there are concerns that the child has suffered significant harm or is likely to do so, a referral should be made immediately to local authority children's social care.

Provision of effective services to help families

134. Local areas should have a comprehensive range of effective services. They should reflect any local assessment of need, including the JSNA and the latest evidence of the effectiveness of early help programmes⁶⁹. Good practice should also ensure effective join-up between specific local early help services and universal services to ensure families can seamlessly transition from universal to more specialist support should a specific need be identified. There should be an explicit link to the local area's offer of short breaks for disabled children, as well as suitably adjusted services to support parents. Evidence should be collated to show their impact, including on those with a particular protected characteristic.

135. Specific local early help services typically include family and parenting programmes, assistance with school attendance, assistance with health issues including

⁶⁸ [Our young parents project - The Lullaby Trust](#) describes a young parent as someone under the age of 25

⁶⁹ [What Works Centre for Children & Families \(Foundations\)](#). See [Home | EIF Guidebook](#) and [Interventions with established evidence of preventing, stopping or reducing the impact of child abuse and neglect and related risks](#)

mental health, enabling financial stability, supporting secure housing, responses to emerging concerns in extra-familial contexts, responding to a parent in custody, and help for emerging problems relating to domestic abuse, drug or alcohol misuse. Local approaches to delivering these services will vary but could include using a family hub model. Family hubs are a place-based way of joining-up in the planning and delivery of family support services, offering a universal access point for children and families.

136. Early help services may also focus on improving family functioning and building the family's own capability to establish positive routines and solve problems. This should be done within a structured, evidence-based practice framework, which is shared across the early help partnership and involves regular review to ensure that real progress is being made. Where family networks are supporting the child and parents, it might be appropriate to use family group decision-making to support work with the family. Some of these services may be delivered directly to parents but should always be evaluated to demonstrate the impact they are having on the outcomes for the child.

137. The Early Help System Guide provides operational guidance on the delivery of whole family working in the early help system. Local areas should have agreed a set of measures at family, cohort, demand, and population level to evidence the effectiveness of early help, looking particularly at whether whole family need has been addressed and how family voice has informed services. This enables shared responsibility for improved outcomes, recognising that no one organisation delivers a specific outcome on their own.

Section 2: Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children

138. Local authorities have statutory duties to support certain groups of children in their area. Under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, local authorities are under a general duty to provide support for children who are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of services, or the child is disabled. Where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, local authorities must make enquiries and decide if any action must be taken under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

139. Where requested to do so by local authority children's social care, health organisations, other local authorities and other parts of the local authority, such as housing, have a duty to co-operate under section 27 of the Children Act 1989⁷⁰ by assisting the local authority in carrying out its children's social care functions, provided that this is compatible with their own duties and obligations and does not interfere with the

⁷⁰ [Children Act 1989 Section 27 \(2\)](#): an authority whose help is so requested shall comply with the request if it is compatible with their own statutory or other duties and obligations and does not unduly prejudice the discharge of any of their functions.

performance of their own functions. Any cooperation from health bodies should be in line with their professional regulations and standards on competence. Local authorities can also ask other agencies to assist in the delivery of support and services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, but those agencies are under no obligation to do so.

140. Whilst the duty to deliver support and services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 is with the local authority, other safeguarding partners may play a critical role in the delivery of services for children and their families. Local safeguarding partners are responsible for setting the strategic direction, vision, and culture of the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including agreeing and reviewing shared priorities, and the resources required to deliver services effectively. More information can be found under 'Strategic leadership and accountability' and 'Delivering multi-agency safeguarding arrangements' in chapter 2.

Statutory requirements for children in need

Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are under a general duty to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. A child in need is defined under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired without the provision of services, or a child who is disabled.

To fulfil this duty, practitioners undertake assessments of the needs of individual children, giving due regard to a child's age and understanding when determining what, if any, services to provide.

Every assessment must be informed by the views of the child as well as the family, and a child's wishes and feelings must be sought regarding the provision of services to be delivered. Where possible, children should be seen alone. Where a child requests to be seen with a trusted adult, this should be supported. A child's communication needs should be taken into account. When assessing children in need and providing services, specialist assessments may be required and, where possible, should be co-ordinated so that the child and family experience a coherent process and a single plan of action.

Some children in need may require accommodation because there is no one who has parental responsibility for them, they are lost or abandoned, or the person who has been caring for them is prevented from providing them with suitable accommodation or care. Under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, the local authority has a duty to accommodate such children in need in their area.

Under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, where a local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives or is found in their area is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, it has a duty to make such enquiries as it considers necessary to decide whether to take any action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare. Such enquiries, supported by other organisations and agencies, as appropriate, should be initiated where there are concerns about all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation whether this is taking place in person or online, inside or outside of the child's home.

There may be a need for immediate protection whilst an assessment or enquiries are carried out. Further information about immediate protection can be found in this guidance on page 85.

Local protocols for assessment and support

141. Local authorities, with their safeguarding partners and any relevant agencies, should develop, agree, and publish local protocols for assessments and support. This

protocol should reflect the local practice framework for work with children and their families. The local authority is publicly accountable for this protocol and all organisations and agencies have a responsibility to understand it. A local protocol should:

- be consistent with the requirements of this statutory guidance
- set out clear arrangements for how cases will be managed once a child is referred into local authority children's social care
- set out who can act as a lead practitioner in supporting children and their families under section 17, and reflect that the decision about who will act as lead practitioner will be made in line with practitioner knowledge and skills, resources, commissioned service requirements, relevant professional standards as appropriate⁷¹ and accountabilities
- set out the skills, knowledge, experience, and competence required for the lead practitioner role and how this will be monitored locally
- set out clearly the governance arrangements to support effective decision-making, including roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities, and how these take account of high-level risk, risks that are dynamic and/or complex.
- set out the process for case audits and accountability including allocation of lead practitioners and decision-making. Information should be included in the yearly report (see chapter 2, paragraphs 106-109) on the evidence of impact on outcomes for children and families, to show progress and learning that has occurred following audits.
- clarify how organisations, agencies and practitioners undertaking assessments and providing services can work in partnership including when sharing and seeking information
- set out how and when organisations and agencies should communicate with children and families
- set out the process for challenge by children and families by publishing the complaints procedures⁷²

142. Local protocols should also reflect the specific needs of certain groups, including but not limited to young carers, children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (including to inform and be informed by EHC plans), unborn children where there are concerns, children in hospital, children in mental health inpatient settings, children with

⁷¹ For example, the Social Work England Professional Standards - [Professional standards - Social Work England](#) or the Nursing and Midwifery Council's Code - [Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates](#)

⁷² Including as specified under [the Children Act 1989 Section 26 \(3\)](#) and the [Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

specific communication needs, asylum seeking children, children considered at risk of exploitation and harm outside the home (including serious violence and association with organised crime groups), children at risk of female genital mutilation, children who are in the youth justice system, children with a parent in custody, children in kinship care, and children returning home from care.

143. Where a child needs other assessments and support, it is important that these are co-ordinated so that the child does not become lost between different organisational procedures. Where a child has had previous assessments and support, information from these should help practitioners build a complete picture of the child and their family, including any support and services that have been provided.

144. Within the local authority, practice leaders are qualified social workers with day-to-day operational responsibility across the whole system for child and family social work practice, ensuring it operates effectively and overseeing child and family frontline social work practitioners and leaders. This is often the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care or equivalent. Child and family principal social workers support social work teams, provide quality assurance, and contribute to strategic leadership. Practice supervisors are experienced social workers whose primary responsibility is to supervise the practice and decision-making of child and family social work practitioners, and to develop the skills of individuals and teams.

145. Principal Social Workers, practice supervisors and practice leaders should support practitioners, the local authority, and partners in further developing their assessment practice and decision-making skills, and the practice methodology that underpins this.

Purpose of assessment

146. The purpose of children's social care assessments is to:

- gather important information about a child and family
- analyse their needs and/or the nature and level of any risk and harm being suffered by the child, including where harm or risk of harm is from outside the home⁷³
- decide whether the child is a child in need (section 17) or is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm (section 47)
- provide support to address those needs to improve the child's outcomes and welfare and where necessary to make them safe

⁷³ See chapter 3, section 2, paragraph 196 on what a good assessment should consider when supporting children at risk of, or experiencing, harm outside the home

- identify support from within the family network

147. Action to meet a child's needs can begin even before assessment has concluded.

Assessment framework

148. Research has shown that taking a systematic approach to enquiries using a conceptual model is the best way to deliver a comprehensive assessment for all children. An example of such a model is set out in the diagram below. It investigates three domains:

- the child's developmental needs
- the capacity of parents or carers (resident and non-resident) and any other adults living in the household to respond to those needs ^{74 75}
- the impact and influence of the family network and any other adults living in the household as well as community and environmental circumstances

⁷⁴ An assessment of the support needs of parent carers of disabled children may be required

⁷⁵ See chapter 4, paragraph 253 on adults with parental responsibility for disabled children

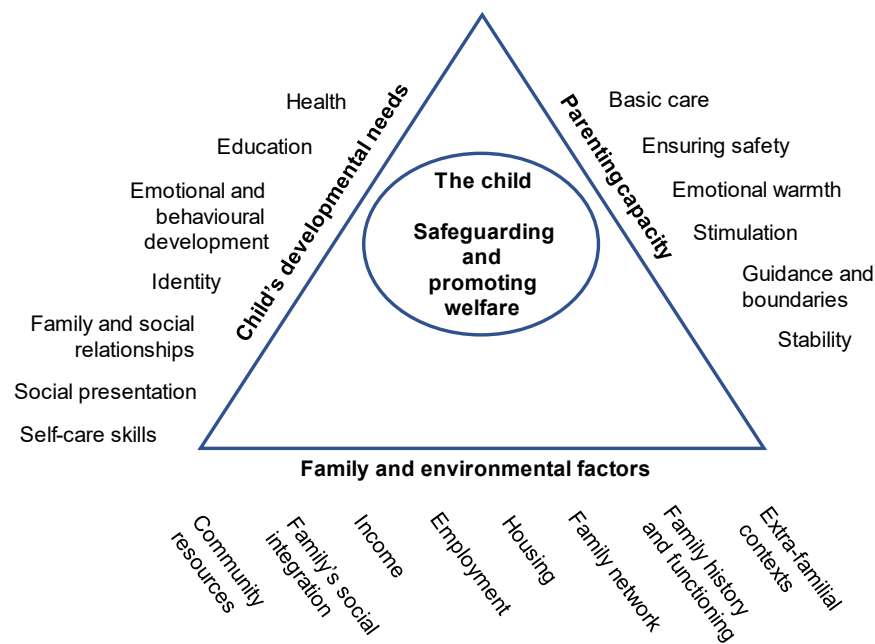


Figure 1: Assessment framework

Referral

149. Local authority children's social care has the responsibility for clarifying the process for referrals in their area. This includes specific arrangements for referrals in areas where there are secure youth establishments. As well as protocols for practitioners working with children and families, contact details should be signposted clearly so that children, parents, other family members and community partners⁷⁶ are aware of who they can contact if they wish to make a referral, require advice or support.

150. Anyone who has concerns about a child's welfare should consider whether a referral needs to be made to local authority children's social care and should do so immediately if there is a concern that the child is suffering significant harm or is likely to do so. Where a child is admitted to a mental health facility, practitioners should make a referral to local authority children's social care. When practitioners refer a child, they should include any information they have on the child's developmental needs, the capacity of the child's parents, carers, or family network to meet those needs and any external factors that may be undermining their capacity to parent. This information may be included in any assessment, including an early help assessment, which may have been

⁷⁶ Community partners include those working in voluntary, private, and statutory organisations who may come into contact with or be aware of the presence of children as they carry out their day-to-day roles in the community, for example, business owners, youth workers, faith and community leaders, park wardens.

carried out prior to a referral into local authority children's social care. An early help assessment is not a prerequisite for a referral but where one has been undertaken, it should be used to support the referral.

151. Feedback should be given by local authority children's social care to the referrer on the decisions taken. Where appropriate, this feedback should include the reasons why a case may not meet the statutory threshold and offer suggestions for other sources of more suitable support. Practitioners should always follow up their concerns if they are not satisfied with the local authority children's social care response and should escalate their concerns in line with local procedures if they remain dissatisfied.

Timeliness

152. The speed with which an assessment is carried out after a child's case has been referred into local authority children's social care should be determined by the needs of the individual child and the nature and level of any risk of harm they face. This will require judgements to be made by a social work qualified practice supervisor or manager on each individual case. Adult assessments, for example, parent carer or non-parent carer assessments, should also be carried out in a timely manner.

153. Within one working day of a referral being received, local authority children's social care should acknowledge receipt to the referrer and a social work qualified practice supervisor or manager should decide next steps and the type of response required. This will include determining whether:

- the child requires immediate protection and urgent action is required
- the child is in need and should be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989
- there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and whether enquiries must be made, and the child assessed under section 47 of the Children Act 1989
- any immediate services are required urgently by the child and family and what type of services
- further specialist assessments are required to help the local authority to decide what further action to take
- to see the child as soon as possible if the decision is taken that the referral requires further assessment

154. For children in need of immediate protection, action must be taken by the local authority, the police (including British Transport Police) or the NSPCC⁷⁷ if removal is required. This should happen as soon as possible after the referral has been made to local authority children's social care^{78 79}.

155. The maximum timeframe for the assessment to conclude, such that it is possible to reach a decision on next steps, should be no longer than 45 working days from the point of referral. If, in discussion with a child and their family and other practitioners, an assessment exceeds 45 working days, the lead practitioner should record the reasons for exceeding the time limit. In some cases, the needs of the child will mean that a quick assessment will be required. In all cases, as practitioners identify needs during the assessment, they do not need to wait until the assessment concludes before providing support or commissioning services to support the child and their family.

Provision of support and services for a child in need

156. Once the referral has been accepted by local authority children's social care, a social work qualified practice supervisor or manager should decide, with partners where appropriate, who the most appropriate lead practitioner will be and with the lead practitioner's agreement, allocate them in line with the local protocol.

157. The lead practitioner role can be held by a range of people, including social workers. When allocating the lead practitioner, local authorities and their partners should consider the needs of the child and their family to ensure the lead practitioner has the time required to undertake the role. The lead practitioner should have the skills, knowledge, competence, and experience to work effectively with the child and their family. The lead practitioner should always be a social worker for child protection enquiries.

158. Lead practitioners should have access to high quality supervision. Effective supervision can play a critical role in ensuring a clear focus on a child's welfare and support practitioners to reflect critically on the impact of their decisions on the child and their family. All lead practitioners should also continue to receive appropriate supervision and support for continuing professional development and to maintain professional registration, where appropriate, within their existing line management arrangements.

159. The responsibility for providing support and services remains with the local authority. Decision-making responsibilities, including the lead practitioner and social work

⁷⁷ [National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children](#).

⁷⁸ [Children Act 1989 Section 44](#)

⁷⁹ [Children Act 1989 Section 46](#)

qualified practice supervisor or manager should be set out in the local protocols (see chapter 3, section 2, paragraph 141)

160. In response to the referral, the lead practitioner should:

- clarify with the referrer, when known, the nature of the concerns and how and why they have arisen
- make clear to children and families how the assessment will be carried out and when they can expect a decision on next steps
- inform the child and family of the action to be taken, unless a decision is taken on the basis that this may jeopardise a police investigation or place the child at risk of significant harm

Focusing on the needs of the child and their family

161. Assessments should be child-centred and responsive to the voice of the child. This means decisions should be made in the child's best interests, rooted in child development, age-appropriate, sensitive to the impact of adversity and trauma and informed by evidence. Observation can be an important way to get the perspective of babies, infants, and non-verbal children. In the case of disabled children, practitioners should consider whether any specialist communication support is required and consider how advocacy services can support the child to communicate their views.

162. In addition, assessments should:

- be focused on action and outcomes for children
- be multi-agency and multi-disciplinary, based on information gathered from relevant practitioners and agencies⁸⁰, and drawing in the relevant expertise
- be discussed with the child and their parents or carers, as appropriate
- build a full picture of all aspects of a child's and their family's life, including their strengths and interests as well as any previous referrals and interventions
- be holistic in approach and address presenting and underlying issues and each of the child's needs, giving sufficient recognition and priority to the specific needs of disabled children and young carers⁸¹ and to any risks the child faces within or outside the home, including online

⁸⁰ For example, teachers, early years workers, health practitioners, youth justice practitioners, the police and adult social care.

⁸¹ [Recognised, valued and supported: next steps for the carers strategy \(2010\)](#).

- explore the needs of all members of the family⁸² as individuals and consider how their needs impact on one another as well as how the family network could support and help de-escalate issues⁸³
- be a dynamic process, not an event, analysing and responding to the changing nature and level of need and/or risk faced by the child from within and outside their family
- recognise and respect the individual and protected characteristics of families, including the ways in which these can overlap and intersect, ensuring support reflects their diversity of needs and experiences
- lead to action, including the provision of services, the impact of which is reviewed on an ongoing basis
- recognise a child's entitlement to a full-time education and the positive impact attendance at school has on personal development and attainment

163. Where there are concerns that a child may be at risk of, or experiencing harm outside the home, assessments should include work with the child, parents, carers, family networks and partners⁸⁴ to determine:

- the nature and duration of the harm
- where risk is located and understand the context in which harm is or may be happening, including online
- the level of risk associated with each concern and context identified

164. Assessments should consider how a child's experience within their family and networks, including their friends and peer groups, and extra-familial contexts, such as the places and spaces where they spend their time, interplay with the risk of harm outside of the home.⁸⁵

165. Where the child has links to a foreign country⁸⁶, the lead practitioner may also need to work with embassies and colleagues abroad⁸⁷.

⁸² An assessment of the support needs of parent carers, or non-parent carers, of disabled children may be required

⁸³ [Family and friends care: statutory guidance for local authorities \(2010\), paragraph 4.37](#)

⁸⁴ This can include safeguarding partners and community partners (such as those working in voluntary, private and statutory organisations who may come into contact with or be aware of the presence of children as they carry out their day-to-day roles in the community – for example, business owners, youth workers, faith and community leaders, park wardens).

⁸⁵ See chapter 3, section 2, paragraphs 194-199 on supporting children at risk of, or experiencing, harm outside the home

⁸⁶ A child with links to a foreign country may be a foreign national child, a child with dual nationality or a British child of foreign parents/national origin

⁸⁷ Further guidance can be found in [Working with foreign authorities: child protection and care orders](#) (2014)

166. The lead practitioner should meet families and go on home visits as needed, when undertaking assessments. The social work qualified practice supervisor or manager should undertake joint visits where this is appropriate.

167. Where a child becomes looked after, the assessment will be the baseline for work with the family. Assessment by a social worker is also required before a looked after child under a care order returns home⁸⁸. This will provide evidence of whether the necessary improvements have been made to ensure the child's safety when they return home. Following an assessment, appropriate support should be provided for children returning home, including where that return home is unplanned, to ensure that children continue to be adequately safeguarded.

Analysis and decision-making

168. The analysis and decision-making should be a collaborative process between the lead practitioner and the multi-agency team working with the family, including the social work qualified practice supervisor or manager.

169. No system can fully eliminate harm. Understanding harm involves judgement and balance. These are central to effective analysis of the relevant information gathered as part of the assessment. Analysis should build upon the history of every child, taking account of family history and the child's experience of cumulative abuse, neglect, and exploitation as well as the impact of any previous services. Where a child has been looked after and has returned home, information from previous assessments and case records should also be reviewed.

170. This information should be used by practitioners to get as comprehensive an understanding as possible of the level of need, and actual or likely significant harm being faced by a child, taking into account the child's perspective of the protective and risk factors they are facing. This should include factors both inside and outside the home.

171. Practitioners' analysis should be supplemented and challenged by others working in the multi-agency team, including the social work qualified practice supervisor or manager, with the family and/or in their teams and management chain. Critical reflection through supervision should further strengthen the analysis.

172. Practitioners should also be alert to a desire to think the best of adults and to hope they can overcome their difficulties. This should not subvert the need to protect children from chaotic, abusive, and neglectful homes. Practitioners should always reflect the latest research on the impact of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and relevant findings from

⁸⁸ [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010.](#)

serious case and practice reviews when analysing the level of need and risk faced by the child. This should be reflected in the case recording.

173. Decisions on the nature and level of the child's needs, and the level of actual or likely significant harm, if any, should be reviewed by a social work qualified practice supervisor or manager.

174. Decisions over what support to provide a child and family should be multi-agency, taken with the best interests of the child in mind, informed by the evidence available, and underpinned by knowledge of child development. Regular decision and review points should be held, involving the child and family and relevant practitioners to ensure that help is given in a timely and appropriate way, and that the impact of this help on the child's outcomes and welfare is evaluated and changed as needed. Decisions should be agreed by the lead practitioner and the multi-agency team working with the family, including the social work qualified practice supervisor or manager.

175. Judgements may need to be revised as a case progresses and further information comes to light. It is a characteristic of skilled practice that practitioners revisit their assumptions in the light of new evidence and take action to revise their decisions in the best interests of the individual child.

176. Decisions about whether looked after children can return home will rest on whether the needs that were previously identified have been addressed. This may include instances where harm from outside the home means the child has been placed out of area to ensure their immediate safety. In these cases, the lead practitioner will be a social worker who should work with partners to take the decision about how to keep the child safe following the return to their family. Local authorities should set out what support and services will be provided following reunification and ensure the child and parents understand who to contact for support. Local authorities may also consider whether family group decision-making would support the child's transition home from care, and the role the family network could play in supporting this.

Focusing on outcomes

177. Where local authority children's social care involvement is continued, the lead practitioner develops a plan of action with the child and family, and in partnership with the multi-agency team which includes the social work qualified practice supervisor or manager, in line with local protocols. The plan should set out which services are to be

delivered, and what actions are to be undertaken, by whom and for what purpose. A child's engagement with education should be reflected in the plan⁸⁹.

178. Many services provided will be for parents or carers (and may include services identified in a parent carer's or non-parent carer's needs assessment)⁹⁰. Where this is the case, the plan should reflect this and set clear measurable outcomes for the child and expectations for the parents, with measurable, reviewable actions for them.

179. Under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, local authorities may provide financial support to family networks to support the plan. Any financial support provided will be subject to review in terms of supporting agreed improved outcomes for the child.

180. In cases where there are concerns of harm outside of the home, the plan should ensure the parents and carers are supported to understand what is happening to the child. This should take a strengths-based approach to support parents to meet the child's needs. Practitioners should be aware that parents may feel blamed or criticised in these circumstances and will need to work thoughtfully with parents to build effective partnerships.

181. The plan should be reviewed regularly to analyse whether sufficient progress has been made to meet the child's needs. This will be important for neglect cases where parents and carers can make small improvements. In such cases, the test should be whether any improvements in adult behaviour are sufficient and sustained. Practitioners should consider the need for further action and record their decisions. The review points should be agreed with other practitioners supporting the child, including the social work qualified practice supervisor or manager, and focus on any change to their welfare.

182. The social work qualified practice supervisor or manager should continue to meet families and go on joint home visits as needed to review the plan for the child. They should work in partnership to ensure help given is leading to a significant positive change for the child and consider whether the pace of that change is appropriate for the child. Practitioners working with children should always have access to appropriate colleagues to talk through their concerns and judgements affecting the welfare of the child.

183. This review should also consider how the family network is supporting the parent or carers to sustain improvements and whether any further support could be offered.

184. Practitioners should consider if a family group decision-making forum is appropriate to determine the help and support the family network can provide for the child. Local

⁸⁹ Attendance below 90% is classed as persistent absence and requires targeted support by schools and local authority school attendance teams, where appropriate. Further details are available in [Working together to improve school attendance](#)

⁹⁰ [Children Act 1989 Section 17ZD](#) and [Carers \(Recognition and Services\) Act 1995 Section 1](#)

authorities should consider referring the family to a family group decision-making service if they believe there is a possibility the child may not be able to remain with their parents or carers, or in any event before a child becomes looked after, unless this would be a risk to the child. If family group decision-making cannot be conducted at this point, the local authority should still consider this as an option later, including as a route to reunification with the birth parents or family network where appropriate.

185. Family group decision-making, including the family group conference model, promotes the involvement of the family network in decision-making about a child's safety or wellbeing. Family group decision-making forums offer a way of ensuring that all resources within the family's wider networks have been engaged for the benefit of the child and empower family networks to come to a decision on how this can be done. Family group decision-making is an entirely voluntary process for the family and requires informed consent. This should be a family-led forum, where a family network has all the resources, adequate preparation, relevant information, a safe and appropriate environment, and "private family time" to make a plan to respond to concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing. At pre-proceedings stage, a successful family group decision-making forum, such as a family group conference, also include having an independent coordinator⁹¹.

186. Known transition points for the child should be planned for in advance. This includes where children are likely to transition between child and adult services, where they move from one local authority to another and where they move between schools.

Supporting disabled children and their carers

187. A crucial role of children's social care is to provide help and support to disabled children and their families. When undertaking an assessment of a disabled child, practitioners should recognise the additional pressures on the family, and the distinct challenges they may have had to negotiate as a result of their child's disability.

188. The assessment process should focus on the needs of the child and family, be strengths-based, and gather information to inform decisions on the help needed to:

- ensure the child achieves the best possible outcomes
- enable the child's family to continue in their caring role where that is right for the child
- safeguard children in cases where there is abuse, neglect, and exploitation

⁹¹ [Court Orders and Pre-proceedings guidance 2014](#)

- ensure that appropriate practical support is in place to enable disabled children and their families to thrive

189. The local authority must also consider whether it is necessary to provide support under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970⁹². Where a local authority is satisfied that the identified services and assistance can be provided under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, and it is necessary in order to meet a disabled child's needs, it must arrange to provide that support. Where a local authority is assessing the needs of a disabled child, a carer of that child may also require the local authority to undertake an assessment of their ability to provide, or to continue to provide, care for the child, under section 1 of the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995. The local authority must take account of the results of any such assessment when deciding whether to provide services to the disabled child.

190. If a local authority considers that a parent carer of a disabled child may have support needs, it must carry out an assessment under section 17ZD of the Children Act 1989. The local authority must also carry out such an assessment if a parent carer requests one. Such an assessment must consider whether it is appropriate for the parent carer to provide, or continue to provide, care for the disabled child. The assessment should also take account of parent carer's needs and wishes, and the specific needs and circumstances of the child resulting from their disability. Parent carers have the right to request an assessment under section 17ZD of the Children Act 1989⁹³, including where a child is not otherwise known to children's social care. Local authorities must ensure they have a process to facilitate these assessments if requested.

191. In line with the commitments made in the Special Educational Needs and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan⁹⁴, local authorities are encouraged to implement the role of Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO) in each local area. The DSCO will provide the capacity and expertise to improve the links between social care services and the SEND system. Similar to the Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) or Designated Medical Officer (DMO) role in health, the DSCO role will support both operational input (such as the contributions from care to education, health and care assessments) and more strategic planning functions (such as the commissioning of care services such as short breaks) for disabled children and those with SEN.

⁹² [Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 Section 2](#)

⁹³ [Children Act 1989 Section 17ZD](#)

⁹⁴ [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) and Alternative Provision \(AP\) Improvement Plan](#)

Supporting young carers

192. If a local authority considers that a young carer (see glossary) may have support needs, it must carry out an assessment under section 17ZA of the Children Act 1989⁹⁵ to establish how best they can support the young carer and their family. The local authority must also carry out such an assessment if a young carer, or the parent of a young carer, requests one. Such an assessment must consider whether it is appropriate or excessive for the young carer to provide care for the person in question, (which may be a sibling, parent, or other member of the family), in light of the young carer's needs and wishes. The Young Carers (Needs Assessment) Regulations 2015⁹⁶ require local authorities to look at the needs of the whole family when carrying out a young carer's needs assessment. Local authorities must consider whether to combine a young carer's needs assessment with any other assessment of the needs for support of the young carer, the person cared for, or a member of the young carer's family.

193. Information on whether a child has been identified as a young carer will be collected annually through the school census from January 2023. Schools do not need to obtain parental or pupil consent to provide this information for the purposes of the census but should respect the wishes and feelings of both children and their parents.

Supporting children at risk of, or experiencing, harm outside the home

194. Some children experience abuse and exploitation outside the home. This is often referred to as "extra-familial harm"⁹⁷. Harm can occur in a range of extra-familial contexts, including school and other educational settings, peer groups, or within community/public spaces, and/or online. Children may experience this type of harm from other children and/or from adults. Forms of extra-familial harm include exploitation by criminal and organised crime groups and individuals (such as county lines and financial exploitation), serious violence, modern slavery and trafficking, online harm, sexual exploitation, teenage relationship abuse, and the influences of extremism which could lead to radicalisation^{98 99}. Children of all ages can experience extra-familial harm.

195. Where there are concerns that a child is experiencing extra-familial harm, practitioners should consider all the needs and vulnerabilities of the child. Some children

⁹⁵ [Children Act 1989 Section 17ZA](#)

⁹⁶ [The Young Carers \(Needs Assessment\) Regulations 2015](#)

⁹⁷ See Appendix A: glossary

⁹⁸ Extremist groups may make use of the internet to radicalise and recruit and to promote extremist materials. Any potential harmful effects to individuals identified as vulnerable to extremist ideologies or being drawn into terrorism should also be considered. For further information see [Prevent duty guidance](#)

⁹⁹ Links to further guidance on forms of extra-familial harm, including child criminal exploitation (such as county lines), child sexual exploitation and radicalisation are available in Appendix B

will have vulnerabilities that can be exploited by others and will require support appropriate to their needs to minimise the potential for exploitation. All children, including those who may be causing harm to others, should receive a safeguarding response first and practitioners should work with them to understand their experiences and what will reduce the likelihood of harm to themselves and others.

196. Where children may be experiencing extra-familial harm, children's social care assessments should determine whether a child is in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 or whether to make enquires under section 47 of the same Act, following concerns that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm¹⁰⁰. A good assessment should:

- build an understanding of the child's strengths, interests, identity, and culture
- respond to each of the vulnerabilities and/or challenges that the child may be facing, including any within the home
- gather information on past experiences of trauma and how this may impact on the child's current experience of harm and on how they interact with practitioners
- explore how the child's experiences within their families and networks, including their friends and peer groups, interplay with the risk of harm outside of the home and identify what needs to change¹⁰¹
- support parents, carers, and family networks to understand what is happening to the child, working with them to ensure they can best meet the child's needs and play an active part in the solutions and processes to help create safety for the child
- understand the risk of extra-familial harm for siblings, for example, where older children are exploited, younger siblings may also be at risk of being targeted

197. Where there are concerns that more than one child may be experiencing harm in an extra-familial context, practitioners should consider the individual needs of each child as well as work with the group. The children in the group may or may not already be known to local authority children's social care. Working with the whole group enables practitioners to build an understanding of the dynamics between those within the group and the extra-familial context.

198. Practitioners will need to build an understanding of the context in which the harm is occurring and draw on relevant knowledge and information from the children and wider

¹⁰⁰ See chapter 3, section 2, paragraph 146 on Purpose of assessment

¹⁰¹ For some children, a safe and loving family environment is not enough to protect them from these risks. For others, problems which exist within the home, such as abuse and neglect, could mean they are more vulnerable to exploitation and extra-familial harm

partners¹⁰² in order to decide on the most appropriate interventions. Practitioners should consider the influence of groups or individuals perpetrating harm, including where this takes place online, and identify patterns of harm, risk and protective factors in these contexts. This may include working across safeguarding and community safety partnerships¹⁰³ to agree a plan for keeping children safe¹⁰⁴.

199. Key decisions should be recorded and communicated to both the child and their parents or carers, so that everyone understands the action that has, or will be, taken to safeguard and promote their welfare. It is important that all partners are clear how actions contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child¹⁰⁵.

The National Referral Mechanism

200. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the UK's system for identifying victims of modern slavery and human trafficking. If a first responder¹⁰⁶ has concerns that a child may be a potential victim of modern slavery or human trafficking (including through county lines) then a referral should be made to the NRM, as soon as possible. A child's consent is not needed for a referral to be made¹⁰⁷.

201. Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTG) are an independent source of advice for children who have been trafficked and somebody who can speak up on their behalf. Where the ICTG service has been implemented¹⁰⁸, if the first responder considers a child to be a potential victim of modern slavery or human trafficking, they should refer them to the ICTG service. This is in addition to following usual safeguarding routes and NRM referrals. The NRM referral and ICTG referral should be made in parallel.

Supporting children in secure youth establishments

202. Any assessment of children in secure youth establishments should take account of their specific needs. In all cases, the local authority in which a secure youth establishment is located is responsible for the safety and welfare of the children in that establishment.

¹⁰² This can include safeguarding partners and community partners (such as those working in voluntary, private and statutory organisations who may come into contact with or be aware of the presence of children as they carry out their day-to-day roles in the community, for example, business owners, youth workers, faith and community leaders, park wardens

¹⁰³ [Community safety partnerships: Local Government Association](#)

¹⁰⁴ Working across safeguarding and community safety partnerships may also provide opportunity to identify and seek to disrupt those that are causing harm to the child to prevent further abuse and/or exploitation

¹⁰⁵ Further guidance and supportive resources on suggested approaches to create safe spaces and places for children in response to extra-familial harm is available at Appendix B: [Multi-agency practice principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm](#) (non-statutory guidance for local areas)

¹⁰⁶ [First responders work for designated organisations](#) and help identify and support potential victims of modern slavery.

¹⁰⁷ Further information on the National Referral Mechanism, including a list of first responder organisations can be found at [National Referral Mechanism guidance: adult \(England and Wales\)](#)

¹⁰⁸ First responders should consult the: [Interim guidance for Independent Child-Trafficking Guardians for further guidance and for a list of sites with current ICTG coverage. Public authorities should give due regard to all ICTG functions, as would be required by regulations made under section 48 \(6\) \(e\)\(i\) and section 48 \(6\) \(e \) \(ii\) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, noting that section 48 of the Modern Slavery Act has not yet been commenced.](#)

The host local authority should work with the governor, director, manager or principal of the secure youth establishment and the child's home local authority, their relevant youth offending team and, where appropriate, the Youth Custody Service¹⁰⁹ to ensure that the child has a single, comprehensive support plan.

203. Where a child becomes looked after, as a result of being remanded to youth detention accommodation (YDA), the local authority should visit the child and assess the child's needs before taking a decision on how they should be supported¹¹⁰. This information should be used to prepare the care plan, which should set out how the YDA and other practitioners will meet the child's needs whilst the child remains remanded, and at any point of transition they will experience (either returning to the community or upon receiving a custodial sentence). The care plan¹¹¹ must be reviewed in the same way as a care plan for any other looked after child¹¹².

Supporting children in mother and baby units

204. When a woman applies for a place on a mother and baby unit (MBU) (see chapter 4), a referral for assessment must be requested by the prison from children's social care in the mother's home authority¹¹³. Any assessment should set out the needs of the child in relation to the mother's application to be placed on an MBU. The assessment should consider:

- suitability of the placement in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child, including the needs of the child and any risk
- impact of the placement on the child's development, health, and wellbeing
- contact arrangements with the family and family network
- suitability and arrangements for the child's care if the placement is not granted, including within the family network through a kinship care arrangement

205. The lead practitioner responsible for the assessment should attend the MBU Admissions Board to represent the best interests of the child. When placed in an MBU, the mother retains full parental responsibility for the day-to-day care of the child and the local authority in which the prison is located is responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child.

¹⁰⁹ As the placing authority

¹¹⁰ [Promoting the health and well-being of looked-after children](#)

¹¹¹ [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010 Regulation 4](#)

¹¹² Following the [Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012](#) all children remanded by a court in criminal proceedings will be looked after.

¹¹³ [Pregnancy, Mother and Baby Units \(MBUs\), and Maternal Separation from Children up to the Age of Two in Women's Prisons](#)

Supporting children at risk from people in prison and people supervised by the Probation Service

206. The Prison Service undertakes a child safeguarding enquiry¹¹⁴ with children's social care for all newly sentenced prisoners and will identify prisoners who present an ongoing risk to children from within custody. Prisons will also decide on the level of contact, if any, they will allow between a prisoner and a child based on a child contact risk assessment¹¹⁵ and will prohibit or restrict a prisoner's contact with a child where necessary.

207. In response to a child safeguarding enquiry, children's social care should:

- review information provided by the Prison Service and record it as required
- respond to a child safeguarding enquiry and share with the Prison Service any concerns about the prisoner and any contact with a child
- contribute to the prisons' child contact risk assessment where a child is known to children's social care, or has previously been known, by providing a report on the child's best interests and verifying the child's identity. Where the child is not known to children's social care, they should still provide a view on child contact and should advise the prison to complete a child safeguarding referral if one is required

208. The Probation Service will share information with children's social care about supervised individuals who have contact with children or who pose a known risk and will also request information by making child safeguarding enquiries. Information exchange between probation and children's social care help both agencies develop a better understanding of the children and families they work with and ensures risk assessments are accurate and well informed.

209. Under the UKGDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 sharing of personal information of an offender must be lawful and fair and must comply with Part 3 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and in particular the data protection principles. Sharing of information for the purposes of law enforcement and keeping children and young people safe meets one of the requirements for lawful processing under the Data Protection Act 2018 as the data sharing is authorised by law (under section 325(3) and (4) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003) (or section 14 of the Offender Management Act 2007). It is therefore not necessary for Prison and Probation Service staff to obtain consent from the offender under the Data Protection Act 2018.

