Adolescent safeguarding in London
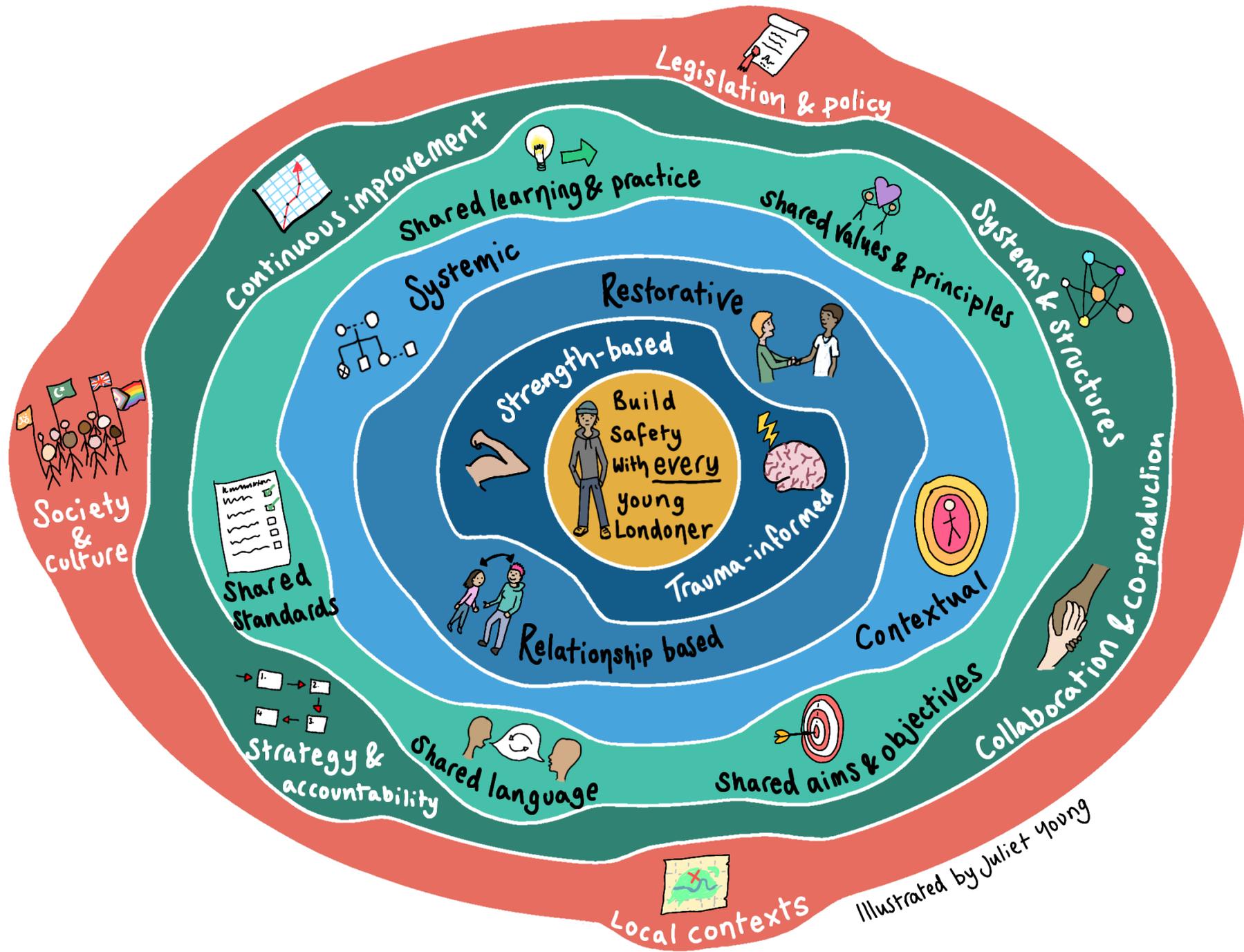
A handbook for collaboration

Build safety with every young Londoner

ALDCS
The Association of London
Directors of Children's Services

LIIA LONDON
INNOVATION &
IMPROVEMENT
ALLIANCE

Continuous improvement

Shared learning & practice

Legislation & policy

Systemic

Shared Values & Principles

Systems & structures

Restorative

Strength-based

Build Safety with every young Londoner

Trauma-informed

Contextual

Collaboration & co-production

Society & culture

Shared standards

Relationship based

Shared aims & objectives

Strategy & accountability

Shared language

Local contexts

Illustrated by Juliet Young

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Foreword: You have to meet us halfway...

Adolescence is an exciting, rewarding, yet anxiety-provoking experience for young Londoners, their families and for the professionals who work alongside them during their journeys toward adulthood. It's a transitional experience in mind, body, learning, and relationships. Each young person explores their sense of self, agency and belonging, as they test their independence in peer groups and in spaces beyond the familiar. Experimentation with boundaries is a normal part of adolescence and most young people make it through without serious consequences or harm.

However, any child, young person or young adult can be exposed to harm at any point during their journey toward adulthood. As children develop through adolescence, harms can arise from relationships beyond the home, in peer groups, schools, neighbourhoods, online and in wider environments. Evidence suggests that children who experience adversity - whether during childhood or adolescence - are more likely to have poor outcomes and meet further harms as they grow (EIF 2020). These harms occur both within and beyond their family.

Adolescent Safeguarding in London is a handbook about understanding and valuing the lived experience and diversity of young Londoners. The handbook recognises adolescence as a stage of development, not a fixed age range, and takes adolescence to begin around age 10 continuing to at least age 25.

It's about responding to harms wherever they happen. It's about working together within our multi-agency partnerships and across our disciplinary and local area boundaries to create a coherent framework for building safety with young Londoners, their families, and communities.

Threats of harm outside of family life include sexual, physical, and emotional abuse and exploitation in different places and spaces. Young people and young adults can be harmed and exploited in different ways, including sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, County Lines, trafficking, modern slavery, online abuse, and extremism that leads to radicalisation.

What should agencies do differently to support young people to stay safe?

"At the end of the day, it's not just one person, it's all adults and organisations – foster carers, social workers, schools, whatever. Every kid - no matter how big or small the situation is - every kid needs to get dealt with. Every case needs to get chased up.

When that kid is sitting in the room, on their phone, talking about stuff that's going on in their life, the parent needs to be on it, the foster carer needs to be on it, the social worker needs to be on it, everybody needs to pull their weight for something like this to work. You can't have one side of a bridge being built by young people and the other side not built by adults. You're going to run out of a foundation to build on. **You have to meet us halfway so we can help each other out.**"

Young Londoner

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About this handbook

This handbook has been written with two audiences in mind:

» **System and practice leaders who are collaborating within their local safeguarding children partnerships to promote the safety, wellbeing, learning, participation and life chances of young people,**

» **Professionals who work directly with young people and their families across different sectors including education, health, housing, police, social care, voluntary, community and faith (VCFS), and youth justice.**

When thinking about adolescent development, extra-familial harms, and what these mean for local safeguarding partnerships, this handbook follows five themes:

Every young Londoner matters.

First, young people are understood to be children until they are 18. At the same time, effective adolescent safeguarding pays close attention to the data and lived experience of all young Londoners, including those up to around 25.

It's the stage, not the age.

Second, there is a 'move away from the chronologically defined notion of age group […] to concentrate, rather, on states of mind' (Waddell 2018) and toward better understanding of adolescent development.

The power of collaboration.

Third, there is strong emphasis throughout the handbook on the power of relationships at every level of our service systems:

• **collective leadership** from statutory safeguarding partners: health, police, and social care,

• **forging collaboration** within and between organisations, disciplines, and sectors.

• **designing strategy and coherent service systems** that promote enduring relationships to build safety with young Londoners, their families, and communities.

Build safety in places, spaces & communities.

Fourth, places, spaces and communities - physical and virtual - and how these shape both young people's lived experiences, and our capacities, as local, sub-regional, regional partnerships, to collaborate effectively to:

• prevent harms wherever they are happening,

• build safety in places, spaces, and communities, and influence better outcomes for and with young people.

Reflection & learning across boundaries.

Fifth, effective adolescent safeguarding belongs to all partners, and must include reflection and learning through collaboration with and between all sectors: adult services, education, housing, private sector, probation, voluntary, community and faith (VCFS) organisations, youth justice, and crucially, the voice and experience of young people, young adults, their families and communities.

About this handbook

This handbook started its life as a practice guide edited for Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Partnership ([2018](#)).

A great deal has happened in the four years since that guidance was edited, not least extensive research, policy and practice in adolescent safeguarding undertaken by [Contextual Safeguarding research programme based at University of Bedforshire](#) (until 2021) [and Durham University](#) (since 2021), [ListenUP](#), [Research in Practice](#), and the [Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme](#).

The handbook draws upon this rich and evolving body of work, as well as upon the experience of professionals and young Londoners from across our region.

During those four years, national voices have raised serious concerns about child criminal exploitation ([Commission on Young Lives 2021](#), [The Children's Society 2019](#)) and other extra-familial harms such as trafficking ([ECPAT UK 2021](#)). Since March 2020, we have seen the profound impact of the pandemic, not least on adolescent mental health ([DfE 2022](#)) and vulnerability to exploitation ([Brewster et al, 2021](#)).

The Office for National Statistics have emphasised the huge problem of gaps in data and evidence for child victims of modern slavery, trafficking and exploitation in the UK. ONS published their latest findings with the voice of a criminally exploited young person: 'It's on your doorstep. You just don't see it.' ([ONS 2022](#)).

This handbook holds onto some key ideas from the 2018 Waltham Forest guidance. These include firmly held beliefs in the power of quality conversations and in forging enduring relationships both with young people and between professionals.

In addition, the handbook adds more attention to adolescent development and to forms of collective leadership, strategy and collaboration with the potential to design services that build safety with young Londoners.

The guidance has the quality of patchwork, sewing in material from research, policy and practice, largely from the last five years, during which time there has been intensive testing of ideas and approaches.

Additional material has been gathered between 2019 and 2022 in conversations with local areas across London, all grappling with the task of working together to keep young Londoners safe.

There are also perspectives from young Londoners, drawn from interviews undertaken between 2019 and 2021. These voices are left anonymous, although permission to share for the purposes of professional development was agreed by young people at the point of interview.

Adolescent safeguarding touches on experiences of children, families, communities across London, and covers policy and practice from community, education, health, justice, policing, social care, and beyond. The handbook does not aim at an exhaustive approach to any one aspect of this rapidly expanding field.

In each part, there are also questions for reflection for leaders and for professionals working directly with young people.

To help with exploration and navigation of the topic, web links are provided throughout, with suggestions of further reading and resources, and links are listed again [here](#) at the end of the handbook.

About this handbook

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Part 1 includes information on the national and regional policy context for adolescent safeguarding.

This part introduces pan-London principles and a framework for practice.

PART 1
CONTEXT

PART 2
ADOLESCENCE

Part 2 is about adolescent development and the experiences of young Londoners today.

This part includes information about attachment, social communication, emotional wellbeing and life transitions.

PART 5
REFLECTION

PART 4
PRACTICE

PART 3
STRATEGY

Part 5 is about reflection and collaboration across boundaries.

This part includes information on workforce, learning, and supervision, and also includes links to further reading and resources.

Part 4 is about evidence-informed approaches to working with young people, families and communities.

This part introduces a London framework for building safety and life chances with children young people and young adults who move across local area boundaries.

Part 3 is about collaboration to design a partnership strategy for adolescent safeguarding.

This part includes practical questions and challenges for local partners to examine current practice, and set out plans to create safety with young people.

Glossary: 'See how we see the world!'

Language is powerful.

The words we use not only reflect our values, but they also describe and define the changes we hope for in our work with young people and young adults.

On the one hand, technical vocabulary can help us to understand key ideas. On the other hand, jargon can act as a barrier to building relationships with young Londoners, families, communities, and professionals. Where possible the language in this guidance handbook is kept simple.

However, some key points of theory, policy or practice are explained using specialist words and phrases that inevitably need definition. Professionals, young Londoners, and families rightly pose questions about the language of adolescent safeguarding. Definitions of adolescence and young adulthood are a source of debate (**Holmes and Smale, 2018 p3**) and the words we use to describe different aspects of this topic are rapidly developing.

New phrases like '*contextual safeguarding*', '*transitional safeguarding*', '*child criminal exploitation*' and '*extra-familial harm*' are found throughout our strategies, policies and practice. Researchers working on

the Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme have shared some very useful messages about the changing language associated with child exploitation here (**Brodie, 2017**).

Some key terms associated with adolescent safeguarding are defined below, with references to definitions included as weblinks. Not everyone agrees about this terminology, and some of the definitions below set out challenges that have been raised by young Londoners, families and professionals, for example in relation to contested concepts like 'risk' and 'vulnerability', which can be seen to blame and stigmatise.

The glossary below is offered in the spirit of shared learning and ongoing collaboration.

Children

Individuals between 0 and 17 years of age; Under the Children Act (**1989**) children have a right to protection until they are 18 and as such, 'child' or 'children' refers to any child under the age of 18. A Child First approach to youth justice means that young people under 18 are seen as children rather than 'offenders' or 'perpetrators'.

What do professionals really need to know?

"It's like an ongoing battle between two generations. Adults think, 'we're right, we're right!' But what if young people are the ones who are actually evolving? And the more the adults do that, the more the young people separate ourselves from you.

I feel like professionals always want to look at it from one perspective. You could say 'that's a number six', and a young person could stand around the other side of it, and say 'that's a number nine'. You have to sometimes put yourself in a young person's shoes to actually understand and see what is going on, to relate, to catch up, to like, morph yourself into the situation, and see this safety issue through a young person's eyes. See how we see the world! It's so different for us now than it was twenty or even ten years ago."

Young Londoner

Young people is used to refer to children aged between about 10 and about 18.

Young adults is used to refer to people roughly between the ages of about 19 and 25, but also for those older than 25 with known vulnerability and who have been exposed to harms.

Young Londoners is used in this handbook as shorthand to refer to both young people and young adults as one group, and refers to those roughly between the ages of 10 and 29.

Adolescence

Adolescence is used to refer to the transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood. The World Health Organization (WHO 2022) defines adolescence with reference to 'any person between ages 10 and 19'.

However, for the purpose of this handbook, adolescence is taken as a stage of development, rather than a fixed age range, and is understood to extend beyond 18 or 21 (Waddell 2018) into young adulthood.

Parents is used as shorthand to include all carers and parental figures.

Families

Families are understood to range from the traditional nuclear family to single-parent families, same-sex families, step families, extended families, multi-generational and adoptive and foster families. Not all of these family types include children but many do, or would like to.

Harm

The ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another person is also a form of harm. Harm can be determined 'significant' by 'comparing a child's health and development with what might be reasonably expected of a similar child' (Children Act, 1989).

Extra-familial harms

Harms, abuse, or exploitation that take place outside of family and home and raise safeguarding concerns. Extra-familial harms take a variety of different forms and children, young people and young adults can be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, peer-on-peer abuse, sexual abuse, gang affiliation, county lines, serious youth violence, radicalisation and violent extremism (The Innovate Project 2021).

Risk

Risk is used in adolescent safeguarding policy and practice to refer to experiences of adversity, harm or abuse that would seriously threaten the health, development, or life of a child.

Risk also refers to the likelihood of experiencing such adversity, harm, or abuse, or the experience of a wider range of adversities including poor education and poverty, involvement in minor crime, and mental health problems.

However, the act of 'risk-taking' can also have positive effects in the lives of young people and young adults, and is understood as a necessary part of adolescent development.

Many young Londoners, families and professionals have challenged the use of 'risk', 'risky' or 'at risk', where the term is used to suggest that a young person is responsible for their vulnerability to harm, abuse or exploitation, and instead replace the word risk with harm and likelihood to be harmed (Johnston & Akay, 2022).

Too often, the language of risk misses the adversity and trauma in the lives of children who have been harmed, and who have caused harm to others (Houghton 2021).

Questions for professionals working directly with young people

How do you avoid labelling young people in terms of risks and behaviours and see them as whole people, with lived experience, strengths, skills, needs and goals?

How do you explain this to young people, young adults, families and other professionals and promote strength-based terms?

Vulnerability

There is no standard definition of vulnerability in childhood and adolescence, and we believe that every child and young person is vulnerable to harm.

A child may be more vulnerable to harm and poor outcomes because of individual characteristics; the impact of action or inaction by other people; and their physical and social environment.

Additional factors include:

- child's physical, emotional, health and educational needs

- any harm the child has experienced or may be likely to experience

- the capability of the child's carers and wider family environment to meet the child's needs, or indeed to cause harm e.g. homelessness or poor housing conditions, the presence of adults in the home with mental health problems, alcohol and drug dependence, or contact with the criminal justice system, domestic abuse and poverty

- the absence of supportive relationships in a child's life

- the wider community and social conditions beyond the family including crime, the built environment, community cohesion and resilience (**Public Health England 2020**)

Child criminal exploitation (CCE)

A form of child abuse, where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child 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 has been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual (**Home Office, 2018**)

County Lines

County Lines is where illegal drugs are transported from one area to another, often across police and local authority boundaries (although not exclusively), usually by children or vulnerable people who are coerced into it by gangs. The 'County Line' is the mobile phone line used to take the orders of drugs. Areas where drugs are taken to report increased violence and weapons-related crimes as a result of this trend.

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. (**NCA**)

Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (**DfE, 2017**)

Grooming

When someone builds an emotional connection with a **child or young person** to gain their trust so that they can be sexually abused, exploited or trafficked. Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional. Anybody can be a groomer, no matter their age, gender or race. Grooming can take place over a short or long period of time – from weeks to years. Groomers may also build a relationship with the young person's family or friends to make them seem trustworthy or authoritative. (**NSPCC**)

Human Trafficking

The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons ('Palermo Protocol') provided (Article 3) the first internationally recognised definition of human trafficking:
"Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control of another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or removal of organs."

Child Trafficking, Slavery and Forced Labour

Child trafficking is the practice of transporting children into, within and out of the UK or any other country for the purposes of exploitation. The exploitation can be varied and include:

- domestic servitude;
- labour exploitation;
- criminal activity (e.g. cannabis cultivation, drug supply through county lines, petty street crime, illegal street trade, etc.);
- sexual exploitation (child abuse, closed community, child abuse images);
- application of residence;
- benefit fraud;
- forced begging;
- illegal adoption; and
- sham marriage.

Where there is an arrangement made to travel, or to facilitate travel with a view to child exploitation, section 2 of the 2015 Act should be used. In these circumstances, regard should be had to the victim's age in determining their vulnerability.

If the victim states they are a child, they should be viewed as such until their age can be verified by identification or an independent age assessment carried out by the local authority or a court determination. **Section 51 of the 2015** Act provides for presumption about age. Until an assessment is made of the person's age by the local authority, there is an assumption that the person is under 18.

Missing

Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another (**ACPO**)

Going missing should be treated as an indicator that the individual may be at risk of harm. The safeguarding of vulnerable people is paramount and a missing person report should be recognised as an opportunity to identify and address risks. The reasons for a person deciding to go missing may be complex and linked to a variety of social or family issues.

Three key factors should be considered in a missing person investigation:

· protecting those at risk of harm

· minimising distress and ensuring high quality of service to the families and carers of missing persons

· prosecuting those who perpetrate harm or pose a risk of harm when this is appropriate and supported by evidence.

Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB)

Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour displayed by children and young people which is harmful or abusive (**Hackett, 2014**).

Peer-on-peer sexual abuse is a form of HSB where sexual abuse takes place between children of a similar age or stage of development.

Problematic sexual behaviour (PSB) is developmentally inappropriate or socially unexpected sexualised behaviour which does not have an overt element of harm or abuse.

Contextual Safeguarding

Professor Carlene Firmin started the Contextual Safeguarding approach whilst at the University of Bedfordshire. The Contextual Safeguarding research programme led by Professor Firmin has been based at Durham University since September 2021. The programme **website** holds extensive research, policy and practice examples: **https://www. contextualsafeguarding.org.uk**

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families, within their communities, and

· recognises relationships young people form in peer groups, neighbourhoods, communities, schools and online can feature harm, abuse and violence,

· recognises that parents sometimes have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine child-parent and family relationships, and

· expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of different social contexts.

Contextual safeguarding is relevant to a range of risks which can cause significant harm to young people where the primary cause of harm is outside of the family. This list is not exhaustive but includes:

· Child Sexual Exploitation and peer-on-peer exploitation

· Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines

· Risks associated with gangs

· Modern Slavery and Trafficking

· Missing young people

· Radicalisation (PREVENT)

Contextual Safeguarding has been set out as a framework with four parts to articulate what the approach can achieve in your local area. According to the framework, Contextual Safeguarding is evident in a local area if partners are able to:

- target the contexts in which abuse has occurred;
- achieve this through the lens of child protection and child welfare: ensure there is a child protection, and not just community safety, response to extra-familial harm;
- partner with organisations and individuals who could influence the nature of extra-familial contexts, and;
- measure contextual, as well as individual, impact.

(Adapted from Contextual Safeguarding research programme Durham University Website 2022 and Firmin 2020).

Contextual Safeguarding Toolkit

Contextual Safeguarding team at Durham University have developed the **Scale-Up Tookit**, with resources to start thinking about creating a Contextual Safeguarding system.
Follow this link to explore the resources.

Transitional safeguarding

An emerging area of policy, not widely applied in practice, which proposes that existing safeguarding systems for children and adults need to become more fluid and more responsive to the dynamic needs of young people and young adults (**Homes and Smale 2018**).

Transitional safeguarding responds to safeguarding young people and young adults across developmental stages which builds on the best available evidence, learns from both children's and adult safeguarding practice and which prepares young people for their adult lives. It focuses on safeguarding young people from adolescence into adulthood, recognising transition is a journey not an event, and every young person will experience this journey differently (**DHSC 2021**)

Further information about Transitional Safeguarding can be found on page 25.

Cuckooing

The process where adults and/or children are used to take over houses acquired from vulnerable adults including class A drug addicts.

Debt bondage

Children are robbed by members of their own network or are encouraged to run into debt for commodities acquired from the network (e.g. drugs) in order to remain indebted to them.

Race, ethnicity & racially minoritised people

Race is a categorisation based mainly on physical attributes or traits, assigning people to a specific race simply by having similar appearances or skin colour (for example, Black or White). It is widely accepted that race is a social construct. However, having been racialised and shared common experiences of racism, racial identity is important to many young people and communities, and can be a basis for collective organising and support for racially minoritized individuals. (**The Law Society 2022**)

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is broader than race and is used to refer to long shared cultural experiences, religious practices, traditions, ancestry, language, dialect or national origins (for example, African-Caribbean, Indian, Irish). Ethnicity can be seen as a more positive identity than one forged from the shared negative experiences of racism. (**The Law Society 2022**)

Terms BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) and BME (black and minority ethnic) are not used in this handbook, following the UK government, because they emphasise certain ethnic minority groups (Asian and Black) and exclude others (mixed, other and white ethnic minority groups). The terms can also mask disparities between different ethnic groups and create misleading interpretations of data.
[Further information on writing about ethnicity at Gov.uk](#)

Anti-racism

Anti-racism is an active commitment to working against racial injustice and discrimination. It's making conscious and thoughtful decisions regarding your own behaviours and how they negatively influence and impact your own biases and actions. Professionals do not have to be completely free of racism or bias to be anti-racist. An anti-racist person practices self-reflection and self-improvement. Anti-racist action is different from non-racist action due to taking up the position of challenging racism in society. To be anti-racist is to be an active part of the solution, whereas a non-racist is a bystander to a problem. ([The Law Society 2022](#))

Disproportionality

Disproportionality refers to a group's representation in a particular category that exceeds expectations for that group, or differs substantially from the representation of others in that category. Research shows that the youth justice system treats children and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds differently. This means that ethnicity is over-represented in sentencing, custody and other parts of the system compared to the proportion of that group within the general population.

School disproportionality encompasses disproportionately high rates at which children from certain ethnic groups are subjected to school sanctions, suspensions (previously known as fixed period exclusions), and/or permanent exclusions.

Unconscious bias

Unconscious (or implicit) bias is a term that describes the associations and feelings we hold, outside our conscious awareness. Unconscious bias affects everyone, and is triggered by our brain automatically making quick judgments and assessments. If adults working or volunteering with children are unaware that they have unconscious bias or do not act to mitigate it, this may have a negative impact on their ability to identify and respond appropriately to discrimination, harm, abuse and exploitation experienced by children.

Intersectionality

Intersectional thinking invites professionals to explore how young people experience the world, how this affects relationships and how young people feel able to share their lived realities. These experiences are shaped and influenced by aspects of a young person's identity, such as their ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, class, and disabilities. People's interactions with the world are not solely based on one aspect of their identity but instead are layered and multifaceted ([Crenshaw 1991](#)). As different aspects of a young person's identity interrelate, they are experienced simultaneously. For example, young people may experience racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia and classism collectively or individually at different times and in different environments.

Adultification

Adultification is a form of racism and a bias, where children from minoritised ethnic communities are perceived as being more 'streetwise', more 'grown up', less innocent and less vulnerable than other children. This particularly affects Black children, who might be viewed primarily as a threat rather than as a child who needs support (**Davis and Marsh, 2020**).

In March 2022, a report was published regarding the experience of Child Q (**CHSCP 2022**), a Black female child who was strip searched by police officers following a safeguarding referral made by a school. The report made urgent recommendations for anti-racist practice when safeguarding children, and including the need for for better understanding of the impact of adultification bias.

LGBTQ+

LGBTQ+ is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer and more. LGBTQ+ is used as a shorthand. The full acronym recognises the diverse terms people identify with and use to describe their gender and sexuality, and the '+' recognises that there are more ways to identify and describe gender and sexuality beyond the acronym. While the above are common terms used to self-identify gender and sexuality in the English language, the world is a place of diverse sexualities and gender identities.

Further information about LGBTQ+ terms at Stonewall

Our principles:

The following list of nine principles are drawn from adolescent safeguarding strategies devised by local areas across London, and they inform our policy and practice.

Don't give up on empathy.

We recognise that young people, up to the age of 18, are still children. We believe there is a 'reachable moment' for every child, young person and young adult and we go the extra mile to build safety with them, their families and communities.

Every young Londoner matters.

We act together across our region to build safety with young Londoners no matter what adversity they have faced, what harm they face today and wherever they are facing it.

It's all about relationships.

We are committed to building enduring relationships with young people, young adults, within families and communities, and between our agencies.

Keep it real.

We focus on the lived experiences of young Londoners including paying attention to both familial and extra-familial harms.

Understanding adolescence.

We seek to understand and value adolescence as a distinct transitional phase in human development, informed by evidence and data.

Safety, wellbeing & life chances.

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the safety, health, wellbeing, learning and life chances of all young Londoners.

Social justice, anti-racism & inclusion.

We are anti-racist. We tackle disproportionality, structural inequality and discrimination. We will value young Londoners, of all ethnicities, gender identities, sexualities, abilities & beliefs.

Right support at the right time.

We offer young people the right information and support at the right time to create the best chance of building safety and preventing harm.

Commitment to collaboration.

We work in open partnership with young people, families, communities and with agencies at local, sub-regional, regional and national levels.

Our principles in practice:

Reachable moments in *practice*

When a child, young person or young adult is involved in crime, anti-social behaviour, or otherwise affected by harms, we will continue to work with them to create safety, recognising adversity, trauma and constrained choices.

Develop contextual & transitional safeguarding with young Londoners.

We will commit to building safety with older children and with young adults, helping them to access support, safeguarding and protection from harm, wherever and whenever harm happens.
We will act together across local boundaries to safeguard young Londoners.

Promote enduring relationships with young people, families & communities.

Professionals with expertise in working with older children will respond reliably and flexibly to the specific needs of this group. We will design service systems and structures that promote continuity of relationships with young Londoners.

Listen to young people & value their lived experience.

As children get older, we recognise and value their increasing autonomy. This will inform our responses to young people, and shape how we involve young people in safety planning, decision-making, support, and review.

Apply evidence, intelligence & analysis.

Our strategic and operational approaches will be based on sound evidence, on the lived experience of young people, as well as on effective analysis of intelligence and data.

Identify & respond to extra-familial harm:

...located within families, and in peer groups, in community contexts, and in digital spaces. We will work in close partnership with families, peer groups, communities, businesses, and in digital/online spaces to build safety and prevent harm in future.

Provide young-person centred services to tackle inequalities

Our responses will tackle the realities of young people's lives, including the impact of different forms of structural inequality and discrimination, such as racism, ableism, classism, homophobia, and transphobia.

Equip children with knowledge & skills to build relationships, keep safe and live healthy, happy lives

For older children this means high quality sex and relationships education, and accessible services shaped in collaboration with young Londoners.

Create joined-up multi-agency systems, structures & services

...that are organised around young people rather than the needs of our agencies. We will work inter-agency, cross-sector, cross-borough to create and sustain confident, holistic responses with the right support and interventions at the right time.

A Framework for Adolescent Safeguarding Practice

The framework for collaboration and practice below draws together perspectives from early help, education, social care, youth justice, youth, and community work, and shows:

- Local, regional, and national forces shape everything we do to build safety for and with young people, their families, and communities **(PART 1)**
- Adolescent development, safeguarding and outcomes are priorities shared by local partners committed to a whole-place approach **(PART 2)**
- The shared features of a partnership strategy depend on collective leadership, shared language, structures, and service systems **(PART 3)**
- Evidence-informed approaches integrated into one framework for practice **(PART 4)**
- Reflection, supervision, collaboration, learning and development **(PART 5)**

Illustrated by Juliet Young
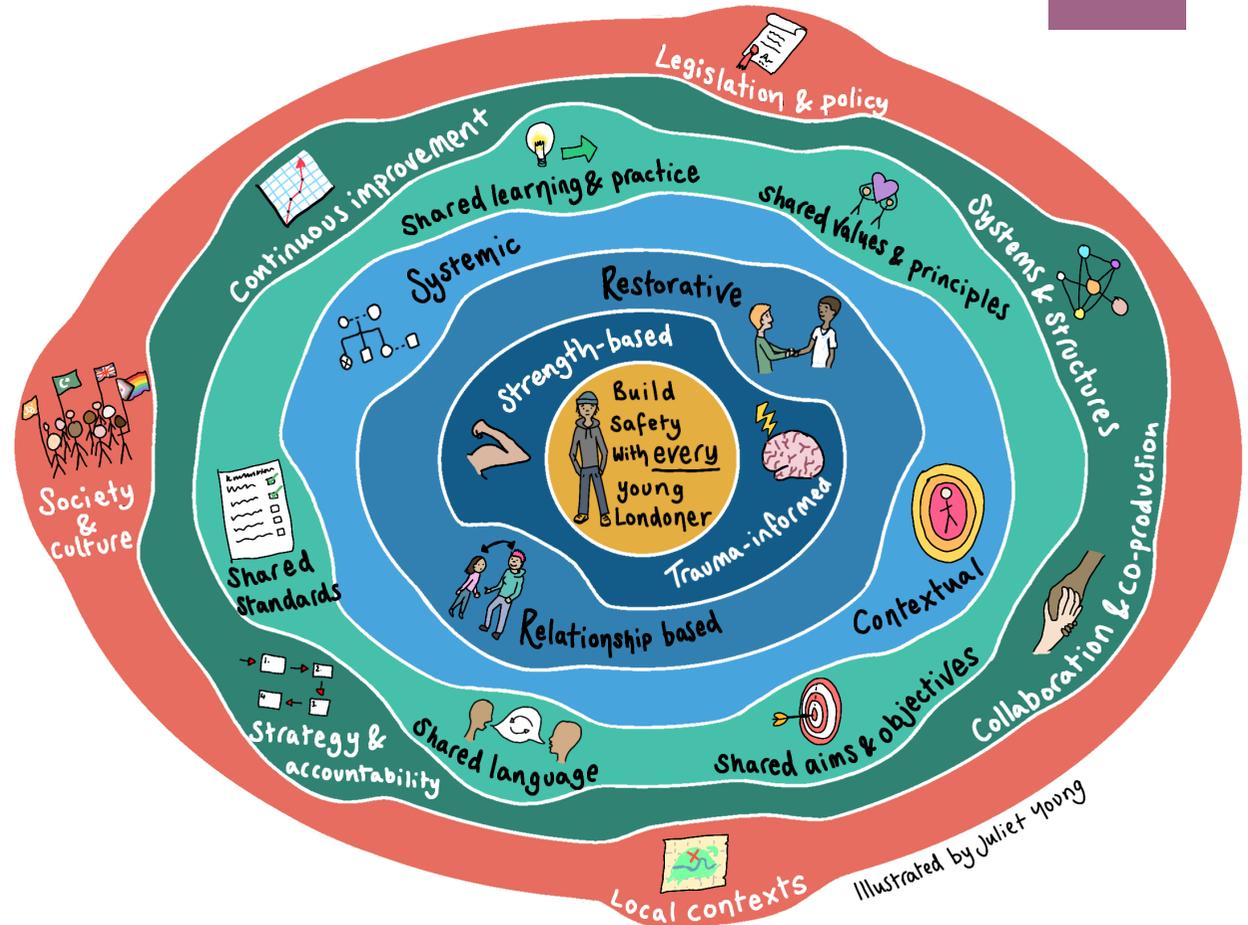
What do each of these evidence-informed approaches focus on…?

Lived experience grounded in realities of life as experienced by young people and families
Young person-centred keeping young **person at centre of planning and decisions**

Trauma-informed understanding impact of harm and trauma, and finding paths to recovery
Strength-based starting from the strengths of young person, family, and community
Relationships-based recognising emotions, lived experience and voice of young person

Restorative repairing conflict and harm, and re-building relationships
Systemic seeing family relationships and social system around young person
Contextual recognising physical, cognitive and social influences on human development

1

Part 1 **CONTEXT**   Adolescent Safeguarding

PART 1: CONTEXT: Adolescent Safeguarding

Part 1 reviews different aspects of policy and practice in adolescent safeguarding and includes brief information about:

How does exploitation go unnoticed?

"Young people are not really trusting in adults, they more have trust in someone on social media, or someone who is not attached to someone with a title, like a teacher, social worker, or even a parent or carer. They just don't open up about these issues to adults.

Young people might not know the full consequences, but they know that it's somewhat wrong, and they might get in trouble, so they are not going to go round shouting it from the rooftops. **So it's really easy to fall through the gaps, and go unnoticed while it's happening.**"

Young Londoner

» Adolescent and contextual safeguarding approaches

» Increased awareness of child criminal exploitation

» The impact of the pandemic on young people's wellbeing, safety, and learning

» Race inequalities and disproportionality

» Young people who identify as LGBTQ+

» Young people with special, education needs, and disabilities (SEND)

» Parental engagement and family support

» Youth work and community development

What are adolescent and contextual safeguarding?

Violence, abuse, and exploitation are a lived reality for many young Londoners. Widening inequalities and growing pressures on families, communities and services have sustained the urgent, ongoing dialogue about how to use collective resources wisely and in a way that supports young people's wellbeing, safeguards all young people from serious harm and builds safety in places, spaces, and communities.

The movement toward developing more effective responses to adolescent harms can be traced back to at least 2014, with the publication of 'That Difficult Age' in which Hanson and Holmes drew attention to the effects 'neglect, running away sexual exploitation and offending' to inform 'a distinctive adolescent-centred approach to protection, prevention and the promotion of resilience.'

Key themes of this approach remain important and applicable to current practice (adapted from 2014):

· Recognising that those young people who have experienced adversity or harms in earlier childhood are sometimes left with unmet needs that they seek to address via testing boundaries in adolescence.

· At the same time, it is crucial to recognise that all children and young people are vulnerable to exploitation, not only those who have experienced adversity in the past.

· Working actively with young people's relationships and lived experiences is essential to keeping them safe.

· Adolescent 'choice' is sometimes misinterpreted as informed choice akin to adult decision-making. Conceptualising choices as 'lifestyle choices' can lead to victims of harm being denied appropriate support.

· Engagement is more likely when professionals:

a) focus on and work with an adolescent's strengths;
b) have support in understanding what factors might be influencing the salient risks;
c) 'go with the grain' of adolescent development and use it as a strength; and
d) start with the young person's needs, goals, values and aspirations.

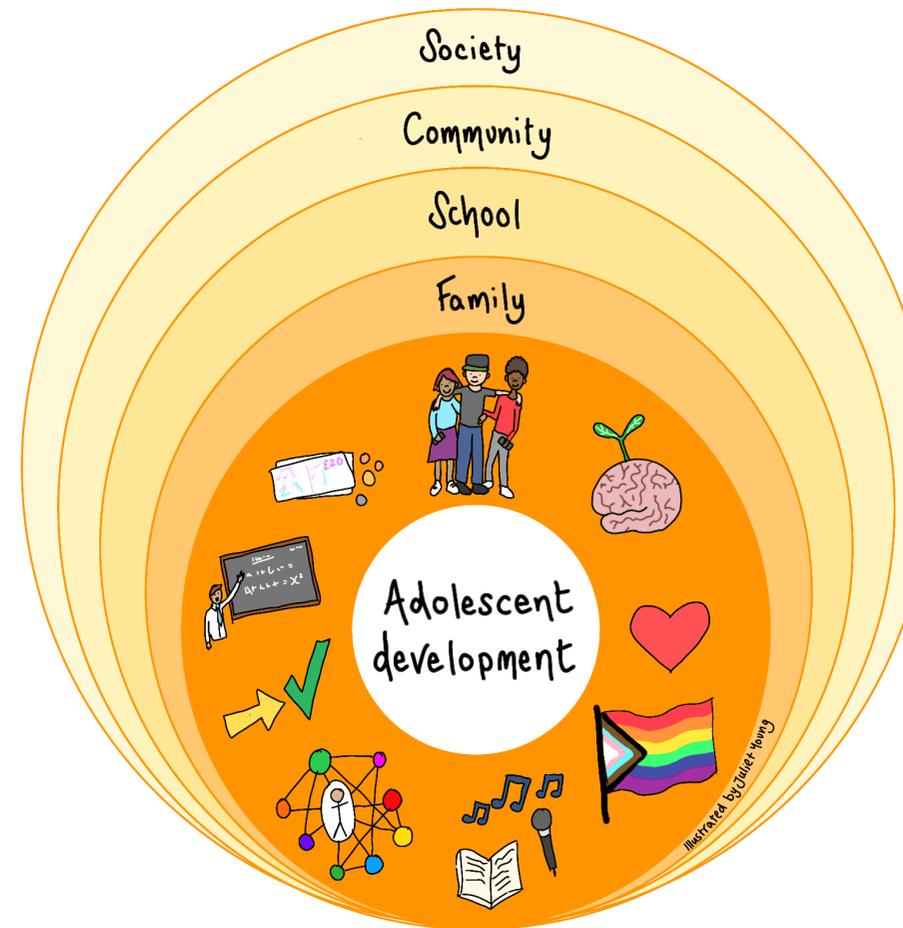
Illustration by Juliet Young.

Contextual safeguarding model adapted from the work of Professor Carlene Firmin and the Contextual Safeguarding research teams at University of Bedfordshire and Durham University.

Grounded in the reality of young people's lives

All young people are to some extent vulnerable to harm, exploitation, and abuse. With the contextual safeguarding approach, Carlene Firmin and the research teams at University of Bedfordhire showed that understanding exploitation of children 'is not simply about identifying the characteristics of children who are vulnerable... it requires a wider perspective and understanding of the contexts, situations and relationships in which exploitation is likely to manifest' (**Firmin 2016**).

Professor Firmin has more recently identified problems with *application* of contextual safeguarding approach in some local areas that 'target young people in extra-familial contexts [but] don't target, or change the social conditions of, the contexts themselves' (**Firmin 2022**).

This work reinforces the need for the following key features:

- **characterised by collaboration** with young people, families and communities;

- **uphold children's and human rights;**

- **build on strengths** of young people, families and communities to build safety (as well as mitigate risks);

- **be grounded in the reality of young people's lives** and understand vulnerability and safety from that perspective; [...] seeing individuals in context but also seeing those contexts [...] in reference to broader structural and contextual factors.

Ideas for implementing this approach in collaborative strategy and in direct work with young people, young adults, families and communities are explored in **PART 3** and **PART 4**.
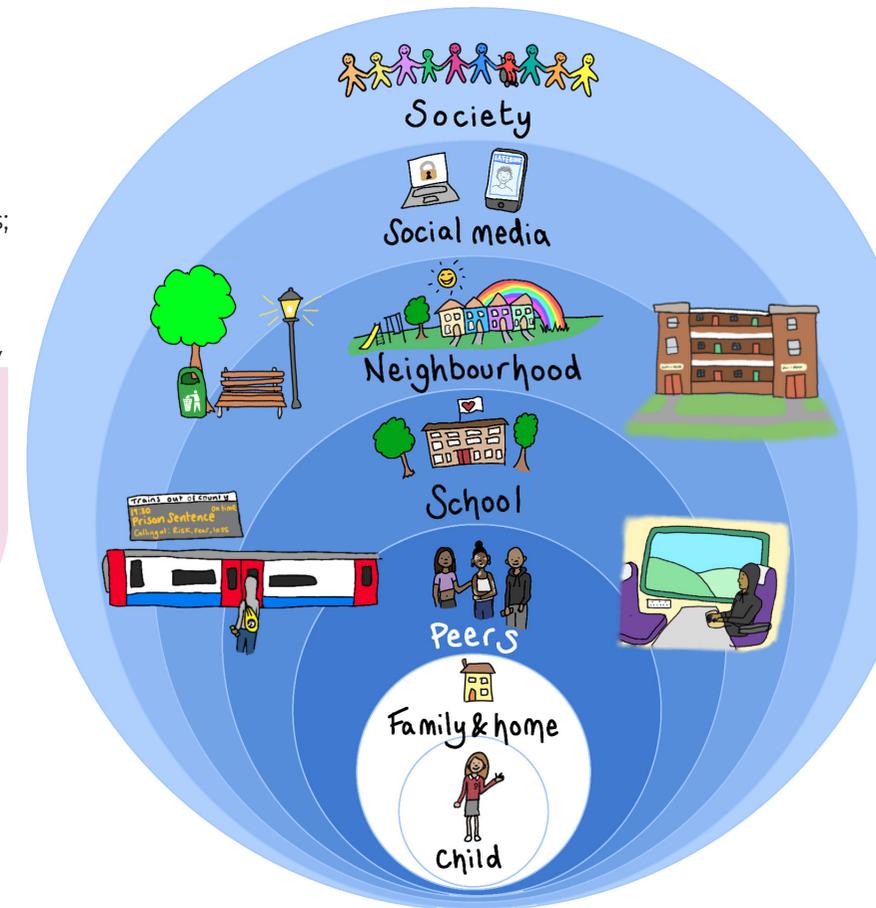

Illustration by Juliet Young.