¹¹⁴ [The HMPPS Child Safeguarding Policy Framework](#) sets out that a child safeguarding enquiry (sometimes referred to as a safeguarding check) is an official enquiry that HMPPS staff send to local authority children's social care to request information on an individual, child or family.

¹¹⁵ The child contact risk assessment process is explained in [Chapter 5b of the Public Protection Manual \(PPM\)](#) PSI 18/2016.

210. For information exchange to be effective, children's social care should:

- explore arrangements with their local Probation Delivery Unit who have resources to support the timely provision of information in response to child safeguarding enquiries, including same day responses, where delay may negatively impact on a child. This may involve sharing information relating to a child, family, or offender who children's social care may currently or historically know
- reflect the voice of the child in information shared with the Probation Service, where appropriate
- be prepared to offer the Probation Service a view on decisions in the child's best interest

211. The following descriptors and flow charts set out the steps that practitioners should take when working together to assess and provide services for children who may be in need and when children are returning home to their families.

Assessment, support and planning for children under the Children Act 1989

Following acceptance of a referral by local authority children's social care, a social work qualified practice supervisor or manager should initiate a multi-agency assessment under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. The assessment should be led by a lead practitioner and approved by a social work qualified practice supervisor or manager. Local authorities have a duty to ascertain the child's wishes and feelings and take account of them when planning the provision of services. Assessments should be carried out in a timely manner reflecting the needs of the individual child, as set out in this chapter.

Where the local authority children's social care decides to provide services, a multi-agency child in need plan should be developed which sets out which organisations and agencies will provide which services to the child and family. The plan should set clear measurable outcomes for the child and expectations for the parents. The plan should reflect the positive aspects of the family situation as well as the weaknesses, acknowledging any factors beyond the family that may be undermining their capacity to parent or keep their child safe.

Where a child in need has moved permanently to another local authority area, the original local authority should ensure that all relevant information (including the child in need plan) is shared with the receiving local authority as soon as possible. The receiving local authority should consider whether support services are still required and discuss with the child and family what might be needed, based on a timely re-assessment of the child's needs, as set out in this chapter. Support should continue to be provided by the original local authority in the intervening period. The receiving local authority should work with the original local authority to ensure that any changes to the services and support provided are managed carefully.

Where a child in need is approaching 18 years of age, this transition point should be planned for in advance. This includes where children are likely to transition between child and adult services.

Where information gathered during an assessment result in the lead practitioner and social work qualified practice supervisor or manager suspecting that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, the local authority should hold a strategy discussion to enable it to decide, with other agencies, whether it must initiate enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

Purpose:

Assessments should determine whether the child is in need, the nature of any services required and whether any specialist assessments should be undertaken to assist the local authority in its decision-making.

A social work qualified practice supervisor or manager should:

- agree with partners who the most appropriate lead practitioner should be and allocate them
- approve the lead practitioner's assessment
- review and approve the plan for the child
- meet families and attend home visits where that is appropriate

The lead practitioner should:

- lead on an assessment and complete it in line with the locally agreed protocol according to the child's needs and within 45 working days from the point of referral into local authority children's social care
- see the child within a timescale that is appropriate to the nature of the concerns expressed at referral, according to an agreed plan
- conduct interviews with the child and family members, separately and together as appropriate. Initial discussions with the child should be conducted in a way that minimises distress to them and maximises the likelihood that they will provide accurate and complete information, avoiding leading or suggestive questions
- record the assessment findings and decisions and next steps following the assessment
- inform, in writing, all the relevant agencies and the family of their decisions and, if the child is a child in need, of the plan for providing support
- inform the referrer of what action has been or will be taken

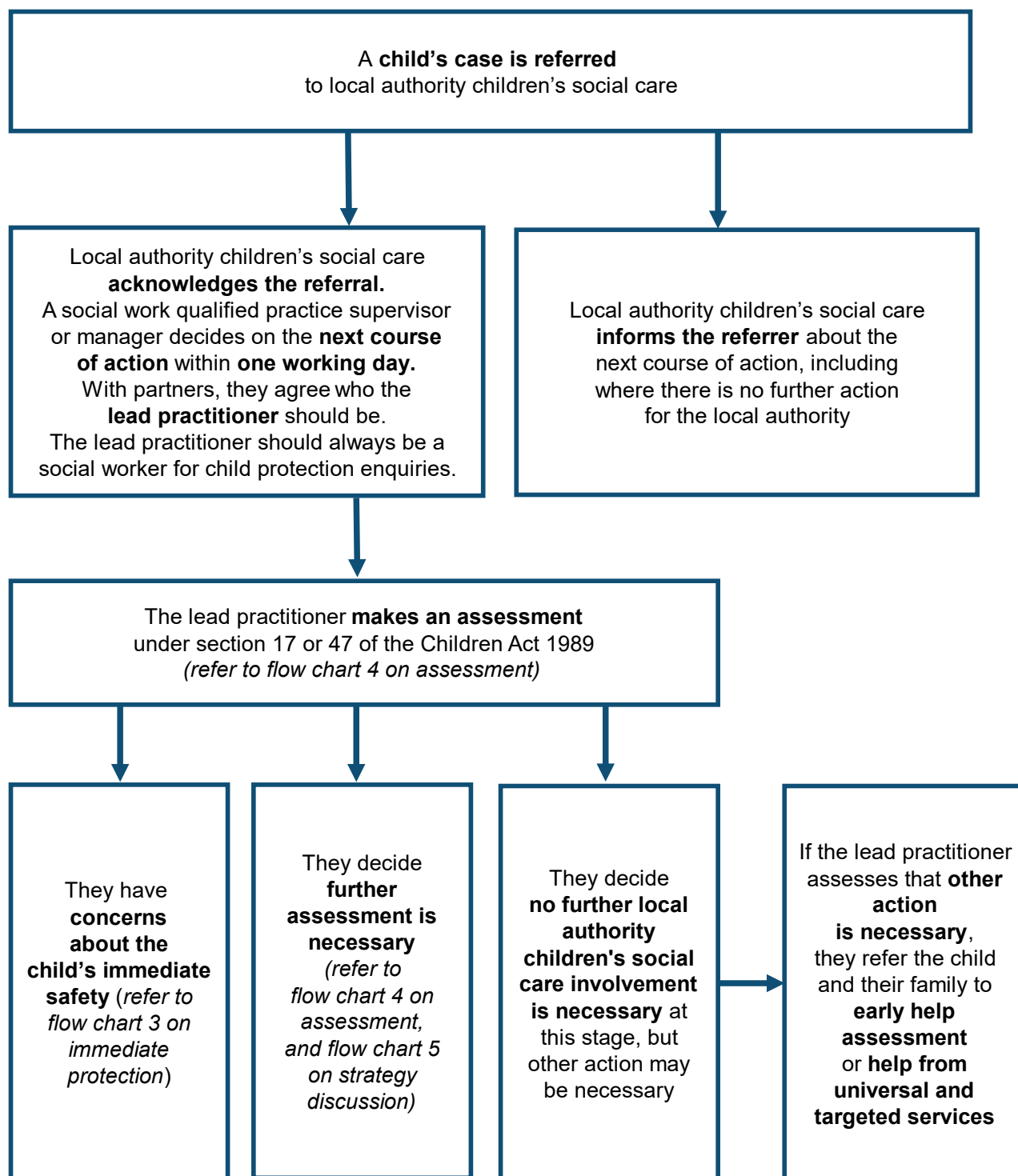
The police should:

- assist other organisations and agencies to carry out their responsibilities where there are concerns about the child's welfare, providing information about the child and family drawing on individual and organisational knowledge and expertise to strengthen any plan to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child
- be involved in assessments where crimes have been committed, where their expertise is required to identify whether a crime has been committed and where crimes may be committed in the future. These investigations might be reactive (where there is evidence to suggest a crime has been committed) or proactive (where further activity is required to establish if a crime has occurred)

All involved practitioners should:

- be involved in the assessment and provide further information about the child and family
- agree further action, including what services would help the child and family, and inform local authority children's social care if any immediate action is required
- seek advice and guidance as required and in line with local practice guidance

Flow chart 1: Action taken when a child is referred to local authority children's social care



Looked after children returning home to their families

Where the decision to return a child to the care of their family is planned, the local authority should undertake an assessment while the child is looked after as part of the care planning process (under regulation 39 of the Care Planning Regulations 2010). This assessment should consider what services and support the child and their family might need. Family group decision-making, such as family group conferences, could also be used to establish how the family network will support the child to return home. The outcome of this assessment should be included in the child's care plan. The decision to cease to look after a child will, in most cases, require approval under regulation 39 of the Care Planning Regulations 2010. Practitioners must carry out an assessment of need for eligible children¹¹⁶ to consider their eligibility for independence and transition into adulthood.

Where a child who is accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 returns home in an unplanned way, (for example, the decision is not made as part of the care planning process, but the parent removes the child, or the child decides to leave), the local authority should work with partners to consider whether there are any immediate concerns about the safety and wellbeing of the child. This could include harm from outside the home. The local authority should take appropriate action, including making enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, if there is concern that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

There should be a clear plan for all children who return home that reflects current and previous assessments, focuses on outcomes, and includes details of services and support required. Following reunification:

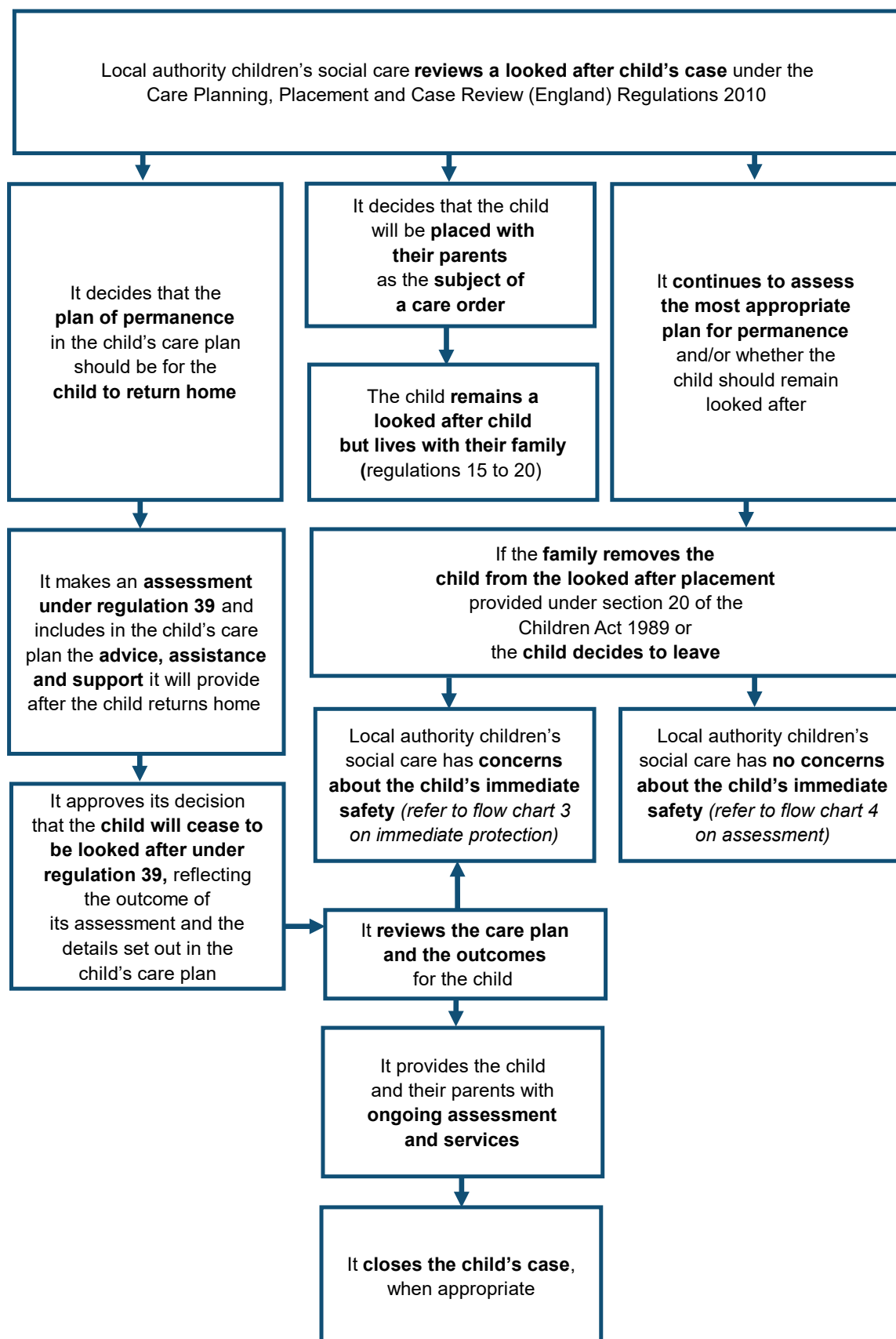
- practitioners should make the timeline and decision-making process for providing ongoing services and support clear to the child and family
- when reviewing outcomes, children should, wherever possible, be seen alone. Practitioners have a duty to ascertain their wishes and feelings regarding the provision of services being delivered

The impact of services and support should be monitored and recorded, and where a child is remanded to local authority or youth detention accommodation, consideration must be given to what ongoing support and accommodation the child may need after their period of remand¹¹⁷. This should be included in their care plan.

¹¹⁶ Where the child is an eligible child, regulation 42 of the [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010](#) applies.

¹¹⁷ [The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care, planning, placement and case review paragraph 8.20](#)

Flow chart 2: Looked after children returning home to their families



Section 3: Child protection

212. Alongside the offer of help and support, there must be strong and effective multi-agency child protection arrangements¹¹⁸. Children who need protecting may include those who experience harm in their own family and those who are harmed or exploited by others, including their peers, in their community and/or online. Suffering or being likely to suffer significant harm is the threshold for child protection enquiries and can take different forms, including sexual, physical or emotional abuse, neglect or domestic abuse (including controlling or coercive behaviour¹¹⁹), exploitation by criminal gangs or organised crime groups, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation, and the influences of extremism which could lead to radicalisation.

213. Child protection is the set of multi-agency activities and processes that follow a concern that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. Under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, the local authority has a duty to make enquiries when this is the case and to take decisive action when needed to protect a child from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Practitioners responsible for child protection decision-making should be skilled, experienced and have the right expertise to collate, analyse and distil complex information in a changing context. Where child protection enquiries are necessary, the lead practitioner should always be a social worker.

214. Whatever the form of abuse, neglect and exploitation, practitioners should:

- put the needs of children first when determining what action to take
- speak to the child at the earliest opportunity to understand what is happening in their daily life, recognising that the child may express this through their actions and behaviours
- work with the family to build trusting and co-operative relationships with parents and carers, in line with the principles for working with parents and carers set out in chapter 1 of this guidance
- use their skills and experience to recognise circumstances where the parent is reluctant to engage and seek to understand the factors that might underly this, including types of domestic abuse that are resulting in coercive or controlling behaviour which limits the parent's capacity to engage

¹¹⁸ [Children Act 2004](#)

¹¹⁹ [Serious Crime Act 2015 Section 76](#) provides information regarding circumstances when a child cannot be considered a victim of coercive or controlling behaviour.

- speak to and gather detailed information about the child and, where appropriate, their siblings, through engaging with the family network and those who know the child well, such as those working in the child's school or nursery
- consider a wide range of evidence from many sources, including other practitioners and agencies working with the family
- create as full a picture as possible of what is happening for the child, understanding what the child's daily life is like will be critical to making effective decisions about their safety
- build on existing assessments, including those under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 or assessments for early or targeted help, where the child is already known to services

215. Where the decision is taken not to proceed with a child protection plan or to discharge the plan, the lead practitioner should consider the support that the child requires, which might include multi-agency support and/or continued support under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

National multi-agency practice standards for child protection

216. Expectations for practice for senior leaders, practice supervisors and practitioners in local authorities are set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework. This includes practice to help keep children safe inside and outside of their homes (Outcome 3).

217. The following national multi-agency practice standards for child protection are for all practitioners working in services and settings who come into contact with children who may be suffering or have suffered significant harm within or outside the home. The term practitioner is used throughout the guidance to refer to individuals who work with children and their families in any capacity, including a range of professionals, such as qualified social workers and those who work for the statutory safeguarding partners or in education settings. Section B is specifically targeted at those directly involved in child protection work. These standards should be used within the wider context of paragraphs 212-215.

218. Local safeguarding partners need to ensure all practitioners are supported to be able to achieve these child protection standards, including through:

- an unrelenting focus on protection and the best outcomes for children
- creating learning cultures in which practitioners stay up to date as new evidence of best practice emerges
- creating an environment in which it is safe to challenge, including assumptions that relate to ethnicity, sex, disability, and sexuality

- supporting practitioners with effective supervision as determined by their regulatory body in which they can critically reflect on their findings and strengthen their analysis
- helping practitioners to understand the impact of their decisions on the child and family

A: Recognising actual or likely significant harm for all practitioners

- Practitioners are alert to potential indicators of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and listen carefully to what a child says, how they behave, and observe how they communicate if non-verbal (due to age, special needs and/or disabilities, or if unwilling to communicate). Practitioners will try to understand the child's personal experiences and observe and record any concerns.
- Practitioners communicate in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and level of understanding and use evidence-based practice tools for engaging with children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities.
- When practitioners have concerns or information about a child that may indicate a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, they share them with relevant practitioners and escalate them if necessary, using the referral or escalation procedure in place within their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. They update colleagues when they receive relevant new information.
- Practitioners never assume that information has already been shared by another professional or family member and always remain open to changing their views about the likelihood of significant harm.

B: Section 47 enquiries, child protection conferences and child protection plans

- Practitioners are aware of the limits and strengths of their personal expertise and agency remit. They work collaboratively and proactively with multi-agency practitioners to build an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the daily life of a child and their family to establish the likelihood of significant harm and any ongoing risks. Practitioners respect the opinions, knowledge and skills of multi-agency colleagues and engage constructively in their challenge.
- Practitioners have an applied understanding of what constitutes a child suffering actual or likely significant harm. They consider the severity, duration and frequency of any abuse, degree of threat, coercion, or cruelty, the significance of others in the child's world, including all adults and children in contact with the child (this can include those within the immediate and wider family and those in contexts beyond the family, including online), and the cumulative impact of adverse events.

- Practitioners take care to ensure that children know what is being discussed about them and their family where this is appropriate. They ask children what they would like to happen and what they think would help them and their family to reduce the likelihood of significant harm, including where harm is taking place in contexts beyond the family home. Practitioners listen to what children tell them.
- Practitioners engage parents and the family network, as appropriate, in the discussions, recognising previous involvement with agencies and services may influence how they engage. Practitioners encourage parents and families to express what support would help them to reduce significant harm.
- Practitioners thoroughly explore the significance of the adults in contact with the child and their family or individual histories. They should pay particular attention to any serious criminal convictions, previous allegations of child abuse, domestic abuse or impulsive violent behaviour, restrictions on contact with children or involvement with children subject to child protection plans or care proceedings.
- Practitioners satisfy themselves that conclusions about the likelihood of significant harm give sufficient weight to the views, experiences, and concerns of those who know the child and/or parents well, including relatives who are protective of the child, and other relevant practitioners.
- Practitioners share their thinking and proposed recommendations with other practitioners who hold relevant information and insight into the child and adults involved with the child. Practitioners comment, challenge, and jointly deliberate, before making a final decision about the likelihood of significant harm.
- Together with other agencies, practitioners clarify what family help from multi-agency partners is necessary to reduce the likelihood of significant harm and maintain reasonable care for the children. They seek assurance that this resource is available and of sufficient skill and intensity.
- Practitioners explain clearly to parents and the family network the implications of the threshold that has been reached for section 47 enquiries, the initial child protection conference, and any ongoing child protection plan (including that this threshold may lead to pre-proceedings, should the likelihood of significant harm not reduce). Practitioners do everything they can to ensure that parents and the family network understand and can engage purposefully with the enquiries and any protection plan.

- Practitioners remain alert to changes in circumstances for the child and family and respond as new information comes to light that needs to be reflected in the child protection plan.
- Practitioners reflect on the proposed protection plan and consider adjustments to strengthen the protection plan. The protection plan is specific, achievable, and relevant to the likelihood of significant harm and the context in which it is occurring.

C: Discharging the child protection plan

- Practitioners work as part of a multi-agency team to create lasting change for families and ensure the child, parents and family network know that further help and support is available if needed or further concerns arise.
- Following a decision to discharge a child protection plan, practitioners ensure that appropriate support is in place for the child and family and respond to changing circumstances and new information.
- Where a child becomes looked after, practitioners ensure that this is well planned and that the child, parents and family network are appropriately supported. Ongoing need is monitored as part of care planning.

219. The following descriptors and flow charts set out the steps that practitioners should take when working together to protect a child who is or is likely to suffer significant harm.

Immediate protection

Where there is a risk to the life of a child or a likelihood of serious immediate harm, whether from inside or outside the home, the local authority, the police (including British Transport Police) or NSPCC should use their statutory child protection powers to **act immediately to secure the safety of the child**, as set out in Section 46 of Children Act 1989.

If it is necessary to remove a child from their home, a local authority must, wherever possible and unless a child's safety is otherwise at immediate risk, apply for an **Emergency Protection Order (EPO)**. Police powers to remove a child in an emergency should be used only in exceptional circumstances where there is insufficient time to seek an EPO or for reasons relating to the immediate safety of the child.

An EPO, made by the court, gives authority to remove a child, or prevent a child being removed from a hospital or other place the child is being accommodated, and places them under the protection of the applicant.

When considering whether emergency action is necessary, the local authority or the police should always consider the needs of other children in the same household or in the household of an alleged perpetrator.

The local authority in whose area a child is found in circumstances that require emergency action (the first authority) is responsible for taking emergency action. If the child is looked after by, or the subject of a child protection plan in another authority, the first authority must consult the authority responsible for the child. Only when the second local authority explicitly accepts responsibility (to be followed up in writing) is the first authority relieved of its responsibility to take emergency action.

Multi-agency working

Planned emergency action will normally take place following an immediate strategy discussion. Social workers, the police or NSPCC should:

- initiate a strategy discussion to discuss planned emergency action. Where a single agency has to act immediately, a strategy discussion should take place as soon as possible after action has been taken
- see the child (this should be done by a practitioner from the agency taking the emergency action) to decide how best to protect them and whether to seek an EPO
- wherever possible, obtain legal advice before initiating legal action, in particular when an EPO is being sought

Related information: For further guidance on EPOs see Chapter 4 of the statutory guidance document for local authorities, [Court orders and pre-proceedings](#) (DfE, April 2014).

Strategy discussion

Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, there should be a strategy discussion involving local authority children's social care (including the residential or fostering service, if the child is looked after), the police, health, and other bodies such as the referring agency, education, early help, or other practitioners involved in supporting the child. This might take the form of a multi-agency meeting and more than one discussion may be necessary. A strategy discussion can take place following a referral or at any other time, including during the assessment process and when new information is received on an already open case.

Purpose

The purpose of a strategy discussion is to determine the child's welfare and plan rapid future action if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

Attendees

A local authority social worker, health practitioners and a police representative should, as a minimum, be involved in the strategy discussion. Other relevant practitioners will depend on the nature of the individual case but may include those who have concerns about the child and/or those involved in the child's life, for example:

- the practitioner or agency which made the referral
- the child's school or nursery
- any health or care services the child or family members are receiving
- youth justice practitioner and/or youth worker
- adult mental health, substance misuse and/or domestic abuse specialist
- British Transport Police representative

All attendees should be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their organisation and agencies. They should be sufficiently skilled and experienced to prepare for and engage with the strategy discussion and be able to critically assess and challenge their own and others' input.

Tasks

The discussion should be used to:

- share, seek and analyse available information
- agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation
- consider whether enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 should be undertaken.

It is for the local authority to decide whether to make enquiries and the strategy discussion should inform this decision.

Where there are grounds to initiate an enquiry under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, decisions should be made as to:

- what further information is needed if an assessment is already underway and how it will be obtained and recorded
- what immediate and short-term action is required to support the child, and who will do what by when
- whether legal action is required

The timescale for the assessment to reach a decision on next steps should be based upon the needs of the individual child, consistent with the local protocol and no longer than **45 working days** from the point of referral into local authority children's social care.

The assessment framework set out earlier on in this chapter should be followed for assessments undertaken under section 47 of the Children Act 1989. The lead practitioner for section 47 enquiries should be a social worker.

Lead practitioners should convene the strategy discussion and make sure they:

- consider the child's welfare and safety, including through speaking to the child, and identifying whether the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm
- decide what information should be shared with the child and family (on the basis that information is not shared if this may jeopardise a police investigation or place the child at risk of harm)
- agree what further action is required, and who will do what by when, where an EPO is in place, or the child is the subject of police powers of protection
- record agreed decisions in accordance with local recording procedures
- follow up actions to make sure what was agreed gets done

Health practitioners should:

- advise about the appropriateness or otherwise of medical assessments, and explain the benefits that arise from assessing previously unmanaged health matters that may be further evidence of neglect or maltreatment
- provide and co-ordinate any specific information from relevant practitioners regarding family health, maternity health, school health mental health, domestic abuse and violence, and substance misuse to assist strategy and decision making
- secure additional expert advice and support from named and/or designated professionals for more complex cases following preliminary strategy discussions
- undertake appropriate examinations or observations, and further investigations or tests, to determine how the child's health or development may be impaired

The Police should:

- discuss the basis for any criminal investigation, including both reactive (where there is evidence to suggest a crime has been committed) and proactive (where further activity is required to establish if a crime has occurred), and any relevant processes that other organisations and agencies might need to know about, including the timing and methods of evidence-gathering
- lead the criminal investigation where joint enquiries take place with the local authority children's social care leading for the section 47 enquires and assessment of the child's welfare

Initiating section 47 enquiries

A section 47 enquiry is carried out by undertaking or continuing with an assessment in accordance with the guidance set out in this chapter.

Local authority social workers should lead assessments under section 47 of the Children Act 1989. The police, health practitioners, teachers and school staff and other relevant practitioners should help the local authority in undertaking its enquiries.

Purpose

A section 47 enquiry is initiated to decide whether, and what type of action is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child who is suspected to be suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm.

Lead practitioners should:

- lead the assessment in accordance with this guidance
- carry out enquiries in a way that minimises distress for the child and family
- see the child who is the subject of concern to ascertain their wishes and feelings, assess their understanding of their situation, assess their relationships and circumstances more broadly, and understand the child's experiences and interactions with others, especially where there are concerns of extra-familial harm
- explain to parents or carers the purpose, process and potential outcome of the enquiries and be prepared to answer questions openly, unless to do so would affect the safety and welfare of the child
- interview parents or carers and determine the wider social and environmental factors that might impact on them and their child, including extra-familial contexts
- systematically gather information about the child's and family's history
- analyse the findings of the assessment and evidence about what interventions are likely to be most effective with other relevant practitioners
- determine the child's needs and the level of risk of harm faced by the child to inform what help should be provided and act to provide that help
- follow the guidance set out in "Achieving best evidence in criminal proceedings: guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special

measures”, where a decision has been made to undertake a joint interview of the child as part of any criminal investigation¹²⁰

Health practitioners should:

- provide appropriate specialist assessments, for example, paediatric or forensic medical assessments, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and/or child psychologists may be involved in specific assessments relating to the child’s developmental progress. The lead health practitioner (probably a consultant paediatrician, or possibly the child’s GP) may need to request and co-ordinate these assessments
- ensure appropriate treatment and follow up health concerns, such as administering missing vaccines

The Police should:

- help other organisations and agencies understand the reasons for concerns about the child’s safety and welfare by sharing information and analysis
- decide whether or not police investigations reveal grounds for instigating criminal proceedings
- make available to other practitioners any other relevant information gathered or known to inform discussions about the child’s welfare
- follow the guidance set out in “Achieving best evidence in criminal proceedings: guidance” on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures, where a decision has been made to undertake a joint interview of the child as part of the criminal investigation

All involved practitioners should:

- contribute to the assessment as required, providing information and analysis about the child and family
- consider whether a joint enquiry or investigation team may need to speak to a child victim without the knowledge of the parent or carers
- approach the work with parents and carers in line with the principles in chapter 1
- seek advice and guidance as required and in line with local practice

¹²⁰ [Achieving best evidence in criminal proceedings: guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures](#) (2011).

Outcome of section 47 enquiries

The lead practitioner (social worker) is responsible for deciding what action to take and how to proceed following section 47 enquiries. They should make these decisions based on multi-agency discussions informed by the voice of the child.

If local authority children's social care decides not to proceed with a child protection conference, then other practitioners involved with the child and family have the right to request that local authority children's social care convene a conference if they have serious concerns that a child's welfare may not be adequately safeguarded. As a last resort, the safeguarding partners should have in place a quick and straightforward means of resolving differences of opinion.

Where concerns of significant harm are not substantiated

Lead practitioners should:

- discuss the case with the child, parents and other practitioners and be prepared to answer questions openly and be clear on next steps
- discuss whether support from any services may be helpful and help secure it
- consider whether the child's health and development should be re-assessed regularly against specific objectives and decide who has responsibility for doing this
- discuss with the family whether they wish to be referred to a family group decision-making forum, such as a family group conference, to determine ongoing support for the child and family

All involved practitioners should:

- participate in further discussions as necessary
- contribute to the development of any plan as appropriate
- provide services as specified in the plan for the child
- review the impact of services delivered as agreed in the plan
- approach the work with parents and carers in line with the principles set out in chapter 1 of this guidance
- seek advice and guidance as required and in line with local practice guidance
- consider the plans for ongoing assessment and reviewing the child's circumstances

Where concerns of significant harm are substantiated, and the child is judged to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm:

Lead practitioners should:

- convene an initial child protection conference (see next section for details). The timing of this conference should depend on the urgency of the case and respond to the needs of the child and the nature and severity of the harm they may be facing. The initial child protection conference should take place within 15 working days of a strategy discussion, or the strategy discussion at which section 47 enquiries were initiated if more than one has been held
- consider which practitioners with specialist knowledge or relevant professional disciplines should be invited to participate so that the plan will meet the child's needs
- seek to communicate the outcome and rationale to the referring practitioner or agency, and give particular consideration to whether they should be included in the child protection conference
- ensure that the child and their parents understand the purpose and who will attend, parents should be given appropriate information to support their participation in the conference
- help prepare the child if they are attending or making representations through a third party to the conference
- give information about advocacy agencies and explain that the family may bring an advocate, friend, or supporter

All involved practitioners should:

- be sufficiently skilled and experienced to prepare for and engage with the child protection conference, and able to critically assess and challenge their own and others' input
- contribute to the information their agency provides ahead of the conference, setting out the nature of the organisations or agency's involvement with the child and family
- offer clear analysis based on their perspective
- consider, in conjunction with the police and the appointed conference chair, whether the report can and should be shared with the parents and if so when
- approach the work with parents and carers in line with the principles set out in chapter 1 of this guidance
- attend the conference when invited and participate in decision-making
- seek advice and guidance as required and in line with local practice guidance

Initial child protection conferences

Following section 47 enquiries, an initial child protection conference brings together family members (and the child where appropriate), with the supporters, advocates, and practitioners most involved with the child and family, to make decisions about the child's future safety, health and development. If concerns relate to an unborn child, consideration should be given as to whether to hold a child protection conference prior to the child's birth.

Purpose

To bring together and analyse, in a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary meeting, all relevant information and plan how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child and protect them from harm. It is the responsibility of the conference to make recommendations on how organisations and agencies work together to safeguard the child in future.

Practitioners and parents should be provided with clear and accurate information about the conference process to support effective planning. All practitioners should approach the work with parents and carers in line with the principles set out in chapter 1 of this guidance.

Conference tasks include:

- appointing a lead statutory body (either local authority children's social care or NSPCC) and a lead social worker, who should be experienced and an employee of the lead statutory body
- identifying membership of the core group of practitioners and family members who will develop and implement the child protection plan
- establishing timescales for meetings of the core group, production of a child protection plan and for child protection review meetings
- agreeing an outline child protection plan, with clear actions and timescales, including a clear sense of how much improvement is needed, by when, so that success can be judged clearly

The conference chair:

- is accountable to the Director of Children's Services, where possible the same person should chair subsequent child protection reviews
- should be a practitioner, independent of operational and/or line management responsibilities for the case
- should meet the child and parents in advance to ensure they understand the issues, the purpose, the process, and possible outcomes of the conference
- should be prepared to answer questions openly
- should approach the work with parents and carers in line with the principles set out in chapter 1 of this guidance
- should consider whether members of the family network should attend and participate in the conference
- should ensure all participants are encouraged to contribute views independently

Lead practitioners should:

- convene, attend, and present information about the reason for the conference, their understanding of the child's needs, parental capacity, family and environmental context (including extra-familial contexts), and evidence of how the child has been abused, neglected, or exploited and its impact on their health and development
- analyse the information to enable informed decisions about what action is necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child who is the subject of the conference
- share the conference information with the child and family beforehand (where appropriate)
- prepare a report for the conference on the child and family which sets out and analyses what is known about the child and family and the local authority's recommendation
- record conference decisions and recommendations and ensure action follows

All involved practitioners should:

- work together to safeguard the child from harm in the future, taking timely, effective action according to the plan agreed
- attend and present information about their understanding of the child's needs, parental capacity, family, and environmental factors (including extra-familial contexts) and evidence of how the child has been abused, neglected, or exploited and its impact on their health and development
- bring their agency perspective, expertise and challenge and contribute to decisions about actual or likely significant harm and actions to address by contributing to the plan to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child who is the subject of the conference

Safeguarding partners should:

- monitor the effectiveness of child protection conference arrangements

The child protection plan

Actions and responsibilities following the initial child protection conference

Purpose:

The aim of the child protection plan is to:

- ensure the child is safe from harm (including inside and outside of the home, and online) and prevent them from suffering further harm
- promote the child's health and development
- support the parents, family, and the family network to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child
- set out the support and resources to be provided by each agency to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child

Local authority children's social care should:

- designate a social worker to be the lead practitioner as they carry statutory responsibility for the child's welfare
- consider the evidence and decide what legal action to take if any, where a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm
- define the local protocol for timeliness of circulating plans after the child protection conference

Lead practitioners should:

- be the lead for multi-agency and multi-disciplinary work with the child and family, co-ordinating the contribution of family members, including through family group decision-making such as family group conferences, and practitioners into putting the child protection plan into effect
- support multi-agency and multi-disciplinary practitioners to contribute to the development of the outline child protection plan into a more detailed multi-agency plan and circulate to all relevant practitioners (and family where appropriate)
- ensure the child protection plan is aligned and integrated with any associated offender risk management plan
- undertake direct work with the child and family in accordance with the child protection plan, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings, and the views of the parents in so far as they are consistent with the child's welfare

- approach work with parents and carers in line with the principles set out in chapter 1
- complete the child's and family's in-depth assessment, securing contributions from core group members and other practitioners as necessary
- undertake direct work with the family network, for example, through family group decision-making such as family group conferences, to consider how the family network can support the plan and update the plan accordingly
- explain the plan to the child in a manner which is in accordance with their age and understanding and agree the plan with the child
- if needed, inform the relevant embassy if the child has links to a foreign country
- co-ordinate progress reviews against the planned outcomes set out in the plan, updating as required. The first review should be held within three months of the initial conference and further reviews at intervals of no more than six months for as long as the child remains subject of a child protection plan
- record decisions and actions agreed at core group meetings as well as the written views of those who were not able to attend and follow up those actions to ensure they take place. The child protection plan should be updated as necessary
- lead core group activity

The core group should:

- meet within 10 working days from the initial child protection conference if the child is the subject of a child protection plan
- further develop the outline child protection plan, based on assessment findings, and set out what needs to change, by how much, and by when in order for the child to be safe and have their needs met
- decide what steps need to be taken, and by whom, to complete the in-depth assessment to inform decisions about the child's safety and welfare
- share information about relevant multi-agency and multi-disciplinary resources and services available, agree what should be provided to the child and parents as part of the plan and how this will be funded. Practitioners should agree how impact will be assessed
- implement the child protection plan and take joint responsibility for carrying out the agreed tasks, monitoring progress and outcomes, and refining the plan as needed

Child protection review conference

The review conference procedures for preparation, decision-making and other procedures should be the same as those for an initial child protection conference.

Purpose:

To review whether the child is continuing to suffer or is likely to suffer significant harm and review developmental progress against child protection plan outcomes.

To consider whether the child protection plan should continue or should be changed.

Lead practitioners should:

- attend and lead the organisation of the conference
- determine when the review conference should be held within three months of the initial conference, and thereafter at maximum intervals of six months
- provide information to enable informed decisions about what action is necessary to continue to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child, and the effectiveness and impact of action taken so far
- share the conference information with the child and family beforehand, where appropriate, and ensure that they understand the information provided
- approach work with parents and carers in line with the principles set out in chapter 1
- engage the family network where this is appropriate to support the child. If there is family group decision-making, such as a family group conference, parents and family networks should have the opportunity to prepare for it in advance
- record conference outcomes
- decide whether to initiate family court proceedings (all the children in the household should be considered, even if concerns are only expressed about one child) if the child is considered to be suffering significant harm

All involved practitioners should:

- attend, when invited, and provide details of their involvement with the child and family
- produce reports for the child protection review. This information will provide an overview of work undertaken by family members and practitioners and evaluate the impact on the child's welfare against the planned outcomes set out in the child protection plan
- approach work with parents and carers in line with the principles set out in chapter 1
- be sufficiently skilled and experienced to prepare for and engage with the review, and able to critically assess and challenge their own and other's input

Discontinuing the child protection plan

A child should no longer be the subject of a child protection plan if:

- it is judged that the child is no longer continuing to, or is likely to, suffer significant harm and therefore no longer requires safeguarding by means of a child protection plan
- the child and family have moved permanently to another local authority area. In such cases, the receiving local authority should convene a child protection conference within 15 working days of being notified of the move. Only after this event may the original local authority discontinue its child protection
- the child has reached the age of 18 years (to end the child protection plan, the local authority should have a review around the child's birthday, and this should be planned in advance), has died, or has permanently left the United Kingdom

Lead practitioners should:

- notify, as a minimum, all agency representatives who were invited to attend the initial child protection conference that led to the plan
- seek input on the decision to discontinue from other core group members and ensure that all practitioners who are involved in supporting the child and parents are notified
- consider whether support services are still required and discuss with the child, parents, family, and family network as appropriate what might be needed, based on a re-assessment of the child's needs, including where this may involve transition between child and adult services

Initiating pre-proceedings

Once the child protection process has been carried out, it may be deemed by the local authority that there is still not sufficient protection of the child by the parents and that the ‘threshold’¹²¹ for care proceedings has been met in principle. In this instance, the local authority should determine whether to initiate pre-proceedings and follow the ‘Court orders and pre-proceedings guidance for local authorities’¹²². This decision should be informed by engagement with other relevant agencies. During this period, the local authority should offer family group decision-making, such as family group conferences, to continue to explore potential placements within the family network and to clarify the realistic options available for the child. At pre-proceedings, records of key discussions with the family can be used as evidence of decision-making¹²³.

The pre-proceedings process acts as the final opportunity for parents to avoid care proceedings. Whilst pre-proceedings may be initiated at this final stage as per flow chart 6, where the local authority considers the “threshold” for care proceedings to be met, proceedings can be initiated at any stage.

The local authority should work in partnership with families and, where possible, any extra support or services needed to support the family should be identified and put in place. There should be clear expectations set with parents about the changes they are required to make.

Link to the full statutory guidance on court orders and pre-proceedings can be found in Appendix B of this document, titled “Children Act 1989: court orders and pre-proceedings”.

When initiating pre-proceedings, practitioners should review Practice Direction 12A, the link can also be found in Appendix B. The pre-proceedings checklist in this Practice Direction outlines the documentation that must be prepared in pre-proceedings or before and submitted as part of the local authority application for a court order.

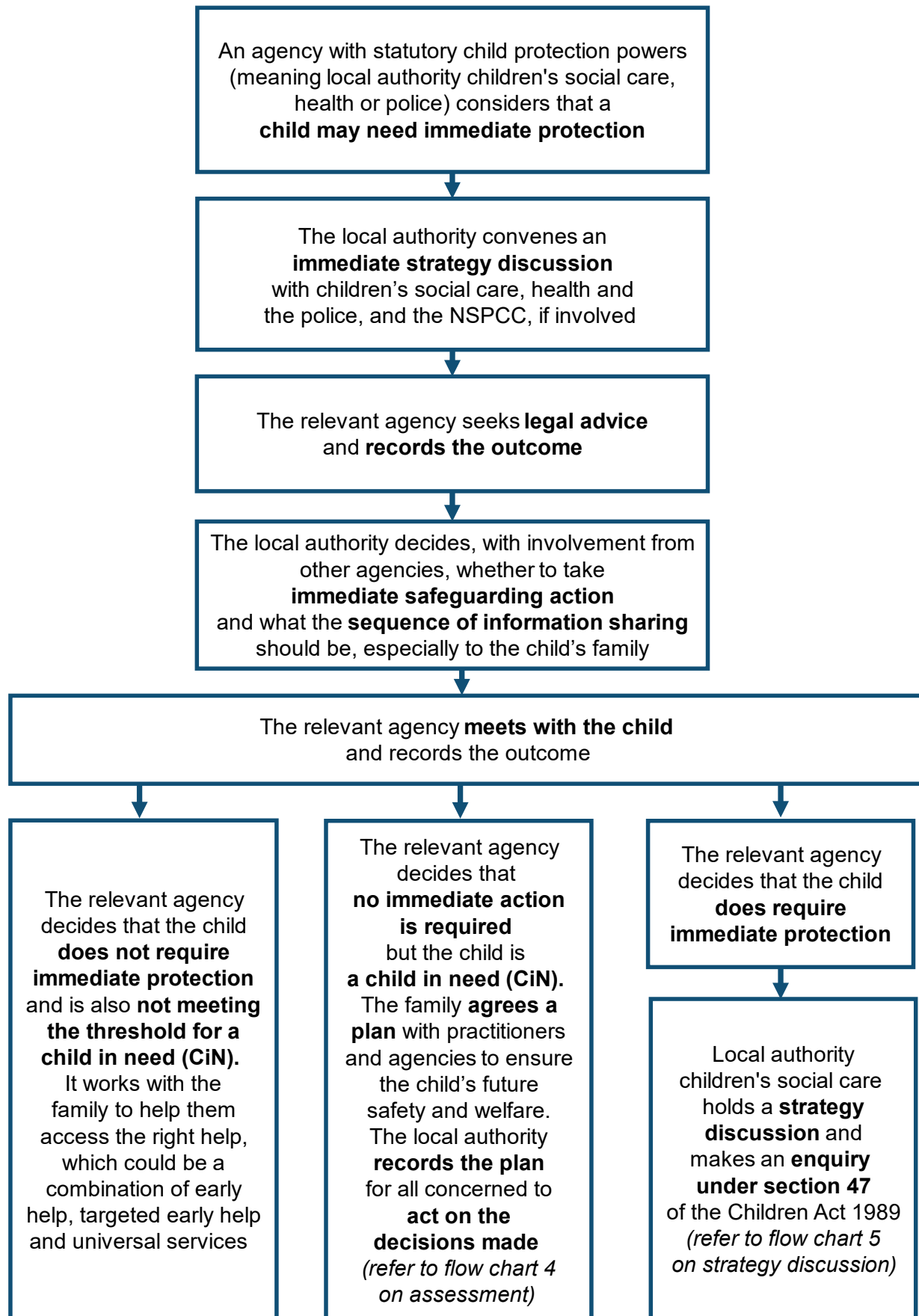
Practitioners and strategic leads can also refer to the family justice hub for access to resources and tools to support the delivery of best practice in pre-proceedings. A link to these resources can be found in Appendix B, titled “Pre-proceedings and family justice hub”.

¹²¹ [The Children Act 1989 Section 31 \(2\)](#)

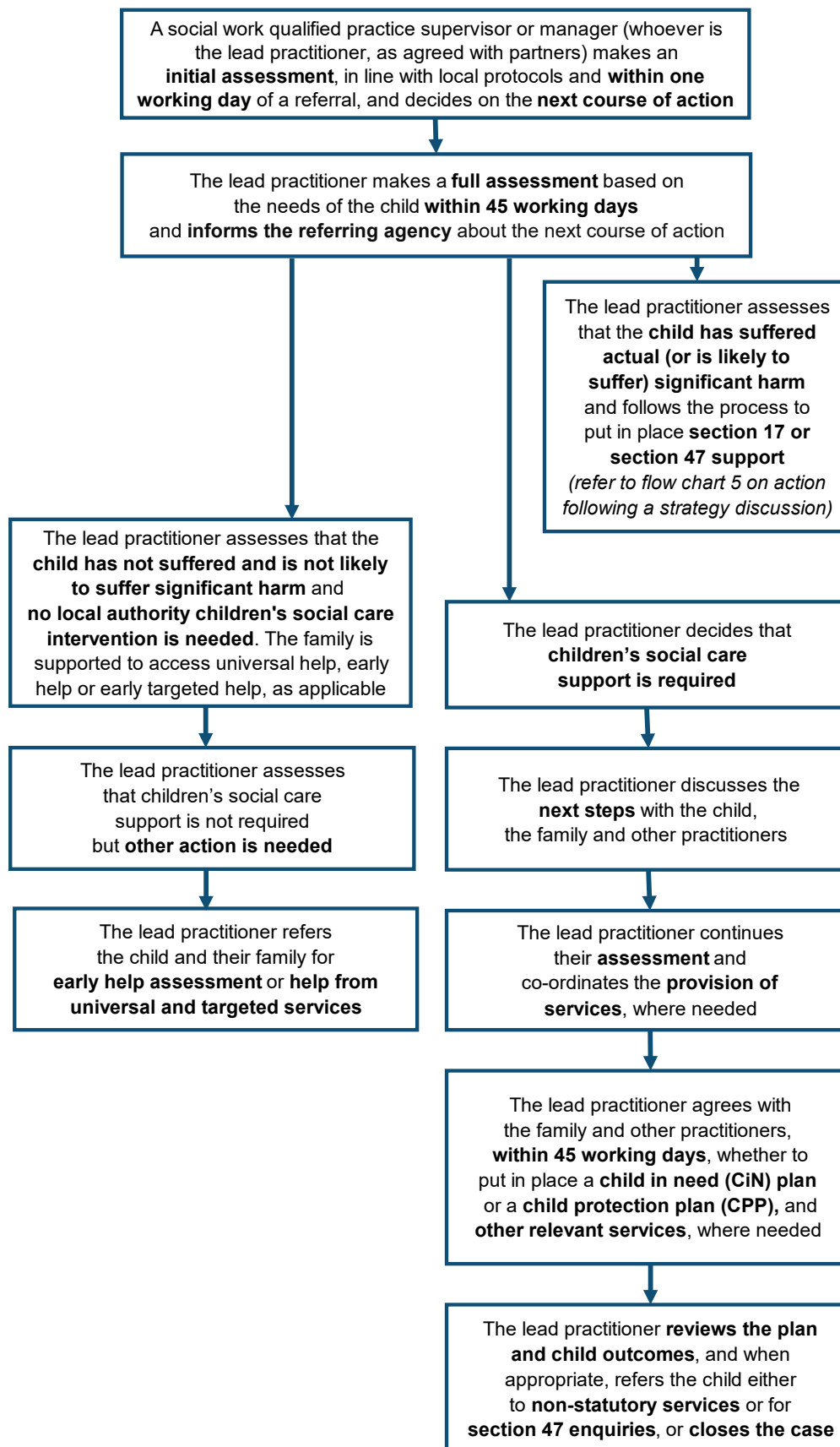
¹²² [Court Orders and Pre-proceedings for Local Authorities \(2014\)](#)

¹²³ [Practice direction 12A – Care supervision and other part 4 proceedings: guide to case management.](#)

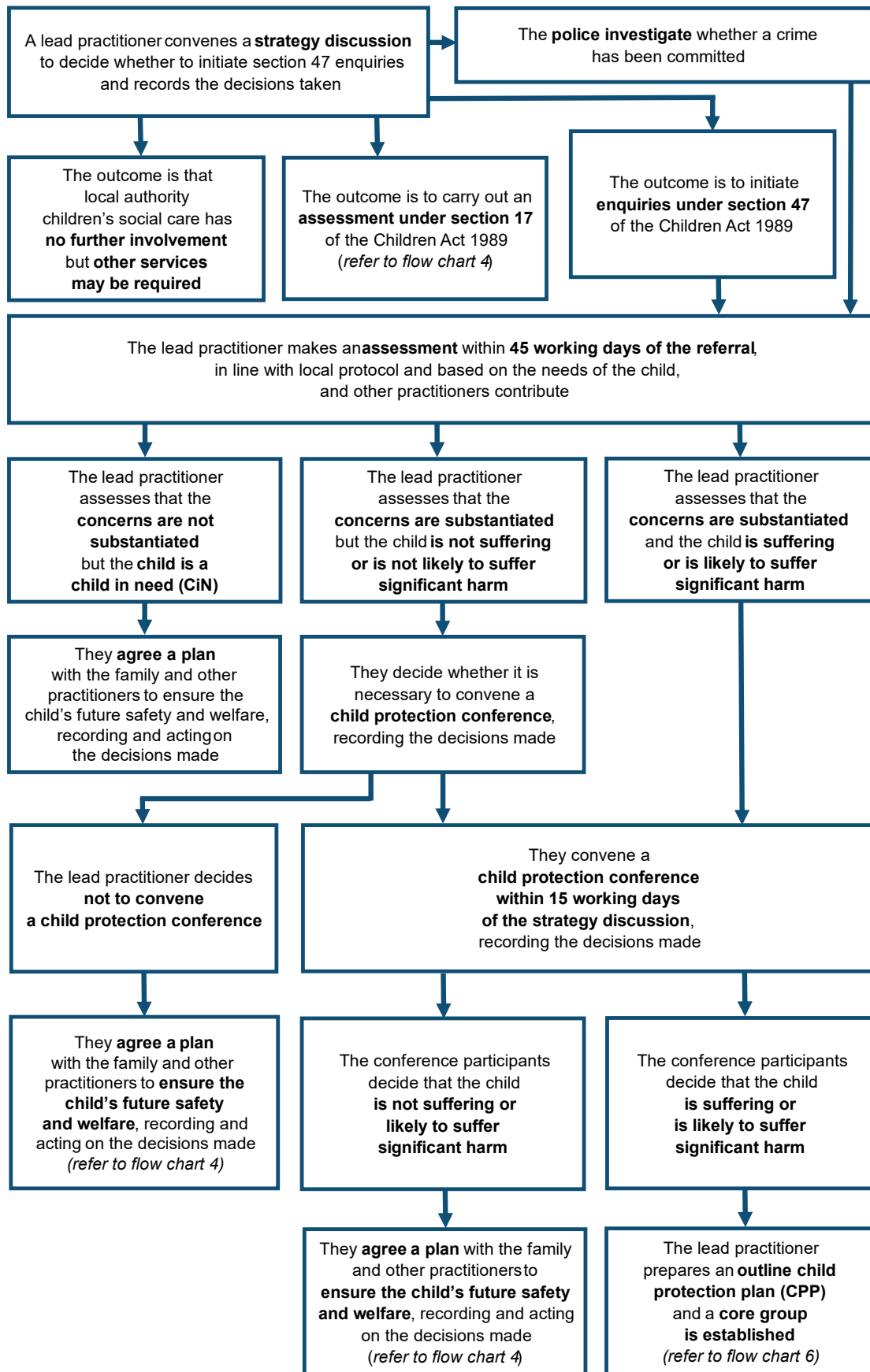
Flow chart 3: Immediate protection



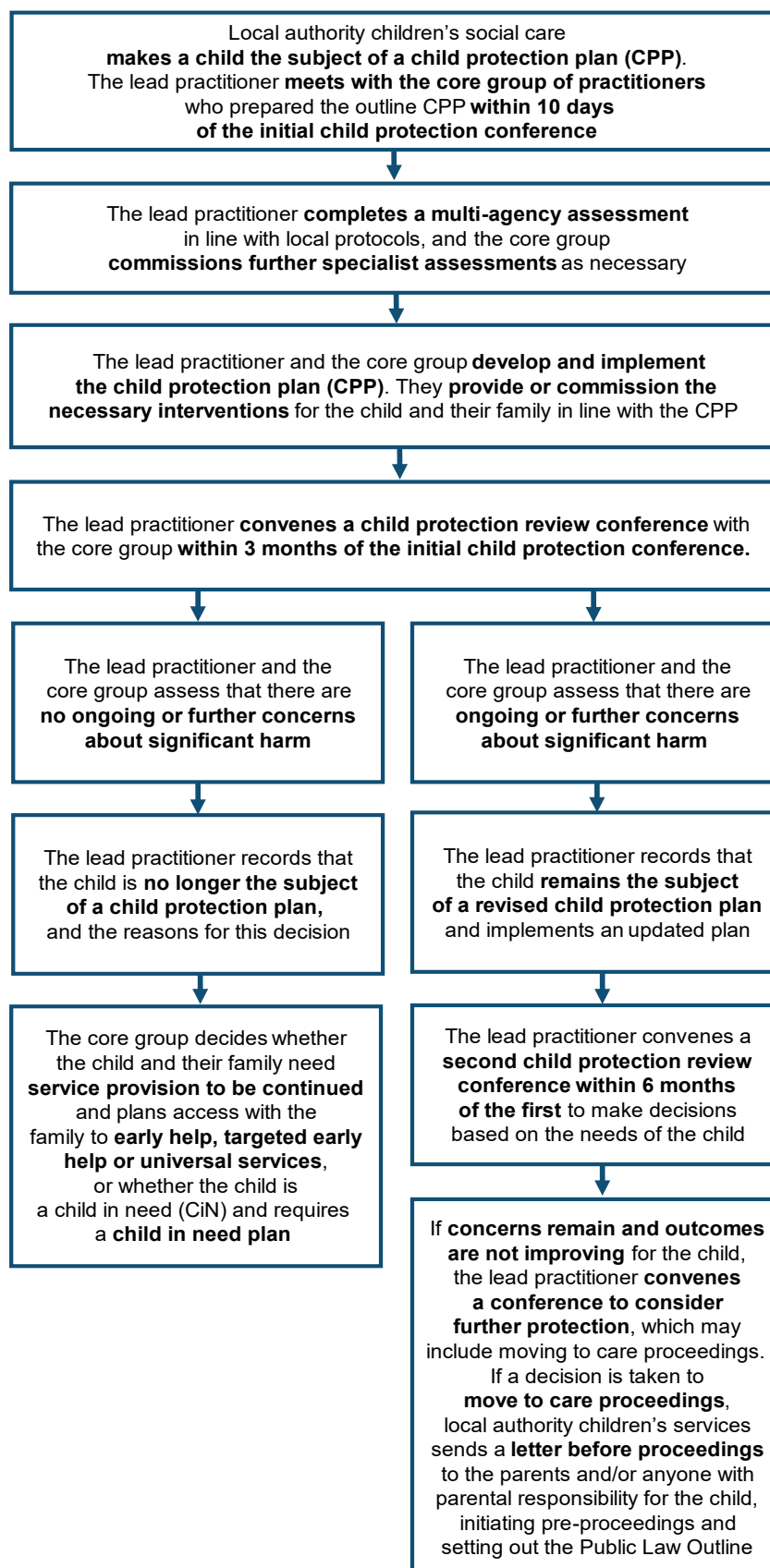
Flow chart 4: Action taken for an assessment of a child under the Children Act 1989



Flow chart 5: Action following a strategy meeting



Flow chart 6: What happens after the child protection conference, including review?



Chapter 4: Organisational responsibilities

220. A range of individual organisations and agencies working with children and families have specific statutory duties to promote the welfare of children and ensure they are protected from harm. These duties, as applied to individual organisations and agencies, are set out in this chapter.

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004

Places duties on a range of organisations, agencies, and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

221. Section 11 places a duty on:

- local authorities and district councils that provide children's and other types of services, including children's and adult social care, public health, housing, sport, culture and leisure services, licensing authorities and youth services
- NHS organisations and agencies and the independent sector, including NHS England, ICBs, NHS Trusts, NHS Foundation Trusts and general practitioners
- the police, including Police and Crime Commissioners and the chief officer of each police force in England and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime where they exist
- the British Transport Police
- the Probation Service
- governors or directors of prisons and young offender institutions (YOIs)
- directors of secure training centres (STCs)
- youth offending teams (YOTs)

222. These organisations and agencies should have in place arrangements that reflect the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including:

- a clear line of accountability for the commissioning and/or provision of services designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- a senior board level lead with the required knowledge, skills, and expertise or sufficiently qualified and experienced to take leadership responsibility for the organisation's or agency's safeguarding arrangements
- a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, both in individual decisions and the development of services

- clear whistleblowing procedures, which reflect the principles in Sir Robert Francis' 'Freedom to Speak Up Review' and are suitably referenced in staff training and codes of conduct, and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to be addressed¹²⁴
- clear escalation policies for staff to follow when their child safeguarding concerns are not being addressed within their organisation or by other agencies
- arrangements which set out clearly the processes for sharing information, with other practitioners and with safeguarding partners
- a designated practitioner (or, for health provider organisations/agencies, named practitioners). Please see Health Practitioners with Specific Duties for more detail) for child safeguarding. Their role is to support other practitioners in their organisations and agencies to recognise the needs of children, including protection from possible abuse or neglect. Designated practitioner roles should always be explicitly defined in job descriptions. Practitioners should be given sufficient time, funding, supervision, and support to fulfil their child welfare and safeguarding responsibilities effectively
- safe recruitment practices and ongoing safe working practices for individuals whom the organisation or agency permit to work regularly with children, including policies on when to obtain a criminal record check
- appropriate supervision and support for staff, including undertaking safeguarding training
- creating a culture of safety, equality, and protection within the services they provide

In addition:

- employers are responsible for ensuring that their staff are competent to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and creating an environment where staff feel able to raise concerns and feel supported in their safeguarding role
- staff should be given a mandatory induction, which includes familiarisation with child protection responsibilities and the procedures to be followed if anyone has any concerns about a child's safety or welfare
- all practitioners should have regular reviews of their own practice to ensure they have knowledge, skills and expertise that improve over time

¹²⁴ [Sir Robert Francis' freedom to speak up review](#)

People in positions of trust

223. Organisations and agencies working with children and families should have clear policies for dealing with allegations against people who work with children. Such policies should make a clear distinction between an allegation, a concern about the quality of care or practice, or a complaint. An allegation may relate to a person who works with children who has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

224. County level and unitary local authorities should ensure that allegations against people who work with children are not dealt with in isolation. Any action necessary to address corresponding welfare concerns in relation to the child or children involved should be taken without delay and in a co-ordinated manner. Local authorities should, in addition, have designated a particular officer, or team of officers known as local authority designated officers (LADO), (either as part of local multi-agency arrangements or otherwise), to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people who work with children. Any such officer, or team of officers, should be sufficiently qualified and experienced to be able to fulfil this role effectively, for example, qualified social workers. Any new appointments to such a role, other than current or former designated officers moving between local authorities, should be qualified social workers. Arrangements should be put in place to ensure that any allegations about those who work with children are passed to the designated officer, or team of officers, without delay.

225. Local authorities should put in place arrangements to provide advice and guidance to employers, and voluntary organisations and agencies on how to deal with allegations against people who work with children. Local authorities should also ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place to liaise effectively with the police and other organisations and agencies to monitor the progress of cases and ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process.

226. Employers, school governors, trustees and voluntary organisations should ensure that they have clear policies in place setting out the process, including timescales for investigation and what support and advice will be available to individuals against whom allegations have been made. Any allegation against people who work with children should be reported immediately to a senior manager within the organisation or agency. The

designated officer, or team of officers, should also be informed within one working day of all allegations that come to an employer's attention or that are made directly to the police. If the person is subject to registration or regulation by a professional body or regulator, for example by the Care Quality Commission or Ofsted, the designated officer should advise on whether a referral to that body is appropriate.

227. If an organisation or agency removes an individual (paid worker or unpaid volunteer) from work in regulated activity¹²⁵ with children (or would have, had the person not left first) because the person poses a risk of harm to children, the organisation or agency should make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service to consider whether to add the individual to the barred list. In some circumstances, organisations and agencies will be under a legal duty to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service¹²⁶.

228. This applies irrespective of whether a referral has been made to local authority children's social care and/or the designated officer, or team of officers. It is an offence to fail to make a referral without good reason¹²⁷.

Individual organisational responsibilities

229. In addition to these section 11 duties, which apply to a number of named organisations and agencies, further safeguarding duties are also placed on individual organisations and agencies through other statutes. The key duties that fall on each individual organisation are set out below.

Schools, colleges and other educational providers

230. The following have duties in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children:

- governing bodies of maintained schools (including maintained nursery schools), and colleges which includes providers of post 16 Education as set out in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009: 16-19 Academies, Special Post-16 institutions and Independent Training Providers¹²⁸
- proprietors of independent schools, (including academies, free schools, and alternative provision academies) and non-maintained special schools. In the case of academies, free schools and alternative provision academies, the proprietor will be the academy trust

¹²⁵ [Regulated activity in relation to children: scope](#)

¹²⁶ [Making barring referrals to the DBS](#)

¹²⁷ Further guidance on referrals to the DBS is available at Appendix B

¹²⁸ [Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009](#)

- management committees of pupil referral units (PRUs)¹²⁹
- senior leadership teams

231. This guidance applies in its entirety to all schools

232. Schools, colleges, and other educational settings must also have regard to statutory guidance ‘Keeping children safe in education’, which provides further guidance as to how they should fulfil their duties in respect of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in their care¹³⁰.

Early years and childcare

233. Early years providers have a duty under section 40 of the Childcare Act 2006¹³¹ to comply with the welfare requirements of the early years foundation stage (EYFS)¹³². Early years providers must ensure that:

- they are alert to any issues of concern in the child’s life
- they implement policies and procedures to safeguard children. This must include an explanation of the action to be taken when there are safeguarding concerns about a child and in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff. The policy must also cover the use of mobile phones and cameras in the setting, that staff complete safeguarding training that enables them to understand their safeguarding policy and procedures, have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues, and recognise signs of potential abuse and neglect
- they have a practitioner who is designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding children within each early years setting and who must liaise with local statutory children’s services as appropriate. This lead must also complete child protection training

Health

234. ICBs are one of the three statutory safeguarding partners as set out in chapter 2. NHS organisations and agencies are subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. Health practitioners are in a strong position to identify welfare needs or safeguarding concerns regarding individual children and, where appropriate, provide support. This includes understanding risk factors, communicating and sharing information effectively with children and families, liaising with other organisations and agencies,

¹²⁹ [Education Act 2002 Section 175](#) for management committees of pupil referral units, by virtue of regulation 3 and paragraph 19A of Schedule 1 to the [Education \(Pupil Referral Units\) \(Application of Enactments\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)

¹³⁰ [Keeping children safe in education](#)

¹³¹ [Childcare Act 2006 Section 40](#)

¹³² [Section 3 – safeguarding and welfare requirements in the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage](#)

assessing needs and capacity, responding to those needs, and contributing to multi-agency assessments and reviews.

235. A wide range of health practitioners have a critical role to play in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including: GPs, primary care practitioners, paediatricians, nurses, health visitors, midwives, public health school nurses, allied health practitioners, those working in maternity, children and young people's mental health, youth custody establishments, adult mental health, sexual, alcohol and drug services for both adults and children, unscheduled and emergency care settings, highly specialised services, and secondary and tertiary care.

236. All staff working in healthcare settings, including those who predominantly treat adults, should receive training to ensure they attain the competences appropriate to their role and follow the relevant professional guidance^{133, 134, 135}.

237. Within the NHS¹³⁶:

- NHS England is responsible for ensuring that the health commissioning system as a whole is working effectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It is accountable for the services it directly commissions or delegates, including healthcare services in the under 18 secure estate (for police custody settings see below in the policing section). NHS England also leads and defines improvement in safeguarding practice and outcomes and should also ensure that there are effective mechanisms for safeguarding partners to raise concerns about the engagement and leadership of the local NHS. Each NHSE region should have a safeguarding lead to ensure regional collaboration and assurance through convening safeguarding forums.
- ICBs are one of the statutory safeguarding partners and the major commissioners of local health services. They are responsible for the provision of effective clinical, professional, and strategic leadership to child safeguarding, including the quality assurance of safeguarding through their contractual arrangements with all provider organisations and agencies, including from independent providers.

¹³³ [Safeguarding Children and Young People: roles and competencies for health care staff](#) (RCN, 2019)

¹³⁴ [Looked after children: Roles and competences of health care staff](#) (RCN, 2020)

¹³⁵ For example, [Protecting children and young people: the responsibilities of all doctors](#) (GMC, 2018) and [Safeguarding children and young people: the RCGP/NSPCC's safeguarding children toolkit for general practice](#) (RCGP, 2018)

¹³⁶ Further guidance on accountabilities for safeguarding children in the NHS is available in [Safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk in the NHS: safeguarding accountability and assurance framework](#) (2022)

Health practitioners with specific duties

238. Detailed descriptions of roles and competencies for health practitioners with specific duties are set out in the relevant Intercollegiate Documents.

Designated health practitioners

239. ICBs should employ, or have in place, a contractual agreement to secure the expertise of designated practitioners, such as dedicated designated doctors and nurses for safeguarding children, and dedicated designated doctors and nurses for looked after children (and designated doctor or paediatrician for unexpected deaths in childhood).

240. In some areas, where the ICB has more than one local authority in its footprint, they may consider 'lead' or 'hosting' arrangements for their designated health professionals, or a clinical network arrangement with the number of designated doctors and nurses for child safeguarding equating to the size and complexity of the child population. Designated doctors and nurses, as senior professionals, clinical experts, and strategic leaders, are a vital source of safeguarding advice and expertise for all relevant organisations and agencies but particularly the ICB, NHS England, and the local authority, and for advice and support to other health practitioners across the health economy. The NHS commissioners and providers should ensure that designated professionals are given sufficient time to be fully engaged, involved, and included in the new safeguarding arrangements.

Named health practitioners

241. All providers of NHS funded health services, including NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts, should identify a dedicated named doctor and a named nurse (and a named midwife if the organisation or agency provides maternity services) for safeguarding children. In the case of ambulance trusts and independent providers, this should be a named practitioner. Named practitioners have a key role in promoting good professional practice within their organisation and agency, providing advice and expertise for fellow practitioners, and ensuring safeguarding training is in place. They should work closely with their organisation's or agency's safeguarding lead on the executive board, designated health professionals for the health economy and other statutory safeguarding partners.

242. ICBs should employ named GPs for safeguarding children to advise and support GP practice safeguarding leads. GP practices should have a lead and deputy lead for safeguarding, who should work closely with the named GP¹³⁷.

Other organisations providing NHS services

243. Other public, voluntary, and independent sector organisations, agencies and social enterprises providing NHS services to children and families should ensure that they follow this guidance.

Police

244. The police are one of the three statutory safeguarding partners as set out in chapter 2 and are subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. Under section 1(8)(h) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011¹³⁸, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) must hold the Chief Constable to account for the exercise of the latter's duties in relation to safeguarding children under sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004.

245. All police officers and other police employees, such as Police Community Support Officers, are well placed to identify early when a child's welfare is at risk and when a child may need protection from harm. Children have the right to the full protection offered by criminal law. In addition to identifying when a child may be a victim of a crime, police officers should be aware of the effect of other incidents which might pose safeguarding risks to children and where officers should pay particular attention. Harm may be indirect and non-physical as, for example, in the case of some domestic abuse which may involve controlling or coercive behaviour, or economic abuse. An officer attending a domestic abuse incident should be aware of the effect of such behaviour on any children in the household and recognise that children who see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse are victims in their own right¹³⁹.

246. Children who are encountered as offenders, or alleged offenders, are entitled to the same safeguards and protection as any other child and due regard should be given to their safety and welfare at all times. These children are often victims of harm, for example, children who are apprehended in possession of Class A drugs may be victims of exploitation through county lines drug dealing. Consideration should be given to the potential impact an arrest or seizure of items may have upon a child's immediate and ongoing safety and whether there is actual or likely significant harm. This might include

¹³⁷ [Child safeguarding toolkit: Introduction | Home \(rcgp.org.uk\)](https://www.rcgp.org.uk/child-safeguarding-toolkit/introduction/)

¹³⁸ [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 Section 1 \(8\) \(h\)](#)

¹³⁹ [Domestic Abuse Act 2021, section 3](#)

self-harm, threats, or violence from criminal gangs to the child and their family following loss of money and/or drugs and a “debt” can be created which is also known as debt bondage¹⁴⁰.

247. The police will hold important information about children who may be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, as well as those who cause such harm. They should always share this information with other organisations and agencies where this is necessary to protect children. Similarly, they can expect other organisations and agencies to share information to enable the police to carry out their duties. All police forces should have officers trained in child abuse investigation and safeguarding responsibilities. Officers making decisions about whether children are referred into children’s social care should be confident in understanding and applying the local threshold document (see chapter 2).

248. The police have a power to remove a child to suitable accommodation under section 46 of the Children Act 1989, if they have reasonable cause to believe that the child would otherwise be likely to suffer significant harm. Statutory powers to enter premises can be used with this section 46 power, and in circumstances to ensure the child’s immediate protection¹⁴¹. Police powers can help in emergency situations, but should be used only when necessary and, wherever possible, the decision to remove a child from a parent or carer should be made by a court. This can include circumstances where the significant harm is from outside the home^{142 143}.

249. Restrictions and safeguards exist in relation to the circumstances and periods for which children may be taken to or held in police stations. PCCs are responsible for health commissioning in police custody settings and should always ensure that this meets the needs of individual children.

250. Using Civil Orders powers available to police and partners can be an effective tool to disrupt those who are targeting children for criminal purposes. The Child Exploitation

¹⁴⁰ Further information on “debt bondage” can be found at [County lines offending: the Crown Prosecution Service](#)

¹⁴¹ Potential powers of entry include those under:

- [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(PACE\) section 17\(1\)\(b\)](#), a constable may enter and search any premises for the purpose of arresting a person for an indictable offence
- [PACE section 17\(1\)\(e\)](#), a constable may also enter and search premises for the purpose of saving life or limb or preventing serious damage to property – in the exercise of [police protection](#) powers, if entry to premises is refused, this section may give adequate powers
- common law, where a constable has the power to enter premises to prevent or deal with a breach of the peace (which is preserved under [PACE section 17\(6\)](#))
- [Children Act 1989 section 48](#), a warrant may be obtained to search for children who may be in need of emergency protection

¹⁴² A child under police protection should not be brought to a police station except in exceptional circumstances, such as a lack of immediately available local authority accommodation, and then only for a short period. [College of Policing: Police response to concern for a child College of Policing \(www.college.police.uk\)](#)

¹⁴³ [College of Policing: Arrest and other positive approaches](#); [College of Policing: Protective measures and civil orders](#)

Disruption Toolkit¹⁴⁴ lists a range of useful tools available to frontline professionals in disrupting child criminal exploitation activity. For example, Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders, and Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders can place prohibitions on the offender in order to disrupt child criminal exploitation activity.

Adult social care services

251. Local authorities provide services to adults who are themselves responsible for children who may be in need. These services are subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. When staff are providing services to adults, they should ask whether there are children in the family and take actions to respond if the children need help or protection from harm. Additional parenting support could be particularly needed where the adults have mental health problems, misuse drugs or alcohol, are in a violent relationship, have complex needs or have learning difficulties.

252. Local authority services to adults must consider whether any children are providing care to the adult and whether the young carers are in need of support¹⁴⁵. In such cases, or when requested by a parent or the young carer, the authority is under a duty to conduct a young carers' needs assessment under section 17ZA of the Children Act 1989 (see chapter 3, paragraphs 192-193).

253. Adults with parental responsibilities for disabled children have a right to a separate parent carer's needs assessment under section 17ZD of the Children Act 1989. Adults who do not have parental responsibility, but are caring for a disabled child, are entitled to an assessment on their ability to provide, or to continue to provide, care for that disabled child under the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995¹⁴⁶. That assessment must also consider whether the carer works or wishes to work, or whether they wish to engage in any education, training, or recreation activities.

254. Adult social care services should liaise with children's social care services to ensure that there is a joined-up approach when both carrying out such assessments and in the provision of support to families where there are young carers or parent carers.

Housing services

255. Housing and homelessness services in local authorities and others, such as environmental health organisations, are subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. Practitioners working in these services may become aware of conditions that

¹⁴⁴ The government's [child exploitation disruption toolkit](#) was updated in July 2022 to set out tools and tactics to support the use of statutory powers such as civil orders that are available to frontline safeguarding agencies.

¹⁴⁵ [The Care and Support \(Assessment\) Regulations 2014 Regulation 4](#)

¹⁴⁶ [Carers \(Recognition and Services\) Act 1995](#)

could have or are having an adverse impact on children. Under Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004¹⁴⁷, authorities must take account of the impact of health and safety hazards in housing on vulnerable occupants, including children, when deciding on the action to be taken by landlords to improve conditions. Housing authorities also have an important role to play in safeguarding vulnerable young people, including young people who are pregnant, leaving care or a secure establishment.

Homelessness duty

256. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas.

257. It added section 213B into the Housing Act 1996¹⁴⁸, which is a duty on certain public authorities to refer to a housing authority service users they consider are or may be homeless or threatened with homelessness (meaning it is likely they will become homeless within 56 days).

258. The duty to refer applies to all social services functions, including early help, leaving care and child protection, and is intended to increase early identification and intervention, which is critical for safeguarding against homelessness. Earlier intervention can help prevent children becoming homeless, and the possibility of them being considered 'intentionally homeless' and so not owed a long-term housing duty.