Contextual safeguarding model adapted from the work of Professor Carlene Firmin and the Contextual Safeguarding research teams at University of Bedfordshire and Durham University.

Child criminal exploitation: 'It was hard to escape'

Joint inspection reports (**2016**, **2018**), Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (CSRP) (**2020**) and London serious case reviews (see for example **2020**, **2021**) and have repeatedly found that agencies have been too late in recognising the scale or extent of child criminal exploitation, which has led to missed opportunities to prevent serious violence, harm and the tragic deaths of young Londoners. The key findings from the CRSP have informed this handbook:

- Ethnicity and gender appear to be factors
- Known risk factors associated with vulnerabilities don't always act as predictors
- Exclusion from mainstream school is seen as a trigger point for risk of serious harm
- Effective practice is not widely known about or used
- Trusted relationships with children are important
- Responding to the critical moment

The Children's Society (**2021**) argue for changes to legislation to include a statutory definition of child criminal exploitation to: 'send out a strong message that children who are forced to commit crime are victims rather than criminals, [and]

- Enable a shared understanding and a better multi-agency response to this form of exploitation
- Lead to professionals spotting the signs of this exploitation earlier on in the grooming cycle

- Parental engagement is nearly always a protective factor
- Moving children and families works for a short period but is not effective as a long-term strategy
- Priority should be given to disrupting perpetrator activity
- The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is not well understood and is inconsistently used
- Comprehensive risk management arrangements can make a difference

These findings are explored further in **PART 3**.

- Make sure children are safeguarded and supported earlier
- Create greater focus on disrupting the activity of those who groom children for child criminal exploitation.'

Independent review of children's social care 2022

The independent review of children's social care (**2022**) calls for a 'more tailored and coherent response [...] to harms outside of the home' and recommends 'a bespoke child protection pathway - through a Child Community Safety Plan - so that police, social care and others can provide a robust child protection response. The review also recommends 'multi-disciplinary Family Help response' that will meet the needs of children and families and to 'provide a more coordinated response to bring extra-familial harm services up to a 0-25 age cohort'.

Further ideas around strategic planning for a collaborative response are explored in **PART 3**, and safety planning with young Londoners are explored in **PART 4** of this handbook.

What is Transitional Safeguarding?

Over the last few years, new research and policy (**2018**, **2019**, **2022**) have highlighted that young people continue to be exposed to harm and poor outcomes as they transition to young adulthood beyond the age of 18 (**Holmes & Smale 2018 p7**).

In England, transitional approaches to support are standard in work with young people and young adults with SEND and for those who are care-experienced (**Cocker and Cooper, 2022 p1**)**.** In these cases, some level of service is extended 'until age of 25, recognising that ongoing support may be needed into young adulthood' (**Ibid**)**.**

Safeguarding systems do not typically feature transitional approaches for young people and young adults, and have not been designed to respond to adolescent development or extra-familial harm (**Cocker and Cooper, 2022, p2**). 'Children's safeguarding developed pre- dominantly to address intrafamilial harms experienced by younger children (Corby, Shemmings, and Wilkins 2012) and adult safeguarding developed predominantly to protect older people and mostly works with adults over the age of 75 (Cooper, Cocker, and Briggs 2018)' (**Cocker and Cooper, 2022, p2**)

Transitional safeguarding is proposed not as a model (**Holmes & Smale 2018 p10**), but rather as 'a local and collaborative re-formulation of structures and services with the aim of life course-based 'whole systems' change' (**Huegler & Ruch 2022 p30**). This proposal for transitional safeguarding is based on the recognition that:

- 'Young people may experience a range of harms, and so may require a distinctive safeguarding response.
- Harm, and its effects, do not stop at the age of 18.
- Many of the environmental and structural factors that increase a child's vulnerability persist into adulthood, resulting in unmet needs and costly later interventions.
- The children's and adults' safeguarding systems are arguably conceptually and procedurally different, and governed by different statutory frameworks, which can make the transition to adulthood harder for young people facing ongoing risk.
- Young people entering adulthood can experience a 'cliff-edge' in terms of support.' (**Holmes and Smale 2018, p4**)

Cocker, Cooper and Holmes have argued **'for a redesign of safeguarding systems for young people, and for that to start with a reconceptualisation of 'young people' which better reflects the fluid and indiviudal process of transition into adulthood'** **(in Holmes 2022, p218)**

Further reading: transitional safeguarding

This Transitional Safeguarding knowledge briefing has been co-produced by representatives from children and adult social care, health and police (**Holmes & Smale 2018**)

This briefing compares Complex, Contextual and Transitional Safeguarding (**Firmin, Horan, Holmes, Hopper 2019**).

This blog post poses analytic questions about Transitional Safeguarding (**Ruch 2022**)

This journal issue on social care policy explores transitional safeguarding in depth (**Practice Volume 34, 2022, Issue 1**)

This chapter: 'Transitional Safeguarding: Bridging the Gap Between Children's and Adult's Safeguarding Responses' by Christine Cocker, Adi Cooper & Dez Holmes is published in the book: *Safeguarding Young People: Risk, Rights, Resilience and Relationships* (Edited by Dez Holmes 2022)

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on young people's wellbeing, safety and learning

What do young people know about vulnerable groups?

'I know many young people with learning difficulties, disabilities, and mental health issues. I could say like eighty percent of my friends have some sort of issues at least with mental health.

When people know you have those problems, you are one of the biggest targets ever, because it's easy to manipulate you, it's easy to get to you. If they want to blackmail someone that has learning difficulties, and they are mentally or physically stronger or whatever… there are people that do that in this area. Young people with those problems are a hundred percent not looked after enough!'

Young Londoner

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on all young people, families, communities and society at large, exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities (**NIHR 2021**), inequalities and criminalisation (**Harris and Goodfellow, 2022**), is increasing wellbeing and safety concerns for young people and families across London.

The full impact of the pandemic on young people in London will not be fully understood for a number of years, although research to date suggests the longer term impact on education, health service provision and poverty will be profound, and is expected to disproportionately affect the most disadvantaged young people and families (**Public Health England, 2021**). Young Londoners have experienced additional harms from the pandemic control measures, which resulted in social isolation, disruption to family lives, friendships, routines, community dynamics, access to community support, health care, education and play spaces, reduction in protective factors and increase in risk factors for young people's wellbeing (Ibid **p6**).

Mental health of young people was already a major concern before 2020, and several measures of children's wellbeing were already in decline: experiencing increase in anxiety and depression, decline in satisfaction with health, difficulties with finances and disconnection from communities (**NHS Digital 2021**). NHS Digital further reported that after the first lockdown, 1 in 6 children in the UK had probable mental health disorder, compared with 1 in 9 in 2017 (**NHS Digital 2021**). About 7% of children had attempted suicide by the age of 17 and almost one in four said they had self-harmed in the past year, based on analysis of the millennium cohort study (**Patalay & Fitzsimons, 2020**). The Centre for Mental Health (CMH) reported that 1.5 million children will either need new or additional mental health support as a result of the pandemic, and that one third of these are new cases (**CMH 2020**).

In London, the mental health of young carers, young people from low-income households, and disabled young people has been disproportionately affected. This compounds the rise in young Londoners' emotional distress in recent years alongside the rise in demand for counselling services, hospital admissions for self-harm and referrals to specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) across the region (**London Assembly Health Committee, 2021**). A review led by the IoPPN revealed that the COVID-19 lockdown was associated

with poor emotional outcomes for young people, including psychological distress, loneliness, boredom, fear, and stress. Not only did new psychiatric conditions appear, but children and young people with previous mental health conditions relapsed (**Panchal, et al, 2021**).

The Alliance for Youth Justice (AYJ) has analysed the impact of the pandemic on young people and the youth justice system (**Harris and Goodfellow, 2022**), setting out a series of recommendations that inform the thinking throughout this handbook. AYJ recognises the progress made in efforts 'to reduce unnecessary child arrests and divert children away from the criminal justice system, toward support that aims to address unmet needs and focus on positive long-term outcomes', as part of the Child First approach, adopted by the Youth Justice Board (YJB). The report recommends that more support is needed for young people outside of statutory services and at the point of diversion, to avoid a significant increase of children entering the youth justice system.

Racially minoritised young people

The Lammy review (**2017**) sought to understand the treatment of and outcomes for racially minoritized people in the UK criminal justice system, where there is consistent racial disproportionality. Lammy found young people from racially minoritized communities face multiple forms of discrimination.

Research in the following five years has provided further evidence that young Londoners from racially minoritized communities are more likely to face adverse childhood experiences (**Bullock 2019**), poor health outcomes (**HLP 2019**), school exclusion (**Perera 2020**), caring responsibilities (**TCS 2018**) and are more likely to be in care, and less likely to be adopted (**Gov.uk 2021**). Further work is needed across London to respond to disproportionality in the rising rates of school sanctions and exclusions (**Just for Kids Law 2020a**, **RSA 2020**, **Timpson Review 2019**).

Bernardos have highlighted the discrimination and structural racism faced by racially minoritised groups across education, health and life chances (**Bernardos 2022**), and Public Health England (**PHE 2021**) have shown that these groups have higher risks and worse outcomes from the pandemic.

YJB has shown how racial disparity adversely affects the outcomes of children and young people in the early years, education and health (**YJB 2020a**). Black children were over four times more likely than white children to be arrested in the UK (**YJB 2020b**) and exposed to rising rates of stop and search in London (**Gov.uk 2021**).

The Mayor of London has published action plans to improve transparency, accountability and trust in policing to improve confidence that Black Londoners have in police services (**MOPAC 2020**) and tackle ethnic disproportionality in youth justice (**MOPAC 2021a**).

There is growing recognition in London (**London Councils 2022**) and in research (**Godar TCE 2021**) about links between disproportionality, policing, criminal justice and criminal exploitation. Alliance for Youth Justice (AYJ) note that police increasingly act as the first point of contact for a growing number of children, but 'when relationships between police and children are strained, children are less likely to report victimisation [...] and interactions are more likely to escalate and result in criminalisation' (**Harris and Goodfellow 2022**). With the

combination of inequalities and pandemic harms disproportionately affecting racially minoritized young people, including economic and health impacts, and disparities in the youth justice system, young Londoners from this group are significantly more likely to be abused and criminally exploited.

A range of anti-racist approaches is needed to tackle disproportionality in education, health and youth justice at local levels. **The Youth Justice Resource hub** collates examples. These include putting young people's voices at the heart of collaborative action plans, improvements in cultural competence, and tailored pathways for racially minoritized young people.

Young people who identify as LBGTQ+

While LGBTQ+ children and young people face the same harms as all children and young people, they are at greater risk of some types of abuse. For example, they might experience homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying or hate crime. They might also be more vulnerable to or at greater risk of sexual abuse, online abuse or sexual exploitation (NSPCC 2022a). Nicholas Marsh (Research in Practice, 2022)

has noted that 'LGBTQ+ young people may well have to cope with feelings of shame and potential rejection from their family and friends, as well as being at increased risk of of bullying and social isolation at school and online Public deliberations about the acceptance of LGBTQ+ people in society are frequently internalised as shame and stigma (Todd, 2016) and societal values in regards to sexual orientation and perceived gender norms can feel highly restricting for young people.'

As a consequence of feeling isolated, many LGBTQ+ young people believe there will be a lack of acceptance from others regarding their sexuality and/or gender identity (Barnardos, 2016). This can result in LGBTQ+ young people seeking support via adult-orientated groups, online or, in the case of boys and young men, in public sex environments such as 'cottages' or 'cruising grounds' or other spaces that could lead them to exposure to harm and different forms of exploitation.

Young people with SEND

The London Child Exploitation Operating Protocol notes that children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) are more vulnerable to exploitation and recommends targeted responses, greater

awareness of risk factors in schools, and attention to children who are educated outside of mainstream settings. Young people with learning disabilities are vulnerable to exploitation due to a range of factors that include overprotection, social isolation, professional lack of awareness, gaps in policy, gaps in multi-agency arrangements or fear of negative responses from professionals (Barnardo's 2016).

NSPCC, The Children's Society, and the Home Office have identified that children with physical and/or learning disabilities are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and County Lines (TCS 2019, NSPCC 2022b, Home Office 2018). NSPCC have produced guidance (NSPCC 2022) on protecting disabled children from abuse.

Among other agencies, Parents Against Child Exploitation (PACE) have flagged that children are targeted for County Lines at special education, alternative education provisions, pupil referral units, and care homes (PACE). However, there is not yet substantial research or guidance on preventing young people with SEND from exposure to these harms.

Parental engagement and family support

SPACE (Stop and Prevent Adolescent Criminal Exploitation) have noted that many parents feel totally unaware of child criminal exploitation and County Lines. Parents often receive advice on child safety planning and action from children's social care and/or police that is focused on parenting and family life (2021). SPACE urgently recommends a shift in thinking from 'beyond parental control' to 'in perpetrators' control'. This means a professional culture shift from blaming children and their families for criminal exploitation toward recognising the pull factors, intervening in the spaces where extra-familial harms take place, and working in partnership with parents to build safety and support wellbeing for and with young people.

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel found that services can sometimes be slow to respond to parental concerns about child exploitation and other extra-familial harms (CSPRP 2021). However, where professionals provide support for parents to understand young people's experiences, for example through CAMHS support or youth professionals trained in whole family working, parents can feel confident to take part in non-judgemental

safety and welfare planning for children to prevent serious harms.

Early help arrangements

Ofsted has highlighted confusion around differences in understanding of the terms, early help and early intervention. Local government association (LGA 2019) has created a resource pack explaining the distinction, which explains:

- **Early help** is support provided by universal services to improve outcomes for all children
- **Early intervention** is intensive or additional support for children - below the threshold for statutory intervention - and identified as being at risk of poor outcomes.

Recent studies found that early help in local areas does reach some children, young people and families (Ofsted 2022, HMI Probation 2021, Lucas and Archard 2021). These reports highlight that early help services in England do not provide enough targeted prevention for young people and young adults in general, and for Black young men and boys in particular. These reports follow a decade during which overall funding for children's services in England fell by 23% between 2010 and 2019, and early intervention services fell by 50% from £3.6bn to £1.8bn (Action for Children 2020).

Adolescent safeguarding in education

Statutory safeguarding guidance for schools has been updated to include advice around extra-familial harm and exploitation (DfE 2021). The harmful consequences of school absence, exclusion and education out-of-mainstream settings, particularly in relation to child criminal exploitation, have been set out repeatedly over the last few years (for example Just for Law Kids 2020, Children's Commissioner 2021). For young people ages 16 and 17, the law provides even fewer protections from educational exclusion, with various calls for the provision of support for vulnerable children in this group (Centre for Social Justice 2021, Loughborough University 2021, HMIP 2021a, HMIP 2021b). Mainstream schools, alternative provision, and further education have a crucial role to play in building positive relationships, identifying signs of vulnerability to harm and exploitation at the earliest point, and providing a protective factor in the lives of young Londoners.

There is more information in the handbook on adolescent safeguarding in education in **PART 4**.

Youth practice and community development

There is growing evidence leading to regular recommendations that professionals trained in working with young people and in community development are well placed to work effectively with young people and their families to build safety and prevent serious violence and harms (CJI 2016, NYA 2020, CSPRP 2021).

The key features of an effective youth workforce were set out by an All-Party Parliamentary Group:

- **An experienced and trained youth workforce**
- **Services developed by and staffed from the community**
- **Offering young people a range of opportunities**
- **A flexible approach to service delivery**
- **Sufficient and sustainable funding for the service**

APPG on Knife Crime and Violence Reduction 2020

National and regional research has shown that since 2010, there has been a significant decrease in expenditure on youth services in England and London (YMCA 2020, Berry 2021).

Violence reduction

London Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) was set up in 2019 and is working across the region to prevent and reduce violence, taking a public health approach. World Health Organisation (WHO 2017) defines a public health approach to reducing violence as one that: 'Seeks to improve the health and safety of all individuals by addressing underlying risk factors that increase the likelihood that an individual will become a victim or a perpetrator of violence. By definition, public health aims to provide the maximum benefit for the largest number of people. Programmes for primary prevention of violence based on the public health approach are designed to expose a broad segment of a population to prevention measures and to reduce and prevent violence at a population-level.'

The London VRU's mission states:

- We use research, data and intelligence to better understand why violence occurs.
- We are committed to exposing the underlying causes of violence such as poverty, deprivation, inequality and lack of opportunity.
- We are determined to take action to prevent it now and in the long-term.
- The VRU champions and promotes the voice of young people, and we listen

to local people and work alongside communities to push for greater investment to deliver local change.

- We are a team of specialists who use our expertise to work in partnership with communities, councils, the NHS, public health, the police, schools and colleges and charities, to co-ordinate efforts and bring about change.

- We believe in the importance of education and being in school, and we're invested in providing support and **positive opportunities** for young people.

Local violence reduction partnerships (VRP)

Local partnerships across the region are bringing together agencies to tackle violence and its cases. Following the VRU, partners aim to create approaches that involve people, agencies and sectors at every level of society, creating 'a whole-system multi-agency approach to serious violence prevention' (HM Gov, 2019). Following practice in Scotland, local VRPS are following principles of asset-based community development (NESTA 2020, Smith 2020)

Health services and adolescent safeguarding

The London Violence Reduction Unit and NHS England and Improvement's London Violence Reduction programme has developed different forms of support including CAMHS services and a social prescribing pathway (NHS England 2022). Local areas across London are working across safeguarding partnerships between health, police and social care to improve data analysis and information sharing, and NHS England Safeguarding have identified a workstream for contextual safeguarding and digital data.
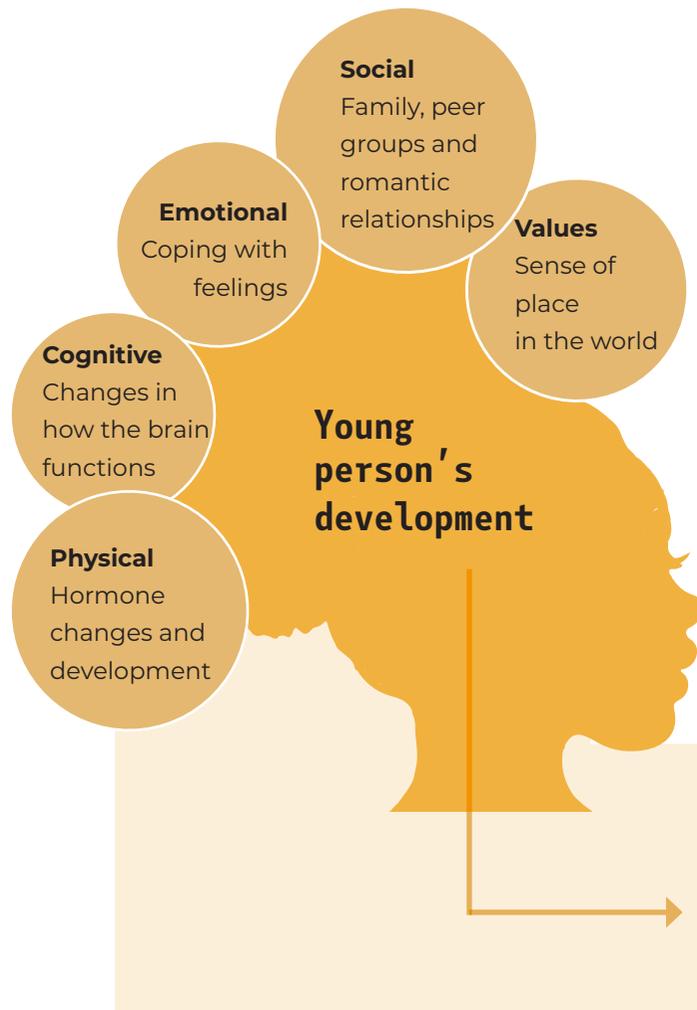
2

Part 2 **ADOLESCENCE** it's the stage, not the age.

PART 2: ADOLESCENCE: it's the stage, not the age.

Part 2 sets out some key theories associated with child and adolescent development to help inform strategy and practice. Adolescence is understood to be a stage that continues until at least age 25. Selected theories are included to support partnerships to build safety with all young Londoners.

Social
Family, peer groups and romantic relationships

Emotional
Coping with feelings

Values
Sense of place in the world

Cognitive
Changes in how the brain functions

Young person's development

Physical
Hormone changes and development

This part includes information on:

» Adolescent development and transitions
» Adolescent brain development
» Social cognitive development
» Attachment theory
» Working with families
» Safety and belonging
» Psychosocial needs
» Adversity and trauma
» Impact of trauma on relationships
» Trauma and constrained choice
» Rights-based use of language

Adolescent development and transitions

Adolescence is fundamentally a stage of development about transitions. It is full of change, challenge and potential as young people engage more deeply with the world around them. Young people grow physically, try new activities, begin to think more critically, and develop more varied and complex relationships with family and peers.

The five areas overlap in the young person's lived experience. For example, young people who experience mental health problems such as depression or anxiety may also experience problems with schoolwork, parents, peers, and physical health, and may lose interest in activities they used to enjoy. Families sometimes need support from professionals to recognise and understand these complexities, and to respond in a supportive way.

Adolescent development: brain science

Adolescence is the phase between childhood and adulthood. It is a unique stage of development and an important time for laying foundations of good health and life chances. Young people experience rapid growth physically, cognitively and psycho-socially (feelings and relationships). Intense learning and development affects how young people feel, think, make decisions, and interact with the world around them. ([WHO 2022](#))

Over the last decade there has been significant progress in understanding of adolescent brain development. Scientific research has identified a number of key messages about brain development during this period ([Unicef](#)). Recent findings show that for all children - and especially helpful for those who experienced adversity during early childhood - there is a 'second window of opportunity' for developmental progress and/or recovery during early adolescence ([Dahl and Suleiman, 2017](#)). Roughly between ages 9 and 14, there is a time period of rapid learning and brain development.