259. Before making a referral, a public authority must:

- have the individual's consent to the referral (although referrals without consent may be made in order to safeguard children or vulnerable adults, in accordance with local procedures)
- allow the individual to identify the housing authority in England which they would like the notification to be made to
- have consent from the individual that their contact details can be supplied so the housing authority can contact them regarding the referral

260. The referral to a housing authority must include the individual's name, contact details, and the agreed reason for referral (for example, that the individual is homeless or at risk of homelessness). Further referral information may include:

¹⁴⁷ [Housing Act 2004 Part 1](#)

¹⁴⁸ [Housing Act 1996 Section 213B](#)

- whether an individual is already homeless, and if not when they are likely to become homeless
- whether the individual is at risk of rough sleeping on the date the referral is made and if so whether this is imminent
- risk assessment information, considering risks to the individual and to others
- key medical information where relevant

261. Full guidance can be found in the Homelessness Code of Guidance¹⁴⁹. Further guidance on how social care and housing authorities should work together to prevent those aged 16 and 17 from becoming homeless, and how the duty to refer should operate in this context, can be found in the 'Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation guidance'¹⁵⁰.

British Transport Police

262. The British Transport Police (BTP) is subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. In its role as the national police for the railways, the BTP can provide a useful insight beyond the geographical footprint of local authority areas. They also play an important role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, especially in identifying and supporting children who have run away, who are missing, at risk of suicide, sexual abuse or who are being exploited by criminal gangs, such as the movement of drugs through county lines drug dealing.

263. The BTP should carry out its duties in accordance with its legislative powers, working closely with safeguarding partners. This includes investigating offences perpetrated against children, such as through the Modern Slavery Act 2015 where children have been exploited, removing a child to a suitable place using their police protection powers under the Children Act 1989¹⁵¹, and the protection of children who are truanting from school using powers under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998¹⁵².

The Prison Service

264. The Prison Service, including privately managed prisons, is subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. Prison staff have a responsibility to initiate or follow up a

¹⁴⁹ [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities](#)

¹⁵⁰ [Provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation](#)

¹⁵¹ [Children Act 1989 Section 46](#)

¹⁵² [Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)

child safeguarding enquiry¹⁵³ with children's services at the earliest opportunity for all newly sentenced prisoners. If circumstances for the prisoner have changed, prison staff must make a new child safeguarding enquiry.

265. The Prison Service have a responsibility to identify prisoners who present an ongoing risk to children from within custody and are assessed as a potential or confirmed 'person posing a risk to children' (PPRC)^{154, 155}. Where an individual has been identified as a PPRC, the relevant prison establishment should:

- inform the local authority children's social care service (in the prisoner's home area and the home area of any identified child at risk where this is different) of the prisoner's reception to prison, subsequent transfers, release on temporary licence, and release date and address of the offender
- consult with children's social care about any significant change in circumstances, including if the PPRC initiates a request to change their name
- notify the relevant Probation Service or youth offending team of the offender's PPRC status. Alert the police to the release date and address^{156, 157}
- decide on the level of contact, if any, to be allowed between the PPRC and children based on the prison's child contact risk assessment and prevent or restrict a prisoner's contact with children where necessary. The prison's decision should take into account any risk information provided by other relevant agencies, this may include the police, probation, health, and children's social care
- make referrals to the relevant children's social care department¹⁵⁸ where the child is not known and there are concerns about prisoner contact
- record information children's social care have shared as required in assessments and case notes

266. The primary carer of a child may contact the prison to request a restriction on contact between the prisoner and child. Requests can be made to the HMPPS Unwanted Prisoner Contact Team, contact details are:

¹⁵³ [HMPPS child safeguarding policy framework](#) sets out that a child safeguarding enquiry (sometimes referred to as a safeguarding check) is an official enquiry that HMPPS staff send to local authority's children's services to request information on an individual, child or family.

¹⁵⁴ This applies not just to adult prisons but also to all types of establishments within the secure estate for children, with the same process applying to children who pose a risk to other children.

¹⁵⁵ [HMP public protection manual](#)

¹⁵⁶ If the PPRC have been released under probation supervision, the prison no longer has responsibility for them, and it falls to the relevant Probation Delivery Unit to address and manage the risk in the community.

¹⁵⁷ The management of an individual who presents a risk of harm to children will often be through the prisons multidisciplinary interdepartmental risk management team meetings.

¹⁵⁸ The referral will be sent to the local authority in which the child lives

- email – unwantedprisonercontact@justice.gov.uk
- telephone – 0300 060 6699, Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm
- website – [GOV.UK/stop-prisoner-contact](https://www.gov.uk/stop-prisoner-contact)

267. A prison can monitor a prisoner's communication (including letters and telephone calls) to protect children where it is proportionate and necessary to the risk presented.

268. Prison governors should ensure there is a clear process for children's social care practitioners to engage prisoners who are involved in safeguarding or child protection procedures. This may be via face-to-face visits or virtual conferencing. All prisons have an Offender Management Unit (OMU) with a telephone or functional mailbox which can be found at [Prisons in England and Wales - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/prisons-in-england-and-wales), this should be the first point of contact for agencies who need to contact a prisoner or OMU. Agencies or organisations who need to find a prisoner should follow the instructions outlined at [Find a prisoner - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/find-a-prisoner)

269. Each prison should have arrangements in place that take account of the needs of children who have parents in prison. During a prisoner's first night induction, they will be supported to make suitable care arrangements for any dependent children. Prisons can work with children's social care services and other agencies to contribute to improved outcomes for children who are impacted by parental imprisonment. The Prison Service should:

- provide facilities for children to play whilst visiting a prisoner
- ensure the visitors' area caters for the needs of children and promotes a positive and safe experience
- ask all prisoners during their initial custody screening process whether they have caring responsibilities for any children under the age of 18
- review who is looking after the dependent children of prisoners, and inform children's social care services if they have concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing

270. Prison staff may also use the National Information Centre on Children of Offenders (NICCO) website¹⁵⁹ to find local services who can support children who are impacted by parental imprisonment. Further support for families can be found at [Support for families and friends of prisoners.](https://www.gov.uk/support-for-families-and-friends-of-prisoners)

¹⁵⁹ [National information centre on children of offenders \(NICCO\)](https://www.nicco.org.uk/) is delivered by Barnardo's in partnership with HM Prison and Probation Service

271. Prisons should encourage and assist prisoners to maintain relationships with their families, including children, to support their social rehabilitation wherever it is appropriate and safe to do so¹⁶⁰¹⁶¹.

Mother and baby units in prisons

272. Mother and baby units (MBUs) are discrete specialist accommodation, within some prisons, for female prisoners with children up to age of 18 months or above, where appropriate. Governors or Directors of prisons which have MBUs have a duty of care to the child. When a woman applies for a place on a MBU, the referral for assessment must be sent to children's social care in the mother's home area at the earliest opportunity and must include information on MBU provision and policy¹⁶².

273. The prison should actively engage children's social care to ensure the relevant input into processes and individual cases. Practitioners should be provided with information on the purpose, facilities and support available on the MBU. Opportunities for practitioners to visit the MBU should be offered and encouraged.

274. Prisons must consult children's social care on all MBU Board decisions, including decisions relating to a change in placement, and any other matters relevant to promoting the welfare and safeguarding a child¹⁶³¹⁶⁴.

The Probation Service

275. The Probation Service is a statutory criminal justice agency that supervises adult offenders serving community sentences, or who are subject to licensed supervision following release from custody. Probation staff also deliver resettlement work in prisons, undertake pre-sentence assessments, provide advice to courts, deliver targeted interventions and work with victims. The purpose of the Probation Service is to protect the public by reducing reoffending and improve offender rehabilitation. During the course of their duties, probation practitioners will come into contact with individuals who:

- have offended against a child
- pose a risk of harm to children even though they have not been convicted of an offence against a child

¹⁶⁰ This reflects the requirements of [Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights](#) (ECHR): respect for family life and private life. [Under section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998](#), a public authority is obliged to act compatibly with ECHR rights, including article 8. Both the Secretary of State for Justice and governors are bound by section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998. Prison governors must ensure that the local prison approach to the family-ties strategy is sufficient to ensure compliance with article 8 and section 6.

¹⁶¹ [Strengthening Prisoners Family Ties Policy Framework](#)

¹⁶² [Pregnancy, Mother and Baby Units \(MBUs\), and Maternal Separation from Children up to the Age of Two in Women's Prisons](#)

¹⁶³ [Pregnancy, MBUs and maternal separation in women's prisons Policy Framework](#)

¹⁶⁴ [Pregnancy, Mother and Baby Units \(MBUs\), and Maternal Separation from Children up to the Age of Two in Women's Prisons](#)

- are parents or carers of children
- have regular contact with a child for whom they do not have caring responsibility

276. The timely communication of safeguarding concerns between the Probation Service, children's social care and other agencies is an important part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of a child. On the day an offender is being sentenced, the courts may ask the Probation Service to provide sentencing advice and an assessment of the offender's risk. Probation staff will make child safeguarding enquiries¹⁶⁵ with children's social care about whether they have information about children which may impact on the safety of different sentencing options (for example, the use of an electronically monitored curfew at the home address). They may request a response on the same day. Probation staff should incorporate considerations about the potential impact on children of any proposal they make to the court so that they are safe and appropriate. Probation staff working in prisons and in community teams may also undertake child safeguarding enquiries and should request a quick response if there are concerns about an offender having contact with a child.

277. Probation staff should make child safeguarding enquiries and share information with children's social care to inform sentencing advice and ongoing management of offenders, including the impact any offender may have on the safety or wellbeing of a child. Probation will send child safeguarding enquiries to the local authority in which the child and offender live. Each Probation Delivery Unit (PDU)¹⁶⁶ should have arrangements in place with children's social care for exchanging information. This includes responding to information sharing requests from local authorities regarding prospective foster carers and adoptive parents. If an offender who poses a risk to an identified child moves to another address which is in a different local authority, the probation practitioner should ensure the local authority where the offender lives is made aware. Probation should share the details of the offender and the identified child at risk.

278. The Probation Service ensures every offender undergoes a thorough risk assessment¹⁶⁷ to understand the risk they pose, and the factors related to their offending. Where appropriate this assessment will be informed by a range of agencies, which may include children's social care, police, healthcare services, housing, and other voluntary organisations. Probation practitioners will develop a sentence plan and where necessary

¹⁶⁵ [The HMPPS child safeguarding policy framework](#) sets out that a child safeguarding enquiry (sometimes referred to as a safeguarding check) is an official enquiry that HMPPS staff send to local authority children's social care to request information on an individual, child or family.

¹⁶⁶ Including the National Security Division (NSD). The NSD is part of the Probation Service. It is a specialist division that works across England and Wales in 5 geographical units (Midlands, London/Kent/Surrey/Sussex, Wales, North, East of England/South Central). It manages those offenders who pose the highest risk of harm, including those convicted of terrorism offences or those who pose a national security terrorist risk. Other cohorts managed include some serious organised crime and critical public protection cases.

¹⁶⁷ [HMPPS risk of serious harm assessments and guidance](#) provides information regarding the specialist tools HMPPS practitioners use to assess the risk posed by an offender

a risk management plan (RMP) which contains any specific measures required to manage and reduce the risk of harm to children. When appropriate, the Probation Service should share risk assessments and RMPs with other organisations and agencies involved in the management of the offender's risk. Probation practitioners will also work with children's social care to ensure that RMPs align with child protection and child in need plans.

279. The sentence plan includes specific child safeguarding objectives for those offenders who pose a risk of serious harm to children or where there are child safeguarding concerns. Probation practitioners will also consider how a planned intervention might affect the offender's caring or parental responsibilities or contribute to improved outcomes for children known to be in an existing relationship with the offender.

280. Probation practitioners are experienced in working with offenders and assessing risk. Suitably qualified probation practitioners will attend child protection conferences, core group meetings and other child safeguarding meetings where required. They will provide an assessment of the offender's risk and will assess how the offender's behaviour might impact the wellbeing of children. Probation practitioners should prepare and submit reports in a timely way¹⁶⁸.

281. The Probation Service may hold valuable information on the parents of a child who is known to children's social care and other agencies. The probation caseload is predominantly male and includes men who pose a risk to children, and men who may play a nurturing role, and have a positive impact on a child's wellbeing. These men can often go unseen¹⁶⁹ by agencies who do not ordinarily come into contact with men in the criminal justice system. This puts the Prison and Probation Service in a unique position to contribute to safeguarding work other agencies undertake with children and families.

Multi-agency public protection arrangements

282. Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) is the set of arrangements through which the Police, Probation and Prison Services (known as the Responsible Authority) work together with other agencies to manage the risks posed by violent, sexual and terrorism offenders living in the community to protect the public.

283. MAPPA is not a statutory body but is a mechanism through which agencies can better discharge their statutory responsibilities and protect the public in a co-ordinated manner. Agencies retain their full statutory responsibilities and obligations.

¹⁶⁸ [The HMPPS child safeguarding policy framework](#) sets out how probation practitioners are expected to participate in formal meetings with children's social care

¹⁶⁹ [Unseen men: learning from case reviews: NSPCC Learning](#)

284. Section 325(3) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003¹⁷⁰ requires the Responsible Authority (RA) to co-operate with certain agencies, such as local authorities, including Children's Social Care. They are known as Duty to Co-operate Agencies (DTC agencies). This is a reciprocal duty, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 obliges DTC agencies to co-operate with the RA in establishing arrangements and includes co-operating with other DTC agencies. DTC agencies are required to co-operate as far as they can, consistent with the exercise of their statutory functions.

285. Representatives from other agencies or individuals that do not have a statutory Duty to Cooperate under MAPPA (Associate Agencies) may be included in MAPPA on a case-by-case basis where that agency or individual can contribute to the risk assessment and management of a MAPPA offender. Potential Associate Agencies covered by Working Together include:

- independent schools, academies, and free and maintained schools
- early years and childcare
- private sector healthcare
- designated health professionals
- the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
- voluntary, charity, social enterprise, faith-based organisations, and private sectors.
- sports clubs/organisations
- youth services and youth work organisations

286. Whenever a child is discussed at a MAPPA meeting, the meeting must ensure that it considers its responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of that child and how their life may be impacted by the behaviour of an offender. Where a child is managed under MAPPA the risk of harm the child presents to others must be addressed but children convicted of an offence or who are alleged to have engaged in offending behaviour are entitled to the same safeguards and protection as any other child and due regard should be given to their welfare at all times.

287. The purpose of sharing information about individuals (data subjects) under MAPPA is to enable the relevant agencies to work together more effectively in assessing risks and considering how to manage them in order to protect the public. Agencies should share all relevant information, so that public protection is not compromised, while respecting the rights of data subjects, which may limit what can be shared. These rights are set out in Part 3 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and Article 8 of the European Convention on

¹⁷⁰ [Criminal Justice Act 2003](#) Section 325 (3)

Human Rights. In summary, the principles derived require that information sharing is lawful, necessary, and proportionate.

288. Section 325(4) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 provides a lawful basis for sharing information between RA and DTC agencies¹⁷¹. It also states that all DTC agencies qualify as competent authorities when fulfilling their obligations under MAPPA. This means that all information sharing under MAPPA is governed by Part 3 of the Data Protection Act 2018, rather than UK GDPR¹⁷².

Serious violence duty

289. The Serious Violence Duty was introduced as part of the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022¹⁷³ and requires specified authorities namely police, Justice (Probation and YOTs), Fire and Rescue Service, Health (ICBs) in England, and Local Health Boards in Wales, and local authorities to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence. This includes identifying the kinds of serious violence¹⁷⁴ that occur in the area, the causes of that violence (so far as it is possible to do so), and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing, and reducing serious violence in the area.

290. The Duty also requires the specified authorities to consult relevant authorities, namely educational, prison and youth custody authorities for the area in the preparation of their strategy. The Duty takes a multi-agency approach to understand the causes and consequences of serious violence, focusing on prevention and early intervention, and informed by evidence. It does not require new multi-agency structures and encourages the use of existing local structures and partnerships to prevent and reduce serious violence and ultimately improve community safety and safeguarding.

291. The Duty provisions commenced on 31 January 2023 and local partners will then have to publish their first serious violence strategy by 31 January 2024 and then review it as appropriate. Statutory guidance to support authorities in meeting the Duty requirements was published in December 2022¹⁷⁵.

Children's homes

292. The registered person of a children's home, including Secure Children's Homes must have regard to the Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations¹⁷⁶, including the

¹⁷¹ [Criminal Justice Act 2003 Section 325 \(4\)](#)

¹⁷² [Multi-agency public protection arrangements \(MAPPA\): guidance](#)

¹⁷³ [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#)

¹⁷⁴ [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 Section 13](#) makes clear that violence is not limited to physical violence against the person. It provides that, for the purposes of the duty, violence includes domestic abuse, sexual offences, violence against property and threats of violence but does not include terrorism.

¹⁷⁵ [Serious Violence Duty statutory guidance](#)

¹⁷⁶ [Children's homes regulations, including quality standards: guide](#)

quality standards (April 2015)¹⁷⁷, in interpreting and meeting the Regulations. The Guide covers the quality standards for children's homes, which set out the aspirational and positive outcomes that we expect homes to achieve, including the standard for the protection of children. The registered person is responsible for ensuring that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis.

293. In addition to the requirements of this standard, the registered person has specific responsibilities under regulation 34 of the Children's Homes Regulations¹⁷⁸ to prepare and implement policies setting out:

- arrangements for the safeguarding of children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation
- clear procedures for referring child protection concerns to the placing authority or local authority where the home is situated if appropriate
- specific procedures to prevent children going missing and take action if they do

294. Each home should work with their local safeguarding partners to agree how they will work together, and with the placing authority, to make sure that the needs of the individual children are met.

The secure estate for children

295. Governors, managers, directors and principals of the following secure establishments are subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter:

- secure training centres
- young offender institutions

296. Each centre holding those aged under 18 should have in place an annually reviewed safeguarding children policy. The policy is designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of children and should cover all relevant operational areas as well as key supporting processes, which would include issues such as child protection, risk of harm, restraint, separation, staff recruitment and information sharing. A manager should be appointed and will be responsible for implementation of this policy¹⁷⁹.

¹⁷⁷ [The Children's Homes \(England\) Regulations 2015](#)

¹⁷⁸ [The Children's Homes \(England\) Regulations 2015 Regulation 34](#)

¹⁷⁹ Detailed guidance on the safeguarding children policy, the roles of the safeguarding children manager and the safeguarding children committee, and the role of the establishment in relation to the LSCP can be found in [Prison Service Instruction](#) (PSI) 08/2012 Care and Management of Young People.

297. Each centre should work with their local safeguarding partners to agree how they will work together, and with the relevant YOT and placing authority (the Youth Custody Service), to make sure that the needs of individual children are met.

Youth offending teams

298. Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) are subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. YOTs are multi-agency teams responsible for the supervision of children subject to pre-court interventions and statutory court disposals¹⁸⁰. They are therefore well placed to identify children known to relevant organisations and agencies as being most at risk of offending and the contexts in which they may be vulnerable to abuse, and to undertake work to prevent them offending or protect them from harm. YOTs should have a lead officer responsible for ensuring safeguarding is embedded in their practice.

299. Under section 38 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998¹⁸¹, local authorities must, within the delivery of youth justice services, ensure the “provision of persons to act as appropriate adults to safeguard the interests of children detained or questioned by police officers”.

UK Visas and Immigration, Immigration Enforcement and the Border Force

300. Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 places upon the Secretary of State a duty to make arrangements to take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in discharging functions relating to immigration, asylum, nationality and customs. These functions are discharged on behalf of the Secretary of State by UK Visas and Immigration, Immigration Enforcement and the Border Force, which are part of the Home Office. The statutory guidance ‘Every Child Matters: arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children’ and other guidance relevant to the discharge of specific immigration functions set out these arrangements¹⁸².

Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service

301. The responsibility of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), as set out in the Children Act 1989, is to safeguard and promote the welfare of individual children who are the subject of family court proceedings. This is through the provision of independent social work advice to the court.

¹⁸⁰ The statutory membership of YOTs is set out in [the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Section 39 \(5\)](#)

¹⁸¹ [Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Section 38](#)

¹⁸² [Every Child Matters: statutory guidance to the UK Border Agency on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children](#). Issued under section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009

302. A Cafcass officer has a statutory right in public law cases to access local authority records relating to the child concerned and any application under the Children Act 1989. That power also extends to other records that relate to the child and the wider functions of the local authority, or records held by an authorised organisation that relate to that child.

303. Where a Cafcass officer has been appointed by the court as a child's guardian and the matter before the court relates to specified proceedings, they should be invited to all formal planning meetings convened by the local authority in respect of the child. This includes statutory reviews of children who are accommodated or looked after, child protection conferences and relevant adoption panel meetings.

The armed services

304. Local authorities have the statutory responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children of service families in the UK¹⁸³, in discharging these responsibilities:

- where a local authority requires input from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in relation to safeguarding reviews or have been informed of an allegation against a serving person of a safeguarding nature that requires Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or equivalent involvement, they should notify the MoD¹⁸⁴ to promote timely information sharing
- local authorities should ensure that the MoD is made aware of any service child who is the subject of a child in need or child protection plan and whose family is about to move overseas
- each local authority with a United States (US) base in its area should establish liaison arrangements with the base commander and relevant staff. The requirements of English child welfare legislation should be explained clearly to the US authorities, so that the local authority can fulfil its statutory duties

Channel panels

305. The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 contains a duty on specified authorities in England, Wales, and Scotland to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

¹⁸³ The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is responsible for providing safeguarding support and promoting the welfare of the children of armed forces personnel and the children of civilians working with the armed forces when those groups are based overseas. The MOD contact is through the armed forces families safeguarding policy team at People-AFFS-Safeguarding-Mailbox@mod.gov.uk

¹⁸⁴ The MOD contact is through the armed forces families safeguarding policy team at People-AFFS-Safeguarding-Mailbox@mod.gov.uk

306. Children can be vulnerable to the influences of extremism which could lead to radicalisation. Channel panels, established under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, arrange for support for individuals who have been assessed as vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism^{185 186}.

307. The Children Act 1989 promotes the view that all children and their parents should be considered as individuals and that family structures, culture, religion, ethnic origins, and other characteristics should be respected.

308. When providing support to an individual on the Channel programme, local authorities and their partners should consider how best to align assessments under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.

309. Links should be established between Channel panels and other statutory partners, including safeguarding partners and YOTs.

Voluntary, charity, social enterprise, faith-based organisations, and private sectors

310. Voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) and private sector organisations and agencies play an important role in safeguarding children through the services they deliver. Some of these will work with particular communities, with different races and faith communities, and deliver via health, adult social care, housing, and Prison and Probation Services. They may, as part of their work, provide a wide range of activities for children and have an important role in safeguarding children and supporting families and communities.

311. Like other organisations and agencies who work with children, they should have appropriate arrangements in place to safeguard and protect children from harm. Many of these organisations and agencies as well as many schools, children's centres, early years, and childcare organisations, will be subject to charity law and regulated either by the Charity Commission and/or other "principal" regulators. Charity trustees are responsible for ensuring that those benefiting from, or working with, their charity, are not harmed in any way through contact with it. The Charity Commission for England and Wales provides guidance on charity compliance which should be followed¹⁸⁷.

312. Some of these organisations and agencies are large national charities whilst others will have a much smaller local reach. Some will be delivering statutory services and may

¹⁸⁵ [Channel duty guidance: protecting people susceptible to radicalisation](#)

¹⁸⁶ [Prevent duty guidance](#)

¹⁸⁷ [Strategy for dealing with safeguarding issues in charities](#)

be run by volunteers, such as library services. This important group of organisations includes youth services not delivered by local authorities or district councils.

313. All practitioners working in these organisations and agencies who are working with children and their families are subject to the same safeguarding responsibilities, whether paid or a volunteer.

314. Every VCSE, faith-based organisation and private sector organisation or agency should have policies in place to safeguard and protect children from harm. These should be followed, and systems should be in place to ensure compliance in this. Individual practitioners, whether paid or volunteer, should be aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and protecting children from harm, how they should respond to child protection concerns and how to make a referral to local authority children's social care or the police, if necessary.

315. Every VCSE, faith-based organisation and private sector organisation or agency should have in place the arrangements described in this chapter. They should be aware of how they need to work with the safeguarding partners in a local area. Charities (within the meaning of section 1 Charities Act 2011), religious organisations (regulation 34 and schedule 3 to School Admissions) and any person involved in the provision, supervision or oversight of sport or leisure are included within the Relevant Agency Regulations¹⁸⁸. This means if the safeguarding partners name them as a relevant partner they must cooperate. Other VCSE, faith-based and private sector organisations not on the list of relevant agencies can also be asked to co-operate as part of the local arrangements and should do so.

Sports clubs/organisations

316. There are many sports clubs and organisations, including voluntary and private sector providers that deliver a wide range of sporting activities to children. Some of these will be community amateur sports clubs, some will be charities. All should have the arrangements described in this chapter in place and should collaborate to work effectively with the safeguarding partners as required by any local safeguarding arrangements. Paid and volunteer staff need to be aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, how they should respond to child protection concerns and how to make a referral to local authority children's social care or the police if necessary.

¹⁸⁸ [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency \(England\) Regulations 2018](#)

317. All National Governing Bodies of Sport that receive funding from either Sport England¹⁸⁹ or UK Sport¹⁹⁰ should aim to meet the Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport¹⁹¹.

¹⁸⁹ [Sport England](#)

¹⁹⁰ [UK Sport](#)

¹⁹¹ [Standards for safeguarding and protecting children in sport](#)

Chapter 5: Learning from serious child safeguarding incidents

318. Child protection in England is a complex multi-agency system with many different organisations and individuals playing their part. Reflecting on how well that system is working is critical in improving our response to children and their families.

319. Sometimes a child suffers a serious injury or death as a result of abuse or neglect. Understanding not only what happened but also why it happened can help improve our response in the future. Appreciating the impact that organisations and agencies had on the child's life, and on the lives of their family members, and whether or not different approaches or those actions could have resulted in a different outcome, is essential. It is in this way that we can make good judgements about what might need to change at a local or national level.

Purpose of child safeguarding practice reviews

320. The purpose of serious child safeguarding case reviews, at local and national level, is to identify improvements that can be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Learning is relevant locally but has a wider importance for all practitioners working with children and families and for the government and policymakers. Understanding whether there are systemic issues, and whether and how policy and practice need to change, is critical to the system being dynamic and self-improving.

321. Reviews should seek to prevent or reduce the risk of recurrence of similar incidents. They are not conducted to hold individuals, organisations, or agencies to account, as there are other processes for that purpose, including employment law and disciplinary procedures, professional regulation and, in exceptional cases, criminal proceedings. These processes may be carried out alongside a review or at a later stage. Employers should consider whether any disciplinary action should be taken against practitioners whose conduct and/or practice falls below acceptable standards and should refer to their regulatory body as appropriate.

Responsibilities for reviews

322. The responsibility for how the system learns the lessons from serious child safeguarding incidents lies at a national level with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (the panel) and at a local level with the safeguarding partners.

323. The panel is responsible for identifying and overseeing the review of serious child safeguarding cases which, in its opinion, raise issues that are complex or of national importance. It should also oversee the system of national and local reviews and how effectively it is operating.

324. As outlined in chapter 2, the safeguarding partners play an integral role in establishing a system of learning and reflection locally. Safeguarding partners must:

- identify and review serious child safeguarding cases which, in their opinion, raise issues of importance in relation to their area
- commission and oversee the review of those cases if they consider it appropriate

325. The way in which this responsibility is divided between the lead safeguarding partners (LSPs) and their delegates is for local decision. Accountability for ensuring learning from serious incidents is implemented is the responsibility of the LSPs and the impact of local and national reviews should be evidenced in yearly reports and subjected to independent scrutiny.

326. The panel and safeguarding partners have a shared aim to identify improvements to practice for protecting children from harm and should maintain an open and ongoing dialogue. This will enable them to raise concerns, highlight commonly recurring areas needing further investigation (whether leading to a local or national review), and share learning, including from success, that could lead to improvements elsewhere.

327. As such, safeguarding partners should have regard to any guidance the panel publishes. Guidance will include the timescales for a rapid review (see chapter 5, paragraphs 343-344) and for the panel's response.

328. Serious child safeguarding cases are those in which:

- abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected
- the child has died or been seriously harmed

329. Serious harm includes (but is not limited to) serious and/or long-term impairment of a child's mental health or intellectual, emotional, social, or behavioural development. This is not an exhaustive list. When making decisions, judgement should be exercised in cases where impairment is likely to be long-term, even if this is not immediately certain. Even if a child recovers, including from a one-off incident, serious harm may still have occurred. Local authorities and safeguarding partners should refer to the panel's guidance¹⁹² for further clarity on issues relating to the criteria for serious child safeguarding cases.

¹⁹² [Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel guidance for safeguarding partners](#)

Duty on local authorities to notify incidents to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

16C (1) of the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) states:

Where a local authority in England knows or suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, the local authority must notify the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel if:

- (a) the child dies or is seriously harmed in the local authority's area
- (b) while normally resident in the local authority's area, the child dies or is seriously harmed outside England

330. The local authority should notify the panel of any incident that meets the above criteria via the Child Safeguarding Online Notification System. It should do so within five working days of becoming aware it has occurred. Though the responsibility to notify rests on the local authority, it is for all three safeguarding partners to agree which incidents should be notified in their local area. Where there is disagreement, the safeguarding partners should follow local dispute resolution processes.

331. The local authority must notify the Secretary of State for Education, and Ofsted of the death of a looked after child.

332. The local authority should also notify the Secretary of State for Education and Ofsted of the death of a care leaver up to and including the age of 24¹⁹³. This should be notified via the Child Safeguarding Online Notification System. The death of a care leaver does not require a rapid review or local child safeguarding practice review. However, safeguarding partners must consider whether the criteria for a serious incident has been met and respond accordingly, in the event the deceased care leaver was under the age of 18. If local partners think that learning can be gained from the death of a looked after child or care leaver in circumstances where those criteria do not apply, they may wish to undertake a local child safeguarding practice review.

333. The local authority, on behalf of the safeguarding partners, has a duty to notify the panel about all serious incidents that meet the criteria. The number of serious incidents notified is not a reflection of local area performance. Making a notification, will ensure that

¹⁹³ Care leavers are entitled to support from their Personal Adviser up to their 25th birthday. Local authorities are required to keep in touch with all care leavers up the point they reach age 21, and to make their best efforts to contact all care leavers aged 21 to 24 annually to remind them that they remain eligible for support. If a young person chooses not to take up support between 21 to 24 years of age the local authority may no longer be aware of a care leaver's whereabouts or circumstances (and therefore their death).

learning is identified and fed back into the system to prevent future harm or death. The link to the Child Safeguarding Online Notification form for local authorities to notify incidents to the panel is available on the Report a serious child safeguarding incident¹⁹⁴ page on GOV.UK.

334. The Department for Education (DfE) is responsible for publishing annual serious incident data. This data is extracted from the notifications submitted by local authorities, so accuracy when completing the online notification form is key. All incidents meeting the criteria should be notified as “serious harm” or “death”, except where there is a clear reason to notify as “other”, for example, in cases where the notification relates to a perpetrator. A notification regarding the suicide of a child should be made where abuse or neglect is a factor.

335. Others who have functions relating to children¹⁹⁵ should inform the safeguarding partners of any incident they think should be considered for a child safeguarding practice review.

Decisions on local and national reviews

336. Safeguarding partners must:

- identify serious child safeguarding cases that raise issues of importance in relation to their area
- commission and oversee the review of those cases if they consider review appropriate

337. When a serious incident becomes known to safeguarding partners, they must consider whether the case meets the criteria and guidance for a local review¹⁹⁶. If safeguarding partners determine that the criteria is met to undertake a local child safeguarding practice review, then a serious incident notification and rapid review must take place.

338. In some cases, a ‘serious child safeguarding case’ may not meet the criteria for a serious incident notification but may nevertheless raise issues of importance to the local area. That might, for example, include where there has been good practice, poor practice or where there have been ‘near-miss’ incidents. Safeguarding partners may choose to undertake a local child safeguarding practice review in these or other circumstances, in

¹⁹⁴ [Report a serious child safeguarding incident](#)

¹⁹⁵ This means any person or organisation with statutory or official duties or responsibilities relating to children

¹⁹⁶ [Children Act 2004 Section 16F](#)

which case they should be clear about their rationale for undertaking such a review and what its focus will be.

339. It is for safeguarding partners to determine whether a review is appropriate, given that the purpose of a review is to identify improvements to practice. Meeting the criteria does not mean that safeguarding partners must automatically carry out a local child safeguarding practice review.

340. All incidents should be considered on a case-by-case basis using all information that is available to local safeguarding arrangements. Issues might appear to be the same in some cases, but reasons for actions and behaviours may differ resulting in useful learning for the local area.

341. Decisions on whether to undertake reviews should be made transparently and collaboratively between safeguarding partners, and the rationale recorded and communicated appropriately, including to families. Where there are disagreements, local dispute resolution processes should be followed.

342. Learning from local reviews should be reflected in the annual reports published yearly by the safeguarding partners.

The criteria safeguarding partners must take into account include whether the case¹⁹⁷:

- highlights or may highlight improvements needed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including where those improvements have been previously identified
- highlights or may highlight recurrent themes in the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children
- highlights or may highlight concerns regarding two or more organisations or agencies working together effectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- is one the panel has considered and has concluded a local review may be more appropriate

¹⁹⁷ [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency \(England\) Regulations 2018](#)

Safeguarding partners should also have regard to circumstances where:

- they have cause for concern about the actions of a single agency
- there has been no agency involvement, and this gives them cause for concern
- more than one local authority, police area or ICB is involved, including in cases where a family has moved around
- the case may raise issues related to safeguarding or promoting the welfare of children in institutional settings¹⁹⁸

The rapid review

343. The safeguarding partners should promptly undertake a rapid review of the case, in line with any guidance published by the panel. The aim of this review is to enable them to:

- gather the facts about the case, as far as they can be readily established
- discuss whether any immediate action is needed to ensure children's safety and share any learning appropriately
- consider the potential for identifying improvements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- decide what steps they should take next, including whether to undertake a child safeguarding practice review

344. As soon as the rapid review is complete, the safeguarding partners should send a copy of their findings to the panel¹⁹⁹. They should also share with the panel their decision about whether a local child safeguarding practice review is appropriate, or whether they think the case may raise issues that are complex or of national importance such that a national review may be appropriate. They may also do this if, during a local child safeguarding practice review, new information comes to light suggesting that a national review may be appropriate. As soon as they have determined that a local review will be carried out, they should inform the panel, Ofsted and DfE, providing the name of the reviewer they have commissioned.

¹⁹⁸ Includes children's homes (including secure children's homes) and other settings with residential provision for children, custodial settings where a child is held (including police custody, young offender institutions and secure training centres), and all settings where detention of a child takes place, including under the [Mental Health Act 1983](#) or the [Mental Capacity Act 2005](#)

¹⁹⁹ The panel may share this with the DfE, if requested, to enable DfE to carry out its functions.

Guidance for the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

345. On receipt of the information from the rapid review, the panel must decide whether it is appropriate to commission a national review of a case or cases. They must consider the criteria and guidance that follows:

The criteria the panel must take into account include whether the case²⁰⁰:

- highlights or may highlight improvements needed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including where those improvements have been previously identified
- raises or may raise issues requiring legislative change or changes to guidance issued under or further to any enactment
- highlights or may highlight recurrent themes in the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children

The panel should also have regard to:

- circumstances where significant harm or death to a child occurred otherwise than at school
- circumstances where a child is seriously harmed or dies while in the care of a local authority, or while on (or recently removed from) a child protection plan
- circumstances where the case may raise issues relating to safeguarding or promoting the welfare of children in institutional settings²⁰¹
- cases which involve a range of types of abuse²⁰²

346. As well as considering a notification from a local authority, information from a rapid review and local child safeguarding practice reviews, the panel should consider a range of other evidence, including inspection and other reports and research. The panel may also consider any other criteria it considers appropriate to identify whether a serious child safeguarding case raises issues that are complex or of national importance.

²⁰⁰ [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency \(England\) Regulations 2018](#)

²⁰¹ Includes children's homes (including secure children's homes) and other settings with residential provision for children, custodial settings where a child is held (including police custody, young offender institutions and secure training centres), and all settings where detention of a child takes place, including under the [Mental Health Act 1983](#) or the [Mental Capacity Act 2005](#)

²⁰² For example, trafficking for the purposes of child sexual exploitation

347. In many cases there will need to be dialogue between the safeguarding partners and the panel to support the decision-making process. The safeguarding partners must share further information with the panel if requested.

348. The panel should inform the relevant safeguarding partners promptly following receipt of the rapid review, if it considers that:

- a national review is appropriate, setting out the rationale for its decision and the next steps
- further information is required to support its decision-making, including whether the safeguarding partners have decided to commission a local review

349. The panel should decide on whether to undertake a national review and communicate its rationale appropriately, including to families. The panel should notify the Secretary of State if it decides to carry out a national review.

350. On receipt of the information from a rapid review or following its appraisal of a number of rapid reviews that highlight a particular theme, the panel must decide whether it is appropriate to commission a national review of a case, or cases, or to undertake a thematic review. For the criteria and guidance that the panel considers in its decision-making, refer to its guidance²⁰³

351. If the panel decides to undertake a national review, it should discuss with the safeguarding partners its potential scope and methodology and how they it will engage with them and those involved in the case.

352. There will be instances where a local review has been carried out which could then form part of a thematic review that the panel undertakes at a later date. There may be other instances where a local review has not been carried out but where the panel considers that the case could be helpful to a future national review. In such circumstances, the panel should engage with safeguarding partners to agree how the review should be conducted.

353. Alongside any national or local reviews, there could be a criminal investigation, a coroner's investigation and/or professional body disciplinary procedures. The panel and the safeguarding partners should have in place clear processes for how they contribute to with other investigations (including a domestic homicide review, multi-agency public protection arrangements, or safeguarding adult's reviews), and collaborate with those

²⁰³ [Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel](#)

responsible for carrying them out. This will reduce the burdens on, and anxiety for, the children and families concerned as well as uncertainty and duplication of effort.

Commissioning a reviewer(s) for a local child safeguarding practice review

354. The safeguarding partners are responsible for commissioning and supervising reviewers for local reviews²⁰⁴.

355. In all cases they should consider whether the reviewer has:

- professional knowledge, understanding and practice relevant to local child safeguarding practice reviews, including the ability to engage with practitioners, children, and families
- knowledge and understanding of research relevant to children's safeguarding issues
- ability to recognise the complex circumstances in which practitioners work together to safeguard children
- the ability to understand practice from the viewpoint of the individuals, organisations or agencies involved at the time rather than using hindsight
- the ability to communicate findings effectively
- any real or perceived conflict of interest

Local child safeguarding practice reviews

356. The safeguarding partners should agree with the reviewer the method by which the review should be conducted, taking into account this guidance and the principles of the systems methodology recommended by the Munro review²⁰⁵. It should provide a way of looking at and analysing frontline practice as well as organisational structures and learning, and allow those involved in the review to reach recommendations that will improve outcomes for children. All reviews should reflect both the child's perspective and the family context.

²⁰⁴ Safeguarding partners may also consider appointing reviewers from the panels pool of reviewers, where available

²⁰⁵ [The Munro review of child protection final report: a child-centred system](#) (2011)

357. The review should be proportionate to the circumstances of the case, focus on potential learning, and establish and explain the reasons the incidents occurred as they did.

358. As part of their duty to ensure the review is of satisfactory quality, the safeguarding partners should ensure that:

- practitioners are fully involved and invited to contribute their perspectives without fear of being blamed for actions they took in good faith
- families, including surviving children (in order that the child is at the centre of the process) are invited to contribute
- families understand how they are going to be involved and have their expectations appropriately and sensitively managed

359. The safeguarding partners must supervise the review to ensure the reviewer is making satisfactory progress and the review is of satisfactory quality²⁰⁶. They may request information from the reviewer to enable them to assess this and any such requests must be made in writing. The President of the Family Division's guidance covering the role of the judiciary in serious case reviews²⁰⁷ should also be noted in the context of child safeguarding practice reviews.

Safeguarding partners – expectations of the final report

360. The safeguarding partners must ensure the final report includes:

- a summary of any recommended improvements to be made by individuals or organisations in the area to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- an analysis of any systemic or underlying reasons actions were taken or not taken in respect of matters covered by the report

361. Any recommendations should make clear what is required of relevant agencies and others both collectively and individually, and by when, and focussed on improving outcomes for children.

362. Reviews are about promoting and sharing information about improvements, both within the area and potentially beyond, so the safeguarding partners must publish the report, unless they consider it inappropriate to do so²⁰⁸. In such a circumstance, they must

²⁰⁶ [Children Act 2004 Section 16F \(1\)](#) and [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency \(England\) Regulations 2018 Regulation 15](#)

²⁰⁷ [President of the Family Division's guidance covering the role of the judiciary in serious case reviews](#)

²⁰⁸ [Children Act 2004 Section 16F \(1\)](#) and [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency \(England\) Regulations 2018 Regulation 15](#)

publish any information about the improvements that should be made following the review they consider appropriate to publish. The name of the reviewers should be included. Published reports or information must be publicly available for at least one year.

363. When compiling and preparing to publish the report, the delegated safeguarding partners should consider carefully how best to manage the impact of the publication on children, family members, practitioners and others closely affected by the case. The safeguarding partners should ensure that reports are written in such a way so that what is published avoids harming the welfare of any children or vulnerable adults involved in the case.

364. Safeguarding partners must send a copy of the full report to the panel and to the Secretary of State no later than seven working days²⁰⁹ before the date of publication. Where the safeguarding partners decide only to publish information relating to the improvements to be made following the review, they must also provide a copy of that information to the panel and the Secretary of State within the same timescale. They should also provide the report, or information about improvements, to Ofsted within the same timescale.

365. Depending on the nature and complexity of the case, the report should be completed and published as soon as possible and no later than six months from the date of the decision to initiate a review. Where other proceedings may have an impact on or delay publication, (for example, an ongoing criminal investigation, inquest or future prosecution), the safeguarding partners should inform the panel and the Secretary of State of the reasons for the delay. Safeguarding partners should also set out for the panel and the Secretary of State the justification for any decision not to publish either the full report or information relating to improvements. Safeguarding partners should have regard to any comments that the panel or the Secretary of State may make in respect of publication.

366. Every effort should also be made, both before the review and while it is in progress, to:

- capture points from the case about improvements needed
- take corrective action and disseminate learning

²⁰⁹ "Working day" means any day which is not a Saturday, Sunday, or bank holiday.

Actions in response to local and national reviews

367. The safeguarding partners should take account of the findings from their own local reviews and from all national reviews, with a view to considering how identified improvements should be implemented locally, including the way in which organisations and agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The safeguarding partners should highlight findings from reviews with relevant parties locally and should regularly audit progress on the implementation of recommended improvements²¹⁰. Improvement should be sustained through regular monitoring and follow up of actions so that the findings from these reviews make a real impact on improving outcomes for children.

Guidance for the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel – reviewers

368. The panel must set up a pool of potential reviewers who can undertake national reviews, a list of whom must be publicly available. If they consider that there are no potential reviewers in the pool with availability or suitable experience to undertake the review, they may select a person who is not in the pool. When selecting a reviewer, the panel should consider whether they have any conflict of interest which could restrict their ability, or perceived ability, to identify improvements impartially.

369. For national child safeguarding practice reviews, the panel should follow the same guidance on procedure and supervision as for local child safeguarding practice reviews (see chapter 5, paragraphs 356-359).

The panel – expectations for the final report

370. The panel must ensure that the final report includes:

- a summary of any improvements being recommended to the safeguarding partners and/or others to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- an analysis of any systemic or underlying reasons why actions were taken or not taken in respect of matters covered by the report

371. The panel must publish the report, unless they consider it inappropriate to do so. In such a circumstance they must publish any information about the improvements that

²¹⁰ See also Reporting section in chapter 2 (safeguarding partners' report).

should be made following the review that they consider it appropriate to publish. The name of the reviewer should be included.

372. The panel should work with safeguarding partners to identify and manage the impact of the publication on children, family members, practitioners and others closely affected by the case.

373. The panel must ensure that reports or information published are publicly available for at least three years. The panel must send a copy of the full report to the Secretary of State no later than seven working days before the date of publication. Where the panel decides only to publish information relating to the improvements to be made following the review, they must also provide a copy of that information to the Secretary of State within the same timescale. The panel should also send a copy of the report or improvements to the relevant safeguarding partners, Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.

374. Reports should be completed and published within six months of the date of the decision to initiate a review. Where other proceedings may have an impact on or delay publication, for example, an ongoing criminal investigation, inquest or future prosecution, the panel should advise the Secretary of State of the reasons for the delay. The panel should also set out for the Secretary of State the explanation for any decision not to publish either the full report or information relating to improvements. During the review, the panel should share any points that arise about improvements needed with the safeguarding partners in any local authority areas covered by the review and others as applicable.

375. The panel should send copies of published reports of national and local child safeguarding practice reviews or published information relating to improvements that should be made following those reviews, to Foundations (What Works Centre for Children and Families) and relevant inspectorates, bodies, or individuals as they see fit. Where a local review results in findings which are of national importance, or in recommendations for national government, the panel should consider the potential of those recommendations to improve systems to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and how best to disseminate and embed such learning.

How to notify a serious incident, rapid review, and local child safeguarding practice review

Serious incident notification

All serious child safeguarding incidents must be notified to the panel.

Notifications should be sent within five working days of the local authority becoming aware of the incident.

Notifications are made through the online notification system, which is accessible 24 hours a day.

The rapid review

Rapid reviews should be submitted to the panel within 15 working days of the incident.

This is a non-statutory requirement and more details can be found in the panel's practice guidance²¹¹.

Rapid reviews should be submitted to the panel secretariat, at Mailbox.NationalReviewPanel@education.gov.uk.

Local child safeguarding practice review

Full reports must be sent to the panel and the Secretary of State for Education²¹² no later than seven working days before the date of publication.

Final reports, information relating to improvements to be made following a review, and reasons for any delay, should be notified to

Mailbox.NationalReviewPanel@education.gov.uk and Mailbox.CPOD@education.gov.uk

In addition, final reports and information about improvements should also be sent to Ofsted SCR.SIN@ofsted.gov.uk

²¹¹ [Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel guidance for safeguarding partners](#)

²¹² By sending to Mailbox.CPOD@education.gov.uk

Chapter 6: Child death reviews

376. The death of a child is a devastating loss that profoundly affects all those involved. The process of systematically reviewing the deaths of children is grounded in respect for the rights of both children and their families²¹³, with the intention of learning what happened and why, and preventing future child deaths.

377. The majority of child deaths in England arise from medical causes. Enquiries should keep an appropriate balance between forensic and medical requirements and supporting the family at a difficult time. This chapter provides guidance to child death review partners on their statutory responsibilities.

378. Child death review partners are local authorities and any ICBs for the local area as set out in the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017²¹⁴. The statutory responsibilities for child death review partners are set out below, and the agency and organisational boundaries should be decided locally as described in paragraph 384 of this chapter.

379. In the immediate aftermath of a child's death, a copy of 'When a child dies – a guide for parents and carers'²¹⁵ should be offered to all bereaved families or carers through the child death review process. In addition to supporting families and carers, staff involved in the care of the child should also be considered and offered appropriate support.

²¹³ [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

²¹⁴ [Children Act 2004, Section 16Q](#)

²¹⁵ [When a child dies: a guide for parents and carers](#)

Statutory requirements²¹⁶

When a child dies, in any circumstances, it is important for parents and families to understand what has happened and whether there are any lessons to be learnt.

The responsibility for ensuring child death reviews are carried out is held by 'child death review partners', who, in relation to a local authority area in England, are defined as the local authority for that area and any ICBs operating in the local authority area.

Child death review partners must make arrangements to review all deaths of children normally resident in the local area²¹⁷ and, as indicated, of any non-resident children who have died in their area. This should be done via a Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP).

Child death review partners for two or more local authority areas may combine and agree that their areas be treated as a single area for the purpose of undertaking child death reviews.

Child death review partners must make arrangements for the analysis of information from all deaths reviewed by the National Child Mortality Database (NCMD).

The purpose of a review and/or analysis is to identify any matters relating to the death, or deaths, that are relevant to the welfare of children in the area, or to public health and safety, and to consider whether action should be taken in relation to any matters identified. If child death review partners find action should be taken by a person or organisation, they must inform them. In addition, child death review partners:

- must, at such times as they consider appropriate, prepare, and publish reports on:
 - what they have done as a result of the child death review arrangements in their area
 - how effective the arrangements have been in practice
- may request information from a person or organisation to enable or assist the review and/or analysis process. The person or organisation must comply with the request, and if they do not, the child death review partners may take legal action to seek enforcement
- may make payments directly towards expenditure incurred in connection with arrangements made for child death reviews or analysis of information about deaths reviewed, or by contributing to a fund out of which payments may be made. They may provide staff, goods, services, accommodation, or other resources to any person for purposes connected with the child death review or analysis process

Responsibilities of child death review partners

380. The child death review process covers children²¹⁸, regardless of the cause of death²¹⁹.

381. In making arrangements to review child deaths, child death review partners should establish a structure and process to review all deaths of children normally resident in their area and, as indicated and agreed between child death review partners, the deaths of children not normally resident in their area but who have died there. Child death review partners should model their child death review structures and processes as laid out in the 'Child Death Review Statutory and Operational Guidance (2018)'²²⁰.

382. Child death review partners should consider the core representation of any panel or structure they set up to conduct reviews, and this would ideally include:

- public health
- the designated²²¹ doctor for child deaths for the local area
- social services
- police
- the designated doctor or nurse for safeguarding
- primary care (GP or health visitor)
- nursing and/or midwifery
- lay representation
- other professionals that child death review partners consider should be involved

It is for child death review partners to determine what representation they have in any structure reviewing child deaths.

383. Child death review partners should agree locally how the child death review process will be funded in their area.

²¹⁶ The guidance in this chapter is issued under [the Children Act 2004 Section 16Q](#)

²¹⁷ For the purposes of child death reviews, a local area is the area within the remit of a local authority (referred to in the Children Act 2004 as a "local authority area").

²¹⁸ [Children Act 2004 Section 65](#) - a child is defined as a person under 18 years of age

²¹⁹ This will include the death of any liveborn baby, where a death certificate has been issued, or where the birth was unattended, but does not include those (of any gestation) who are stillborn where there was medical attendance or planned terminations of pregnancy carried out within the law.

²²⁰ [Child Death Review: Statutory and Operational Guidance \(England\)](#)

²²¹ Within that part of the health system that supports child safeguarding and protection services, the word "designated" means a dedicated professional with specific roles and responsibilities that are centred on the provision of clinical expertise and strategic advice.

384. The geographical and population “footprint” of child death review partners should be locally agreed but must extend to at least one local authority area. It should take into account networks of NHS care, and agency and organisational boundaries in order to reflect the integrated care and social networks of the local area. These may overlap with more than one local authority area or ICB. They should cover a child population such that they typically review at least 60 child deaths per year. Child death review partners should come together to develop clear plans outlining the administrative and logistical processes for their review arrangements.

385. Child death review partners should ensure that a designated doctor for child deaths is appointed to any multi-agency panel (or structure in place to review deaths). The designated doctor for child deaths should be a senior paediatrician who can take a lead role in the review process. Child death review partners should ensure a process is in place whereby the designated doctor for child deaths is notified of each child death and is sent relevant information.

386. Child death review partners may request that a person or organisation provide information to enable or assist the reviewing or analysing of a child's death. The person or organisation must comply with such a request. If they do not comply, the child death review partners may instigate legal action to enforce.

387. Child death review partners for the local authority area where a child who has died was normally resident are responsible for ensuring the death is reviewed. However, they may also choose to review the death of a child, including a looked after child, that occurred in their local area even if the child in question was not normally resident there. In such circumstances, the designated doctor for child death in each area should discuss and agree who will be responsible for collecting information and reviewing the death, to ensure there is no duplication of review. The review process should seek to involve child death review partners for another local authority area who had an interest in the child or any other person or agencies, as appropriate.

388. Child death review partners should publicise on their website, information on the arrangements for child death reviews in their area. This should include who the accountable officials are (the local authority chief executive, and the accountable officer of the ICB), which local authority and ICB partners are involved, what geographical area is covered and who the designated doctor for child deaths is.

Responsibilities of other organisations and agencies

389. All local organisations or individual practitioners that have had involvement in the case should co-operate, as appropriate, in the child death review process carried out by child death review partners. All local organisations or individual practitioners should also have regard to any guidance on child death reviews issued by the government.

Specific responsibilities of relevant bodies in relation to child deaths

Registrars of Births and Deaths (Section 31 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008): Requirement on registrars of births and deaths to supply child death review partners with the particulars of the death entered in the register in relation to any person who was or may have been under the age of 18 at the time of death. A similar requirement exists where the registrar corrects an entry in the register.

The registrar must also notify child death review partners if they issue a Certificate of No Liability to Register (where a death is not required by law to be registered in England or Wales) where it appears that the deceased was or may have been under the age of 18 at the time of death.

The information must be provided to the appropriate child death review partners (which cover the sub-district in which the register is kept) no later than seven days from the date the death was registered, the date the correction was made or the date the certificate was issued.

Coroners and Justice Act 2009 & Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013: Duty to investigate and hold an inquest. Powers to request a post-mortem and for evidence to be given or produced.

Coroner's duty to notify the child death review partners for the area in which the child died or where the child's body was found within three working days of deciding to investigate a death or commission a post-mortem.

Coroner's duty to share information, including post-mortem reports with the relevant child death review partners.

Responding to the death of a child: the child death review process

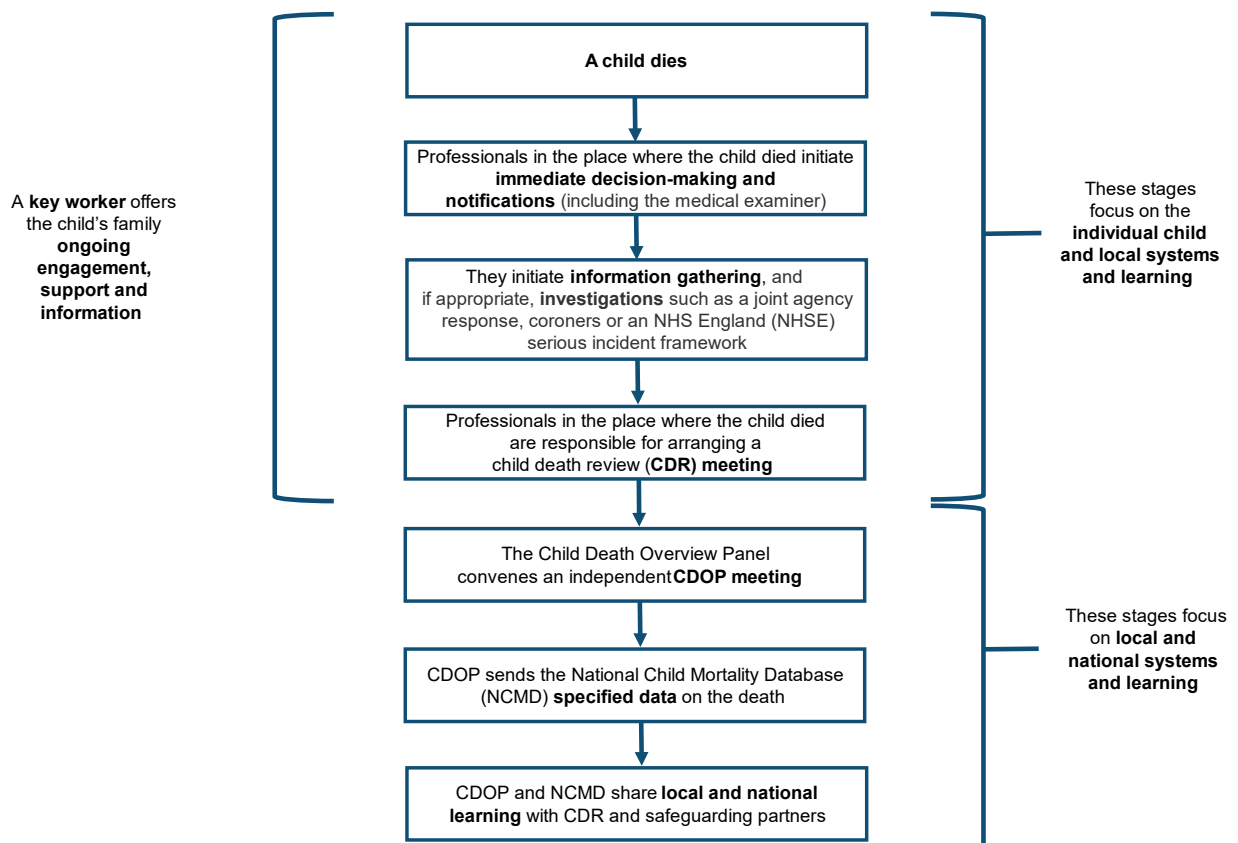


Figure 2: Process to follow when a child dies

390. The steps that precede the child death review partners' independent review commence in the immediate aftermath of a child's death. These include the immediate decisions, notifications and parallel investigations, and the child death review by those directly involved in the care of the child or the investigation after their death, at the child death review meeting. The information gathered throughout this process should be fed into the child death overview panel review.

391. The learning from all child death reviews should be shared with the National Child Mortality Database which may in addition consider information from other reviews in order to identify any trends in or similarities between deaths. Information from the database will be used to inform local or national changes to prevent future deaths.

392. The processes that should be followed by all those involved when responding to, investigating, and reviewing child deaths is set out in the Child Death Review Statutory and Operational guidance²²² on child death reviews issued by the government.

393. All practitioners participating in the child death review process should notify, report, and scrutinise child deaths using the standardised templates²²³. These should be forwarded to the relevant CDOP.

The child death review process

A child dies

394. Practitioners in all agencies should notify the child death review partners, via the local CDOP administrator (or equivalent) of the death of any child of which they become aware by using the child death notification form²²⁴.

Immediate decision-making and notifications, and investigation and information gathering

395. Whenever a child dies, practitioners should work together in responding to that death in a thorough, sensitive, and supportive manner. The aims of this response are to:

- establish, as far as is possible, the cause of the child's death
- identify any modifiable or contributory factors²²⁵
- provide ongoing support to the family
- learn lessons in order to reduce the risk of future child deaths and promote the health, safety, and wellbeing of other children
- ensure that all statutory obligations are met

396. Where a joint agency response is required, practitioners should follow the process set out in 'Sudden unexpected death in infancy and childhood: multi-agency guidelines for care and investigation (2016)'²²⁶. A joint agency response is required if a child's death:

- is or could be due to external causes
- is sudden and there is no immediately apparent cause (including sudden

²²² [Child Death Review Statutory and Operational guidance](#)

²²³ [Child death reviews: forms for reporting child deaths](#)

²²⁴ [Child death notification form](#)

²²⁵ These are defined as factors that may have contributed to the death of the child and that might, by means of a locally or nationally achievable intervention, be modified to reduce the risk of future deaths

²²⁶ [Sudden unexpected death in infancy and childhood: multi-agency guidelines for care and investigation – RCPCH Child Protection Portal](#)

unexpected death in infancy or childhood)

- occurs in custody, or where the child was detained under the Mental Health Act
- occurs where the initial circumstances raise any suspicions that the death may not have been natural
- occurs in the case of a stillbirth where no healthcare professional was in attendance

397. If there is an unexplained death of a child at home or in the community, the child should normally be taken to a hospital emergency department rather than a mortuary. In some cases when a child dies at home or in the community, the police may decide that it is not appropriate to move the child's body immediately, for example, because a forensic examination is needed.

398. In a criminal investigation, the police are responsible for collecting and collating all relevant information pertaining to a child's death. Practitioners should consult the lead police investigator and the Crown Prosecution Service to ensure that their enquiries do not prejudice any criminal proceedings.

399. If the results of any investigations suggest evidence of abuse or neglect as a possible cause of death whether at home or in the community, all practitioners should inform relevant safeguarding partners and the panel immediately.

Child death review meeting

400. This is the multi-agency meeting that takes place prior to the CDOP review. At the meeting, all matters relating to an individual child's death are discussed by professionals involved with the case. It should be attended by professionals who were directly involved in the care of that child during their life and in the investigation into their death and should not be limited to medical staff. A draft analysis form²²⁷ of each individual case should be sent after the meeting to the local CDOP to inform their review.

Review of death by CDOP

401. The review by CDOP is intended to be the final, independent scrutiny of a child's death by professionals with no responsibility for the child during their life. The information gathered using all the standardised templates may help CDOP to identify modifiable factors that could be altered to prevent future deaths.

²²⁷ [Child death reviews: forms for reporting child deaths](#)

402. In addition to the statutory responsibilities set out above, the review should also provide data to the National Child Mortality Database.

403. Child death review partners for a local authority area in England must prepare and publish a report as set out in the statutory responsibilities above^{228 229}. They may therefore wish to ask their CDOP to produce an annual report on local patterns and trends in child deaths, any lessons learnt and actions taken, and the effectiveness of the wider child death review process in order to assist child death review partners to prepare their report.

²²⁸ [Children Act 2004 Section 16M](#)

²²⁹ [Child Death Review: Statutory and Operational Guidance \(England\)](#)

Appendix A: Glossary

Abuse - A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear, or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or extra-familial contexts by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Child criminal exploitation - As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy²³⁰, published by the Home Office, where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Child death review partners - A child death review partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 as (a) the local authority, and (b) any integrated care board for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area. The 2 partners must make arrangements for the review of each death of a child normally resident in the area and may also, if they consider it appropriate, make arrangements for the review of a death in their area of a child not normally resident there. They must also make arrangements for the analysis of information about deaths reviewed under this section. The purposes of a review or analysis are (a) to identify any matters relating to the death or deaths that are relevant to the welfare of children in the area or to public health and safety, and (b) to consider whether it would be appropriate for anyone to take action in relation to any matters identified.

Child protection - Part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

Child sexual exploitation - 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)

²³⁰ [Serious Violence Strategy](#)

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.

Children - Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.

Controlling or coercive behaviour - Also known as coercive control, controlling or coercive behaviour is a form of domestic abuse. In 2015, the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour was introduced under Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act as a criminal offence. Controlling or coercive behaviour is included in the definition of domestic abuse in section 1(3)(c) of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Controlling or coercive behaviour is a pattern of abuse (on two or more occasions) that involves multiple behaviours and tactics used by a perpetrator to (but not limited to) hurt, humiliate, intimidate, exploit, isolate, and dominate the victim. It is an intentional pattern of behaviour used to exert power, control, or coercion over another person. Controlling or coercive behaviour is often committed in conjunction with other forms of abuse and is often part of a wider pattern of abuse, including violent, sexual, or economic abuse. Children can be used to control or coerce the victim, for example, by frustrating child contact and/or child arrangements, telling the children to call the victim derogatory names or to hit the victim, or by threatening to abduct the children.

This pattern of abuse causes fear, serious alarm and/or distress which can lead to a substantial adverse effect on a victim's day-to-day life. This can have a significant impact on children and young people²³¹.

Section 68 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 came into force on 5 April 2023 and removed the 'living together' requirement for the controlling or coercive behaviour offence, which means that the offence applies to partners, ex-partners or family members, regardless of whether the victim and perpetrator live together. More information about controlling or coercive behaviour, including the impact on children can be found in the Controlling or coercive behaviour: statutory guidance²³² and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021: statutory guidance²³³.

²³¹ As set out in [the Serious Crime Act 2015 Section 76](#), a child cannot be considered a victim of coercive or controlling behaviour if (see sub-section 3) "A" has parental responsibility for "B" (the child) and if "B" is under the age of 16. To note, children aged 16 to 17 can be considered victims of coercive or controlling behaviour in their own personal relationships.

²³² [Controlling or coercive behaviour: statutory guidance](#)

²³³ [Domestic Abuse Act 2021: statutory guidance](#)

County lines - As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy²³⁴ published by the Home Office, a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of ‘deal line’. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

This activity can happen locally as well as across the UK; no specified distance of travel is required. For further information see ‘Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines’ guidance²³⁵.

Domestic abuse - The Domestic Abuse Act 2021²³⁶ introduced the first ever statutory definition of domestic abuse (section 1 of the Act). The statutory definition is clear that domestic abuse may be a single incident or a course of conduct which can encompass a wide range of abusive behaviours, including a) physical or sexual abuse; b) violent or threatening behaviour; c) controlling or coercive behaviour; d) economic abuse; and e) psychological, emotional, or other abuse.

Under the statutory definition, both the person who is carrying out the behaviour and the person to whom the behaviour is directed towards must be aged 16 or over and they must be “personally connected” (as defined in section 2 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021). The definition ensures that different types of relationships are captured, including ex-partners and family members.

All children can experience and be adversely affected by domestic abuse in the context of their home life where domestic abuse occurs between family members, including where those being abusive do not live with the child. Experiencing domestic abuse can have a significant impact on children. Section 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises the impact of domestic abuse on children (0 to 18), as victims in their own right, if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse.

Young people can also experience domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships. This form of child-on-child abuse is sometimes referred to as teenage relationship abuse. Depending on the age of the young people, this may not be recognised in law under the statutory definition of domestic abuse (if one or both parties are under 16). However, as with any child under 18, where there are concerns about safety or welfare, child safeguarding procedures should be followed and both young victims and young perpetrators should be offered support.

²³⁴ [Serious Violence Strategy](#)

²³⁵ [Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines guidance \(Home Office\)](#)

²³⁶ [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)

The 'Domestic Abuse Act 2021: statutory guidance'²³⁷ provides further advice for frontline professionals who have responsibility for safeguarding and supporting victims of domestic abuse, including children. This guidance provides further information about the different forms of domestic abuse (including teenage relationship abuse and child to parent abuse) and the impact of domestic abuse on children.

Education, health and care (EHC) plan - An education, health and care (EHC) plan details the education, health and social care support that is to be provided to a child or young person who has SEN. See the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0-25 (2015).

Emotional abuse - The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child so as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or making fun of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Extra-familial harm - Children may be at risk of or experiencing physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and exploitation in contexts outside their families (see glossary definition of extra-familial contexts).

While there is no legal definition for the term extra-familial harm, it is widely used to describe different forms of harm that occur outside the home.

Children can be vulnerable to multiple forms of extra-familial harm from both adults and/or other children. Examples of extra-familial harm may include (but are not limited to): criminal exploitation (such as county lines and financial exploitation), serious violence, modern slavery and trafficking, online harm, sexual exploitation, child-on-child (non-familial) sexual abuse and other forms of harmful sexual behaviour displayed by children towards their peers, abuse, and/or coercive control, children may experience in their own intimate relationships (sometimes called teenage relationship abuse), and the influences of extremism which could lead to radicalisation.

²³⁷ [Domestic Abuse Act 2021: statutory guidance](#)

Extra-familial contexts - Extra-familial contexts include a range of environments outside the family home in which harm can occur. These can include peer groups, school, and community/public spaces, including known places in the community where there are concerns about risks to children (for example, parks, housing estates, shopping centres, takeaway restaurants, or transport hubs), as well as online, including social media or gaming platforms.

Extremism - Extremism is defined in the Prevent strategy as the vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces.

Family group decision making - this is the umbrella term for family-led decision-making forums, where a family network has all the resources, adequate preparation, relevant information, a safe and appropriate environment, and private family time to make a plan to response to concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing. At pre-proceedings stage, successful family group decision-making also includes having an independent coordinator. Family group decision-making can take different forms. The Department for Education does not prescribe a specific model, but a process which follows the steps set out above.

Family group conference - this is one model of family group decision-making.

Family network - A group of people close to a child made up of relatives and non-related connected people (where connected people has the same definition used in the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010²³⁸ in addition to close family friends who have a connection with the child)

A family network could include step-parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, godparents, or close family friends.

Financial exploitation - Financial exploitation can take many forms. In this context, we use the term to describe exploitation which takes place for the purpose of money laundering. This is when criminals target children and adults and take advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive them into facilitating the movement of illicit funds. This can include physical cash and/or payments through financial products, such as bank and cryptocurrency accounts.

Kinship care - Kinship care is any situation in which a child is being raised in the care of a friend or family member who is not their parent. The arrangement may be temporary or longer term.

²³⁸ [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulation 24](#)

The following are all types of kinship care arrangements however this list is not exhaustive:

- a. Informal kinship care arrangements (not approved foster care) including:
 - i. A private family arrangement in which a close family member who does not hold parental responsibility, raises the child and
 - the local authority has had no major role in making the arrangement for the child
 - where a Family Court has not made an order in respect to the care of the child.
 - ii. Where a child under the age of 16 is being provided with accommodation for less than 28 days by an individual in their own home who is not a close relative
 - iii. Where a 16 or 17 year old is being provided with accommodation by an individual who is not a close relative in their own home
- b. A private fostering arrangement in which someone who is not a close relative²³⁹ of the child looks after the child for 28 days or more²⁴⁰ (as per section 66(1)(a) and (b) of the Children Act 1989)²⁴¹
- c. Where a 'lives with' child arrangements order²⁴² has been granted in respect of the child, in favour of someone who is a friend or family member but is not the child's parent.
- d. Where a special guardianship order has been granted appointing a friend or family member as the child's special guardian.
- e. Where a child is a 'looked after child' by virtue of either an interim or final care order or being accommodated by the local authority (usually under section 20 of the Children Act 1989) and each of the following apply (this may be described as 'kinship foster care' or 'family and friends foster care'):
 - i. The child is being cared for by a friend or family member who is not their parent, and
 - ii. The friend or family member is approved as a local authority foster carer on a temporary basis or following full assessment.

²³⁹ In relation to private fostering, "relative" has the meaning given in section 105 of the Children Act 1989. It includes only the following: grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership), and stepparent (a married stepparent, including a civil partner).

²⁴⁰ For the purposes of this kinship definition, the term private fostering arrangement includes only individuals accommodating a child. It does not apply to organisations or bodies

²⁴¹ 16- and 17-year olds who are disabled will be deemed to be in a private fostering arrangement.

²⁴² Pursuant to section 8 of the Children Act 1989

- f. Where an adoption order has been granted in respect of the child and, prior to the making of the order, the adopter was a friend or family member.

Local authority designated officer (LADO) - County level and unitary local authorities should ensure that allegations against people who work with children are not dealt with in isolation. Any action necessary to address corresponding welfare concerns in relation to the child or children involved should be taken without delay and in a coordinated manner. Local authorities should, in addition, have designated a particular officer, or team of officers (either as part of multi-agency arrangements or otherwise), to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people who work with children. Any such officer, or team of officers, should be sufficiently qualified and experienced to be able to fulfil this role effectively, for example, qualified social workers. Any new appointments to such a role, other than current or former designated officers moving between local authorities, should be qualified social workers. Arrangements should be put in place to ensure that any allegations about those who work with children are passed to the designated officer, or team of officers, without delay.

Maltreatment - All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Neglect - The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- provide suitable education

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs

Parent carer - A person aged 18 or over who provides or intends to provide care for a disabled child for whom the person has parental responsibility

Physical abuse - A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Relative - The Children Act 1989 (section 105)²⁴³ defines a relative as in relation to a child, meaning a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent. This guidance uses this definition and includes cousins when referring to relatives.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children - Defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- protecting children from maltreatment, whether the risk of harm comes from within the child's family and/or outside (from the wider community), including online
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Safeguarding partners - A safeguarding partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 as: (a) the local authority, (b) an integrated care board for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area, and (c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area. The three safeguarding partners should agree on ways to co-ordinate their safeguarding services, act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others, and implement local and national learning, including from serious child safeguarding incidents. To fulfil this role, the 3 safeguarding partners must set out how they will work together and with any relevant agencies as well as arrangements for conducting local reviews.

Serious violence - Serious violence covers specific types of crime, such as homicide, knife crime, and gun crime, and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in gangs and county lines drug dealing. It also includes crime threats faced in some areas of the country such as the use of corrosive substances as a weapon.

For the purposes of the Serious Violence Duty, as per section 13 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, Serious Violence in the local area is violence that is serious in that area, taking account of: the maximum penalty which could be imposed for the offence (if any) involved in the violence, the impact of the violence on any victim, the prevalence of the violence in the area and the impact of the violence on the community in the area.

²⁴³ [Children Act 1989 Section 105](#)

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.

Young carer - A young carer is a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person (of any age, except generally where that care is provided for payment, pursuant to a contract or as voluntary work). Young adult carers are aged 16 to 25 and may have different support needs as they transition to adulthood.