During this stage young people experience increases in:

- Sensation-seeking
- Motivation for social interaction
- Sensitivity to social evaluation

Puberty initiates intense development, which leads to changes to important brain systems. These changes bring about an opportunity to invest extra support in young people to support their learning. However, the changes also mean that young people are more vulnerable to stress factors in their lives. A set of these opportunities for learning, and challenging vulnerabilities have been described by researchers as positive and negative 'spirals' ([Dahl and Suleiman, 2017](#)):

Positive spiral might include:

- » Increase tendency to explore healthy versions of risk-taking
- » Gain support from adults for learning opportunities and taking on guided responsibilities
- » Improved self-confidence, further supported risk-taking in new learning contexts

Negative spiral might include:

- » Biological changes lead to tendency to stay up late
- » Intensified social interaction and technology, late bedtimes and erratic sleep provoke 'social jet-lag'
- » Problematic patterns affect emotions, attention and health

The 'second window of opportunity' is summarised in the infographics on the next two pages published by Unicef.

ADOLESCENT BRAINS
ARE SENSITIVE TO STRESSORS

unicef
Office of Research–Innocenti

BIOLOGICAL

CHANGES IN HORMONE LEVELS AFFECT DEVELOPMENT OF NEUROBIOLOGICAL CIRCUITS.

POPULATION

MASS EVENTS – WAR AND DISASTER – CAN HAVE LONGER LASTING NEGATIVE IMPACTS.

SOCIAL

ADOLESCENTS NEED A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT TO DEVELOP THEIR SOCIAL IDENTITY AND CONNECT TO PEERS.

PROMOTE RESILIENCE

STRESS MANAGEMENT
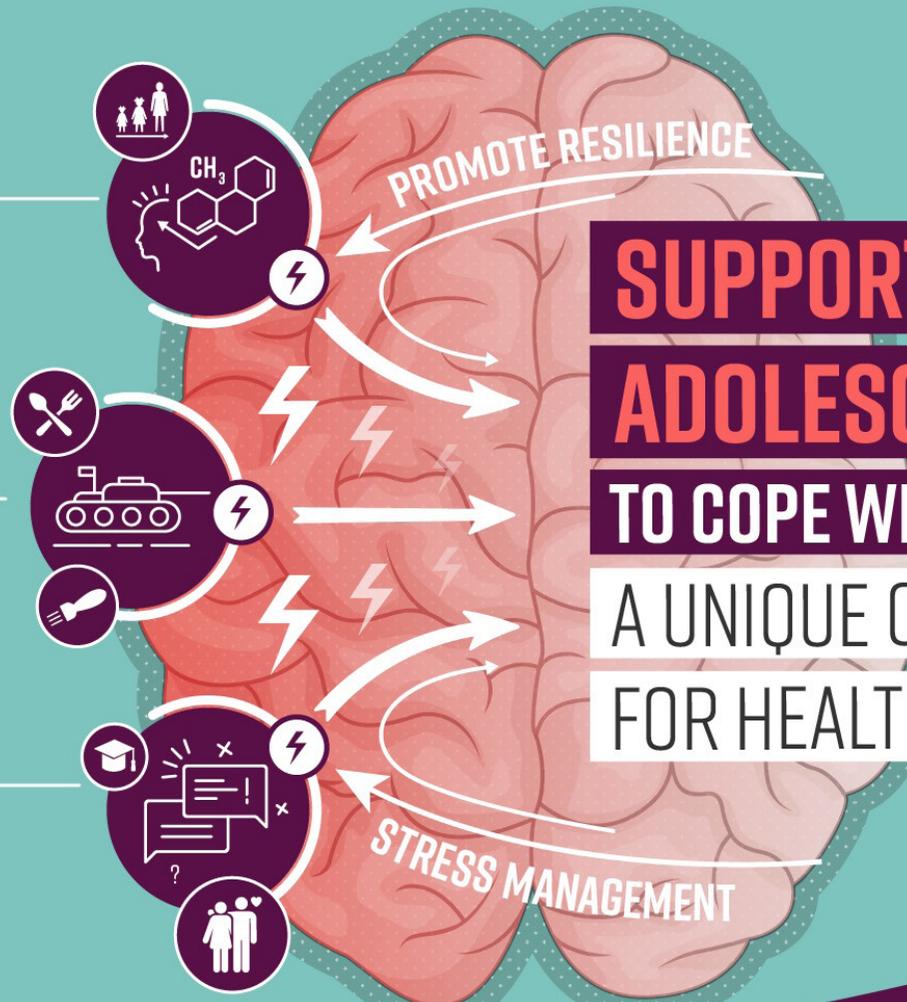
SUPPORTING ADOLESCENTS
TO COPE WITH STRESS
A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY
FOR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

DOWNLOAD
"THE ADOLESCENT BRAI
A SECOND WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SPIRALS
DURING ADOLESCENT BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

unicef
Office of Research–Innocenti

IMPROVED SELF-CONFIDENCE, SUPPORTED RISK-TAKING IN LEARNING CONTEXTS

BIOLOGICAL CHANGES INCREASE TENDENCIES TO EXPLORE, TAKE RISKS. ADOLESCENTS CAN EXPLORE HEALTHY VERSIONS OF RISK-TAKING

SUPPORT FROM ADULTS FOR HEALTHY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES, TAKING ON GUIDED RESPONSIBILITIES

EXAMPLE OF A **POSITIVE SPIRAL**

BIOLOGY
CH₃

ENVIRONMENT

AGE
9-14

15   16   17   18   19   20s

THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN NEEDS SUPPORT TO CREATE POSITIVE SPIRALS, AVOIDING NEGATIVE TRAJECTORIES

BIOLOGICAL CHANGES AT PUBERTY LEAD TO A TENDENCY TO PREFER STAYING UP LATER

INTENSIFIED THROUGH SOCIAL INTERACTION AND TECHNOLOGY, LATE BEDTIMES & ERRATIC SLEEP PROVOKE

PROBLEMATIC PATTERNS

EXAMPLE OF A **NEGATIVE SPIRAL**

DOWNLOAD

Questions for professionals working directly with young people and their families

Family members can find it difficult to influence what happens in the lives of young people but professionals may have more capacity to create change working directly with young people.
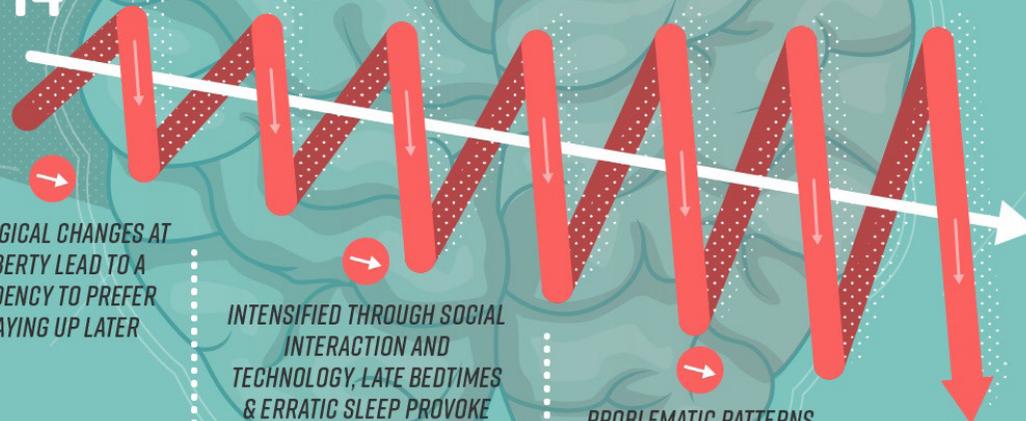
Professionals can apply understanding of the complexity of changes already happening in the life of a young person as they are developing and engaging with the world.

A young person has been bullying other young people. They believe that they will get kicked out of school if things get any worse, and they feel very angry.

How would you approach this young person to better understand their circumstances?

A young person is struggling with gender identity and believes their family will reject them if they share these feelings.

How can you build trust with this young person to better understand their lived experience?

Question for leaders

To grow and develop in good health, young people need:

- information, including age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education;
- opportunities to develop life skills;
- health services that are acceptable, equitable, appropriate and effective;
- safe and supportive environments.
- opportunities to meaningfully participate in design and delivery of interventions to improve and maintain their health.

Expanding such opportunities is key to responding to young people' specific needs and rights (WHO 2022).

How can your local area make use of insight about the 'window of opportunity' between ages 9 to 14 to design interventions that support young people and families during the transition from primary to secondary schools?

How can you create more opportunities for young people to be involved in design and delivery of interventions?

Social cognitive development

Another area of progress in understanding adolescence is social cognitive development. Studies have shown structural changes in the brain during this stage help young people to develop 'mentalising' (**Blakemore 2007**). This means that the young person develops the ability to understand mental states, whether their own thoughts and feelings that underlie their own behaviours, or to imagine the thoughts and feelings of others. This development allows the young person to perceive and interpret the intentions, desires and reasons behind the behaviour of other people, and therefore to reflect on how other people think (**Fonagy et al 2019**).

From a psycho-social point of view, adolescent development is a combination of exciting and anxiety-inducing internal and external experiences - of rapidly changing emotions and social interactions (**Waddell 2018**). This includes:

- Relationships with immediate and extended families, any other kinship forms, and older generations.
- Coping with anxieties arising from change including body, emotions, thinking, faith, education, friendships,

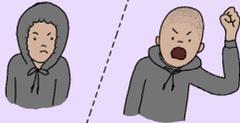professional relationships and so on.

- Young person's attempts to cope with developmental anxieties and the impact of these coping methods on relationships with families, friends, professionals and on their welfare, wellbeing, learning and safety.

Attachment theory

Attachment refers to a child or young person's relationship with a primary caregiver (**Bowlby, 1958**). This relationship has a significant impact on health, wellbeing, and the ability to form relationships with others during childhood and adolescence. Attachment continues to affect relationships in adult life.

When carers are responsive to a child's needs, a secure attachment style develops. Children who are securely attached tend to have a greater capacity to manage distress. Insecurely attached individuals tend to respond to stress by either demonstrating exaggerated emotional responses or by withdrawing from others and suppressing emotional responses. An attachment style will have a significant impact in childhood, adolescence and through to adulthood.

Research shows that babies and young children who have secure relationships with caregivers experience minimal stress hormone activation when frightened by a strange event, and those who have insecure relationships experience a significant activation of the stress response (CDC Harvard 2022). The research shows us that if we can provide supportive, responsive relationships as early in life as possible, they 'can help to buffer a child from the effects of toxic stress' (CDC Harvard **2022**)

Secure I'm ok, you're ok Healthy communication style	**Anxious** I'm not ok, you're ok Clinginess, fear of disconnection
Avoidant I'm ok, you're not ok Difficulty expressing emotion	**Disorganised** I'm not ok, you're not ok Mix of avoidant and anxious

Questions for professionals working directly with young people and their families

Young people have a range of developmental needs that interact with their attachments to parents, carers, family members and friends.

These include the need to explore their independence, which includes taking positive risks and testing boundaries

- **What are the different ways in which young people explore their independence in your experience?**
- What are the challenges for young people to talk to practitioners about relationships with family and peers?
- **How can you identify and assess the strengths, opportunities, and likelihood of harm associated with a young person's changing circumstances as they get involved with new peer groups?**
- How can you work with families to so they can see a young person's perspective where relationships have broken down?

- **Where children's social care and/or police, and/or health are involved, how professionals maintain a child-first and rights-based approach that recognises the young person's voice, experience and builds safety for and with the young person?**
- How can you develop your understanding of relationships from the point of view of different groups of young people, such as racially minoritised groups, LGBTQ+, young people with SEND, and others?

Working with families to support young people

Parents and carers will sometimes need help to understand that attachment continues to be important as young people develop and go through the transitions that are normal during adolescence. Professionals can work with families to understand responses like conflict and rebellion as opportunities to build their relationships with children and young people. Some parents will need extra support to develop negotiation skills to sustain their connection with young people as they experience development and transition.

There is more information on relationship-based approaches to work with parents in **PART 4**.

Attachment, safety and belonging

Professionals should be aware that the actions, emotional responses and relationships of young people are informed by four key components that support feelings of security: See diagram on this page.

Developing an understanding of these four components will contribute to relationship building as well as understanding safety and likelihood of harm in the lives of the young people. The four components may be made up of a combination of individuals, groups of people, places and online spaces.

Young people may establish new contexts outside of the family and home where they feel a sense of security and belonging, but where they may also be exposed to harm.

Safe haven
When a young person is sad, upset or scared, they have somewhere to go. This doesn't need to be there all the time, as young people need to explore. But they know where it is if needed.

Secure base
Do young people get what they need when they get to their safe haven?

Security and belonging

Separation Protection
How young people cope when they are away from their safe have for too long. A picture or a thing associated with the safe haven provides reassurance.

Proximity seeking
Young people like to go to their attachment figure when in need.

Questions for professionals working directly with young people and their families

When a young person establishes a new place or group of people outside of the family and home where they feel safe, but where they may also be exposure to harm, which in turn may lead to situations where they harm others. Professionals working directly with young people need to understand the situation and choose a safe way to respond.

How can you gather information, reflect, and make safety plans with young people that reflect the reality of their situations?

Some young people with learning difficulties struggle to establish safe havens and/or choosing safe groups of people.

How can you work with young people with SEND and/or their families (with consent) to identify support and safe choices?

LGBTQ+ young people sometime experience isolation and fear of disclosing people and places where they are seeking safety, but where they may also be exposed to harm.

How can you work with LGBTQ+ young people and/or their families (with consent) to identify support and safe choices?

Make a list of professionals and services who work with young people in different settings – including colleagues who work in schools and the VCF sector.

Make a plan to gather more information about people, places and spaces in the area where you work.

There is more information on this topic in **PART 4** of this handbook.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are stressful, and potentially traumatic experiences that happen to children or young people (Young minds 2022). Experiences of adversity can be one-off or ongoing threats to safety, welfare, stability, trust or bodily integrity. In the original study (Felliti et al 1998), traumatic events were listed as abuse, neglect and household dysfunction. It is now recognised that ACEs include poverty, exploitation, bereavement, bullying and other factors (EIF 2020). There is a useful summary here: Young Minds 2022.

There have been large ACE studies carried out in England (Bellis et al 2014), Wales (Public Health Wales 2016) and Scotland (Couper and Mackie 2016). These studies show strong links between ACEs and poor health and social outcomes in adulthood. The research highlights the links between ACEs, health inequalities and the need to build strategies to increase resilience in childhood and adolescence through social and emotional skill development. The Scottish research was followed up by policy to build relationship-based approaches in education (Education Scotland 2018.

EIF have recently conducted a survey of all evidence around ACEs (EIF 2020), and concluded:
**'...if evidence-based interventions were integrated into a comprehensive public health strategy developed in response to population needs, many ACEs could be prevented or substantially reduced.
Psycho-social needs: emotions and relationships for young people with ACEs'**

Psycho-social needs: emotions and relationships for young people with ACEs

ACEs and distressing events can affect mental health in ways that bring about changes in emotional state, mentalisation and relationships. Indicators may include:

Emotional or internalising states	**Interpersonal behaviours**
Fearful, withdrawn, low self-esteem	Indiscriminate contact Affection seeking, overfriendliness or excessive clinginess Demonstrating excessively 'good' behaviour to prevent disapproval
Behavioural or externalising states Aggressive or oppositional Habitual body rocking	Failing to seek or accept appropriate comfort or affection from an appropriate person when significantly distressed Coercive controlling behaviour Lack of ability to understand and recognise emotions.

Access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) can be challenging in any area of London due to increased demand and limited resources.

However, clinicians working in the various fields of child psychology including educational psychologists, CAMHS therapists, speech and language therapists, and so on, provide access to further information, training, resources and case advice around adolescent development, emotional wellbeing and mental health issues.

Understanding trauma

Trauma refers to life events or circumstances that are experienced as harmful or life-threatening and that have lasting impacts on mental, physical, emotional and/or social well-being. Some young people will have a traumatic response to exposure to harm that they have experienced. Trauma can present a sense of psychological threat to a child or young person's physical integrity, sense of self, safety and survival. Children and young people may experience trauma as a result of a number of different circumstances including ACEs, such as:

Sexual, physical emotional abuse	Gang related violence
Chronic neglect	Sexual exploitation
Disorganised or insecure parent-child attachment (see p38 above)	Rape and sexual assault Severe bullying
Exposure to domestic violence Abandonment	Exposure to wars and conflict zones
	Household substance misuse
Direct experiences of interpersonal violence i.e. domestic violence	Household mental illness
	Significant bereavement

Additionally, environmental stress can add to children and young people's adverse experiences of:

• Inadequate social support

• Stigmatisation i.e. held responsible and to blame for abuse

• Social marginalisation and oppression including experiences of racism, ableism and homophobia are likely to exacerbate psychological symptoms

The young person's exposure to adverse conditions produces a range of symptoms that have a profound impact on the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social development of the individual. "Trauma-specific" services are designed to treat the actual consequences of trauma.

Individuals who have experienced trauma become biologically conditioned to constantly anticipate further danger.
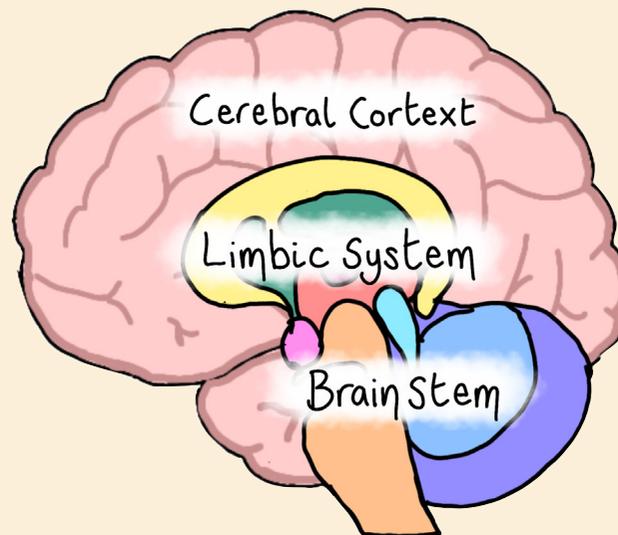
The brain stem manages our basic physical responses such as blood pressure, heart rate and respiratory rate. A stress response impacts on all these physical responses.

The limbic system manages emotional responses like happiness, fear, anxiety, curiosity. When we are stressed it can trigger high levels of difficult emotional response, challenging the functioning of the cerebral cortex.

The cerebral cortex particularly the prefrontal cortex, is the most highly developed part of the brain and is responsible for higher cognitive functioning, thinking, producing, and understanding language. When we experience stress, it causes a rapid and dramatic loss of prefrontal cognitive abilities. In effect, we lose our ability to think straight!

Their nervous, endocrine and physiological systems are programmed to be on permanent 'high alert'. As a result of this, the bodies of those who have experienced trauma are flooded with 'fight, flight or freeze' hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline (**Linares et al, 2008**).

This response is a functional one, as their bodies have learnt that it is necessary to adapt for short term survival, ensuring they can respond to immediate threats. This is often termed as being in a state of 'chronic hyper-arousal'. However, the product of being chronically hyper-aroused is toxic stress. Stress is quite unique in the way that it can impact on all the major parts of the brain; these are summarised briefly in the yellow box on the previous page.

During adolescence, the prefrontal cortex is not yet fully developed, and as such, young people who have experienced trauma are more vulnerable to hyper-arousal and the effects of toxic stress.

Question for leaders

Research and serious case reviews (see for example 2020, 2021) have repeatedly shown that experience of adversity, harm and trauma often precede exposure to future harm and exploitation. As a consequence, any local areas have taken on a commitment to trauma-informed approaches in work with children and young people.

Society
Community
School
Family

Adolescent development

• What does a trauma-informed offer look and feel like in your local area?

• How does this commitment to trauma-informed approach show up in planning, interventions, and outcomes for young people?

• Can you articulate the impact of trauma-informed practice across your local partnership, including universal, targeted and statutory services?

• Have you sought feedback from young people to know whether the approach is effective in supporting them to build safety in their lives?

Contextual model adapted from the work of Professor Carlene Firmin and the Contextual Safeguarding research teams at University of Bedfordshire and Durham University

The effects of different types of stress

Our brains are highly responsive to stress, however there are different types of stress that we can experience. These are usually categorised as positive stress, tolerable stress, and toxic stress. Positive stress is characterised by brief increases in heart rate and mild elevations in hormone levels but there is no threat. Positive stress is common, and it is important and essential to healthy development. Often positive stress dissipates quickly after it has served its purpose.

Positive stress tends to occur in the context of stable and supportive relationships. Being in a supportive relationship with a caregiver as a child, helps to bring levels of stress hormones back within a normal range. During child development this supports children to develop self-control.

Toxic stress sees a prolonged activation of the stress responses, which can disrupt the development of brain architecture and cause 'wear and tear' on the brain and body. This increases risk for stress-related disease in adulthood.

Reactions to trauma

Reactions to trauma vary for individuals. Some people draw strength from adverse events, bolstering their personal resilience. However, for many others the negative impact of these experiences persists. Trauma can have significant harmful effects in a child's life. The impact can affect physical and mental health, self-worth, and ability to develop healthy relationships.