Appendix B: Further sources of information

Guidance issued by the Department for Education

- [Care of unaccompanied migrant children and child victims of modern slavery](#)
- [Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners](#)
- [Children Act 1989: court orders and pre-proceedings](#)
- [Children Act 1989 guidance and regulation volume 2: care planning, placement, and case review](#)
- [Children Act 1989: private fostering](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education: for schools and colleges](#)
- [Listening to and involving children and young people](#)
- [Managing risk of radicalisation in your education setting](#)
- [Mandatory reporting of female genital mutilation: procedural information](#)
- [Multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation](#)
- [National action plan to tackle child abuse linked to faith or belief](#)
- [National minimum standards for private fostering](#)
- [Non-Maintained Special Schools \(England\) Regulations 2015](#)
- [Pathways to harm, pathways to protection: a triennial analysis of serious case reviews, 2011 to 2014](#)
- [Preventing and tackling bullying](#)
- [Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation](#)
- [Safeguarding and social care for children](#)
- [Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked practice guidance](#)
- [Safeguarding strategy: unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children](#)
- [Social work post-qualifying standards: Knowledge and skills statements](#)
- [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(EYFS\)](#)
- [Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care](#)
- [Statutory visits to children with special educational needs and disabilities or health conditions in long-term residential settings](#)

- [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency \(England\) Regulations 2018](#)
- [The Prevent duty: support for those working in education with safeguarding responsibilities](#)
- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: how legislation underpins implementation in England](#)
- [Use of reasonable force in schools](#)
- [Visiting children in residential special schools and colleges statutory guidance](#)
- [What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: advice for practitioners](#)

Guidance issued by other government departments and agencies

- [Achieving best evidence in criminal proceedings: guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures](#) Ministry of Justice
- [Apply for a forced marriage protection order](#) Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- [Asset plus: assessment and planning in the youth justice system](#) Youth Justice Board
- [Carers strategy: second national action plan 2014-2016](#) Department of Health and Social Care
- [Channel and Prevent Multi-Agency Panel guidance: protecting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism](#) Home Office
- [Child exploitation disruption toolkit](#) Home Office
- [Commissioning framework for child sexual abuse support](#) Home Office
- [Counter-terrorism strategy \(CONTEST\)](#) Home Office
- [County lines offending: the Crown Prosecution Service legal guidance](#) Crown Prosecution Service
- [Controlling or coercive behaviour: statutory guidance framework](#) Home Office
- [Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines](#) Home Office
- [Cyber aware](#) National Cyber Security Centre
- [DBS barring referral guidance](#) Disclosure and Barring Service
- [Developing local substance misuse safeguarding protocols](#) Public Health England
- [Disclosure and Barring Service](#)

- [Domestic Abuse Act 2021: statutory guidance](#) Home Office
- [Every child matters: statutory guidance \(arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children\)](#) UK Visas and Immigration
- [Female genital mutilation protection orders: factsheet](#) Home Office
- [Female genital mutilation resource pack](#) Home Office
- [Forced marriage](#) Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and Home Office
- [Forced marriage protection orders \(application\)](#) HM Courts and Tribunals Service
- [Forced marriage resource pack](#) Home Office
- [Forced marriage: statutory guidance for heads of safeguarding organisations, and non-statutory guidance for front-line professionals](#) Home Office, and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- [Guidance for health professionals on domestic violence](#) Department of Health and Social Care
- [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities](#) Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
- [Mental Health Act 1983: Code of Practice](#) Department of Health and Social Care
- [Missing children and adults: a cross-government strategy](#) Home Office
- [Modern Slavery Act: statutory guidance](#) Home Office
- [Multi-agency public protection arrangements \(MAPPA\): Guidance](#) Ministry of Justice, HM Prison and Probation Service
- [National service framework: children, young people, and maternity services](#) Department of Health and Social Care
- [Practice direction 12A – care, supervision, and other part 4 proceedings: guide to case Management](#) Ministry of Justice
- [Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales](#) Home Office
- [Prison, probation, and rehabilitation: public protection manual](#) HM Prison and Probation Service
- [Probation Service Serious further offence procedures policy framework](#) Ministry of Justice
- [Protocol for liaison and information exchange when criminal proceedings coincide with child safeguarding practice reviews in England](#) Crown Prosecution Service
- [Recognised, valued and supported: next steps for the carers strategy 2010](#) Department of Health and Social Care

- [Safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk in the NHS: Safeguarding accountability and assurance framework](#) NHS England
- [Serious and organised crime toolkit: an interactive toolkit for practitioners working with young people](#) Home Office
- [Statutory guidance for integrated care boards on executive lead roles](#) NHS England
- [Supporting children to stay safe online](#) National Crime Agency/CEOP Education
- [Understanding the female genital mutilation enhanced dataset: updated guidance and clarification to support implementation](#) Department of Health and Social Care
- [Violence against women and girls](#) Home Office

Guidance issued by external organisations

- [Child maltreatment: when to suspect maltreatment in under 18s](#) NICE
- [Child protection and the dental team](#) British Dental Association
- [Child Protection Companion](#) Royal college of Paediatrics and Child Health
- [Children's Commissioner](#)
- [Children's rights and the law guide](#) Children's Rights Alliance for England
- [Communicating with children: a guide for those working with children who have or may have been sexually abused](#) Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse
- [Cyberbullying: understand, prevent, respond – guidance for schools](#) Childnet International
- [Guide to UK General Data Protection Regulations \(UK GDPR\)](#) Information Commissioner's Office
- [Helping education settings identify and respond to concerns](#) Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse
- [How we protect children's rights](#) Unicef
- [Independent Scrutiny and Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships](#) Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme
- [Inter-parental relationships](#) Early Intervention Foundation
- [Multi-agency practice principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm](#) Non-statutory guidance for local areas, developed by the Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Support Programme, funded by the Department for Education and supported by the Home Office, the Department for Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Justice

- [NICE guideline on child abuse and neglect](#) NICE
- [Police response to concern for a child](#) College of Policing
- [Pre-proceedings and family justice hub](#) Research in Practice and Essex County Council
- [Prison and Probation Ombudsman's fatal incidents reports](#)
- [Private fostering](#) CoramBAAF
- [Protecting children and young people: doctors' responsibilities](#) General Medical Council
- [Protective measures and civil orders](#) College of Policing
- [Safeguarding children: toolkit for general practice](#) Royal College of General Practitioners
- [Safer young lives research centre](#) University of Bedfordshire
- [Signs and Indicators: a template for identifying and recording signs of child sexual abuse](#) Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse
- [Standards for safeguarding and protecting children in sport](#) NSPCC
- [Sudden unexpected death in infancy and childhood: multi-agency guidelines for care and investigation](#) Royal College of Pathologists
- [Supporting parents and carers: a guide for those working with families affected by child sexual abuse](#) Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse
- [UK Safer Internet Centre: Online safety advice and resources](#) UK Safer Internet Centre
- [Whistleblowing advice line](#) NSPCC
- [Working Together with Parents Network: update of the DoH/DfES good practice guidance on working with parents with a learning disability \(2007\)](#) University of Bristol



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Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Child Exploitation Priorities 2023-2028

A Plan to Tackle and Prevent Child Exploitation in Rotherham

Introduction

Tackling exploitation of children in Rotherham is one of our most important roles, and always will be. Our priority is to work in partnership with organisations, communities, children and their families to reduce child exploitation and keep children safe. We commit to focusing on harm reduction in our communities through awareness raising campaigns and the identification of individual and groups of children that may be vulnerable, at risk of or victim of exploitation, and in the pursuit of criminals and bringing them to justice. In Rotherham we also recognise the need to provide post abuse support to victims and survivors and this has and will continue to be significant to us. At the heart of all our activities is ensuring that the voices of victim and survivors is listened to, and that the lived experience of the child sits at the centre of our approach.

Child Exploitation includes Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Criminal Exploitation, Radicalisation, Modern slavery, Human Trafficking and Honour Based Violence

This Child Exploitation Plan sets out how we will deliver our priorities, based under the 4 Ps, **Prepare Prevent Protect Pursue**, which will be driven by the Child Exploitation Delivery Group. This will have strategic oversight from the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (RSCP), with strong links into the Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP). The priorities, derived from the National Child Sexual Abuse Plan and the National Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan, are based in evidence and methodology of supporting organisations to help target offenders and protect children and young people, through new ways of working, to understand the complexity and extent of Child Exploitation. These priorities were the basis of the previous Rotherham Child Sexual Exploitation Plan and remain relevant.

The Safeguarding Children Partnership recognise that a broader view of safeguarding and response is required when considering the exploitation of children and young people. Our approach to child exploitation recognises the different forms of exploitation, which encompasses child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation and, where there are links to child exploitation, gangs, county lines, knife crime, radicalisation, youth violence, modern slavery and child trafficking. The Plan recognises and addresses the risks and vulnerabilities faced by children who go missing, children with additional needs, issues of equality and diversity, children experiencing other forms of abuse, Looked After Children and Care Leavers, increases in online abuse and associated risks and those who are victims of or witnesses of domestic abuse. We continue to support Operation Stovewood and the National Crime Agency's investigation into historical

allegations of abuse in Rotherham during the period between 1997 and 2013, with extensive support services being available for adult survivors, as well as undertaking proactive work to protect children today.

It is the intent of all agencies to improve the lives of vulnerable children and young people living in Rotherham, to identify potential victims due to vulnerability and to safeguard them from further risk of harm. This Plan builds on the ***'Plan to Tackle and Prevent Child Exploitation in Rotherham – 2019-2022'*** and has an associated delivery plan. It sets out intentions regarding use of data to capture themes, emerging trends and using these for learning and response purposes, as well as how agencies will work together to ensure there is the most effective and coordinated response to identify and protect children at risk of exploitation. There are robust community safety and engagement arrangements in place to support the work we do as a Safeguarding Children Partnership and as a Safeguarding Adults Partnership. This Plan sets out the strategic priorities and focuses on building on communities' strengths and empowering them to keep children safe.

Specific legal duties that relate to this Plan are:

- *Children Act 1989 – Section 17* – places duty on the local authority to provide services to children in need in their area, regardless of where they are found
- *Children Act 1989 – Section 47* – requires local authorities to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.
- *Working Together 2018* – states: *'Whilst it is parents and carers who have primary care for their children, local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area'*
- *The National Plan for Child Sexual Exploitation* – sets out the Government's ambition to prevent, tackle and respond to all forms of child sexual abuse

Other guidance documents on or linked to Child Exploitation includes:

- Serious Violence Plan
- Keeping Kids Safe
- The Home Office Child Exploitation Toolkit (2019)

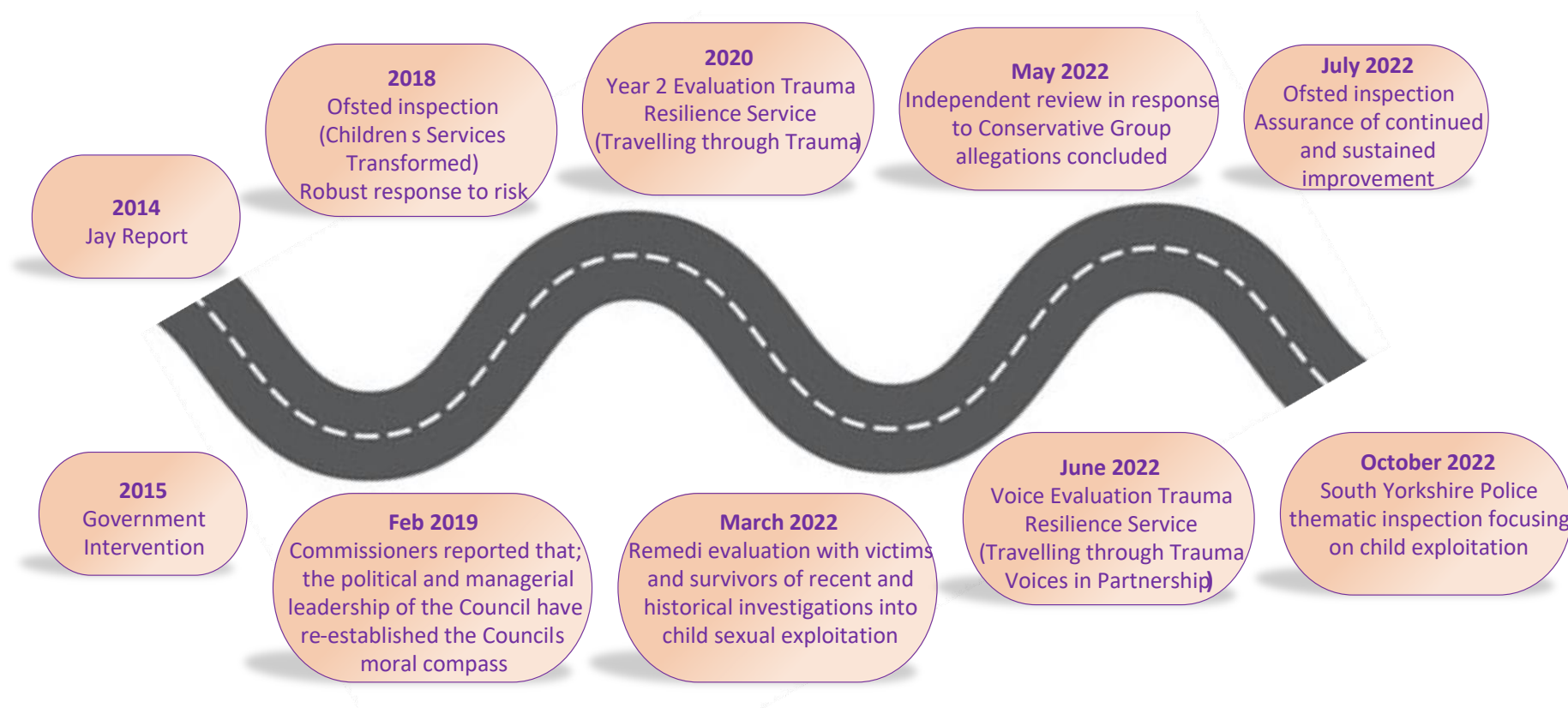
see links in the glossary

Whilst there are clear definitions of what Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Exploitation are, there are similarities between the two in relation to the tactics used by criminals, and the impact for the victims, and that children can be victim of both at the same time, by the same perpetrator. In response we have adopted the umbrella term of Child Exploitation, and this has resulted in bringing together these complex work areas under one pathway with one specialised multi-agency service – ***EVOLVE***. This service has co-located social workers, police officers, missing advocates, family support workers, and voluntary sector

officers from Barnardo's and a dedicated health professional which ensures effective sharing of information. They work directly with the child, their family and wider networks to develop safety plans that recognise and respond to the harm outside of the home.

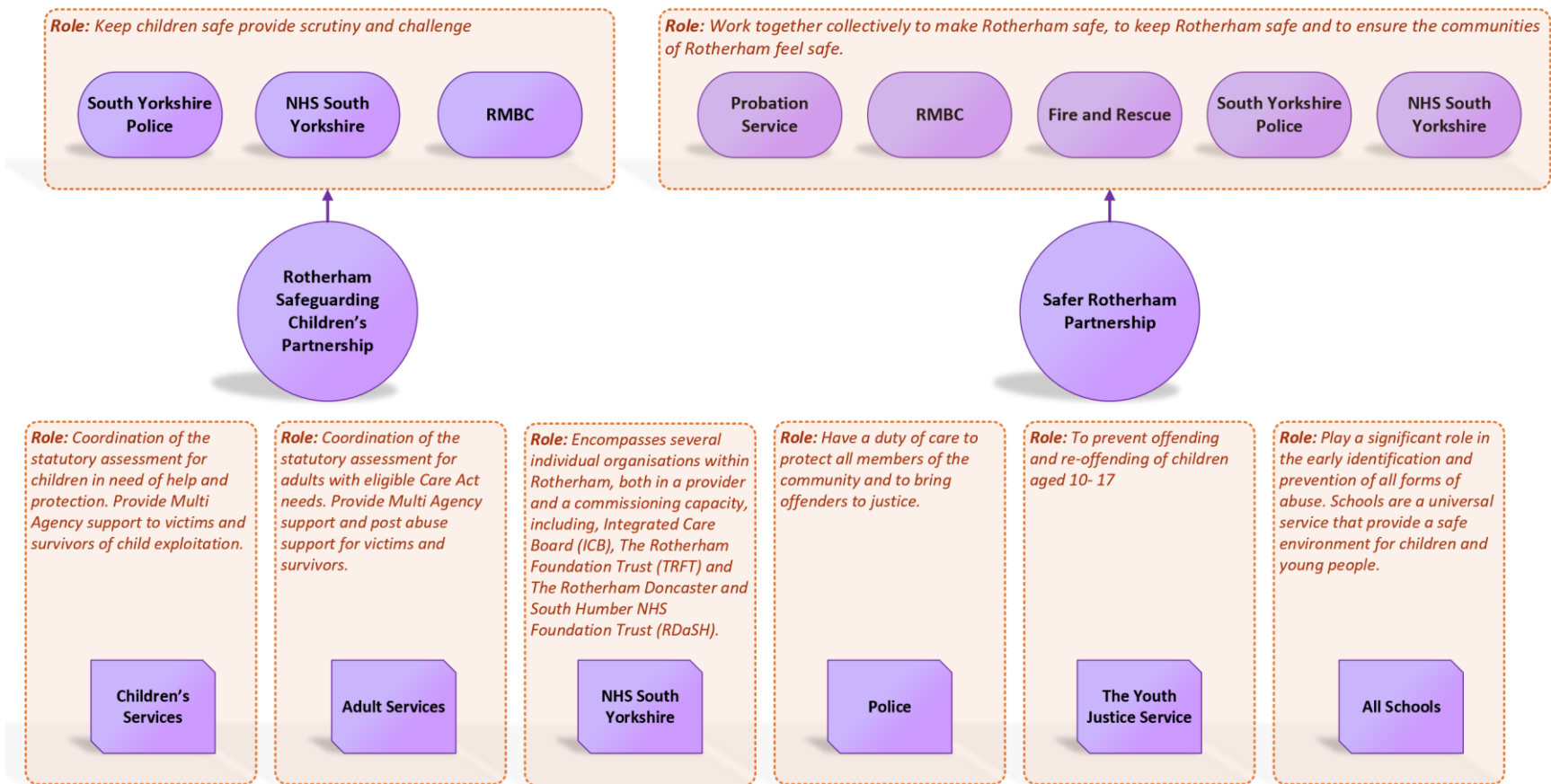
Our Journey

The Rotherham Partnership ambition is to be at the forefront of tackling Child Exploitation. Since 2014 and the publishing of the Jay Report (covering years 1997-2013) there has been on a significant journey of improvement, led by the voice of survivors and victims. We set high standards, and achievement is validated by external and independent experts, including the Office for Standards in Education Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) the Independent Review completed in 2022 in response to Conservative Group allegations, all of whose recommendations have integral to this Plan and the associated Delivery Plan.



Roles and Responsibilities

We know that one agency cannot tackle the complexity of child exploitation alone. Effective interventions, whether they are community groups, universal services, early help, child in need or child protection, are dependent on professionals having strong working relationships that recognise each organisations' statutory responsibilities and procedures regarding keeping children safe. Partnership working is a strength in Rotherham, something that each organisation continually invests in.



Priorities

Strand		How will we achieve this	How will measure success
PREPARE To have an effective response to tackling exploitation in Rotherham, from prevention, safeguarding systems, identification of	Partnerships are just one of our unique strengths, and support us in all our activities to safeguard against all forms of exploitation	We will continue to work together, have a multi-agency approach to tackling exploitation through our Evolve Childs Exploitation team, and joint operational and strategic meetings	Evolve will continue the partnership approach to tackling child exploitation Meetings will be represented from across the partnership Transparent escalation processes in the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safer Rotherham Partnership
	Ensure we have effective early identification services	Promoting early interventions through universal services and use of the early help assessment key tool to support the early identification and intervention by universal and targeted services	Increase in identification Increase prevention at an earlier stage Data to be analysed for themes and emerging trends to inform learning and response

offenders, to victim support 	Ensure we have effective intervention embedded within communities to minimise the occurrence and harm linked to child exploitation	<p>Developing, informing and empowering communities to have an empowered and active role in prevention</p> <p>Ensure that information including strategies, and information on what to do if there are concerns, is available in different languages to ensure all people know how to raise concerns and where to</p>	<p>Targeted communication through communities, universal services and the partnership around child exploitation, raising awareness around spotting the signs of criminal and sexual exploitation and online abuse. Engagement work with communities, universal services and partners to capture they knowledge of contextualised safeguarding, spot the signs, and compare to referral origin data to the police and children's services</p> <p>Communication training and awareness raising to include consideration of equality and diversity, language and additional needs, and this to be captured via audit activity</p> <p>Clear reporting pathways for organisations, professionals and from the community are embedded</p>
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		Provide continuous targeted education and training in priority areas	<p>All schools in Rotherham will be offered a targeted intervention from specialist services including EVOLVE, with a priority on high risk and vulnerable areas</p> <p>Training will be offered to youth groups, focusing on high risk and vulnerable areas, include spot the signs, healthy relationships and friendships, issues of equality and diversity and inclusion, and children with additional needs</p>
			Ensure that training covers all formed of exploitation, criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation, gangs, county lines, knife crime, radicalisation, youth violence, modern slavery and child trafficking

		Development of a child exploitation pathway for practitioners across the partnership workforce	Children vulnerable or at risk of exploitation referred to Children Services and assessed as low risk will receive an early help assessment and intervention / support
		<p>Prepare young people for adulthood</p> <p>Effective safeguarding partnerships arrangements monitored by the Rotherham</p> <p>Strong Safeguarding Partnership</p> <p>Transitioning arrangements in place for vulnerable young people transitioning to adulthood and adult services</p> <p>Quality assurance activity and appreciative enquiries will evidence strong partnership working and effective practice leading to good outcomes</p> <p>Embedded data reporting systems across the partnership</p>	
	Promote our established and successful systems and interventions to install confidence in our partners, communities, and survivors on the outstanding work undertaken	Communicate success of the 2019 -2022 plan and activities through awareness initiatives including spot the signs, training events, Makesafe and Keepsafe. Work with community groups, voluntary sector and elected members to link with communities and engage them in feedback to support the CE Plan and associated workplan	Communities will have awareness of who to contact if they have concerns. They will speak positively about services, and the Towns response to Child Exploitation
	Promote safeguarding is everybody business	Promotion of awareness raising including Spot the Signs, Makesafe and Keepsafe. Draw on community groups and link in with community activities	

PREVENT Reducing exploitation from happening in Rotherham	Ensure the right learning and development offer in place for all partners, relevant organisations and community groups around areas of child exploitation	The partnership is trained to identify and act on early indicators around Child Exploitation and understand their role in the Safeguarding process	Partnership Training offer from Rotherham Safeguarding Partnership will be audited, and monitored against demand and performance data
		To review and evaluate the impact of the whole range of services	Multi-agency audit Internal audits Appreciative enquires
		Use analytical capability and capacity to identify high risk areas of vulnerability. This will enable us to target intervention/prevention activity, including identification of emerging themes to support early intervention and longer-term problem solving	Community, universal services, early intervention and locality-based problem-solving delivers reductions in risk and vulnerability Assurance checking against data and quality
		Work to identify and engage with hardto-reach communities to improve confidence in reporting abuse	Increased engagement with all communities Recognition of inclusion, equality and diversity through language in all activities Increase in reporting from communities Improved trust and confidence from communities.
		Work with organisations, community groups and businesses that work with or provide a service to children to improve their knowledge and understanding and practices in spotting the signs and taking appropriate action	Operation Make Safe to continue and be expanded out Training to be provided to organisations where there is contact with young people, and focusing vulnerable areas

		Work with Communities and community groups to provide education and learning Work with children and young people in communities, youth groups and schools to provide education and awareness of the risks and empower them to support themselves and keep themselves and their peers safe	Operation Keepsafe to continue, focusing on vulnerable areas Work with children and young people directly in schools, community groups and in the community, providing workshops and engagement sessions on healthy relationships, spot the signs, keepsafe and what to do if they are worried for themselves, friends or peers
			National Referral Mechanisms' will be used for all high-risk victims of exploitation
PROTECT Keeping children and young people safe from harm through exploitation	Ensure that local processes and practices are effectively protecting children when child exploitation is suspected or confirmed, as well as effective working arrangements to ensure that perpetrators are identified and brought to justice	Evidencing that child who are at risk of, or who are experiencing child exploitation receive interventions that reduce risk in a timely way	Processes for referral to intervention are clear to all partners and the public
		South Yorkshire Policing is Child Centred and ensures the child is firstly seen as a victim	Children are protected and supported when they are vulnerable to exploitation or have been exploited
		The on-going collection of service user feedback from children and families,	Strong pathways to listen to the voices of victims and survivors Evidence of feedback influencing practice

		considering the impact of practice on children, young people and their families as well as perpetrators of abuse	
		Review of the child protection process for children who are at risk outside the home as a coordinated approach whilst embedding effective partnership processes and response to protect vulnerable individuals from risk whilst targeting those who seek to harm them	Contextualised safeguarding arrangements embedded in all relevant training courses Contextualised safeguarding risks considered in all safeguarding discussions and actions along with traditional risks
	Provide support to victims and survivors of exploitation, recognising the importance of trauma informed practice and ensuring their needs are met, and understanding that this will be continuous activity	Development and implementation of the trauma resilience roadmap, providing post abuse support to victims and survivors	Post abuse services are flexible to meet the needs of victims and survivors at the point of need Community, universal and targeted services have access to clinical guidance to enable them to provide post abuse support The voice of victim and survivors continues to inform pathway and service development
PURSUE Identifying offenders of exploitation and bring them to justice	Pursue all forms of child abuse including sexual abuse sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation and bringing offenders to justice.	The continued review and refinement of processes and pathways so support effective sharing and recording of information about people who pose a risk and or are known to Operation Stovewood	Processes for referral to intervention are clear to all partners and the public
	All child exploitation, including single incidents, individual and groups of children, and complex and organised abuse networks		Utilise the information from partners, CETG and MACE to identify subject and offending profiles, working in partnership to proactively target and disrupt criminal activity
			Police will utilise all available covert and overt techniques to safeguard victims and target perpetrators

	are identified and understood, effectively managed, investigated and resolved. There are effective working arrangements to ensure that perpetrators are identified and brought to justice		Multi-agency approach to proactively target and disrupt offenders through operation fortify
	Ensure that the right strategic and operational arrangements are in place so that investigations including Operation Stovewood around large scale historic abuse concerns in the borough connect effectively to processes for current work with children and survivor	The police with support of partners will pursue those offenders who cause the most harm	For the child exploitation delivery group to continue to lead on ensuring the systematic learning from experiences of Operation Stovewood is embedded into current and future practice
			Ensure there is continued engagement with service users and communities to consider the wider impact of large-scale operations and how we can improve practice

These priorities sit alongside a work plan, which is actioned and driven by the Child Exploitation delivery Group.

END

Appendix Organisations

Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (RSCP). Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 places the responsibility on the three 'safeguarding partners', the police, the local authority and health agencies, to formulate the local arrangements for partnership arrangements for safeguarding children in their respective geographical areas. The partnership is made up of executive officers from the partners, and who meet regularly to review arrangements for keeping children safe, providing scrutiny and challenge as part of their duties. Feeding into the partnership are four delivery groups, Child Exploitation, Learning and Improvement, Performance and Quality and Practice Review Group where scrutiny and assurance and challenge takes place and is then provided to the partnership meetings. These meetings are chaired by senior staff from different organisations which provides accountability.

The Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) is the borough's Community Safety Partnership, set up under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The SRP work out how to deal with crime and local issues like anti-social behaviour, drug or alcohol misuse and reoffending. They assess local crime priorities annually, consulting with partners and the local community about their priorities and monitor progress in achieving them. There are five responsible authorities that make up the Safer Rotherham Partnership: Probation Service, Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue and South Yorkshire Police. They work together collectively to make Rotherham safe, to keep Rotherham safe and to ensure the communities of Rotherham feel safe.

Children's Services are responsible for the co-ordinating of statutory assessments for children in need. Where there are concerns about the safety and welfare of a child, a referral should be made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). They will assess the information and if deemed appropriate undertake further assessment. The assessment may result in the provision of services designed to address the identified needs of the child through Early Help support, Barnardo's, a multi-agency child in need plan or child protection plan. Where a child is assessed as having suffered, or being at risk of, significant harm as a result of Exploitation, Children's Services will follow a Contextual Safeguarding process to ensure that extra familial risks are considered under a multi-agency plan coordinated by the exploitation team – Evolve. Barnardo's are commissioned to work alongside Evolve, Social Care and Early Help to support children and young people at low risk of exploitation. Multi agency support is provided to victims and survivors of Child Exploitation.

Adult Services are responsible for the co-ordinating of statutory assessments for adults with eligible care act needs. Where there are concerns about the safety and welfare of an adult, a referral should be made to the adult social care front door. They will assess the information and if deemed appropriate undertake further assessment. The assessment may result in the provision of services designed to address the identified needs of the adult through early intervention and prevention, care act assessment, and review. Where an adult is assessed as having suffered, or being at risk of, significant harm including as a result of exploitation, adult services will follow a safeguarding process to ensure that all risks are considered under a multi-agency framework. Alongside a statutory duty, Rotherham adult social care has a vulnerable adult's risk management approach to people with a level of complexity, dual diagnosis or offender management who do not meet either adult social care or mental health criteria this team is called the complex lives team and is co located with housing a

community psychiatric nurse, South Yorkshire Police and safer neighbourhood services. Referrals can also be made via adult services front door to these series. Adult Services also commission post abuse support for victims and survivors of child's sexual exploitation.

The Police have a duty of care to protect all members of the community and to bring offenders to justice. The welfare of children is a priority for the service, and all officers are responsible for identifying and referring children who are at risk of harm including exploitation to Children's Services. There are several situations where the police may have opportunity to believe there is cause for concern that a child is at risk of exploitation, this may be a direct referral, in the course of other duties including police work in communities, or through targeting known crime hotspots, and are therefore well placed to identify issues that might indicate child exploitation. In these circumstances the Police will liaise with Children's Services Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). It is imperative that Police Officers attend safeguarding training specific to Child Exploitation so that they are aware of the signs of abuse and exploitation and know the pathway to follow if they have concerns about a child.

The NHS within Rotherham encompasses several individual organisations, both in a provider and a commissioning capacity, including, the NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) and The NHS Rotherham Foundation Trust (TRFT), Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust (RDaSH), and General Practitioners, to name a few, and who provide universal health service in Rotherham. Health professionals, particularly sexual health workers, school nurses, specialist paediatric staff, and mental health services, spend time with young people either in their homes or other establishments (schools/hospitals/clinics) and are well-placed to identify cases of child exploitation. It is important that health professionals are alert to the signs of exploitation in young people including sexual exploitation, and signs of criminal exploitation and attend the numerous safeguarding training opportunities that are available to them. The nature and impact of child exploitation is cumulative and corrosive, so it is essential that all health professionals maintain accurate, detailed and contemporaneous records that help to form a "picture" of the exploitation. When a practitioner identifies concerns regarding exploitation in a child life, they should speak to a member of the designated Health Safeguarding Children team to determine what the next steps to take are. However, this should not delay a referral to Children's Services or police in an emergency.

All schools play a significant role in the early identification and prevention of all forms of abuse. Schools are a universal service that can provide a safe environment for children and young people. Due to the amount of time that school staff spend with children they often are the professional that knows the child and their circumstances best. Schools therefore play an essential role in identifying behaviours that may be indicative of child exploitation. Where there is concern that a child or young person may be involved in sexual or criminal exploitation or is vulnerable to risk of exploitation the School / Education establishment should always initiate action to ensure the child's safety and welfare are paramount consideration. All education settings should have a policy which sets out how they will address child exploitation. The training for Designated Safeguarding Leads will include additional information and guidance on child exploitation.

The Youth Justice Service (YJS) aims to prevent offending and re-offending of children aged 10- 17. All YJS staff have a responsibility to be alert to safeguarding issues in their work with children and their families and must ensure that all young people are assessed to identify risk of exploitation. Exploitation Risk Assessment Management Tools should be completed where appropriate and appropriate concerns should be raised with line managers and where appropriate referred to Children's Social Care and specialist exploitation teams.

Glossary

Sentence or Word	Clarification
Sexual Exploitation	<p>Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. Child Sexual Exploitation includes forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, or whether the child is aware of what is happening and in some situations the child may believe they are in a loving consensual relationship – this is called grooming. The activities may involve physical contact, and may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Children or young people might be invited to parties or gatherings with others their own age or adults and given drugs and alcohol.</p> <p>They may be assaulted and sexually abused by one person or multiple perpetrators. The sexual assaults and abuse can be violent, humiliating and degrading. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. CSE can happen in person or online and children encouraged to film or stream sexual activities and have sexual conversations. An abuser will gain a child's trust or control them through violence or blackmail before moving onto sexually abusing them.</p> <p>The national plan focuses on the relationship between Child exploitation and the Serious and Organised Crime delivery framework, also known as the '4Ps' – Pursue, Prepare, Protect and Prevent. This document can be found at Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Plan 2021 (publishing.service.gov.uk)</p>

Criminal Exploitation	<p>Child criminal exploitation (CCE) is the manipulation, coercion and control of children and young people to commit crimes usually for the benefit of other abusive adult's or peers. This could be within extended families, communities or more sophisticated organised crime groups, linked to the modern-day slavery. transporting and storing of drugs and harbouring or receipt' monies. Such exploitation usually happens outside of the home and is extra-familial.</p> <p>The national guidance can be found at Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p>
Vulnerable Child	<p>Vulnerable children are children can be at greater risk of experiencing harm because of one or more factors in their lives including abuse, living in a home where there is domestic abuse, addiction or mental ill health, and or having additional needs such as learning or physical needs. Vulnerable children can have less resilience or safeguards around them to spot signs of risk.</p>
Radicalisation	<p>Radicalisation is the process through which a person comes to support or be involved in extremist ideologies. Children who are at risk of radicalisation may have low self-esteem or be victims of bullying or discrimination. Extremists might target them and tell them they can be part of something special, later brainwashing them into cutting themselves off from their friends and family.</p>
County Lines	<p>County lines is a form of criminal exploitation in which criminals groom and manipulate children to recruit them as runners for criminal enterprise including the transportation of illegal goods including drugs and cash, all over the country. The 'lines' refer to mobile phones that are used to control a young person who is delivering drugs/cash, often to towns outside their home county. Children are recruited to protect the criminals enabling them to remain detached and less likely to be detected.</p> <p>This crime is often associated with other serious crimes such as sexual exploitation, violence, money laundering, modern slavery and human trafficking.</p>
Modern Slavery	<p>Modern slavery, including child slavery includes when a child is exploited for someone else's gain. This can be through threats of violence and abuse. It can include child trafficking, sexual exploitation, child soldiers, child forced marriage, child domestic slavery or any services children are forced to do against their will.</p>
Child Trafficking	<p>Child trafficking is when a child is moved around (the country, region or into / out of the country) for criminal means. This includes sexual and criminal exploitation.</p>

Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP)	The Rotherham safeguarding partnership, (RSCP) sometimes known as the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership. Each Local area is required by law to establish a Safeguarding partnership. The partnership consists of three statutory agencies, The local authority children's services, South Yorkshire Police, and the Integrated Care Board. The leaders form these three organisations for a partnership, tasked with overseeing and scrutinising the safeguarding arrangements. The group are supported in this activity by an independent Chair, sometimes referred to as a scrutineer, and who provides additional scrutiny and challenge to all partners. Homepage – Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (rscp.org.uk)
Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP)	The Safer Rotherham Partnership is the borough's Community Safety Partnership, set up under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Safer Rotherham Partnership Plan 2022-2025 can be found at safer-rotherham-partnership-plan (saferrotherham.org.uk)
Safeguarding Adult Board	The Rotherham safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) is required under the Care Act 2014. It is made up of three statutory partners, the local authority adult services, Integrated Care Board and South Yorkshire Police. Members of the Board are jointly for ensuring the effective safeguarding of adults at risk of abuse or neglect in Rotherham. Governance – Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board (rsab.org.uk)
Child Exploitation Delivery Group (CEDG)	The Child Exploitation Delivery Group (CEDG) is a multi-agency group of professional people representing all the key agencies that work with or provide a service to children and young people. This group of professionals are at a strategic level where they are responsible for the safeguarding and protection of children. This meeting is responsible for the delivery of the Child Exploitation Plan.
Operation Stovewood	Operation Stovewood is led by the National Crime Agency (NCA) is the investigation into historical Child Sexual Exploitation (crimes between 1997 – 2013).
Serious Violence Plan 2018	The plan sets out four key themes: tackling county lines and misuse of drugs, early intervention and prevention, supporting communities and partnerships and an effective law enforcement and criminal justice response. There are clear parallels between all of these and Child Exploitation The plan can be found at Serious Violence Plan - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

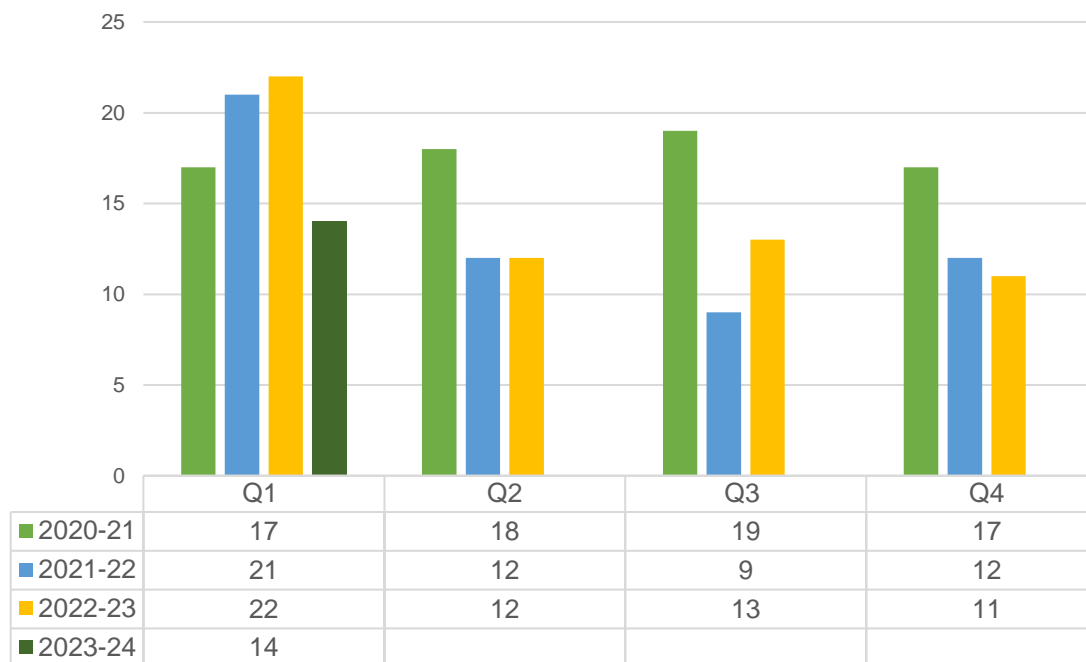
Keeping Kids Safe report	<p>The report by the Children's Commissioner published in 2019, undertook research to describe what it's like to be a child gang member. It estimates how many children are in gangs including looking at the risk factors which make it more likely for a child to be groomed for gang membership and questions whether those responsible for safeguarding children are responding adequately to the rise in gang violence and how children can better be kept safe. Practical solutions to support frontline staff to tackle child exploitation have also been made recently available.</p> <p>It can be found at Keeping kids safe – Children's Commissioner for England (childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)</p>
The Home Office Child Exploitation Toolkit (2019)	<p>This toolkit was developed to support frontline practitioners to safeguard children and young people under the age of 18 from sexual and criminal exploitation. This includes social workers, police officers, housing officers, education staff, healthcare staff, charity staff, and others. Additionally, the toolkit sets out supportive information to assist information sharing and multi-agency working as well as intelligence and evidence gathering and profiling</p> <p>It can be found at Child exploitation disruption toolkit - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p>