One concept associated with the effects of trauma is 'hyper-arousal', which occurs when a person's body adopts a flight/fight response as a result of thinking about their trauma or being triggered by surroundings. Whilst the real threat may not be present, the body and mind respond as if it is there. A fight response is associated with anxiety, panic, and racing thoughts. In contrast, a flight or freeze response can cause feelings of numbness, emptiness, or paralysis.

Illustrations by Juliet Young. Principles adapted from Bracha (2004), Schmidt et al (2008) and Taylor et al (2000)

Child threat responses and reactions to traumatic events
Adapted from Bracha(2004), schmidt m etal.,(2008) and Taylor etal.,(2000)

Fight	Flight	Fright
Child responds to the source of the threat using verbal or physical aggression. This might include irritation with others, anger, violent or explosive reactions or mental physical self-harm.	Child responds by retreating mentally or physically from the source of threat. This might include avoidance, school refusal, over-thinking, self-criticism,	Child responds to every stimulus or situation as though it were a source of threat. This might include reactive behaviour, worry, anxiety, fear, or panic. .
Freeze	**Faint/flop**	**Friend/fawn/feign**
Child responds by stopping all reactions to the source of threat. This might include not moving, speaking, or functioning at all, and may appear like depression.	Child responds by fainting in response to the source of the threat. This might include collapsing involuntarily or balling up on the floor as though fainting.	Child responds by attempting to engage with the source of threat. This might include feigning compliance, trying to please, or a lack of expected boundaries with other children and adults.

Impact of trauma on health and social relationships

There are several potential health and social difficulties that can result from the direct and indirect consequences of trauma, including:

- Difficulties in developing safe and trusting relationships
- Disruption to education
- Post-traumatic stress difficulties
- Low capacity to develop skills in managing distress / emotional reactions

Some survivors will be subjected to 'insurmountable challenges' that overwhelm coping strategies. This is relevant for those affected by trauma in childhood. We know that safe and supportive relationships are a key predictor of resilience in the face of adversity, turning insurmountable challenges into manageable ones (Couple & Mackie, 2016).

Trauma and constrained choice

An understanding of trauma helps professionals to recognise that rather than being completely in control of decision-making, young people often make **constrained choices** compared to developed adults who can make choices, over which they have full control.

Experiences of trauma and other factors such as grooming can have a significant impact on brain development. The choices of a young person who has experienced these factors are highly likely to be constrained. In some cases, due to the impact of trauma, a young person may not be in a position to make any choice at all.
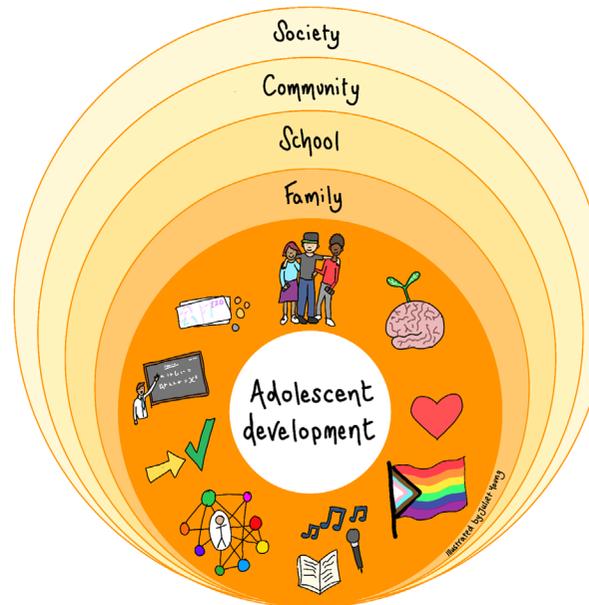
Professionals need to be aware that young people may have experienced trauma due to structural discrimination. This includes racially minoritised young people, those who identify as LGBTQ+, those who experience economic hardship, and young carers, among other groups. Some young people with SEND experience

trauma arising from medical episodes and procedures, through prejudice from others, through failed educational placements. Young people with SEND may not be able to identify or communicate their traumatic experiences. Where communication is not effective, choices may be constrained e.g. the young person cannot express a wish not to take part in an activity or to associate with a peer.

Enduring professional relationships

The importance of one stable adult relationship as a protective factor that allows children to develop skills to cope with ACEs is also recognised (PHW 2018). A key message for all professionals working with young people is the need to use ACEs awareness to guide practice. This is explored in relation to relationship-based practice in **PART 4**.

Impact of trauma on professionals

professionals who work with families exposed to traumatic events can experience a high level of satisfaction, especially when they receive professional supervision, and make use of self-care strategies that foster their resilience. When self-care strategies are not present professionals are vulnerable to compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma.

Compassion fatigue is something that can be experienced by anyone in a helping profession. It is characterised by physical and emotional exhaustion and a profound decrease in the ability to empathise with those we work with. Compassion fatigue can be a symptom of experiencing vicarious trauma.

Vicarious trauma is the emotional impact of exposure that professionals have from working with people as they become witness to their trauma stories. It is important to appreciate vicarious trauma and how best to safeguard workers who are regularly exposed to traumatic experiences of others.

To prevent compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma, professionals benefit from training, support, supervision, and planning. This might involve including staff emotional wellbeing and mental health as part of your plans to build self-care, talking about wellbeing and support from system and practice leaders and managers as part of an inclusive culture.

There is more information on this topic in PART 5 of this handbook, including using reflective practice and supervision to help prevent vicarious trauma.

Rights-based use of language

It is vital that professionals choose accurate and neutral language to describe children and young people that demonstrates an understanding of constrained choice. Language choices must also reinforce self-efficacy, emphasise a young person's agency and the ability to make decisions about themselves and their care.There is growing national consensus through consultation with young people (Young Minds, The Children's Society) that regularly describing them as "vulnerable" is patronising and diminishes the sense of a young person's agency or power.

There are a range of stigmatising words and phrases that reinforce the myth that young people are completely in control of their choices. For example the phrase "lifestyle choices" does not describe the constrained choice of gang affected young people. These phrases fail to recognise the factors that have prevented young people from being safe.

Questions for leaders

What happens when you start to shift onus and emphasis from:

· Risk to harm
· Family context to extra-familial contexts
· Parental control to perpetrator influence

What other examples of language change are you using and what is the purpose and power of these changes?

How do you demonstrate a child first approach in work with peers from other agencies who use 'choice' language about young people that does not take into account constrained choice?

The following advice is adapted from language guidance developed by The Children's Society

Inappropriate term or stigma	Suggested alternative	Inappropriate term or stigma	Suggested alternative
Putting themselves at risk This implies that the child is responsible for the risks presented by the perpetrator and that they can make free and informed choices without recognition of the child's age, circumstances and lived experience or the realities of grooming, coercion, and control.	Child may have been groomed. The child is at an increased vulnerability to being abused/exploited. A Perpetrator may exploit the child's increased Vulnerability Situation could reduce the child's safety Location/situation could increase a perpetrator's opportunity to abuse them. Child in not in a protective environment The location is dangerous to children Not clear if the child is under duress to go missing The child may be being sexually abused It is unclear why the child is getting into cars. There is a power imbalance forcing the child to act in this way. Concerns regarding others Influences on the child.	**Sexual activity with…** This implies consensual sexual activity has taken place. If it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context this term is not appropriate and should not be used.	They have been sexually abused They have been raped Allegation of sexual abuse Child has described sexual activity, but concerns exist that the child may have been groomed or coerced.
		Sexually active since (Age under 13) This implies consensual sexual activity has taken place. If it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context this term is not appropriate and should not be used.	Concerns exist that child may have been coerced, exploited or sexually abused. Child may have been sexually abused or raped
		Have been contacting adults via phone or internet This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the communication and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context.	Adult males/females have been contacting the child. Child may have been groomed. Concerns that the adult is facilitating commination with a child. Child is vulnerable to online perpetrators. Concerns that others may be using online technology to access or abuse the child. Adults appear to be using a range of methods to communicate with the child

Inappropriate term or stigma	Suggested alternative	Inappropriate term or stigma	Suggested alternative
Offering her drugs in return for sex	Child is being sexually exploited Concerns that the child has been raped Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child The child is being sexually abused The child's vulnerability regarding drug use is being used by others to abuse them. The perpetrators have a hold over the child by the fact that they have a drug dependency.	**Involved in CSE or CCE** This implies there is a level of choice regarding the child being abused. A five year old would never be referred to as being involved in sexual abuse for the same reasons.	The child is vulnerable to being sexually exploited or they are being sexually exploited. A 5-year old would never be referred to as being involved in sexual abuse for the same reasons.
Promiscuous This implies consensual sexual activity has taken place. The word 'promiscuous' is a judgemental term based on assumptions and includes a significant gender bias as it is rarely applied to boys and men. It isn't appropriate in any context when discussing children and young people, and particularly if it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context.	Young women who have been raped or who have experienced CSE This puts the blame on the child, implies they know what may be happening, and is not seen as exploitative or abusive. Often used to describe female behaviour.	**Prostituting themselves** This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the abuse and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context. The term child prostitution has been removed from legislation which makes clear in is no longer an acceptable term and should never be used.	This completely misses that the child is being controlled/manipulated. Changes in legislation have meant that child prostitution is no longer an acceptable term and should never be used.

Inappropriate term or stigma	Suggested alternative	Inappropriate term or stigma	Suggested alternative
Boyfriend / girlfriend This implies that the child or young person is in a consensual relationship and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context including imbalance of power or coercion and control. Children have been challenged in court with practitioners' recordings where a practitioner has referred to the perpetrator as the child's boyfriend or girlfriend.	Children have been challenged in court with professional's recordings where their professional has referred to the perpetrator as the child's boyfriend or girlfriend.	**Drug running – He/She/ They are drug running** This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.	The child is a victim of human trafficking and is being criminally exploited to distribute drugs The child is being trafficked for the purpose of criminal exploitation.
They are choosing this lifestyle This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or	The child is a victim of human trafficking and is being exploited. The child is being trafficked for purposes of exploitation. A child can never consent to their own exploitation.	**Recruit/Run/Work** This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.	The child has been targeted by perpetrators and is being groomed to distribute drugs. The child is a victim of human trafficking and is being criminally exploited. The child is being trafficked for the purpose of criminal exploitation.

Inappropriate term or stigma	Suggested alternative	Inappropriate term or stigma	Suggested alternative
Spending time/ associating with 'elders' When this is used in an exploitative context, this implies that the child or young person is choosing to be in contact with the person grooming or exploiting them. When in reality a child who is being coerced, controlled, or manipulated does not have the capacity to make a free and informed choice.	The young person says that they are friends with a person however, there are concerns about that person's age, the imbalance of power, exploitation, and offending.

The young person has been groomed,exploited, controlled. Note: If the 'elder' is under the age of 18 years old, this will need to be considered using child protection processes. | **Victim** | The child has been harmed The child has been abused The child has been affected by crime The child has been exploited |
| **Perpetrator** | The child has been held or arrested by the Police The child has been held or arrested by the Police The child has been responsible for causing harm to others The child has a criminal conviction for causing harm to others | **Trouble or troubled** | The child has had traumatic experiences in the past that may be influencing their choices and/or disruptive behaviours.

The child may need support with their mental health and emotional wellbeing |

3

Part 3 **STRATEGY** The power of collaboration.

PART 3: STRATEGY: The power of collaboration.

The first two parts of this handbook were about exploring the policy context for adolescent safeguarding and understanding adolescence as a distinct and crucial stage of development that continues until around age 25.

Part 3 deals with applying the policy and theory to create an adolescent safeguarding strategy. This part includes practical questions and challenges for partners to explore:

» What is an adolescent safeguarding strategy?

» What is the statutory guidance that sets out what safeguarding partners should do?

» What are the limitations of the statutory guidance?

» What are the London regional aspirations for local adolescent safeguarding?

» What different approaches are there to designing an adolescent safeguarding strategy?

» What conditions can system and practice leaders create to enable a whole-system approach?

» How can local partnerships understand the problems facing young people in their area?

» What is the value of reviewing the systems and services already in place?

» How can we collaborate within and between boroughs to safeguard young Londoners?

What is an adolescent safeguarding strategy?

Strategy means different things to different professionals, but it almost always involves a plan for putting ideas into practice (Grauberg 2021). It is useful to define a partnership strategy for adolescent safeguarding strategy as something like:

A vision agreed by local partners to safeguard young people from harm, build safety in our local communities, and improve young people's outcomes in the future
... and a plan for partners to achieve this vision.

This definition leads to questions familiar to local leaders:

- **WHY** does the local safeguarding children partnership need a new strategy for adolescent safeguarding now?

- **WHAT** is the extent of the local issues with safety and harm to young people, including child exploitation?

- **HOW** do we use intelligence, data and lived experience to understand the local problem?

- **WHO** has responsibility for designing a new strategy?

- **HOW** will partners design and agree on a local approach to putting our ideas into practice?

- **WHERE** and how is adolescent safeguarding work already being carried out and who is responsible for that work?

- **WHEN** do we expect to see an impact from a new strategy and how will we know that our strategy has succeeded?

What is the statutory guidance that sets out what safeguarding partners should do?

Working together to safeguard children

([2018](#)) sets out the expectation the safeguarding partners should agree on ways to coordinate 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 three safeguarding partners must set out how they will work together and with any relevant agencies. Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider may be required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children with regard to local need.

Implications for adolescent safeguarding

The purpose of local arrangements is to enable local agencies to work together in a system where:

- all children and young people are safeguarded from harm and their welfare is promoted
- all partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share, and co-own the vision for how to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people
- organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively
- there is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats
- collaborative learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children, young people and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice across sectors and boundaries

information is shared effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for children, young people and families

Implications for improving local partnership strategies

To work together effectively, the safeguarding partners must collaborate with local organisations and agencies to develop processes and services that:

- develop adolescent safeguarding practice framework based in shared values and principles, not least what matters to young people in the local area
- recognise and respond to the distinct health, safety and learning needs during adolescent development, including young people's need to feel that their voices are heard, and their lived experiences matter
- facilitate and drive collaborative planning, action, review and learning beyond usual institutional and agency constraints and boundaries, and
- enable effective protection of children and young people that is founded on professionals developing lasting and trusting relationships with young people and their families

It was hard to escape: Safeguarding children at risk of exploitation

To support local partnerships to respond effectively to child exploitation, Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (CSPRP 2020) have advised attention in the following areas:

FInding theme	Advice from CSPRP 2020	What is the situation in your local area?
Relationships with children	Ensure that there is sufficient emphasis on relationship-based work and the building of capacity to allow professionals to have both the skill and time to do this work.	
Critical moments	Organisations must be flexible enough to respond immediately to the critical moment when the child is more likely to be open to change.	
Helping parents and extended families to manage risk	A joint approach between families and professionals is essential. Leaders should ensure that current frameworks and approaches promote the building of relationships, whole family work and a non-judgemental approach to parents.	
Acknowledging and managing risk	Local partners look carefully at how individual risk management plans for these children are constructed and whether all local agencies are contributing as needed. Reflect on how those plans are monitored, and how they ensure they can respond rapidly and flexibly to changing levels of risk.	
Child protection framework	In all instances a comprehensive multi-disciplinary plan will be the right route as long as it: • reflects the voices and views of the child and the family • is able to flex to meet changing circumstances • clearly sets out agency involvement	

FInding theme	Advice from CSPRP 2020	What is the situation in your local area?
Skills + knowledge and the lead agency	The lead agency coordinating support for families and children and managing the nature and level of risk should be children's social care. They should do this within a clear multi-disciplinary framework locally which sets out accountability and roles and responsibilities. Above all, local agencies need to be clear on the skills and knowledge needed to make effective interventions with children and families and the community.	
Working Together 2018 and contextual safeguarding	The Department for Education should bring together the relevant stakeholders to explore how best to ensure the narrative and requirements of Working Together reflect the risk of harm from outside the home, with a view to agreeing amendments to the current guidance.	**See table below, pages 58-61**
Data collection	We recommend that joint work is undertaken by the Department for Education, the Home Office, the Department for Health and Social Care, the Youth Justice Board, the Association of Directors of Children's Services and the police to agree on a simple dataset for local collection, which can be incorporated into existing national data collections. The purpose would be to identify the extent, particular features and changing trends and patterns in relation to the criminal exploitation of children.	
Leadership, culture and local partnerships	See page 62 below.	

A select list of limitations or challenges to the statutory guidance identified nationally and regionally

What? Limitations of current arrangements supported (or not) by the statutory guidance	*So what?* What is the impact on young people, families and communities?	*Then what?* How have local areas tried to tackle this limitation?	*Now what?* What else could collaboration in local areas focus on to address this limitation?
Child protection procedures focus on family relationships and home contexts and do not have capacity to respond effectively to young people harmed outside of the family.	Extra-familial harms such as criminal exploitation and trafficking happen outside the control of families, but child protection still aims to create change via family-based work rather than building safety where harms occur. Partnership with families and communities in safety planning is limited and cases are closed either because the family does not consent to continued child protection work, or child protection plan is not reducing harms.	Creatingting pathways to include: • Place assessments and safety mapping across the local area • experienced youth professionals in education or community settings who build enduring relationships with young people to create safety; • community-based professionals or 'guardian' volunteers who work to create safety in places and spaces; • health input where harms happen such as youth support in hospital departments, educational psychology input to alternative education provision, or therapy offered within youth justice.	The independent review of children's social care recommends a **Child Community Safety Plan: 'This should have the same legal underpinning of section 47 and so would be a version of a child protection plan, but would provide for a different approach that makes clear that the primary harm is not attributed to the home and puts emphasis on a more protective approach from all partners to both keep the child [or young adult] safe and address contexts where children are at risk of harm.'** Build knowledge about extra-familial harm across all sectors through whole- place communication and training in safety planning.

In practice, what does your local area do in response to this limitation?

What? Limitations of current arrangements supported (or not) by the statutory guidance	So what? What is the impact on young people, families and communities?	Then what? How have local areas tried to tackle this limitation?	Now what? What else could collaboration in local areas focus on to address this limitation?
Youth justice and policing focus mostly on community safety, crime and disorder and less on child-first approaches to adolescent safeguarding	Young people involved in the criminal justice system have experienced adversity or have unmet needs that have not been identified	• Implement child-first approaches: • Deferred prosecution, such as Outcome 22, and out of court disposal arrangements • Youth justice interventions linked to family engagement and parenting support to build family resources in response to extra-familial harm • Child-first training for policing, youth justice and social care • Develop multi-agency, co- located adolescent safeguarding services across policy, social care, youth justice and health to respond directly to exploitation and gangs	Child-first agreements across all sectors informed by understanding of childhood and adolescent development Trauma-informed training for all sectors that includes child adversity, adolescent health, social, emotional, mental health, communication development. Autism spectrum or other social communication or mental health condition cards for young people to help professionals understand young person's experience at the point of incident

In practice, what does your local area do in response to this limitation?

What? Limitations of current arrangements supported (or not) by the statutory guidance	**So what?** What is the impact on young people, families and communities?	**Then what?** How have local areas tried to tackle this limitation?	**Now what?** What else could collaboration in local areas focus on to address this limitation?
Information sharing, shared data and intelligence to safeguard young people from future harm do not function well across agency, sector and local area boundaries	Single view of adolescent risk misses data about health or places and opportunities for building safety are missed.	Develop information sharing agreements outside of the statutory framework with a focus on intelligence and information sharing that contributes info on safety concerns, situations and places that expose young people to harms and exploitation.	Review strategic and operational arrangements for intelligence and data analytics across local area and draw up whole place principles and protocol. The independent review of children's social care recommends that local areas, 'integrate different organisational responses to minimise the number of plans, professionals and organisations that a young person has to deal with - especially for young people open to both youth offending teams and children's social care'

In practice, what does your local area do in response to this limitation?

What?	So what?	Then what?	Now what?
Limitations of current arrangements supported (or not) by the statutory guidance	What is the impact on young people, families and communities?	How have local areas tried to tackle this limitation?	What else could collaboration in local areas focus on to address this limitation?
Early help arrangements serve younger children and do not meet the needs of young people or young adults who are exposed or more likely to be exposed to extra-familial harm Youth work and youth services are not an expectation when compared with early help arrangements	There is insufficient expert engagement with young people in the places and spaces where harm occurs or where information indicates likelihood of exposure to harm. Effective or sufficient resources are not available to identify young people who would benefit from support or early intervention.	Commission expert youth services from VCF sector to work in places, spaces and communities Seeking extra funding from external sources to commission and/or supplement resources for youth-focused prevention and early intervention offer	Review total resources available across sectors - early help, education, health, policing, social care, youth justice - and pool budgets to invest in youth and community pathways to build safety and prevent harm in local area.

In practice, what does your local area do in response to this limitation?

Strategic partnership and collective leadership

The key to an effective partnership strategy lies in the quality of collective leadership.

Collective leadership must come from health, police, and children's social care, and also from adult social care, education, community sector, housing, youth services, and youth justice. A whole system approach to adolescent safeguarding - a new, emerging and challenging endeavour - demands creative, generous collaboration and collective leadership within a local area.

System and practice leaders must be willing to:

- **Work across organisational, disciplinary and sectoral boundaries** to design together a shared vision, values, practice framework that boldly steers and shapes local policy and a partnership offer to create safety with young people

- **Share information, intelligence, data, and experience** to create understanding of the full extent of threat and safety issues, and to recognise the situation now: spaces, places and communities where harm is happening

- **Recognise the value of all agencies and sectors** contributing to the existing response in policy and practice, and actively create opportunities for collaboration with adult social care, education, voluntary, community and faith sector, housing, and youth services

- **Be vulnerable in the face of interagency, and interdisciplinary challenge**, and to recognise that their own organisational and disciplinary cultures shape the effectiveness of collective responses to young people.

- **Create new interagency structures and systems t**o maximise the value from shared resources that create safety and safeguard young people from harm.

- **Promote new ways of working within and between their organisations**, and to champion a practice framework for joint strategic working and in direct work with children, young people and families, including appreciative enquiry and asset-based approaches.

- **Set a collective strategic plan with short, medium and long term goals** that apply CRAFT (see below) principles.

Ben Byrne has written about working with local partnerships to develop strategic approaches to child exploitation where 'the process of strategy development in itself provides a means of overcoming these barriers between partners and unlocking collective potential' (2021)

'**Just as the process of assessment with children and families can in itself be part of the intervention, so it is with partnerships. The act of coming together to systematically approach a shared challenge – the process of asking questions, being curious, identifying needs and strengths – is often as important and powerful as the strategy identified at the end.'**

Ben Byrne

Components for designing adolescent safeguarding strategy

([Byrne 2021](#))

Components that support strategy development between partners		Local opportunities for collaborative design
Creating space to share and learn together: this provides opportunities to name barriers and reflect honestly on the state of practice and the partnership. This means creating an environment where individuals can admit to vulnerability on behalf of themselves, their agency and the collective.		
Knowledge exchange: to support a common level of understanding. New areas of practice can encourage a hierarchy of those 'in the know' and those left feeling vulnerable about their expertise. This means drawing on subject matter expertise where appropriate, but also appreciating that child exploitation is constantly evolving – we all need to remain open and alert to what may come next.		
Effective facilitation: ideally this will be external, or at least neutral, such as is provided in Bespoke Support Projects through the TCE delivery team. This work takes persistence; it is easier to shy away from sensitive subjects than to work with ambiguity and acknowledge professional vulnerability. **Skilled, impartial facilitation provides a platform for, what can be, difficult conversations.**		
Adopting a mix of methods: including, at times, working with individual agencies rather than partnership groups, to ensure that people feel that they have been able to speak their truth. Acknowledging and managing risk.		
Explicitly attending to behaviours and the culture: there is no 'right' in terms of what a strategic document tackling child exploitation should contain, but there is a stronger case to say there might be a 'right' in terms of how we approach and model strategy. Shifts in culture, and in partnerships, are strengthened by modelling specific – constructive – behaviours. This has a particular pertinence in tackling child exploitation; we have to explicitly eschew, rather than mirror, power dynamics, coercive and controlling behaviours.		

Creating collective leadership to tackle child exploitation and extra-familial harm

Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme (TCESP) has developed a coherent framework for system and practice leaders called Joining the Dots (2022) 'to support the development of cross-cutting strategic approaches that are capable of responding to the complexity of tackling child exploitation and extra-familial harm'. Anna Racher from TCESP poses the following 'fundamental questions' to leaders:

Key question	Exploration	Local answers & opportunities
Are we all modelling compassionate leadership?	What evidence (beyond anecdote) do we have to help us to understand the lived reality for young people, their families and communities right now? How can we respond in a way that builds empathy and trust between communities, and between communities and professionals?	
Are the right people working together?	In the rush to respond, are we thinking laterally enough and including colleagues from education, adult social care, and housing and the faith and community sector, as well as statutory safeguarding partners? Are we connecting up and responding to the whole of who people and communities are?	
Are we rushing too quickly to a response?	Have we sat with the complexity long enough to spot unintended consequences (for example, have we considered the ethics and potential disbenefits of professionals using social media to communicate with young people) and are we being curious enough about what we think we're seeing? And in navigating this complexity are we providing the right level of strategic leadership to support partnerships through uncertainty?	

Reviewing a whole place approach to adolescent safeguarding

Questions about a whole place approach to adolescent safeguarding

What is the experience of young people in different parts of the whole place approach? If you don't know, how can you find out?

How far does your adolescent safeguarding approach align with thresholds guidance for work with children and families?
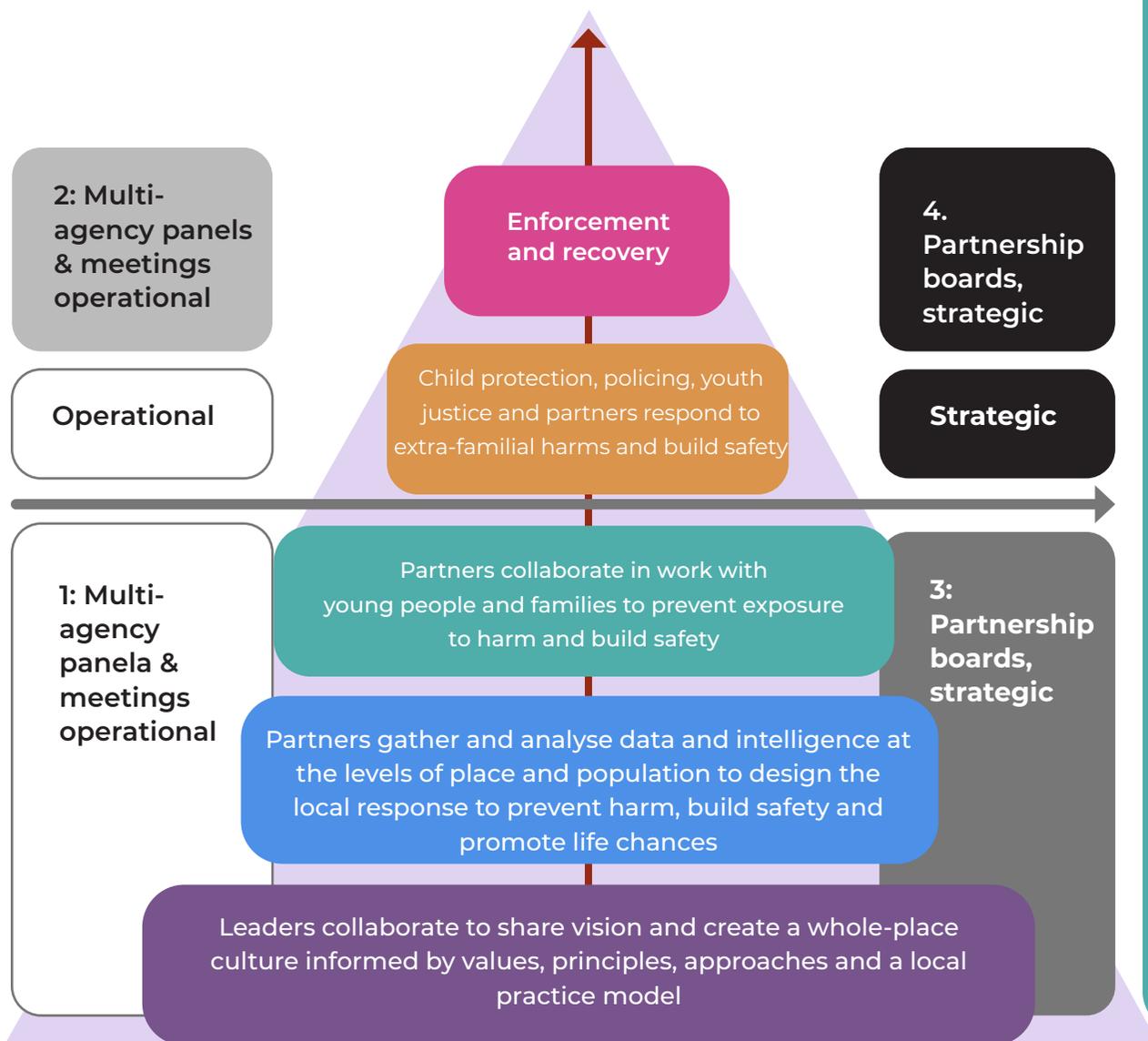
How far does evidence and data analysis inform your whole place approach? How about lived experience of young people?

Have you consulted with all partners on the whole-place approach, including those outside children's services, such as adult social care, housing services and business?

Have you used appreciative enquiry or an asset-based approach to understand the potential of local supports outside the public sector within neighbourhoods, communities and businesses?

How far are local partners signed up to a whole place approach for adolescent safeguarding?

Reviewing strategic and operational panels in place

2: Multi-agency panels & meetings operational

Operational

1: Multi-agency panela & meetings operational

Enforcement and recovery

Child protection, policing, youth justice and partners respond to extra-familial harms and build safety

Partners collaborate in work with young people and families to prevent exposure to harm and build safety

Partners gather and analyse data and intelligence at the levels of place and population to design the local response to prevent harm, build safety and promote life chances

Leaders collaborate to share vision and create a whole-place culture informed by values, principles, approaches and a local practice model

4. Partnership boards, strategic

Strategic

3: Partnership boards, strategic

Questions about boards, meetings and panels (Adapted Saggers 2021)

- Are these meetings mandatory, advisory, or optional?

- How do we currently respond to young people following these meetings?

- What resources do we use at each meeting?

- Is the right level of data and evidence brough to each meeting?

- What skills and experience are we using effectively in each area?

- How does current policy support panel decision-making and practice with young people?

- What practice methods are being discussed and agreed at these boards or meetings?

- Do these methods respond to the known level of threat?

NB the pan-London review of Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) functions is currently being undertaken.

Service design and practice development

Safeguarding partnerships can use the following questions (CSPRP 2020) to review current services and practice already in place to determine: *(Saggers, 2021)*

1. what is already working well with positive outcomes?
2. what needs to be improved and how?
3. what needs to change and why?
4. new approaches are needed and with what intention?

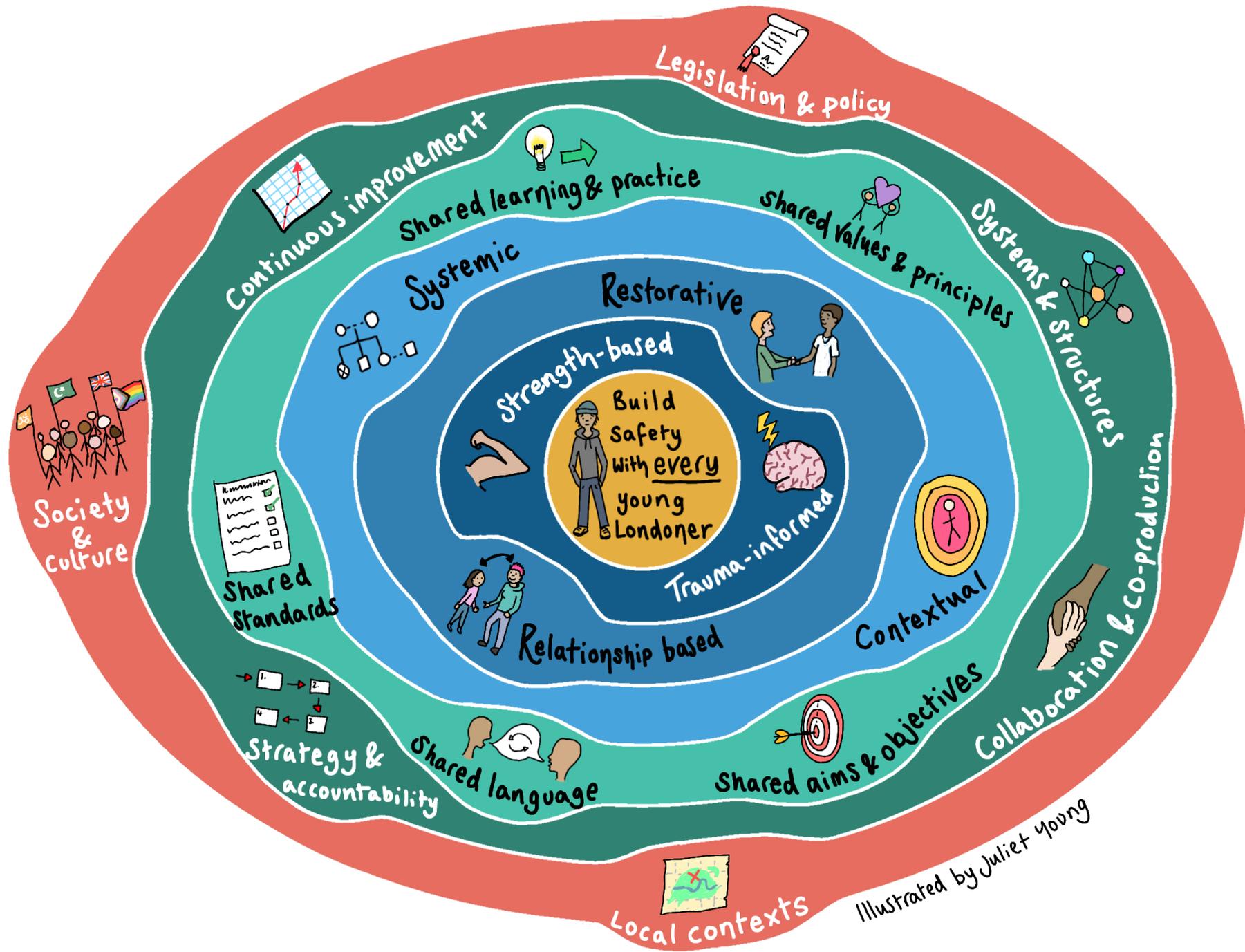| Challenge question to current service and practice	1) 2) 3) 4)	Local evidence and/or next steps
Are your services flexible enough to respond to the critical moments in children's lives		
Is there sufficient emphasis on relationship-based work and on the value of trusted relationships?		
How are individual assessments and safety plans for these children constructed?		
Are all local agencies contributing as needed? Are assessments and safety plans regularly monitored to respond to changing levels of risk?		
How well are families being engaged in the joint protection of their children?		

Challenge question to current service and practice	1) 2) 3) 4)	Local evidence and/or next steps
What are the family engagement methods that can be used?		
How is the balance between understanding these children as both victims and perpetrators understood locally?		
Are adult and children's services working together where needed?		
Are you satisfied with the approach in your local area to prioritising housing for families who face a serious threat as a result of criminal exploitation?		
What is the pattern and trend in school exclusions? What is the nature of alternative provision available?		
Is there a sufficient focus on disruption of criminal activity as well as support for victims?		
How well coordinated are you with your neighbouring partnerships?		
If your police service covers more than one area, are you as integrated with those other areas as possible?		
Are you confident that information follows children and families who are moved out of your area for their own safety and that there is continuity of support?		

4

Part 4 **PRACTICE**   Build safety in places and spaces.

Build Safety with **every** young Londoner

Strength-based

Restorative

Trauma-informed

Relationship based

Contextual

Systemic

Shared learning & practice

Shared values & principles

Continuous improvement

Shared standards

Shared language

Shared aims & objectives

Strategy & accountability

Legislation & policy

Systems & structures

Collaboration & co-production

Society & culture

Local contexts

Illustrated by Juliet Young

PART 4: PRACTICE: Build safety in places and spaces

Part 4 of this handbook is about applying evidence-informed approaches to adolescent safeguarding in direct work with young Londoners and their families.

Across London, these approaches are being used with young adults - up to around age 25 - who are known to be vulnerable or who are exposed to harm.

This part also draws on the work of the Contextual Safeguarding research programme at Durham University.

Part 4 covers:

» Harms outside the home

» Information sharing and safeguarding framework

» Strategy meetings and discussions

» Relationship-based and strength-based practice

» Young-person centred engagement

» Working in partnership with parents and carers

» Youth justice and restorative practice

» Collaborative approaches to assessment and planning

» Safety planning including places and spaces outside the family

» Multi-agency approaches to gangs and exploitation

» A regional protocol to build safety with children who move between local areas

» Trauma-informed and restorative approaches in schools

» Working with young people who experience discrimination

What do young people really know about criminal exploitation?

"But how many people do you know who are trained to do something like that? I know that you are being exploited, so I am going to help you... how would you even go about that? If you're friends are being exploited, how can you help your friend to get out? What is it that you can actually do to help?

Young people and adults could be helping each other out with this. But it's just not taught. Kids go about trying to do it themselves, and they end up getting hurt or affiliated with the gang, and then, the first thing adults do is call the police, and then you're involved, and you can speak to the wrong people and it's a vicious circle.

If you ask an adult, because they don't know what to do, they are just reluctant to help. Then parents get blamed by social workers and police for not being in control of their kids. Then the parents don't want to know. It's a mess! "

*Young Londoner*

Harms outside the family and home

The child protection system in England was designed, in the main, to protect children from harm within the context of their families and/or in situations where family members need additional support to safeguard children from harm to their health, development or future life chances (**Foster 2020**, **HM Gov 2018**)

Through extensive research, Professor Carlene Fermin and the Contextual Safeguarding resesearch team at Bedfordshire University examined the different kinds of harm that children can be exposed to outside of family and home. These include harms in peer groups, social groups and in places and virtual spaces that can reduce the capacity of families to safeguard young people. In This this sense, these 'extra-famillial harms' are not fully addressed by the child protection system (**Firmin 2017 p2**).

Contextual model to the right is adapted from the work of Professor Carlene Firmin and the Contextual Safeguarding research teams at University of Bedfordshire and Durham University

Contextual Safeguarding Scale-Up Toolkit

Contextual Safeguarding team at Durham University have developed the **Scale-Up Tookit**, with resources to start thinking about creating a Contextual Safeguarding system. **Follow this link to explore the resources.**
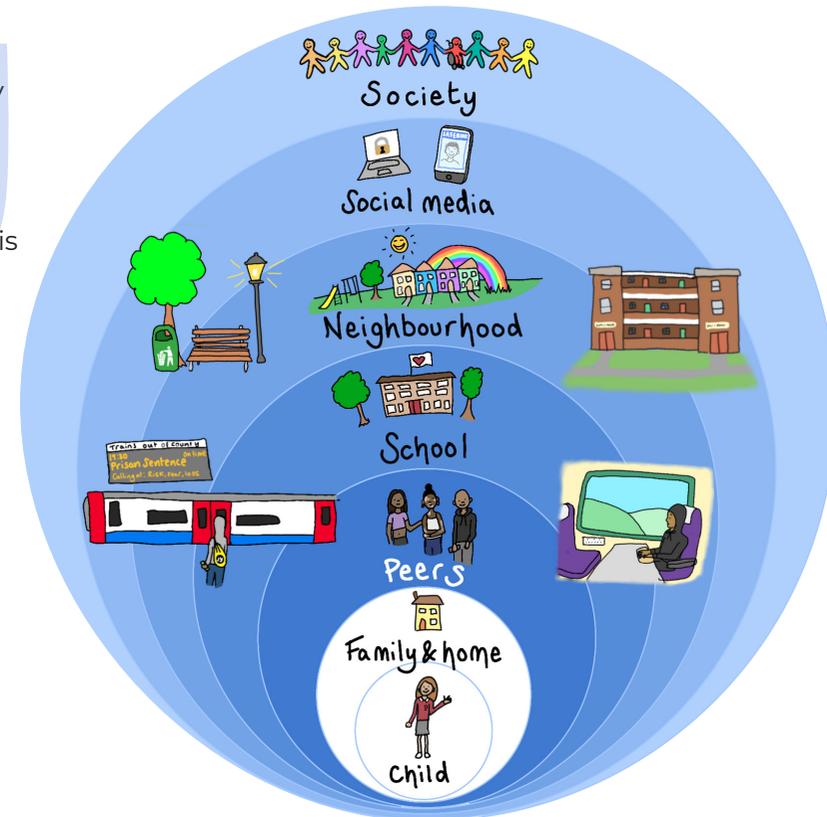
Questions for professionals working with young people

- What is the day-to-day experience of the young person?
- How are they feeling about places, virtual spaces, people, and peer groups?
- What do they want now?
- How can professionals show that young people matter?
- Is the safety of the young person assured in peer groups or places outside home?
- What needs to change for the child to be safe and well?
- Are these changes happening quickly enough?
- What would life be like for the child in the long-term if things do not change?
- Are the right supports and interventions in place to help welfare, safety and work toward positive changes?
- What needs to happen if things do not change?

These questions have been developed with professionals working in London

Contextual Safeguarding approach

In summary, this approach (Firmin 2020a):

- '...recognises that the relationships young people form in peer groups, neighbourhoods, communities, schools and online can feature harm, abuse and violence,
- recognises that parents sometimes have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine child-parent and family relationships, and
- expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of different social contexts.'

According to this approach, Contextual Safeguarding is evident in a local area if partners are able to:

- 'Target the contexts in which abuse has occurred;
- achieve this through the lens of child protection and child welfare: ensure there is a child protection, and not just community safety, response to extra-familial harm;
- partner with organisations and individuals who could influence the nature of extra-familial contexts, and;
- measure contextual, as well as individual, impact.'

'Grounded in reality of young people's lives'

Professor Firmin (2020b) has reminded local areas that a contextual safeguarding approach must:

- **'be characterised by collaboration** with young people, families and communities;
- **uphold children's and human rights;**
- **build on strengths** of young people, families and communities to build safety (as well as mitigate risks);
- **be grounded in the reality of young people's lives** and understand vulnerability and safety from that perspective; [...] seeing individuals in context but also seeing those contexts [...] in reference to broader structural and contextual factors.'

Identifying likelihood of harm

There are a range of indicators that young people may be exposed to harms outside of family and home, including:

- Connections with a place (e.g. shopping centre, park, housing block, school) where there are safety concerns

- Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

- Harmful Sexual Behaviour

- Poor emotional wellbeing and mental health e.g. anger, stress, anxiety, depression, withdrawal, etc.