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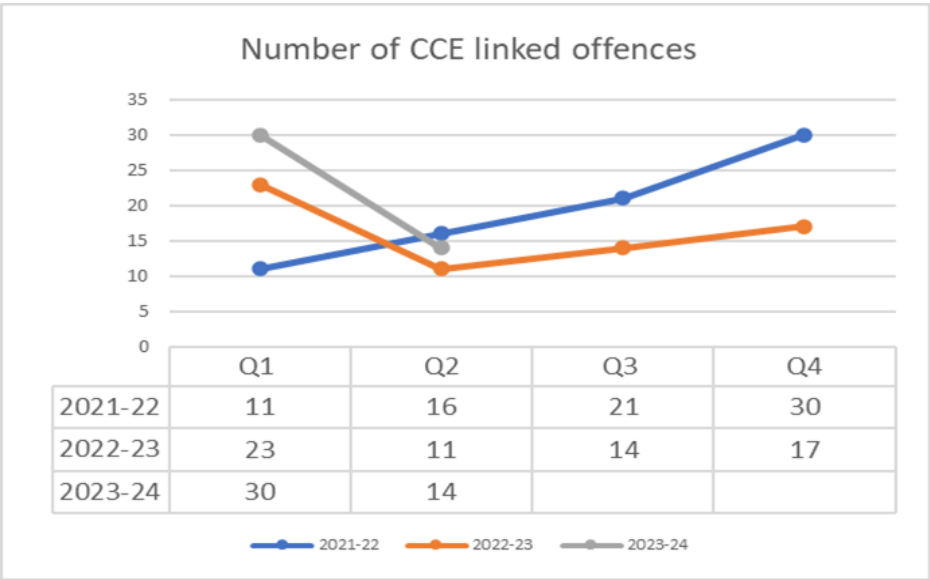
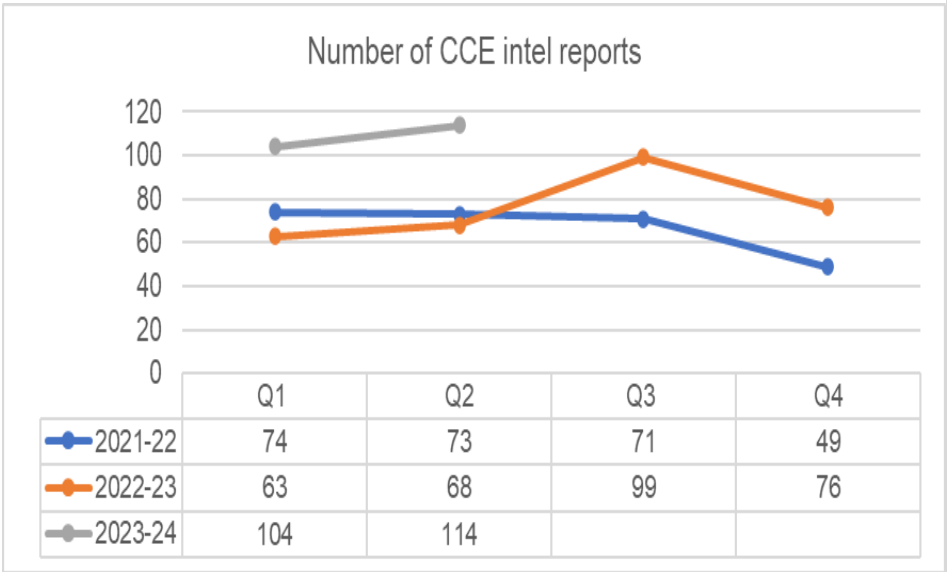
Appendix 3 Supporting Information

1. Missing Children.

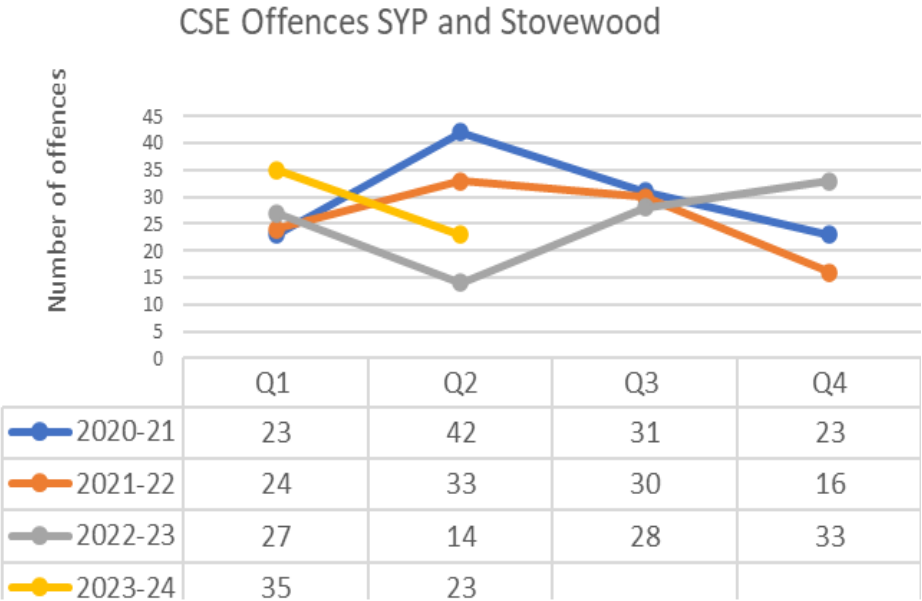
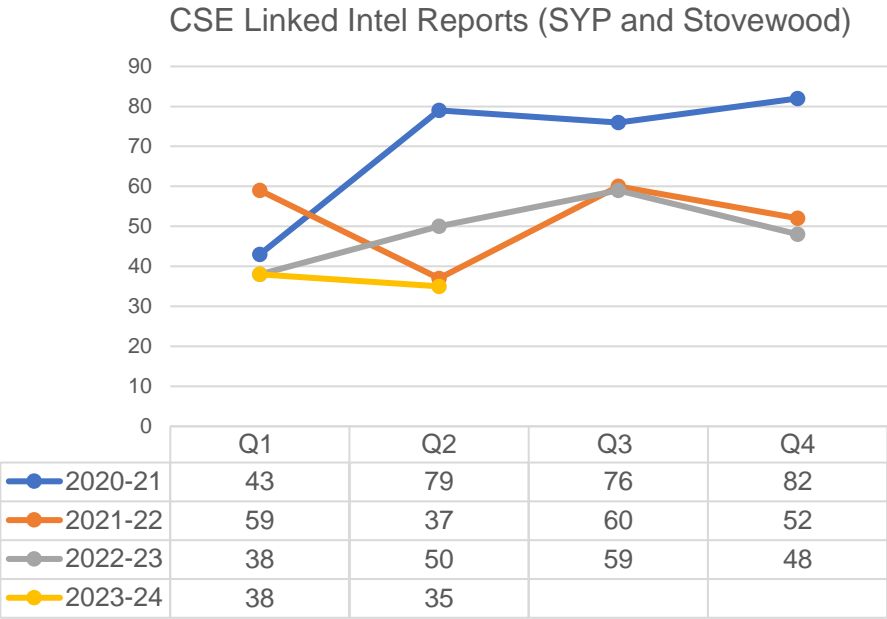
Number of children with 3 or more missing episodes in the reporting period



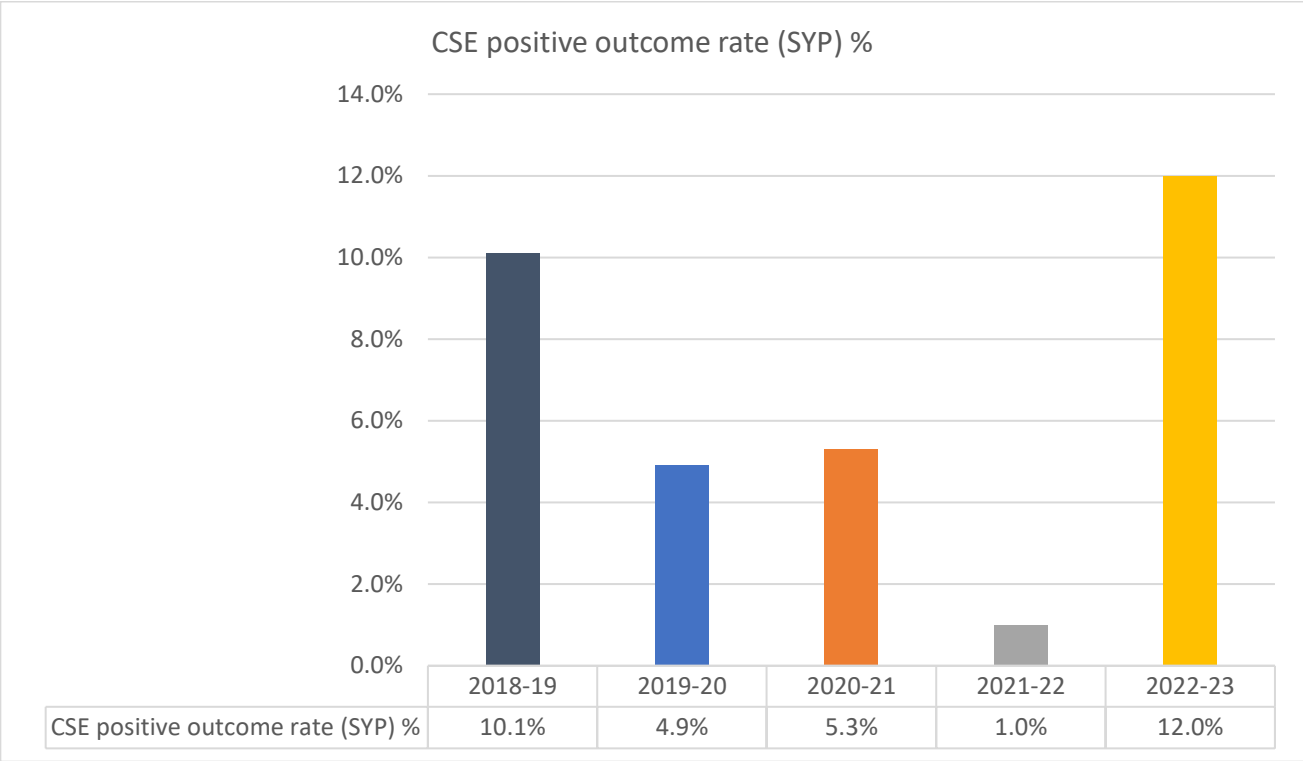
2. CCE intel report and linked offences.



3. CSE linked intel reports and linked Offences.



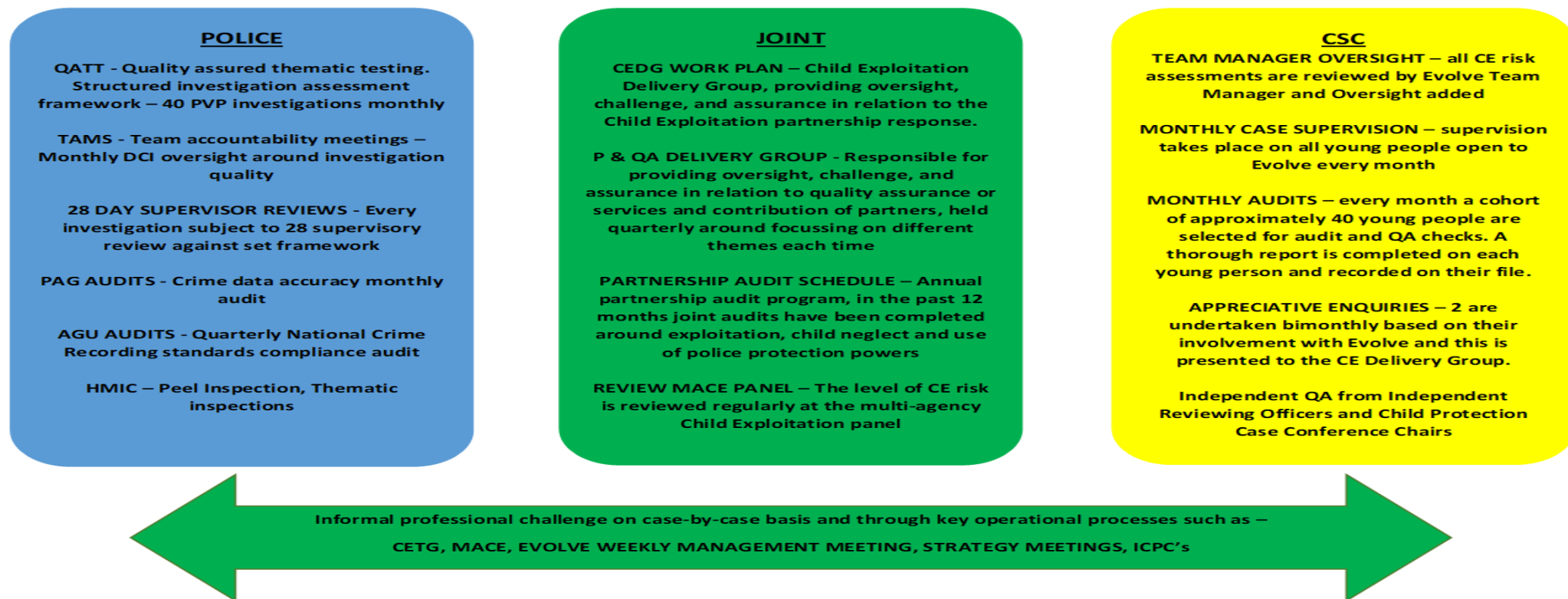
4. Positive outcome rate.



5. Quality Assurance

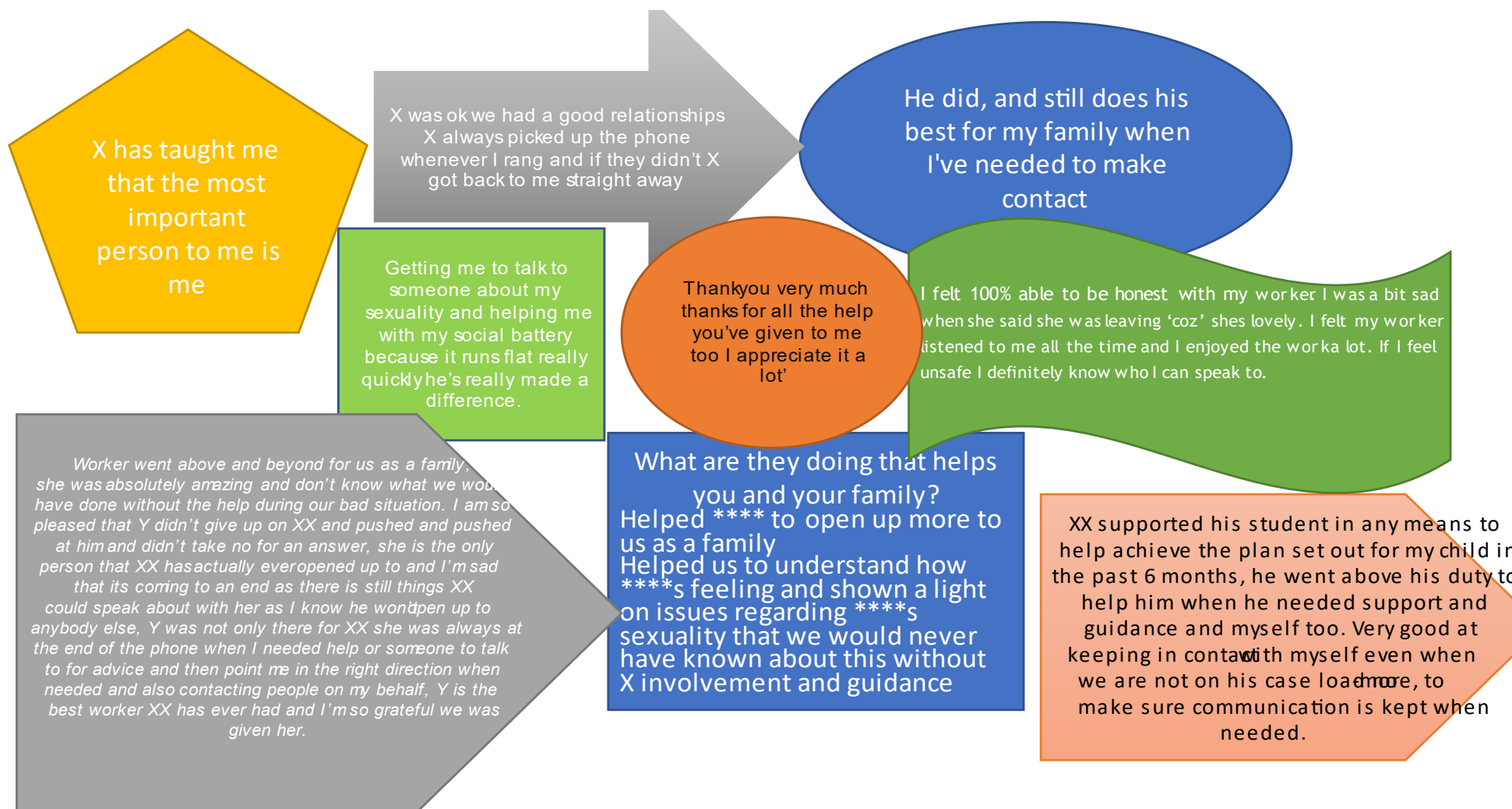
The Child Exploitation Delivery Group (CEDG) meet quarterly to review the strategy, share information, and update the workplan on actions undertaken, including awareness raising. As part of the activity an Audit and Quality Assurance activity map has been produced jointly by the police and children's social care.

ROTHERHAM CHILD EXPLOITATION - ONGOING AUDIT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE WORK



This QA map allows for delivery groups across the partnership to have oversight and provide assurance to all partners and strategic leaders.

6. Feedback from children and their families working with Evolve.



Public Report
Improving Lives Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 30 January 2024

Report Title

Update on Post CSE Support Services

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

Report Author(s)

Lisa Elliott, Strategic Commissioning Manager
01709 334480 or lisa.elliott@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report provides an update on the Post CSE Support Services in response to the actions and recommendations from the last Improving Lives Select Committee Paper 31 January 2023.

Recommendations

1. That members of the Improving Lives Select Committee note the update on commissioned Post CSE Support Services, following the transition to Adult Care, Housing and Public Health.
2. That members of the Improving Lives Select Committee note the proposed next steps in completing a revised needs analysis in collaboration with key partners.

List of Appendices Included

Non

Background Papers

[ILSC report. Updated response to Scrutiny Review Post-CSE support Jan 23.pdf \(rotherham.gov.uk\)](#)

[Decision - Decision to extend the 19-161 Post CSE Support Contracts for an additional 24 months - Rotherham Council](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Name of Committee – Click here to enter a date.

Name of Committee – [Click here to enter a date.](#)

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Update on Post CSE Support Services

Update on Post CSE Support Services

1. Background

- 1.1 In accordance with the Cabinet Paper of 14th February 2022, the Post CSE Services transferred from Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) to Adult Care, Housing and Public Health (ACH&PH). This transfer occurred on the 1st December 2022, which has included budget transfer. Upon transfer, the commissioning team undertook visits to providers to aid understanding and build relationships.

The Post CSE Support Services are provided by GROW, Rotherham Abuse Counselling Service (Rothacs), and Rotherham Rise.

After discussion with the providers about their issues and concerns, the first decision to be made was to secure some stability for the providers and people using the services, as the initial term for the contracts that were transferred ended in December 2023. Contracts for the Post CSE Support Services have now been extended, utilising the permitted contract extension clause, for an additional 2 years, and will now end on the 31st December 2025 as defined in the [Officer Decision 16 May 2023](#). A timeline has now been put in place for future commissioning activity.

During initial visits and meetings with the providers there was also feedback about how the information being reported could better collect information to inform about what the services deliver. Performance reporting systems have now been updated to enable further outcomes to be demonstrated.

- 1.2 The services link to the following themes and outcomes detailed on the Council Plan:
Every Neighbourhood Thriving
People are Safe, Healthy and Live Well

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The current contracts for the Post CSE Support Services will now end in December 2025.

In order to ensure the provision beyond this date is able to continue to meet the needs of people who have experienced CSE, a needs analysis will need to take place to shape the recommissioning.

- 2.2 A project board has been set up to oversee this needs analysis, which includes a co-production sub-group comprising of the service providers, the Trauma Resilience Service RDaSH, and other key stakeholders.

This work will also include feedback from service users which will be obtained by building on the work previously undertaken by Dr Rebecca Hamer, Sheffield Hallam University. Dr Hamer is to commence a second

project, capturing the voice of survivors, the findings from which will be used in the development of services. This work is supported by the service providers GROW, Rothacs and Rotherham Rise.

- 2.3 Alongside this, the Council has also introduced new ways of capturing data around service delivery, working alongside the commissioned providers, GROW, Rothacs and Rotherham Rise. The Post CSE Support Services report quarterly on activity in the services through a co-produced performance workbook, alongside a quarterly case study and service user feedback to capture service user voice. This will enable the Council to see thorough data that can feed directly into the future development of the services.
- 2.4 The Post CSE Support Services continue to work with the Trauma Resilience Service (TRS) through the weekly partnership hubs. Data provided at the point where people leave the service in Q1-Q2 23/24, shows that between 25-29% of the cases had been presented at the TRS Hub. This is consistent with findings from July and September 2019 where 25.71% were referred via the TRS Pathway (Needs Analysis, 2020)

2.5 Numbers in Service:

The latest quarterly report, Q2 23/24, showed that across the 3 services there were 65 open cases. The number of open cases has remained at a similar level since Q1 21/22, however referrals and waiting lists have varied throughout the contract and fluctuate for example this reportedly increases in line with court proceedings and NCA investigations.

The time spent on the waiting list for support varies between the type of service required and current demand. As of October 2023, the waiting list time to access services varied from no waiting time to a maximum of 4 months. For counselling through Rothacs that is not included in the Post CSE Support Service pathway, the waiting time increased to 11 months. Following a loss of funding for counselling services at Rothacs, through the Ministry of Justice, the Council has awarded a grant to Rothacs, the reporting figures from the additional grant will be included in future data collections. It is noted that waiting times will fluctuate over time, however the presence of a waiting list indicates a continued demand for the services, this will be further explored within the needs analysis.

Across 22/23, the Post CSE Support Services received 317 referrals for support across GROW, Rotherham Rise and Rothacs. Referrals are received via a multitude of sources, including self-referrals, ISVA team, RMBC Social Care, Mental Health Services and from the other Post CSE support providers as well as the Trauma Resilience Hub.

2.6 Outcomes:

To build upon the findings of the ILSC Sub-Group Report on Post CSE Support Services, December 2021, that identified the flexible way in which services supported around individual needs, the 3 providers worked with

CYPS commissioning (prior to transfer to ACH&PH) to create and implement measurable outcomes of the post CSE Support Service that are consistent across all provision. Reporting commenced in quarter 1 of 23/24.

For the people leaving the service where outcomes were captured (81% of all leavers had outcomes recorded) in Q1 and Q2:

- 82% rated their mental health & wellbeing as maintained or improved (A1),
- 83% rated their feelings/thoughts about themselves as maintained or improved (A2)
- 88% rated the effect of their trauma as maintained or improved (A3)
- 72% rated their relationship with family and or social network as maintained or improved (A4)

Additional optional outcomes have been recorded for both Rotherham Rise and GROW for the trauma stabilisation part of the service, these are individually tailored to people's needs. Where there is a need identified, 76% of the needs have been achieved.

2.7 Service User Voice and Feedback:

The Post CSE Support Services regularly collect feedback from Service Users throughout their experience in the service and, where appropriate, use the feedback and comments to help improve the services.

Feedback provided to a Counsellor at Rotherham Rise (Q2):

"Thank you for seeing me these past few months, your time and questions with that special space to think and reflect is invaluable. The work you do is amazing. By helping me think about the different parts of myself, I've understood my behaviours and that understanding has had an effect on my relationships... I'm calmer. I've developed a skill of stepping out and noting how I feel – showing interest in myself, and not being frightened of my feelings"

Feedback provided to Rothacs (Q2):

"X made me feel at ease, I felt comfortable talking to X throughout the whole process this helped me to be open, honest and true to myself. I feel like a massive weight has been lifted. I have been trapped inside my own head reliving trauma for pretty much all of my life. I now feel free to be my own self. Using this service gave me a safe space to explore my thoughts, feelings and flashbacks. I never felt judged by X, she has helped me so much."

Feedback provided to GROW (Q2):

"Before coming to GROW I had no hope and couldn't believe in myself. Even though some days are still difficult, I've learnt to love myself and gained so much more confidence"

Service User Voice is also collected to implement changes to services.

For example, at Rothacs suggestions were made to ensure there is access to Fidget Toys, and Rothacs ordered and offered fidget toys in response. Additionally, at Rotherham Rise counsellors made suggestions to order a high backed rocking chair as there are benefits for clients when processing trauma, therefore Rotherham Rise purchased the relevant chair.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Recommended proposal:

1. That members of the Improving Lives Select Committee note the update on commissioned Post CSE Support Services, following the transition to Adult Care, Housing and Public Health.
2. That members of the Improving Lives Select Committee note the proposed next steps in completing a revised needs analysis in collaboration with key partners.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The Strategic Director – Adult Care, Housing and Public Health has been consulted regarding the recommendations.
- 4.2 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health has been consulted with regarding the report and its recommendations.
- 4.3 A Project Board has been established to oversee the needs analysis and next steps in commissioning of the post CSE services, including representation from stakeholders across Adults and Children's Commissioning and Social Care, along with finance and procurement colleagues and partners from the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board. The Project Board will make final recommendations to Cabinet in September 2024. This is being chaired by the Head of Public Health Commissioning.
- 4.4 A sub-group reporting into the project board has also been established to lead on co-production, this includes internal colleagues alongside representatives from the voluntary sector; GROW, Rothacs and Rotherham Rise and partners from the Trauma Resilience Service.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th><th>Activity</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>July 2024</td><td>Completion of Needs Analysis and proposals on future commissioning of services</td></tr> <tr> <td>September 2024</td><td>Cabinet Paper Recommendations for route to market - how contracts will be awarded</td></tr> <tr> <td>December 2025</td><td>End of current contracts and new services in place</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Date	Activity	July 2024	Completion of Needs Analysis and proposals on future commissioning of services	September 2024	Cabinet Paper Recommendations for route to market - how contracts will be awarded	December 2025	End of current contracts and new services in place
Date	Activity								
July 2024	Completion of Needs Analysis and proposals on future commissioning of services								
September 2024	Cabinet Paper Recommendations for route to market - how contracts will be awarded								
December 2025	End of current contracts and new services in place								

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no immediate financial implications. When the needs analysis is complete any new proposals will be assessed at that time for financial implications.
- 6.2 There are no specific procurement implications as a result of this report, subject to any procurement requirements arising from the recommissioning activity this would need to be undertaken in compliance with the Councils Financial and Procurement Procedure rules.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 As stated in the body of the report, the extension of the contracts referred to is allowed for within the terms of contracts. The outcomes of the needs analysis and service review described will inform the requirements of the intended procurement and as such future contracts to be awarded.
- 7.2 Other than the above there are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations within the report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 There are no associated HR implications associated with this document.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 The Services support Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults. The implications are documented in the main body of the report.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications will be presented in the upcoming Cabinet Paper via an equality impact assessment (EIA) to detail key equalities issues and any mitigations identified.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report. A carbon emissions assessment will be submitted alongside the cabinet paper.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 The Council is working with the voluntary sector providers and representatives from Voluntary Action Rotherham through the co-production sub-group, which will oversee the co-design of services.

- 12.2 The Council is also working closely with the Trauma Resilience Service, through its involvement on the Co-production sub-group to ensure that services are aligned.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The voluntary sector providers delivering the Post CSE Support Services all report challenges faced in recent years around rising costs associated with the cost of living and rising staffing costs, it is becoming difficult to sustain the service levels at the contract price. Charities are also experiencing heavy competition for external grants or other public sector contracts, the process for sourcing and applying for funding can often draw away much needed resource from the management and delivery of the services.
- 13.2 The Council, through the Post CSE project board, is looking at all viable procurement options, recognising that the open tender process can be time and resource intensive, adding further strain to the voluntary sector. Recommendations will be presented to Cabinet in September 2024.

Accountable Officer(s)

Lisa Elliott, Strategic Commissioning Manager
 Anne Charlesworth, Head of Public Health Commissioning.
 Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	15/01/24
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health - Councillor Roche	08/01/24

Report Author: Lisa Elliott, Strategic Commissioning Manager
 01709 334480 or lisa.elliott@rotherham.gov.uk

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Name of Committee - 22 January 2024

Improving Lives Select Commission

Report Title

Neglect Strategy 2024 – 2026

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Nicola Curley, Strategic Director, Children and Young People's Services

Report Author(s)

Laura Gough Head of Service Safeguarding Quality, Learning and Therapeutic services.

Laura.Gough@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected.

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report introduces the Neglect Strategy 2024-2026. It is a Partnership Strategy and is governed by the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP). It is owned by the Neglect Delivery Group which reports directly to the RSCP Executive Partnership Group. The strategy is being presented to Cabinet for endorsement.

The Neglect Strategy 2019 – 2023 has concluded, as the strategy was concluding, a Neglect delivery group was established to support the development of the new strategy. This group has brought together key professionals who alongside developing the strategy will be responsible for delivery, and will monitor and analyse data, training offer and attendance, be responsible for awareness raising, and the overarching response across all partners.

The Neglect Strategy 2024 – 2026 has been developed in line with legislation and guidance, the specific legal duties that relate to this Strategy are:

- *Children Act 1989 – Section 17* – places duty on the local authority to provide services to children in need in their area, regardless of where they are found.
- *Children Act 1989 – Section 47* – requires local authorities to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.
- *Working Together 2018* – states: ‘Whilst it is parents and carers who have primary care for their children, local authorities, working with partner

organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area’.

It has also considered the NSPCC research and assessment tool, Graded Care Profile 2.

Derived from academic, sector and local research around neglect, the Strategy has three priorities:

1. Recognise
2. Respond
3. Make a Difference

The aim is to use research alongside current data and local case studies and examples to drive the Strategy action plan.

The Strategy provides clarity on neglect type and signs, roles, and responsibilities of key partner agencies, how they work together to deliver the key priorities and how success is measured.

This report provides a brief introduction and requests endorsement of the new Strategy.

Recommendations

1. That Improving Lives Select Commission endorse the Neglect Strategy 2024-2026.
2. That Improving Lives Select Commission approve the Local Authority involvement in the development and implementation of the Partnership Strategy Delivery Plan and the oversight of progress by; the Neglect Delivery Group, Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (RSCP) and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC).

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Neglect Strategy 2024-2026
Appendix 2 Part A Initial Equality Screening Assessment
Appendix 3 Part B Equality Screening Assessment
Appendix 4 Carbon Impact report

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Background Papers

No

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

The Neglect Strategy 2024 – 2026

1. Background

- 1.1 The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 set out specific duties: section 17 of the Children Act 1989 puts a duty on the local authority to provide services to children in need in their area, regardless of where they are found; section 47 of the same Act requires local authorities to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.
- 1.2 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 – A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (2018), states: *“whilst it is parents and carers who have primary care for their children, local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.”*
- 1.3 The Children Act 2004 states that safeguarding duties placed on the local authority can only be discharged with the full co-operation of other partners, many of whom have individual duties when carrying out their functions under section 11 of the Act. The Social Work Act 2017 brought about changes to how partners work together, abolishing Local Safeguarding Children Boards, and replacing them with an equal partnership, putting duties on three 'safeguarding partners' - the local authority, Clinical Commissioning Group (now Integrated Care Board) and the Chief Officer of Police - to make safeguarding arrangements that respond to the needs of children in their area.
- 1.4 There is no national strategy for Neglect, however, there are a number of articles produced by the Department for Education and NSPCC on the issue, (publishing.service.gov.uk). Neglect is referred to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (publishing.service.gov.uk) as part of the wider safeguarding arrangements for children and young people. Neglect is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children as *“the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.”*
- 1.5 Neglect accounts for 40% (151 children) of Rotherham's Child Protection Plans, second to Emotional abuse at 51% (as of 31 October 2023). These statistics are also reflected in the Children in Need cohorts, and Early Help. By tackling neglect at the earliest opportunity, the aim is to prevent the situation deteriorating to requiring statutory intervention. Whilst Neglect can be a one-off incident (home alone for example) it rarely is. It is an ongoing situation that can be subtly getting progressively worse, but often making it difficult to identify.
- 1.6 The Strategy sets out how partners across Rotherham with responsibility for delivering services to children and young people will deliver on their collective responsibilities to keep children safe from neglect through working with their families, communities, and networks over the next three years.
- 1.7 The Strategy demonstrates how key partners will work together, and the key meetings which provide oversight.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The previous Neglect Strategy 2019 – 2023 was published in 2019.

2.2 Progress against the priorities in the previous Strategy has been reviewed for completion and recognition of achievement, and to support the development of the new strategy. An action plan will be developed to deliver the strategy.

2.3 The key achievements over the last strategy

2.3.1 The Neglect Group, established under the previous 2019 – 2023 Strategy, raised the profile of child neglect as an issue in Rotherham. Whilst Rotherham is not an outlier in comparison to the other regional authorities and comparative neighbours, the Group was able to evidence through data and Early Help, Child in Need and Child Protection Plan analysis that this issue required the attention of the Safer Rotherham Partnership and Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership. Activities included coordinating partners to increase the status of this issue, report of key date and issue, and develop an agreed (Help / Harm) threshold response.

2.3.2 Whilst many children living in poverty are not neglected, there are often links between poverty and deprivation and neglect. 23% of children living in Rotherham are in low-income families (England 20% – 2022). Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement rate is above national average, 25.2% compared to 23.1% at Primary phase and 24.1% compared to 20.9% at Secondary phase (DfE 2021/22). According to the 2019 Indices of Deprivation, deprivation in Rotherham has increased with the Borough now ranked 44th most deprived district on average IMD score, compared to 52nd in 2015. Rotherham's rank means that the Borough is amongst the 14% most deprived local authority areas in England. In 2019, the key drivers of deprivation in Rotherham remained Health & Disability, Education & Skills, and Employment. Of these, Health & Disability deprivation was most severe and widespread whilst Employment and Education deprivation were more concentrated and polarised.

2.3.3 Rotherham is the 52nd most deprived district in England:

2022/23 (2021/22)	Rotherham	Statistical neighbour Av	National Av
No of children subject of CP plans (per 10,000)	70.4 (82.7)	59.2	42.1
No of children looked after (per 10,000)	96.2 (97.8)	102.4	70

2.3.4 In Rotherham 398 children were subject to a Child Protection (CP) Plan at the end of March 2023, which is above statistical and national averages, but there is a downward trend from a high of 505 children in July 2022. There were 396 children subject to a CP plan (as of 31 March 2023), broken into the following categories:

Category of abuse	Children
Emotional	210
Neglect	141
Physical	25
Sexual	18
Multiple	2

2.3.5 In the period of the previous strategy 2019 – 2023, work was undertaken with the child protection conference chairs and wider workforce on the use of categories to identify and then raise awareness for specific children on the greater issue of concern. Previously the Neglect category had been used for children that were exposed to domestic abuse (Neglect through failure to protect). However, this places responsibility on victims of abuse rather than identifying what the actual risk was for the child. These children are now safeguarded through categories of Emotional harm and Physical abuse. Through this work and the work of the Neglect Group collectively and across the partnership, reporting on cases of neglect and understand the size of the issue has improved.

2.4 **Review of the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) arrangements**

2.4.1 The Executive Group for the RSCP has undergone a membership change in 2022-23. The new membership includes:

Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

Laura Kosciwicz, Chief Superintendent and District Commander for Rotherham

Sue Cassin, Chief Nurse, South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB)

Darren Downs, Independent Scrutineer

In addition, the new partnership business manager Lee Durrant, was appointed in February 2023.

2.4.2 A review of the partnership arrangements and delivery groups was undertaken in 2023. This was following the recruitment of an independent scrutineer to the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive group. Darren Downs joined the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership in spring 2023. This role was similar to the previous chair role, however, added a greater emphasis on scrutineer, of the partnership arrangements and safeguarding arrangements.