- Online relationships and social media

- Frequent episodes of missing from home, school or care

- Break down in relationships between young people, parents and carers

- SEND whether assessed or queried

- Offending as an individual or in a group, and/or involvement with youth justice

- Persistent absence, not in education or training

- School exclusion or attendance at alternative provision

- Experience of adversity at home, see ACEs

- Gang involvement, criminal exploitation and County Lines

All indicators listed are also ACEs: See **PART TWO** including EIF research review into application of thinking around ACEs.

There is further government information on criminal exploitation and County Lines here and here and NSPCC guidance on County Lines is here.

Thresholds guidance and extra-familial harm

Every local safeguarding partnership is required to have guidance about 'thresholds' to inform decisions about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and

- how to respond to children, young people, and families,
- which agency is responsible for that response,
- the level and intensity of response that is required,
- whether engagement with the help, support or protection response is voluntary or statutory.

Different local areas have devised different approaches to this guidance. There is a pan-London threshold guidance document, describing a continuum of help and support, which forms the basis of most local guidance in the region.

When applying thresholds to decide on whether a statutory intervention must be applied, local safeguarding partners investigate the severity of abuse or risk of harm the child is exposed to. As set out above, on page 43, the abuse and harm can happen in contexts entirely apart from parents/carers. However parents/carers

and family members may also have a role in causing the harm or failing to protect that child and/or to meet their needs (CSN 2019). Where a child is exposed to extra-familial abuse, for example if they are being harmed by criminal exploitation, the risk factors may be in schools, community spaces, or peer groups.

Screening tools for extra-familial harm

The London Child Exploitation Operating Protocol 2021 sets out the guidance for safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children from exploitation. This protocol is police-led with equal ownership by Metropolitan Police, Local Authority Children's Services, and Health, as safeguarding partners.

Thresholds guidance in many areas have been augmented using screening tools that list risk factors associated with extra-familial harms. These screening tools are used alongside the statutory framework to help local safeguarding partners identify and respond to suspected harms.

When gathering information to screen for risks of harm that take place in spaces and communities beyond the home, there are a range of considerations for local partners:

- **Have young people consenting to the gathering and sharing of information about places?**
- **How do issues associated with race and gender affect young people? For example, policing methods such as stop-and-search or experiences of sexism or transphobia in public places?**
- **Are structural as well as locational factors considered? For example, what are the impacts of poverty, access to youth and community centres, or green spaces on young people in the local areas?**

Questions for leaders about child-first practice and harm outside of family and home

- Is there an agreed set of values and principles for working with young people and extra-familial harm?
- Is recognition from all local partners of adolescence as a distinct stage of development and the need for collaborative approach to respond to young people?
- Can you list the approach or response to extra-familial harms across your local areas?
  At the levels of:
  - · Partnership adolescent safeguarding strategy
  - · Preparation and population data analysis
  - · Prevention and early intervention offer
  - · Protection and treatment
  - · Recovery for those who cause harm
- Are there challenges or tensions between child protection, criminal justice, and health responses to young people in your area? How do these tensions show up at strategic and operational meetings
- How far is your local area commitment to young people child first, trauma-informed, and strength-based?
- Have you identified areas for improvement in building safety with young people in places, spaces, and communities? For example, do child protection conferences fully address harm outside of home?
- Have you carried out peer challenges or received independent scrutiny of your local area's response to extra-familial harms?

These questions have been developed with professionals working in London

Questions for professionals working with young people

- Is your work with young people and young adults in a statutory (child protection social work, adult social care, policing, youth justice) or non-statutory role (school, youth service, early help, health, housing, etc)?
- How do you currently identify and record the peer groups, places or virtual spaces that are important in the lives of young people you work with?
- What are the harms that could be associated with these people and places?

For example:
- School and settings
- Markets
- Shopping centres
- Residential areas
- Community spaces
- Public Transport
- Bus and train stations
  Cars and taxis
- Car parks
- Bikes and scooters
- Parks and green spaces
- Neighbourhoods
- Disused buildings
- Peer groups
- Social media
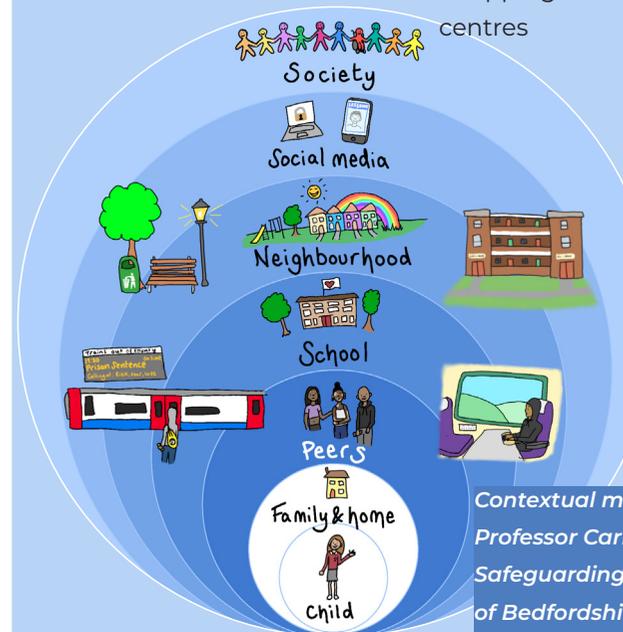
Contextual model adapted from the work of Professor Carlene Firmin and the Contextual Safeguarding research teams at University of Bedfordshire and Durham University

Sharing information about harm

It is essential for all professionals working with young people to understand the influence of wider contexts and contribute to sharing information with others. The purpose of information sharing should be guided by how best to build safety with young people and in the place and spaces were they spend time.

This includes professionals working in all disciplines: health, including mental health, education, youth work and youth justice, family support and parenting, police, probation, housing, social care, voluntary, community and faith organisations, etc.

It also applies to professionals working at every level of need from universal and targeted services, to specialist and statutory.

Young people, especially those who are experiencing CSE or CCE, may not want to share information about their friends, associates or places they have been to because it would put them at risk to do so. The young person will therefore need time and to build trust with you to share such details.

Young people with SEND or with mental health problems may not be able to give or withhold consent for information sharing and this presents an ethical issue where there are concerns as to whether it is right to seek consent from parents.

If you're unclear about the purpose of gathering information about a child or young person, then you should consider whether the information will be used to safeguard them from harm.

If you have any doubts about when and how to share information, you should discuss these doubts with your line manager and/or your Designated Safeguarding Lead.

REMEMBER: If you think a child is at immediate risk of harm, or you think a conversation will put a child at risk of harm, then you should contact the Police on 999

Contextual Safeguarding Scale-Up Toolkit
Contextual Safeguarding team at Durham University have developed the **Scale-Up Tookit**, with resources to start thinking about creating a Contextual Safeguarding system.
There are further resources around information sharing and assessment methods that use a Contextual Safeguarding approach.
Follow this link to explore the resources.

Sharing information: the seven golden rules

1. Protection Regulation (GDPR) is not a barrier to sharing information, but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about individuals is stored and shared appropriately.

2. Be open and honest with the affected individual (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared. Seek their agreement unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.

3. Seek advice if you are in doubt, without disclosing the identity of the person where possible.

4. Share information with consent where appropriate and where possible respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, lack of consent can be overridden by the need to protect the child. Judgement should be based on the facts of the case.

5. Consider safety and wellbeing by basing your information sharing decision on considerations of the safety and wellbeing of the person and others who may be affected by their actions.

6. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure. Ensure the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it. Ensure it is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up to date and is shared in a timely and secure fashion.

7. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it. If you decide to share information, keep a record of what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.
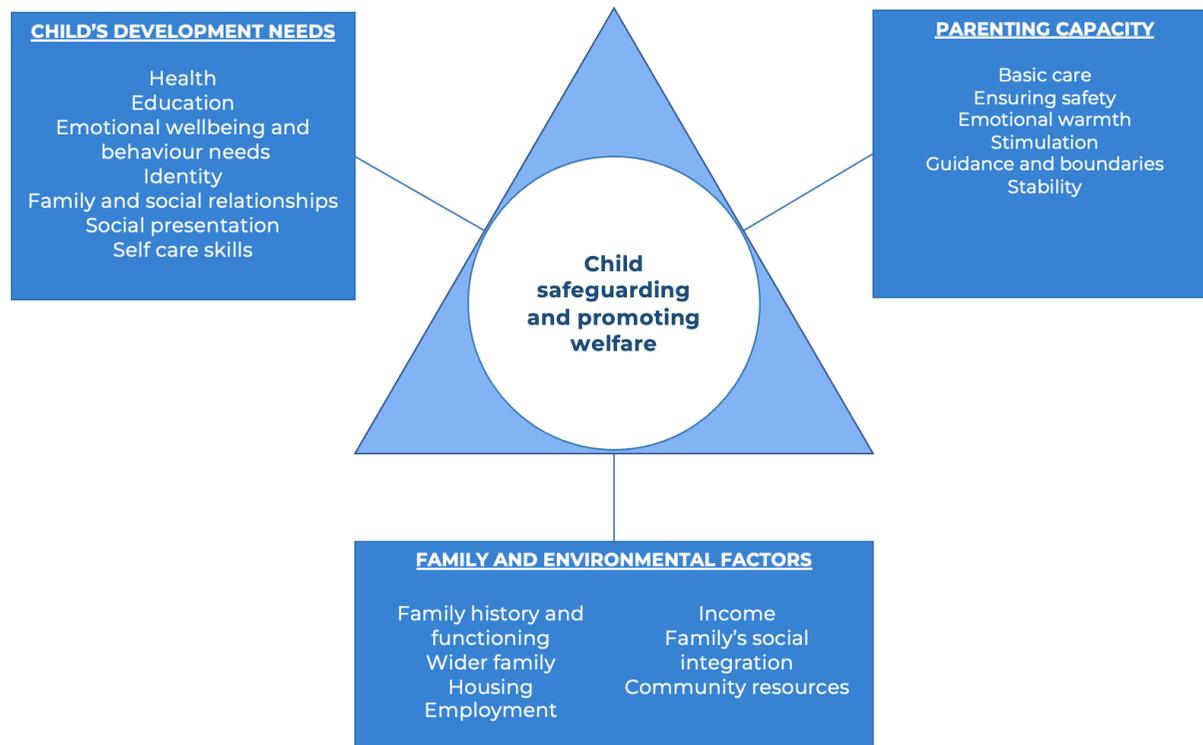
For more advice, refer to the Government guidance and the London Safeguarding Children Procedures, updated March 2022.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people

The assessment triangle below is used in children's social care, but is useful for all agencies who work with young people. The triangle includes the main categories of strength and needs that you will consider when safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

The approach set out in this guide helps you to expand your focus and explore people, places, spaces and communities significant to young people that are outside of family and home, and build this understanding into assessment.

CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Health
Education
Emotional wellbeing and behaviour needs
Identity
Family and social relationships
Social presentation
Self care skills

PARENTING CAPACITY

Basic care
Ensuring safety
Emotional warmth
Stimulation
Guidance and boundaries
Stability

Child safeguarding and promoting welfare

FAMILY AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Family history and functioning
Wider family
Housing
Employment

Income
Family's social integration
Community resources

Questions for professionals working with young people

- Information gathering extends beyond the family to include people, places, spaces and communities outside of home
- What additional strengths and protective factors might young people have in these contexts?
- What exposure to harms might there be?
- How about racially minoritised young people, those with SEND, and LGBTQ+ young people?
- How can you support parents to understand safety issues outside of home?

Strategy meetings and strategy discussions

Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child or young person is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, there should be a strategy meeting / discussion. The purpose of a strategy discussion is to decide whether the threshold has been met for a single or joint (children's social care and police) child protection investigation, and to plan that investigation.

They happen when it is believed a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, serious harm.

A Strategy Meeting/Discussion is used to:

• Share available information;
• Agree conduct and timing of any criminal investigation;
• Decide whether an assessment under [section 47 of the Children Act 1989](#) should be initiated, or continued if it has already begun;
• Consider assessment and actions, if already in place;

• Plan how the section 47 enquiry should be undertaken (if one is to be initiated), including the need for medical treatment, and who will carry out actions, by when and for what purpose;

• Agree what action is required immediately to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child, and / or provide interim services and support. If the child is in hospital, decisions should also be made about how to secure the safe discharge of the child;

• Determine what information from the strategy meeting / discussion will be shared with the family, unless such information sharing may place a child at increased risk of significant harm or jeopardise police investigations into any alleged offence/s;
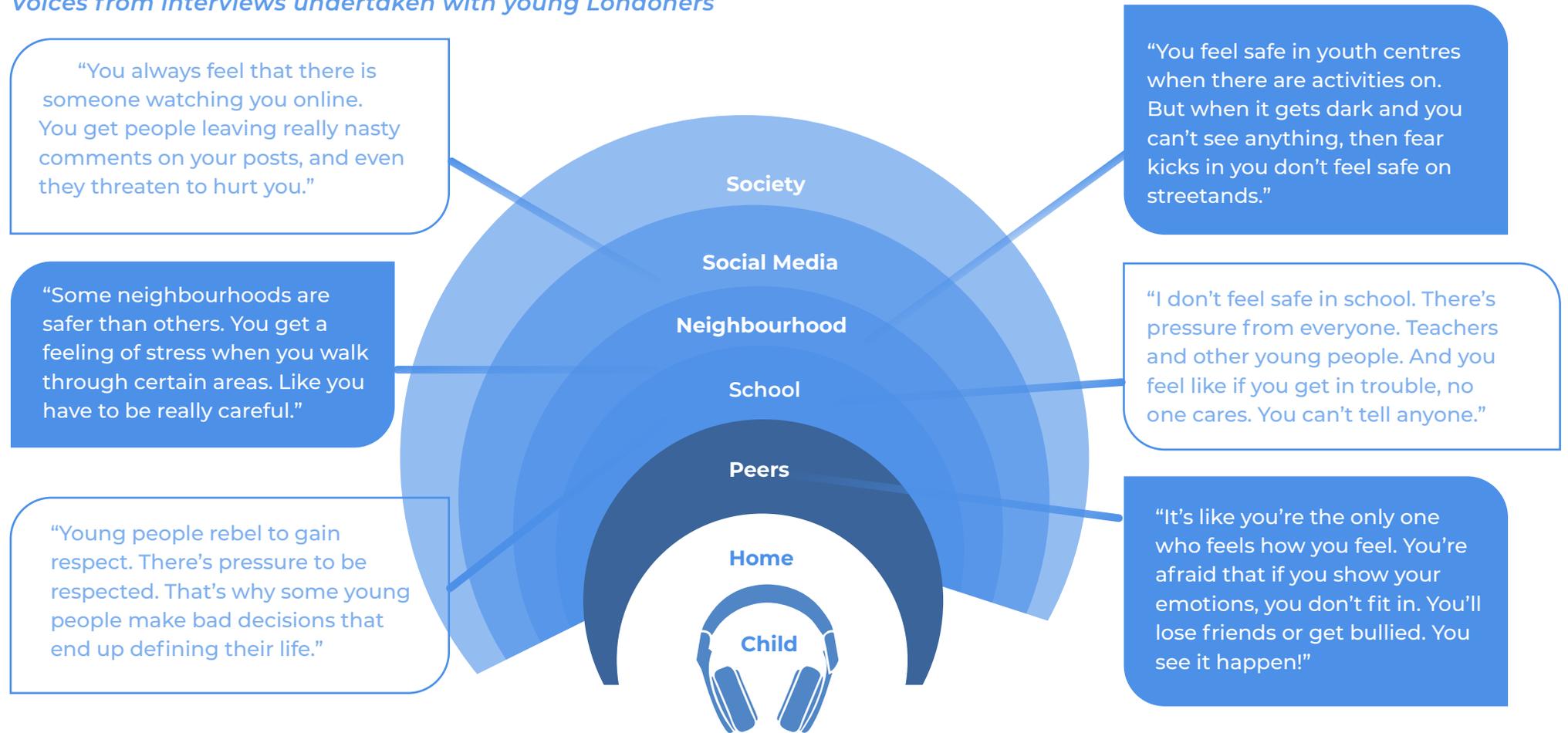
• Determine if legal action is required.

Strategy Meetings/Discussions are relevant to all agencies that work with young people in each discipline and each level of need. Discuss the role of your agency in strategy meetings with your Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Questions for professionals working directly with young people

• How is information gathered about places, peer groups, people and trends influencing the lives of young people?
• How is this information gathered and stored?
• How is this information shared with other agencies?
• How is this information shared in strategy

Young people talk about fears and perceptions of extra-familial harms

Voices from interviews undertaken with young Londoners

"You always feel that there is someone watching you online. You get people leaving really nasty comments on your posts, and even they threaten to hurt you."

"You feel safe in youth centres when there are activities on. But when it gets dark and you can't see anything, then fear kicks in you don't feel safe on streetands."

"Some neighbourhoods are safer than others. You get a feeling of stress when you walk through certain areas. Like you have to be really careful."

"I don't feel safe in school. There's pressure from everyone. Teachers and other young people. And you feel like if you get in trouble, no one cares. You can't tell anyone."

"Young people rebel to gain respect. There's pressure to be respected. That's why some young people make bad decisions that end up defining their life."

"It's like you're the only one who feels how you feel. You're afraid that if you show your emotions, you don't fit in. You'll lose friends or get bullied. You see it happen!"

Society

Social Media

Neighbourhood

School

Peers

Home

Child

Contextual model adapted from the work of Professor Carlene Firmin and the Contextual Safeguarding research teams at University of Bedfordshire and Durham University

Questions for professionals working directly with young people

- Have you asked young people about their views on safety and harm? How can you create opportunities to find out more from young people about spaces, places and local neighbourhoods?

- List practitioners and organisations who know more about places and peer groups: including community organisations, health, police.

Building meaningful relationships

When working with young people, especially those who have experienced adversity and/or harm, it is important for a professional experienced in work with young people to build meaningful professional relationships.

In order for work to be effective, and for professionals to support the young person and build safety around them, relationships should be for sustained periods of time.

Relationship-based practice (RBP)

describes a way of working with young people that recognises the vital importance of building meaningful and enduring relationships. Many young people experience anxiety as a natural response to distress and uncertainty. It is essential for professionals to develop an understanding of the young person's situation and state of mind. Young people with anxiety may have very self-critical thoughts, and are more likely to reject support.

For young people with SEND, the key factors in building relationships can be established through non-verbal means, such as visual communication, or through adapted language – see **page 87** for more information on hearing young people with SEND. There is information on RBP and youth justice on **page 89**. There is further information on RPB here from BASW

Relationship-based practice with families

Professionals use themselves and their relationship-building skills as a resource in work with young people and with families. Fundamentally, relationship-based practice is about professionals recognising and responding to emotions within themselves, and using this awareness to better understand the experiences of families.

It is helpful to recognise the impact of anxiety on family responses to professional intervention (**Ruch, Research in Practice 2020**). Social work, police, and other professional interventions associated with child protection can cause powerful emotions, including feelings of guilt and shame. These feelings can then show up as anger, violent hostility, and aggression toward professionals. Common responses also include avoidance, disguised compliance (**NSPCC 2019**), and withdrawal from engagement with safety planning.

Questions for professionals using RBP to support self-efficacy in work with young people

How can you:
Learn about and work with a young person's interests?

Support a young person to make their own choices, especially in the context of safety planning?

Set moderately difficult challenges?

Encourage a young person to try something new?

Offer space and time to help a young person process adverse experiences and difficult emotions?

Reflective practice is critical for professionals who work directly with young people and their families. Supervision can help professionals to understand the emotional experiences they have in their direct work. The concepts of **holding environment** ([Winnicott 1953](#)) and **containment** (Bion 1962) explain how parents create a situation where children can learn to cope with difficult emotions and experiences, and in parallel, professionals can provide containment for families, and supervisors provide containing spaces for professionals. There is more information on supervision in **PART FIVE**.

What is self-efficacy?

Young people who believe in their own ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task have self-efficacy. A sense of **self-efficacy** can play a major role in how young people approach goals, tasks, and challenges.

Self-efficacy comes and goes. If young people have had adverse experiences of relationships in the past, they may find it difficult to develop self-efficacy in the context of a new professional relationship. Persistence is worthwhile, and meaningful relationships form a positive basis to develop self-efficacy, especially for young people with anxiety.

Quality conversations

The starting point for all professionals if they are concerned about a young person should be a quality conversation with other professionals. Quality conversations are a crucial aspect of RBP, and they take place with young people and families, as well as between professionals. This term includes the phone calls and meetings that take place between professionals working at every level of the services system including universal and prevention, targeted and early intervention, statutory and specialist services.

A quality conversation takes into consideration the complexity of young people's situations – including peer groups, places, spaces and communities, - and places emphasis on **strengths and assets** in a young person's life, as well as on the exposure to harms outside of the home and family.

When a young person's needs cannot be met by family, community and universal services alone, quality conversations will strengthen and improve joint safety planning, decision making, collaborative working and a partnership approach to taking the right action, at the right level, at the right time. If we don't develop sufficient understanding of strengths, needs and harms through quality conversations with families and other professionals, we may miss the threat of harm, and we will certainly miss opportunities to build safety.

Starting with strengths

As a professional working directly with young people, you are a change agent in their lives. Using your professional skills to build on the young person's existing strengths, including supporting them to build positive relationships and safety within their peer group, community and networks.

There is a balance to be struck between understanding the strengths and goals of young people and establishing a consistent approach to positive expectations and clear boundaries. A strength-based conversation helps you to gain an understanding of the young person's experiences, wishes and feelings, the family environment, the young person's life outside the family, and any other agencies involved.