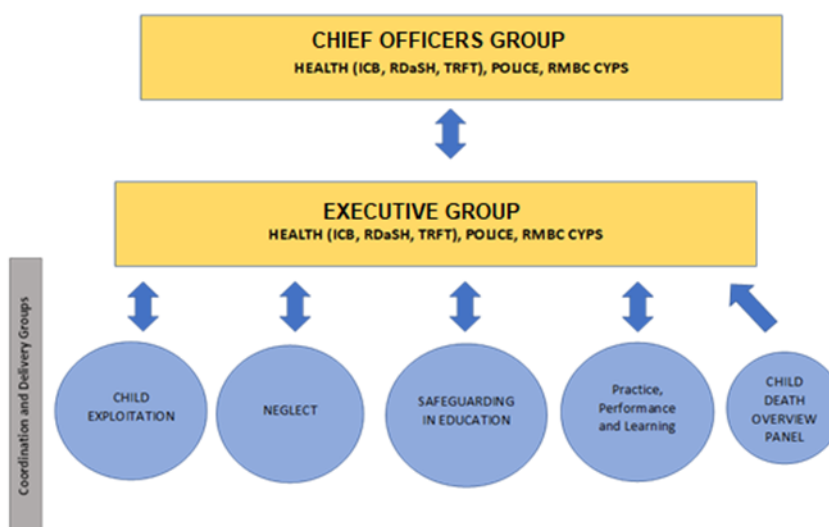
2.4.3 The new arrangements came into play followed by a consultation with the RSCP Executive group and the wider partnership, and a review of the priorities and Terms of reference by the Executive group and wider partnership.

2.4.4 Previous arrangements.



The previous arrangements met the requirements at specific time and place in Rotherham's journey and priorities.

2.4.5 New Arrangements 2023



2.4.6 The changes are mostly seen in the Delivery Group structure. The governance arrangements and oversight by the Independent Scrutineer and the Executive Group reporting to the Chief Officers Group remains unchanged.

2.4.7 The Child Exploitation Delivery Group (CEDG) was retained, and appointment of a new Chair, Superintendent Andy Wright, SYP followed the retirement of the previous Chair.

- 2.4.8 The Neglect Subgroup was elevated to a Delivery Group which reports to the RSCP Executive. This was in recognition of how important the issue and need is in Rotherham, regional and nationally. This Neglect delivery Group is Chaired by Gemma Cross, Head of Safeguarding, NHS.
- 2.4.9 A new Safeguarding in Education Delivery Group (SEDG) was created, and a Chair is to be appointed by the new Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion. This was created in recognition of the important role that schools, early years and education plays in safeguarding children. Whilst Education is not a partner in Working Together 2028, it is believed that in Rotherham, they have a significant role to play in keeping children safe from harm and neglect. Working Together is under review and it is expected the role of Education will have a greater emphasis.
- 2.4.10 The Learning and Performance Delivery Groups have been combined into one Practice, Performance and Learning Delivery Group (PPL) Chaired by Head of Safeguarding Laura Gough. Bringing these groups together ensures that learning is cross cutting from practice to performance data, local, regional, and national learning, and all learning opportunities in-between. This group will be responsible for learning action plans from local reviews and consider learning from regional and national reviews.

2.5 **Further activities undertaken by the Neglect Subgroup**

- 2.5.1 The Neglect Subgroup are promoting safeguarding training, specifically the Neglect Graded Care Profile 2 across the partnership. There is an extensive training prospectus available to the workforce, and a pool of trainers in partner organisations has been developed to deliver the Graded Care Profile 2 training across the Childrens Workforce.
- 2.5.2 The Neglect Subgroup have developed a data and performance analysis process which they use to identify key themes and areas for development and focus.

2.6 **The main priorities for the coming three years:**

- 2.6.1 The main priority is to embed the elevation of the Neglect Subgroup to a Delivery Group reporting to the RSCP Executive group.

The Neglect Delivery Group will focus on early identification of neglect and multi-agency coordination is key in reducing harm. The elevation of the Neglect Group to a Delivery Group reporting directly to the RSCP Executive Group raises the profile of this issue in Rotherham and brings it in line with its status in other Authority partnership arrangements.

- 2.6.2 The Neglect Delivery Group will develop an action plan to deliver the Strategy and monitor the impact. The group are further developing the scorecard in line with other delivery groups for a more sophisticated yet simpler way of observing the issue and scale, themes, and impact of intervention. The training package will receive a greater focus to ensure staff are skilled in identification, assessment and activity required to address the concerns.

- 2.6.3 The Strategy is reflective of the partnership arrangements in Rotherham and demonstrates the continued commitment to listening to the voice and lived experience of children and young people. The Strategy and Neglect Group will use the feedback to focus and develop services. There remains a focus on community engagement and partnerships with families, parents and carers and children and young people in the Strategy that will be a key priority for its duration.
- 2.6.4 It is proposed the delivery plan for the Strategy will be developed with key milestones for each of the objectives, and outcome measures identified. Progress against this will be owned by the Neglect Delivery Group and reported to the RSCP.
- 2.6.5 Annual review of the delivery plan will be undertaken, and the plan updated each year as a result, to reflect progress and focus. This will also feature in the RSCP annual report.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Improving Lives Select Commission is asked to endorse the Neglect Strategy 2024-2026. Endorsement of the Strategy 2024- 2026 will ensure the Council has set out its commitment in line with its duty to ensure that there is safeguarding arrangements in place for all children and specifically those at risk of Neglect.
- 3.2 Improving Lives Select Commission is asked to approve the Local Authority involvement in the development and implementation of the Strategy Delivery Plan and the oversight of progress by; the Neglect Delivery Group, Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (RSCP) and the Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC).
- 3.3 The alternative option is not to endorse the Strategy. This is not recommended as the Strategy is a co-produced multi-agency document that incorporates the delivery and governance for a range of key national and local programmes designed to improve outcomes and the quality of life for children, young people, and families in the Borough.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The development of the revised Strategy has involved collaborative working across Rotherham, including Neglect Delivery Group, Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership, Wider Partnership Group, children and young people and their families, Commissioning, Performance, Legal Services and Finance.
- 4.2 At a development day in June 2023 the Neglect Group considered the progress of the previous Strategy, this then laid the foundations for the 2024- 2026 Strategy.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The current Strategy came to an end in 2023.
- 5.2 The new strategy will cover the period 2024 – 2026.

5.3 Progress against the delivery plan and review of objectives will be undertaken annually by Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

5.4 An Annual Report will be presented to RSCP Executive Group and to Improving Lives Select Commission via the RSCP annual report for scrutiny.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the strategy.

6.2 Where there is a need for the Council to commission services from third party organisations to deliver the Strategy, this must be done in compliance with the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Early consideration needs to be given in the development of any commissioned services to ensure the chosen delivery vehicle includes the flexibility to meet the requirements of the Strategy.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no legal implications arising from the review of the Strategy.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 No direct HR implications within this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Implications to vulnerable children and young people are covered within the Report and Strategy and appendices.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Equality and human rights are considered within the strategy.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 N/A

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 Implications for partners are reflected in the Strategy.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 These are referred to in the strategy and associated delivery plan.

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	

Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	03/01/2024
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	03/01/2024

Report Authors:

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Laura.gough@rotherham.gov.uk

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

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Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Neglect Strategy 2024-2026



Foreword

It is a great pleasure to not only contribute to the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) Neglect Strategy for the period of 2024 to 2026, but also to be the independent scrutineer of the partnership, who will monitor and challenge performance against the aims and objectives of the strategy for the coming years.

Everyone in the community of Rotherham has a responsibility to identify children when there are concerns that neglect might be occurring and communities can play an important role in preventing neglect alongside universal service providers, charitable organisations and the Rotherham Partnership. We need to support our communities to know what to look out for and to understand what thriving and healthy child development looks like, and a key aim of the strategy is to ensure the partners in Rotherham work together to achieve this outcome.

Neglect has been a priority for the partnership for the last 3 years, but we recognise that we need to do more to improve outcomes and a Neglect Delivery Group made up of key partners has been launched to drive the work of this strategy forward, and report to the executive and provide reassurances that delivery is being effective.

The overall purpose of our strategy is to prevent and reduce the incidence of neglect within Rotherham, and to reduce the impact on children that are experiencing neglect, enabling children and families to thrive. Neglect has been identified as a priority because of the lifelong impact that it has on life chances for children and young people.

Neglect currently accounts for 40% of Rotherham's Child Protection Plans, second only to emotional abuse which accounts for 51%. This strategy will help drive these figures down and tackle neglect at the earliest opportunity, reducing the life impact and preventing the situation deteriorating.

Darren Downs (Independent Chair & Scrutineer)



Children & Young People's voices are at the heart of our what we do. They tell us..

I want to feel
safe

I will be
treated
equally

I will be loved
even when I mess
up

I will be happy
and smiling

Someone is
always there
for me

My parents will
know school is
important and make
sure I attend

Grown ups will help
me with my
homework and be
patient

I will have
enough to eat

I will not be
scared

We have created this strategy for..

- Every child and young person living in and being cared for in Rotherham
- Parents, carers, family members
- Members of the community
- Child-minders, day-care providers, nurseries, primary and secondary schools, academies, sports & social clubs and further education colleges
- Midwives, community paediatrics and accident and emergency
- Health visitors, school nurses and GP's
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Adult services, mental health, substance use
- Staff working in youth and community settings
- Police, fire and rescue services and ambulance service
- All partnership employees, early help providers and family hubs
- Voluntary sector providers
- Council colleagues in refuge collection and housing



In Rotherham we will ensure that everyone who works with children and families understands their role in providing early help and the identification of neglect. We will promote accountability so that professionals take responsibility to build relationships with children and their families to provide direct support and not just routinely signpost to other services. We need to work together to pool our skills, knowledge and resources to achieve the best we can for the children and young people of Rotherham, whilst ensuring that professionals receive quality supervision, strong management oversight of their work and support that enables them to do their job well. We also need to be confident to challenge one another when we think we are not getting it right for the child, and will create a culture of high challenge, high support to ensure this happens.

Our Aim is that:

Rotherham will be a place where children feel safe and are safe. This strategy outlines our commitment to prevent children and young people from experiencing neglect and to intervene at the earliest possible stage to tackle its causes and reduce the impact on children when it happens. We recognise that children and young people have a right to live in an environment where they are loved, feel valued and are cared for so that they can reach their potential and have aspiration. Too many children and young people have childhoods that are damaged by neglect, very often because parents are facing problems that they struggle to deal with and often cannot solve alone. We believe in Rotherham that neglect can be prevented and that we can intervene before these concerns become a problem. This strategy will support our partners to identify and assess the extent of neglect, and support children and families with help as soon as concerns emerge. In order to do this we will ensure that:

- Families living in Rotherham and the people that work here will know more about how to recognise Neglect and will have access to information about how to address this and report concerns to the appropriate agencies.**
- Those working directly with children and families will be supported by excellent training, guidance and high quality support and oversight from managers and leaders.**
- There will be a culture of high challenge and high support in ensuring everyone delivers what is expected and reduce the impact of neglect for our children and families**
- There will be high expectations for the children in Rotherham, where concerns are addressed quickly so that the impact of neglect on a child is reduced and as far as possible children can be supported to live happy and healthy lives within their family.**

Defining Neglect:

Department for Education: Working together to safeguard children. 2018 states:

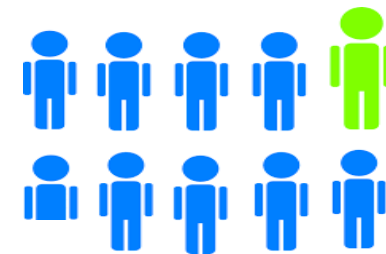
In England, neglect is defined as the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. The definition of Neglect is broad and to help identification, the NSPCC breaks this down into 4 broad types:

Physical Neglect	A child's basic needs are not met, including food, clothing, or shelter. They may not be supervised or kept safe.
Medical Neglect	A child may not receive the medical care needed. This can include delaying seeking treatment, failure to attend appointments, or not administering the medication required.
Emotional Neglect	A child doesn't get the nurture and stimulation they needs. This could be through ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them.
Educational Neglect	A parent/carers fails to provide an education. This may include failing to comply with requirements for school attendance

“In simple terms, neglect is the child or young person not getting what they need, for example not seeing a doctor when needed, not having enough to eat or warm clothes in winter. It may include not being protected from dangerous situations including domestic abuse and violence. ” (NSPCC)

Living with neglect can be lonely, isolating. **“Neglect can erode a child’s resilience, value and sense of worth.”**
Professor Olive Stevenson (2004)

NSPCC estimates 1 in 10 children are affected by Neglect



Who is at risk?

A child of any age can suffer neglect. But some children and young people are more at risk than others. These include children who:

- are born prematurely
- have a disability
- have complex health needs
- have alternate care arrangements, such as living with extended family members
- are seeking asylum.

Other problems and life circumstances can make it harder for parents and carers to meet their child's needs, and when one or more of these issues occur, it can put a child at greater risk of neglect. A recent evidence review reports a number of social and environmental factors that are associated with neglect. These include:

Poverty: Child neglect is more often associated with poverty than other forms of child abuse, although it must be noted clearly that the majority of poor families do not neglect their children. Poverty can lead to social isolation, feelings of stigma, and high levels of stress. Pervasive stress can make it difficult for parents to cope with the psychological, physical and material demands of parenting.

In Rotherham, our partnership will work to ensure that colleagues have information about how best to support those families in our area that are struggling to make ends meet.

- **Poor living conditions:** Neglect is often associated with having poor living conditions. Poor living conditions include: an unsafe home, such as hoarding, holes in the floor, broken windows, exposed wires, leaky roof, infestation of rodents/insects, fixtures and appliances that are broken or not working, overcrowding, instability such as frequent moves, homelessness and short stays with friends/family. It is important to bear in mind, however, that emotional neglect also occurs in households with good living conditions but where parents are physically and emotionally unresponsive.

Our staff will be well trained in assessment techniques which support them to recognise these issues and make plans to deal with them in order to reduce the risk to children

- **Social isolation:** Parents who neglect their children have, or perceive themselves to have, fewer individuals in their social networks and to receive less support than other parents. This may exacerbate other parental vulnerabilities.

Our approach is to have an unwavering commitment to assisting families to establish supportive networks, so that isolation is reduced and families have access to preventative and informal help.

- **Men:** Most of the evidence around neglect relates to mothers rather than fathers. Men can be a source of risk and a source of protection to children they are raising. Fathers can be overlooked in the assessment process in child protection.

We will monitor and audit practice to ensure that the risk and protection offered by men is adequately assessed and addressed in our work.

The effects of neglect on children:

Neglect changes childhood. Children who have been neglected might experience short-term and long-term effects, and the impact can have life-long consequences if not identified early and support put in place. These can include:

- Problems with brain development and emotional regulation
- Increased risk taking, like running away from home, using drugs and alcohol or breaking the law
- Getting into dangerous relationships
- Difficulty with relationships later in life, including with their own children
- A higher chance of having mental health problems, including depression and self-harm
- Poor dental and physical health, including serious and life threatening conditions
- Poor educational attainment and outcomes impacting on life chances

The level of risk and impact varies from one child to another, but there can be occasions when the level of neglect is so high that the consequences can be life threatening or life changing.

What does it currently look like in Rotherham?

- In 2019/20 out of 24,007 contacts to Childrens services, 3,764 were in relation to Neglect (15.6%)
- In 2020/21 out of 20,001 contacts to Childrens Services, 3,296 were for Neglect (16.4%)
- In 2022-23, there were 4,249 Assessments completed with Neglect being identified as the key issues for 669 children. This is 15% of all assessments completed in that period.
- Between April 2022 and March 2023, 335 Child Protection Plans were made due to neglect, accounting for 30% of all Child Protection Plans.
- Based on research from End of Child poverty 34.6% of children were reported to be living in poverty in 2020. We know that poverty does not always equate to neglect but can be a factor that increases the risk of neglect.



How will the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Approach Neglect?

"All Partners are committed to working together in a coordinated way to eliminate neglect and help children and families thrive."

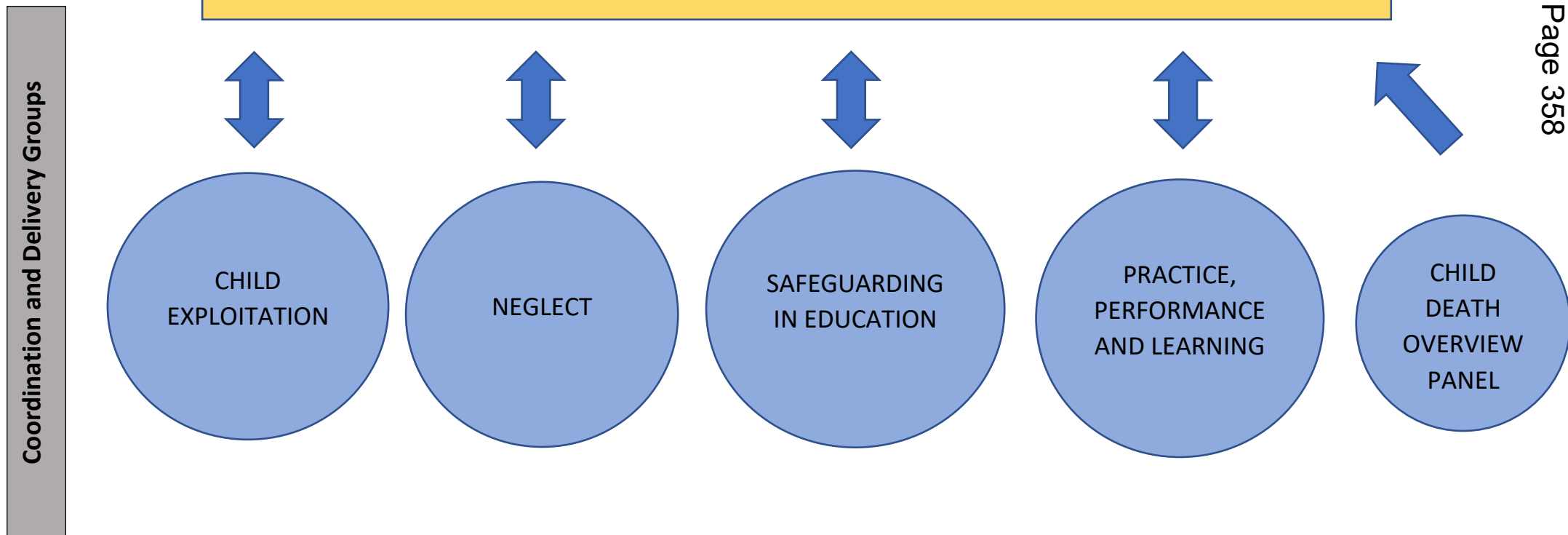


The Neglect Delivery Group has been created by the Partnership in order to raise the profile of neglect in Rotherham and to ensure accountability by all partners for delivery against the aims and objectives of the strategy. The delivery group will report directly to the Partnership Executive and the Independent Scrutineer who will challenge delivery against the strategy and that outcomes are being achieved that benefit children and their families. This will be done through a comprehensive scorecard that monitors key areas of performance, such as quality of interventions, numbers of referrals,

training delivery, resourcing and the level of understanding and engagement with communities. The neglect Delivery Group Chair will attend the Executive Group alongside colleagues from the other delivery groups to ensure cross-pollination of all activity and that they are all working collectively to reduce neglect and its impact.

The executive will also work with other key statutory boards such as the Safeguarding Adults Board and Safer Rotherham Partnership and ensure that work is fully joined up and collaborative for our communities.

RSCP STRUCTURE



Recognising, Assessing and Responding to Neglect

Identifying neglect and determining whether statutory thresholds for action have been reached can present real challenges.

The following characteristics of neglect may make it harder for professionals to recognise that a threshold for action has been reached:

- The chronic nature of this form of maltreatment can mean that professionals become accustomed to how a child is presenting and fail to question a lack of progress or be professional curious.
- Unlike physical abuse, for example, the experience of neglect rarely produces a crisis that demands immediate action, making it difficult to evidence that the threshold is met at a specific point in time.
- Neglect can in some cases be challenging to identify because of the need to look beyond individual parenting episodes and consider the persistence, frequency or pervasiveness of parenting behaviours, which may make them harmful and abusive.
- Practitioners may be reluctant or lack confidence to make judgements about patterns of parental behaviour, particularly when these are deemed to be culturally embedded or associated with social disadvantages such as poverty or when the parent is a victim in their own right.
- The child may not experience neglect in isolation, but alongside other forms of abuse.

In Rotherham, we have adopted the use of the NSPCC 'Graded Care Profile 2' (GCP2). The GCP2 is a tool designed to help practitioners take a strengths-based approach to measure the quality of care a child is receiving, thus supporting them to identify neglect. An assessment may be carried out using the GCP2 for many reasons, including to inform decisions about the next steps of a child's case or to identify the additional support needs of families.

Research carried out by the NSPCC concluded that the GCP2 had a positive impact in

- Bringing about positive change for families
- Supporting practitioners to make informed decisions
- Targeting the area of greatest need and promoting that change
- Supporting the relationship between the practitioner and parents/carers

Other partnership initiatives include the use of the 'SHARED' tool by South Yorkshire Police, this tool supports responding officers to recognise signs of neglect and therefore screen referrals to the appropriate agency for additional support and intervention.

This strategy will support, guide, and monitor the implementation of such assessment tools in order to maximise the multi-agency response to neglect at the earliest opportunity, therefore reducing the harmful impact to Rotherham's children.

How will we measure our impact:

The impact against the work will be measured and monitored by the Partnership executive and through the independent scrutineer. Progress will be assessed on a bi-monthly basis through a performance scorecard and by audits and appropriate challenge. The three key areas that will be subject to scrutiny are identified below:

1. Understand

We will support and guide families, communities, and professionals in this challenging area of practice, by increasing engagement, awareness and understanding of neglect. This will be done through high quality and targeted awareness engagement and training that will be available to all that this strategy is for. This will ensure neglect is responded to confidently, competently, swiftly and effectively.

We will ensure that neglect training and development programmes are responsive to learning from research of local, regional, national serious case reviews and case audits by working with colleagues from across the country and teaching partnerships.

We will have safe systems in place to ensure early identification and the meeting of needs at the point of concerns being raised.

We will have a comprehensive scorecard that identifies and tracks key performance metrics and identifies areas additional scrutiny and focus, along with areas of good practice and success. This will be used to inform our audit processes for additional reassurance and scrutiny.

We will work to ensure that we provide the means for children to have a voice and influence so they can let us know what life is like for them, and how we can continue to improve and deliver for them. Their voice is essential to improving our services and we will listen and address the feedback.

2. Reduce

We will work with families in a manner which ensures that they are given every opportunity to effect change, ensuring that the child's needs remain paramount. We will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of assessments, interventions and family plans, ensuring we are getting it right for children and that we are mindful of the impact of diversity and issues of intersectionality.

We will analyse and interrogate partnership data to enhance our understanding of the local picture and the improvements and challenges ahead.

We will promote effective intervention at the earliest opportunity in order to minimise the impact on the child and to ensure, as far as possible, that children grow up safely within their family.

We will ensure that the training received across the partnership is relevant, effective and accessible by all, and monitor that the attendance and impact of the training is delivering what we expect.

We will ensure a culture of high challenge and high support is seen throughout the partnership, and that all involved are able to confidently challenge delivery and escalate appropriately if required.

3. Prevent

We will analyse our information in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of this strategy in making a difference to the children of Rotherham.

We will monitor performance to ensure that our work is reducing the impact and levels of neglect within our communities. This will be supported by high quality training, and robust analysis by the Practice, Performance and Learning delivery group

We will all take responsibility for our role in this strategy, and support a culture of shared accountability and transparency, where partnership and trust is developed.

We will prevent the neglect experienced by children throughout Rotherham by having safe systems that are responsive, effective and accountable across the partnership.

Finally, Be Curious and Act Against Child Neglect

In Rotherham, we want to encourage and support professionals and members of our community to spot the signs of neglect...Neglected children may:

- Experience hunger or a dirty appearance, physical weight loss and missed appointments
- Be without adequate clothing, e.g. no coat in winter
- Be living in dangerous conditions, e.g. drugs/significant alcohol in the home, poor home safety measures, the home may be unhygienic
- Be aggressive, withdrawn or may self harm
- Talk about homelife without warmth or detail, there may be many caregivers or an uncertain pattern of carers

This is everyone's responsibility, and we need to work collectively to reduce Neglect. Make sure you do your bit.



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PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an Equality Analysis (Part B).

Further information is available in the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance – see page 9.

1. Title

Title: Neglect Strategy 2023-2026

Directorate: Children and Young People's Services

Service area: Safeguarding

Lead person:
Laura Gough

Contact number:
07920037934

Is this a:

☒ **Strategy / Policy**
☐ **Service / Function**
☐ **Other**

If other, please specify

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

The Neglect Strategy 2023-2026 describes the responsibility of agencies to work together and safeguard children under Working together 2018.

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:

The Neglect Strategy 2023-2028 is aligned to legislation Working Together 2018, and Children Act 1989 and 2004, which provide the framework for safeguarding children. The strategy describes the local authority's responsibility to promote inter-agency partnership working to improve the welfare of all children under section 10 of the Children Act 2004.

The Neglect Strategy is owned by the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership, is driven by the Neglect Delivery Group.

The Child Exploitation Strategy 2023-2028 builds on the strong foundations and established partnership arrangements in place from the previous Neglect strategy and local safeguarding arrangements in Rotherham.

The Neglect Delivery Group will drive the implementation of the work plan reporting to the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership, and other governance arrangements as required.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity

All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc.

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community? <i>(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)</i>	x	
Could the proposal affect service users? <i>(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)</i>	x	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics? <i>(Consider potential discrimination, harassment or victimisation of individuals with protected characteristics)</i>	x	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal? <i>(It is important that the Council is transparent and consultation is carried out with members of the public to help mitigate future challenge)</i>	x	
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from commissioning or procurement)</i>	x	
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from your HR business partner)</i>	x	

If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason

If you have answered **no** to all the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6**.

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4**.

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals before decisions are made.

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).

- **How have you considered equality and diversity?**

There are approximately 5,300 children open to children's service, from Early Help, Child in Need, Child Protection, Children in Our Care and Care Leavers. (as at October 2023). 151, 40% of children subject to children protection plans are due to concerns of Neglect.

No. of Children Subject to Child Protection Plans Neglect	Average Age	Gender Breakdown
151	6.2	46.4% Male 47.7% Female

To inform the Neglect Strategy a consultation and engagement activity with partners was undertaken. The development of the Strategy has involved collaborative working across Rotherham's key stakeholders:

- A stake holder event held on the 6th September 2023 and included representatives from RMBC, SY Police, NHS and wider Health colleagues, Probation, Youth Justice Service, Voluntary consortium, Community Safety.
- It has been presented to the Neglect delivery group.
- It has been presented to the RSCP
- RSPC delivery Groups

We understand that the strategy needs to reflect the communities that it serves.

Where concerns of Neglect are identified, information regarding protected characteristics

are captured in Early Help Assessment, The Neglect Graded Care Profile and social Care Children and Families Assessment form. This information informs the plan of support that is coproduced with the family members and the child / young person where applicable.

Translation services are utilised as are a range of bespoke provision including specific targeted support groups for LGBT young people, BAME young people, Girls and young women, faith-based groups.

- **Key findings**

Rotherham's Neglect Offer supports some of the most vulnerable children, young people and families in Rotherham.

The Strategy 2023-2026 is a partnership approach to raising awareness, coordinating partnership response, training, identification, prevention and safeguarding, and support for children and young people.

It aims to ensure communities, and services, both voluntary and statutory are empowered through information sharing and training to spot the signs of Neglect and are equipped with knowledge what to do when they have concerns about the neglect of children.

The Strategy aims to build on the solid partnership foundations, and support agencies in working together to safeguard children.

- **Actions**

Further Equality Impact Analysis will be completed as required as part of the delivery associated with the Strategy.

A range of approaches will be used to ensure that children, young people and families play a key part in the evaluation of the strategy.

The development of the strategy has been undertaken with children and young people and their families in mind, and in conjunction with frontline staff, partner agencies and the voluntary sector alongside using information from children in what works well.

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	Completed
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	March 2024
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	Laura Gough, Head of Service, Safeguarding, Quality and Learning

5. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:

Name	Job title	Date
Nicola Curley	Strategic Director for Childrens Services	October 2023

6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

Date screening completed	31 October 2023
Report title and date	Neglect Strategy 2023-2026
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	November 2023
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	

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PART B – Equality Analysis Form

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

This form:

- Can be used to prompt discussions, ensure that due regard has been given and remove or minimise disadvantage for an individual or group with a protected characteristic
- Involves looking at what steps can be taken to advance and maximise equality as well as eliminate discrimination and negative consequences
- Should be completed before decisions are made, this will remove the need for remedial actions.

Note – An Initial Equality Screening Assessment (Part A) should be completed prior to this form.

When completing this form consider the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc. – see page 11 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

1. Title	
Equality Analysis title: Neglect Strategy 2023 -2026	
Date of Equality Analysis (EA): 31 October 2023	
Directorate: CYPS	Service area: Safeguarding
Lead Manager: Laura Gough	Contact number: 07920037934
Is this a:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategy / Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Service / Function
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
If other, please specify	

2. Names of those involved in the Equality Analysis (Should include minimum of three people) - see page 7 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance

Name	Organisation	Role (eg service user, managers, service specialist)
Jo Hattan	LA CYPS	Senior safeguarding Officer for Children in care (IRO) CYPS
Jo McCartan	LA CYPS	service manager for CP CYPS
Lee Durrant	LA CYPS	Service Manager for the RSCP business unit.

3. What is already known? - see page 10 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance
Aim/Scope (who the Policy/Service affects and intended outcomes if known)

This may include a group/s identified by a protected characteristic, other groups or stakeholder/s e.g., service users, employees, partners, members, suppliers etc.)

It is important to note that in preparation for the development of strategy, an 'awayday' for the Neglect delivery Group took place, where equality and diversity was considered in detail and did inform the strategy.

Furthermore, as part of the Section 11, equality and diversity was reported on, and evidence provided in 2022 and which is still relevant.

What equality information is available? (Include any engagement undertaken)

There is quality information that is already used to shape priorities and deliver existing services across the Local Authority, health and education sectors.

A work plan will sit alongside the strategy with includes the capturing of data, including diversity and equality, and feedback from different children and groups which will continue to be used to monitor, scrutinise and inform the plan. This work plan is owned and delivered on by the Neglect Delivery group, a multi-agency group offering cross partnership challenge and co working.

Equality information is available through existing delivery in the following ways:

Regular monitoring and oversight through the Neglect Delivery group.

Performance Practice and Learning

CYPS performance reporting – Scorecards and Dashboards

Audit and QA activity

DfE

Department for Health & Social Care

Ofsted

Staff and SW Health Check 2023

Are there any gaps in the information that you are aware of?

Not that we are currently aware of, we have rich cross organisational data. However, we will be working on a Neglect specific score card to hold data in one place for analysis.

What monitoring arrangements have you made to monitor the impact of the policy or service on communities/groups according to their protected characteristics?

The Neglect Delivery group provides oversight of the strategy implementation and impact. The governance arrangements (RSCP) will provide accountability through monitor and oversee performance.

Existing data and established methodology across the children's workforce will continue to be used to monitor impact on those groups with protected characteristics.

As part of current practice, the voice of children and families is sought through audit activity, and a variety of voice groups.

The ongoing training via RSCP includes working with vulnerable children and young people and those with protected characteristics.

Engagement undertaken with customers. (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)

June 2023: Neglect Delivery group (including colleges from the partnership and voluntary sector)

October 2023: Early Help

Engagement undertaken with staff (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)

June 23: Multi Agency Workshop with key agencies in attendance. This included front line providers, voluntary sector managers and leaders.

4. The Analysis - of the actual or likely effect of the Policy or Service (Identify by protected characteristics)

How does the Policy/Service meet the needs of different communities and groups? (Protected characteristics of Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity) - see glossary on page 14 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance)

Service delivery is regulated by a range of legislation (the Children Act (1989, 2004) Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2022). Services work in an inclusive way, utilising restorative practice and will continue to work within these parameters.

The strategy follows a well-used evidenced and methodology of supporting organisation to understand the complexity of Neglect and follows the Neglect Graded Care Profile methodology for assessing Neglect.

Does your Policy/Service present any problems or barriers to communities or Groups?

No barriers identified, the Neglect strategy focuses equipping the workforce to safeguard children and young people. Through intelligence reporting systems we can track themes and identify emerging themes.

The Neglect Delivery Group is a multi-agency partnership group that promotes co-working and shared strategy. Good effective communication is the key to the success of this group.

Does the Service/Policy provide any positive impact/s including improvements or remove barriers?

There is evidence that the service provided under the previous strategy has made a positive impact for children and young people. The new strategy builds upon this, and elevates the Neglect sub-group to Neglect Delivery Group, reporting to the RSCP exec group and having the same status as other delivery groups.

There are no plans to reduce or scale down existing provision.

What affect will the Policy/Service have on community relations? (may also need to consider activity which may be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another)

The Neglect strategy provision is for all children and young people and does not differentiate between different groups.

Please list any **actions and targets** that need to be taken as a consequence of this assessment on the action plan below and ensure that they are added into your service plan for monitoring purposes – see page 12 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

5. Summary of findings and Equality Analysis Action Plan

If the analysis is done at the right time, i.e. early before decisions are made, changes should be built in before the policy or change is signed off. This will remove the need for remedial actions. Where this is achieved, the only action required will be to monitor the impact of the policy/service/change on communities or groups according to their protected characteristic - See page 11 of the Equality Screening and Analysis guidance

Title of analysis: Neglect Strategy
Directorate and service area: CYPS 9RSCP)
Lead Manager: Laura Gough
Summary of findings:
The Equality Impact Analysis assures that there is no change to existing provision for children and families in Rotherham. Rather, the strategy and provision will continue to address issues of CE across Rotherham and continue to provide the framework for which agencies work together to safeguard children and young people.

Action/Target	State Protected Characteristics as listed below	Target date (MM/YY)
Complete and submit CE strategy	A, D, S, RE, RoB, PM C, O Youth	October 2023
Cabinet Paper	As above	November 2023
Work plan presented to CEDG	As above	October 2023

***A = Age, D= Disability, S = Sex, GR Gender Reassignment, RE= Race/ Ethnicity, RoB= Religion or Belief, SO= Sexual Orientation, PM= Pregnancy/Maternity, CPM = Civil Partnership or Marriage. C= Carers, O= other groups**

6. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state those that have approved the Equality Analysis. Approval should be obtained by the Director and approval sought from DLT and the relevant Cabinet Member.

Name	Job title	Date
Laura Gough	Head of Service Safeguarding	October 2023
Nicola Curley	Director of Children's Services	
Cllr Cusworth	Lead Member Children's Services	

7. Publishing

The Equality Analysis will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this Equality Analysis relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

Date Equality Analysis completed	October 2023
Report title and date	Neglect strategy
Date report sent for publication	
Date Equality Analysis sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	

Will the decision/proposal impact...	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	N/A	No impact on emissions.			
Emissions from transport?	N/A	No impact on emissions.			
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	N/A	No impact on emissions.			
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	N/A	No impact on emissions.			
Emissions from construction and/or development?	N/A	No impact on emissions.			

Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	N/A	Not planned.			
Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields: N/A					

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:

The Neglect Strategy 2023-2026 is aligned to legislation Working Together 2018, and Children Act 1989 and 2004, which provide the framework for safeguarding children. The strategy describes the local authority's responsibility to promote inter-agency partnership working to improve the welfare of all children under section 10 of the Children Act 2004.

The Neglect Strategy is owned by the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership, is driven by the Neglect Delivery Group. Updates of the work plan are provided through these governance arrangements.

Supporting information:	
Completed by: (Name, title, and service area/directorate).	Laura Gough, Head of Service, Safeguarding, Quality and Learning.
Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	N/A
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	N/A
Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	

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Appendix 1: Improving Lives Select Commission –Summary Work Programme 2023/24

Chair: Cllr Lyndsay Pitchley
Governance Advisor: Natasha Aucott

Vice-Chair: Cllr Wendy Cooksey
Link Officer: David McWilliams

The following principles were endorsed by OSMB at its meeting of 5 July 2023 as criteria to long/short list each of the commission's respective priorities:

Establish as a starting point:

- What are the key issues?
- What is the outcome that we want?

Agree principles for longlisting:

- Can scrutiny add value or influence?
- Is it being looked at elsewhere?
- Is it a priority – council or community?

Developing a consistent shortlisting criteria e.g.

- T: Time: is it the right time, enough resources?
 O: Others: is this duplicating the work of another body?
 P: Performance: can scrutiny make a difference?
 I: Interest – what is the interest to the public?
 C: Contribution to the corporate plan?

Meeting Date	Agenda Item
13 June 2023	Counter Extremism in Schools/ Radicalisation of Young People and Extremism
25 July 2023	CYPS Performance and Year End performance Rotherham Youth Justice Service Progress Report
12 September 2023	Written Statement of Action Update Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report
31 October 2023	Adults Safeguarding Partners Annual Report Elective Home Education Presentation
5 December 2023	Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy Update Domestic Abuse Strategy Update (Council Plan Performance)

30 January 2024	Child Exploitation Update Post Abuse Support (Including the Trauma Resilience Service) The Neglect Strategy
5 March 2024	Carers Strategy Update Family Hubs Update

Suggested Review Activity
Early Years Strategy Workshop- 27 th November 11:30-1:30pm
Preparation for adulthood Spotlight Review- Scheduled for 15 th February
Suggested joint work with Health Select Commission
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Update- Off the Agenda Briefing

To Reschedule:

- Early Help Update
- Pandemic Related Risks to Children's Development