Conversations should be based on acknowledging what the young person is already doing well and building on these strengths instead of focusing on what they are not doing or what they should be doing. You can develop techniques to identify how young people are doing, paying attention to the problems they face and working with them so that they can tap into resources to help themselves.

Once there is shared understanding of the issues, you can help the young person to explore solutions. The default option should not be to suggest a source of support external to the young person, but to identify what the young person can do to address the problems and/or prevent it developing.

[More info on strength-based approaches here.](#)

Solution focus tools in work with young people

There are several solution focus questions that can support professionals to support young people to set goals for changes in their own lives.

Miracle question

Suppose you woke up one morning and by some miracle everything you ever wanted, everything good you could ever imagine for yourself, had happened - your life had turned out exactly the way you wanted it. Think about it now.

- What will you notice around you that let you know that the miracle had happened?
- What will you see?
- What will you hear?
- What will you feel inside yourself?
- How would you be different?

Exception questions

- Tell me about times when you don't get angry...
- Tell me about times you felt the happiest...
- When was the last time that you felt you had a better day?
- What was it about that day that made it a better day?
- Can you think of a time when the problem was not present?

There are more examples of how to use solution focus tools in strength-based practice to support young people find ways to make change in their lives ([Brief 2016](#)) and a useful blog on how to think differently about 'resistance' [here (George 2022)](#).

Effective engagement

Professionals can fall into the habit of safety planning about a young person rather than **with a young person.** The following guidelines support effective engagement with young people, and can also apply to work with families:

- **Listen, listen, listen:** the single most important principle is to listen to what the young person has to say.

- **Acknowledge:** thank young person for being able to talk to you, for what they have to say, and for trusting you.

- **Stay alert:** keep your eyes, ears and body language open to what the young person has to say, without judging, being shocked, commenting or advising (at first).

- **Start neutral:** do not discuss the consequences of their behaviour during early stages of engagement, unless there are clear and immediate child protection concerns.

- **What's in it for me?** Listen out for motivation and to gain an understanding of what the young person wants.

- **Solution-focused:** ask questions that lead to solutions, rather than remaining on problems, issues, and mistakes.

- **Be sensitive:** describe behaviours of concern sensitively considering pace and number of questions.

- **Adapt communication** to needs of young people with SEND or work with an advocate who knows them well.

- **Prepare for challenge:** lead young person carefully towards for probing or challenging questions

- **Offer a way out**: explain to a young person that they can end a discussion or engagement.

- **Ready for change**? Approach early engagements with curiosity and look for the signs of readiness to change…

- **Feedback**: give feedback that is specific, positive, and focused on desired behaviours.

- **What's your view**? Seek their perception of their behaviour rather than talking about your perceptions.

- **The behaviour not the person**: there is much more to a young person than their behaviour. Be aware of your own emotional responses that may give a clue to your biases.

- **Cut the judgemental phrases**: 'I am disappointed' applies to working in partnership with families (see p75)

- **Avoid correction**: instead of questioning the decision, question how they arrived at their thinking (Elicit-Provide-Elicit Model)

- **Follow up**! Make sure that the plans you put in place actually happen through regular communication.

YOUR CHOICE is a London-wide programme that at its core seeks to reinterpret the use of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy principles within current best practice in violence-reduction and related partnership approaches to effectively supporting children affected by extra-familial violence and related harms.

Find out more about YOUR CHOICE here

Young people's voice and participation

Effective support and safeguarding with young people means extending collaboration and working to co-produce the approach, so that young people are at the centre of adolescent safeguarding.

Young people have the right to express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting their social, economic, religious, cultural and political life. This right is enshrined in article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Fundamentally, participatory engagement is about giving young people a say to inform the decisions made that affect their lives or the communities in which they live. This applies both to individual young people, for decisions made about their personal lives, as well as to broader groups of young people at school, community and neighbourhood level.

In order to truly understand and respond to young people's experiences of harm, our approaches to support and safeguarding need to be informed and shaped by the realities of young people.

There are a range of participatory methods that can be used to engage with young people through formal channels, such as the Youth Council and schools, and by organising other informal group sessions and feedback opportunities.

The below methods will help professionals to better understand the lived experience and opinions of young people to inform safety planning in your local area:

Young people comment on whiteboard in a community space

Community mapping with young people to gather feedback on specific places

Young people forums and formal events for feedback and gathering ideas

School events to gather large numbers of comments or ideas

Group work in youth centres to ask young people their views
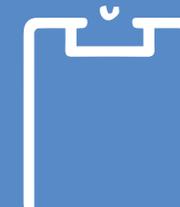
Surveys and questionnaires to existing groups

Questions for professionals using RBP to engage young people

- How can you involve young people in service design and decision making?

Hearing the voices of young people with SEND

All young people have a voice which deserves to be heard.

Young people with SEND may face additional barriers to communicating and influencing decisions made about their lives. This may include young people:

- with speech, language and communication needs
- with communication and interaction difficulties associated with severe and profound learning difficulties;
- with Autistic Spectrum conditions (ASD).

Working effectively with young people with SEND may include using different strategies that enable to them to express themselves and understand others:

Visual communication including signs, symbols, photographs, objects can assist some young people to express themselves and understand others

Adapting speech to individual needs may be useful, such as simplifying grammar, using concrete terms instead of abstract or figurative language, and using short, clear phrases instead of longer sentences.

An advocate supports young people without formal language to have their voices heard. An advocate who knows them well will be able to interpret body language and other forms of potentially communicative behaviour.

Questions for professionals working directly with young people and families

Find your agency policy on SEND, which will refer to the SEND Code of Practice 2015

How does the policy describe the safety issues that young people with SEND may be exposed to outside of family and home?

How does the policy describe planning and intervention methods that identify and respond to these harms?

How can you adopt effective communication strategies to ensure the voices of young people with SEND are heard?

How can you share these approaches with colleagues and partners so that the opinions and strengths of more young people with SEND can be heard and understood?

Can you apply the same thinking about engagement with young people from racially minoritised communities and young people who identify as LGBTQ+?

Working in partnership with families and communities

There are circumstances where professionals can leave parents and/or their family members feeling as though they are blamed for safety issues in the lives of young people, including extra-familial harms.

Professionals working directly with families need to see the situation from the perspective, circumstances and feelings of parents and carers, and to build a no-blame, partnership approach.
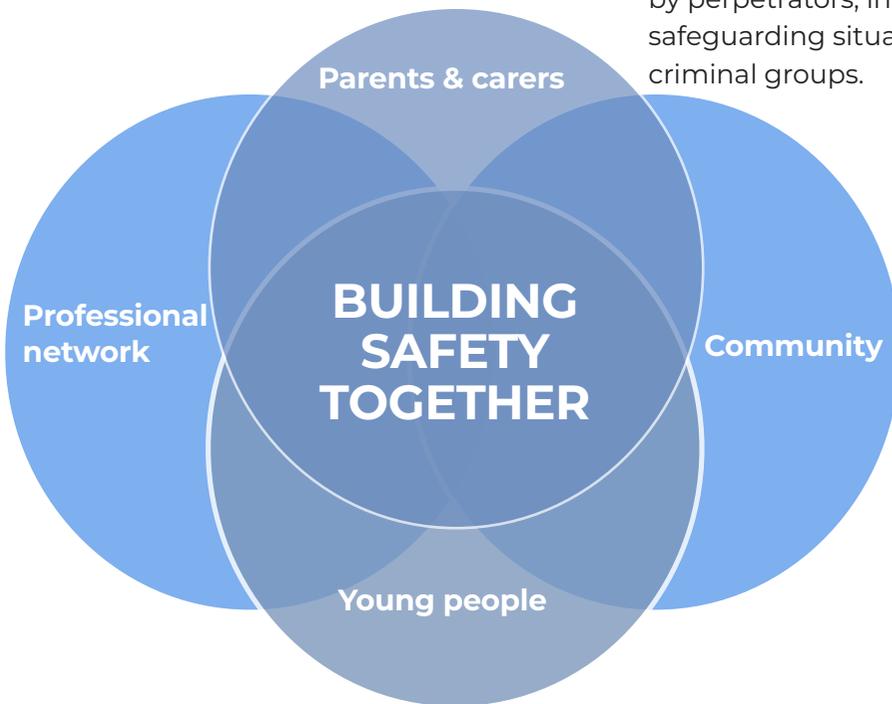
The criminal justice system and the statutory child protection framework can contribute to professional cultures where parents and carers feel they are blamed for vulnerability and extra-familial harm (SPACE 2021).

Reinforcing blame will not help to safeguard young people from harm. It is important to refocus conversations with young people and families on what works to build safety, and to understand the control, influence and harm caused by perpetrators, including complex safeguarding situations and organised criminal groups.

Parents & carers

Professional network

BUILDING SAFETY TOGETHER

Community

Young people

Questions for professionals working directly with the young person and their families

Collaboration breaks down when your safety plan does not have a clear purpose or when a relationships with a young person has not been built. Strength-based conversations help to find resources and relationships for safety

How can you make better use of strength-based conversations with young people and their families to build trusting relationships and improve your assessments?

How much do you know about a young person's interests that you can build on?

Where family relationships have broken down, how can you maintain trust in the relationship with the young person?

Youth Justice and youth offending teams

The youth justice system in England works with children who offend, and is described in the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act. The age of criminal responsibility is 10. For many offences, children are tried in youth court by magistrates or a district judge.

Youth offending teams are inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP), and are overseen by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) who are accountable to the Ministry of Justice.

Youth offending teams, also known as youth offending services, and youth justice services, function as multi-agency services that support young people who offend and are referred either by the Police or by the criminal courts.

The Youth Justice system offers both community and custodial interventions (see page 91 below) depending on the seriousness of an offence, and youth offending teams carry out joint work with local partners to make sure that young people are supported to move away from committing crime.

Youth Justice partners vary, but in most local areas they include:
- Local police and MET Police

- The Probation service.
- Health services including CAMHS to help children with emotional and mental health difficulties.
- Children's and families services
- Housing services
- Substance use services (drug and alcohol interventions)
- Employment, training and skills work with young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- Schools and education settings including alternative provision and PRU settings
- Charities, faith organisations and the local community

Youth Justice work in the community

Community interventions increasingly make use of restorative justice approaches. The aim of community intervention is to support young people to find value in their community, and better understand harms they have caused to others.

Reparation: this is typically for young people under 16 and can be part of a community order made by community panel members or the courts.

Unpaid work: this is typically for young people over 16 and is attached to a community order made by the courts.

Accreditation: many young people who carry out community interventions are offered opportunities to work toward accreditation for training and employment activities.

Enforcement responses to young people who cause harm

When young people cause distress, alarm or harm to others, some actions can be taken by the Police, the Council, Anti-Social Behaviour team, youth court, district court or county court. Professionals must understand these consequences and consider how they can continue to work according to the **principles set out in PART ONE** of this handbook, with emphasis on maintaining a child-first and relationship-based approach to support.

Relationship-based practice in youth justice

YJB guidance (Gov.uk 2019) places emphasis on the importance of high quality relationships with children and their parents for effective assessment and planning. This builds on the guidance above around strength-based approaches, adding a focus on understanding the

context of a young person's offending behaviour patterns, as well as their thinking, beliefs, and hopes.

Understanding the needs of sentenced children

Analysis carried out by YJB has demonstrated (YJB 2020) the vulnerability of children who are sentenced in the youth justice system, with 70% of children having at least five concerns. These concerns were:

- Safety and Wellbeing (88%),
- Risk to Others (85%),
- Substance Misuse (75%),
- Speech, Language and Communication (71%) and
- Mental Health (71%).

Effective work with young people within the youth justice system needs to take into account adversity and trauma in **PART TWO** to better understand the context of offending and opportunities to build safety and resilience.

Sharing information about young people who cause harm

When the Police or Court respond to a young person's behaviour that may cause distress, alarm or harm to others, agencies are often called on to share information.

Sharing information about known risks is a vital aspect of safeguarding young people at risk, both for those who are at risk or harm, and for those who do harm to others. This information includes the people young people are associating with and places where they go. These meetings include any agencies who work with young people such as schools and colleges, community organisations and health services, and are not restricted to high risk services such as the Police, Youth Justice, and Children's Social Care.

Interventions where young people cause harm

Referral Order (RO)

A young person will be referred to a youth offender panel, which investigates the contexts and causes of offending and its consequences with the child, their family and the community. The panel is made up of an adviser from the Youth Justice Services and trained community volunteers. A contract is agreed between the panel and young person, which includes a plan that aims to prevent reoffending.

Youth Rehabilitation Orders (YRO)

A young person receiving a YRO is required to take part in activities set by the Youth Justice Service which could include repaying the community for the offence committed. A YRO can last up to three years. YRO have a range of conditions:

- **Non-association**: forbids contact with one or more persons for a set time;

- **Exclusion zones**: a young person is forbidden from entering a defined area;

- **Curfew notice**: forbids entry to an area, usually after a defined time in the evening. Police may stop and question a young person under curfew.

Criminal behaviour order (CBO)

The CBO is used for seriously antisocial behaviour and can be applied or either on conviction for any criminal offence in any criminal court post-conviction or as a stand-alone injunction in a County Court. The post-conviction orders can only be made through an application by the Crown Prosecution Service. If the court is satisfied that the alleged offender has committed behaviour causing harassment, alarm and distress, a CBO is granted. For stand-alone orders, the Court will consider the evidence of Anti Social Behaviour from the previous 6 months and consider, on the balance of probabilities, the CBO is necessary and proportionate to address the ASB.

Youth custody

A court can give a young person a **custodial sentence** if:

- the crime is so serious there is no other suitable option

- the young person has committed crimes before

- the judge or magistrate thinks the young person is a risk to the public

A young person can also be sent to custody on remand, if the young person has been charged with a serious crime, for example armed robbery, has been convicted of a serious crime in the past, or the court thinks the young person might not go to the court hearing. The Youth Justice Board decides which secure centre a young person will be sent to and will choose somewhere that:

- can deal with the young person's needs safely, eg if they have a health problem

- is suitable for their age, sex and background

- is as near to their home as possible

Restorative approaches with young people

Enforcement decisions provide professionals with an opportunity to understand young people's behaviour and recognise the significance of boundaries in young people's development. Every organisation that works with young people's needs to establish and maintain clear, consistent practice that includes a child-first approach to limits and sanctions. This includes education settings, VCFS, housing, and statutory agencies like health, police and social care

Supporting young people who cause distress means understanding the people, places and spaces influencing their lives. The language of criminal prosecution can reinforce adult roles with phrases like "perpetrator" and "offender", which do not reflect the reality of young people's circumstances.

The principles set out in this handbook ask professionals to consider young people as children first. It remains important that we understand trauma when we describe and respond to harmful and criminal behaviours. At the same time, boundaries and sanctions are a necessary part of adolescent development, so a balance has to be explored between safeguarding and enforcement.

What is restorative practice?

Restorative practice is a way of working with conflict that focuses on repairing the harm that has been done. This approach to conflict resolution involves all parties including those affected by harm.In criminal justice, restorative practice is widely known as restorative justice. Restorative justice gives victims the chance to meet or communicate with offenders to explain the real impact of the crime – it empowers victims by giving them a voice. It also holds those who have offended to account for what they have done and helps them to take responsibility and make amends.

Using restorative approaches in work with young people

Restorative practice in early intervention aims to keep young people out of the criminal justice system. This can include the use of restorative practice in schools, care homes and the community, as well as in crime prevention activity. By supporting and challenging young people to deal with conflict in a constructive way, restorative approaches can help them to avoid contact with the criminal justice system. This both improves their life chances and reduces demand on police.

Restorative approaches teach an understanding of others' feelings and the ability to connect and communicate successfully. They enable young people to think about how to respond to challenging situations and enable young people to build trust and develop more mature responses to a difficult situation. Children can take these skills into adult life (Restorative Justice Council, 2018)

How can restorative approaches be used in care homes?

The use of restorative practice with young people is increasingly prevalent in care homes, where its benefits can be particularly clear. Young people in residential care are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, with incidents that take place in this setting more likely to be reported to the police. A restorative approach can deal with incidents in a way that resolves the situation positively without recourse to the police.

How can restorative approaches be used in schools?

A restorative school is one which takes a restorative approach to resolving conflict and preventing harm. These approaches enable those who have been harmed to convey the impact of the harm to those responsible, and for those responsible to acknowledge this impact and take steps to put it right. A range of methods and strategies can be used both to prevent relationship-damaging incidents from happening and to resolve them if they do happen. There is more information on restorative approaches in schools on below.

Pan-london developments

Pan-London approaches in Youth Justice are being developed including:

London Accommodation Pathfinder (LAP) is for children with a custodial sentence to avoid the need for secure accommodation. LAP is an innovative and joint approach committed to developing a new alternative to custody for 16-17 year olds in London. This project directly addresses the over-representation of London children in custody and particularly the disproportionately high number of black and minority ethnic young people in custody. The project aims to improve outcomes for the young people and reduce re-offending through intensive support provided through a psychologically informed approach, integrated with local authority services.

London Resettlement Partnership (LRP) is a new, innovative and joint approach committed to improving the resettlement experience for young people and presenting real opportunities that support their return to the community. With a partnership consisting of the Association of London Directors of Children's Services, The Youth Justice Board, MOPAC, Youth Offending Institutions and other key strategic partners, this work will shape and drive a more effective resettlement approach and develop practice that reduces reoffending.

Opportunities for collaborative assessment with young people in the youth justice system

YJB introduced the assessment framework, AssetPlus, to support information gathering and case management for work with children. However, some local youth offending teams have reported limitations in using the framework (Rand 2019).

Over recent years, a number of local authorities (including some in London) have tested alternative assessment methods that provide opportunities for collaboration between Youth Justice and Children's and Families services teams.

Key features of good practice found in alternative approaches to assessment and planning:

Systemic models to understand the contexts of offending and harms. These include genograms and ecomaps to gather information. These tools create opportunities for more involvement of young people and families, and for better quality information-gathering, analysis and reflection.

Strengths and outcomes focus to support development of self-esteem, resilience and capability with young people and their families, as well as understanding harms. This approach allows professionals to collaborate with young people and families toward common goals.

Alignment with children's social care assessment for the development of a common practice framework and language to support consistency and coordination.

Building and sustaining relationships with young people and their families, through a shared assessment experience that creates a stronger foundation for desistance.

Training to support professional development includes systemic, strength-based, and restorative ideas, as well as developing reflexivity and use of practice tools.

Quality of practice is improved, and professional ownership and engagement in a child-first, systemic and relationship-based approach. Supervisors are able to gain insight and overview and support professionals with self-reflexivity and holding 'safe uncertainty'. See **PART FIVE** for reflective practice, supervision and safe uncertainty.

Questions for leaders

What do your quality assurance processes tell you about assessment in youth justice?

How joined up are your assessment processes between youth justice and children's social care?

What are the opportunities for improvement and collaboration to safeguard children in the youth justice and children's services from harm?

A multi-agency response to gangs, violence and child exploitation: examples from around London

In the last few years, local areas across London are testing new service models with a mix of non-statutory services. These models bring together staff from the local authority and the police to create responses to gang-related violence and the exploitation of children, young people and young adults.

Different approaches and configurations are being tested to identify vulnerable children, to create safety in their lives through place-based interventions, and to share information, intelligence and practice to prevent further harm to others.

Structure:

- Multi-agency services are situated in either Children's Social Care or Community Safety within a local authority, reporting to senior managers, such as Head of Exploitation, Assistant Directors of Children's Social Care, or Practice Leaders.
- A combination of a police team, a coordinated response team and an outreach team make up an integrated multi-agency service, typically including experienced youth professionals who can deliver detached work.
- Some areas have implemented co-located teams that feature coordinated planning roles who do not deliver direct work with young people and families. These teams work alongside experienced youth professionals who build safety with young people and families, including detached youth work and planning in places and spaces.

Age range: services work with young people in the age range 10 to 25, recognising harm to young adults 19 to 25

Target group: young people exposed to harm or those likely to be exposed to harm from gangs, violence and exploitation

Referral pathways: non-statutory direct referral to the multi-agency service, self-referrals are permitted, and MASH is kept in loop of activity being undertaken

Activities and offers:

- **Track young people who have indicators of harm**, such as welfare issues, care experience, mental health, missing, problematic and/or harmful sexual behaviour, victims of crime, violence, exploitation and/or County Lines, involved in criminal and youth justice system
- **Score young people based on vulnerability indicators** across a range of criteria and create scoring reports for joint planning and action with young people. Scores are presented in reports that are used at strategic and operational meetings to jointly plan responses.
- **Youth work practice and youth justice expertise** to coordinate safety planning and build relationships with young people involved in gangs or organised criminal groups (**CPS 2021**)
- **Draw on place-based intelligence** and information from a wider range of sources including transport, business, retail, parks, leisure and so on.
- **Contextual safeguarding to** explore influence of places, spaces, and communities outside of home, and work with education, community settings and and other agency partners to build safety in places and spaces where young people are exposed to harm.
- **Systemic models of practice** to explore family and relationships and in response to adversity and trauma. Some areas

have a systemic therapist or another clinical practitioner within the service to support other staff with systemic approaches.

- **Multi-agency relationships** with local authority, health and community agencies to oversee the support that is in place for young people, their families and local communities

- **Contribute to panel meetings**: care leaver placement, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, cuckooing, serious violence, and youth justice, out of court disposal panel, etc.

- **Contribute to violence reduction partnership** and community safety in the local area and region.
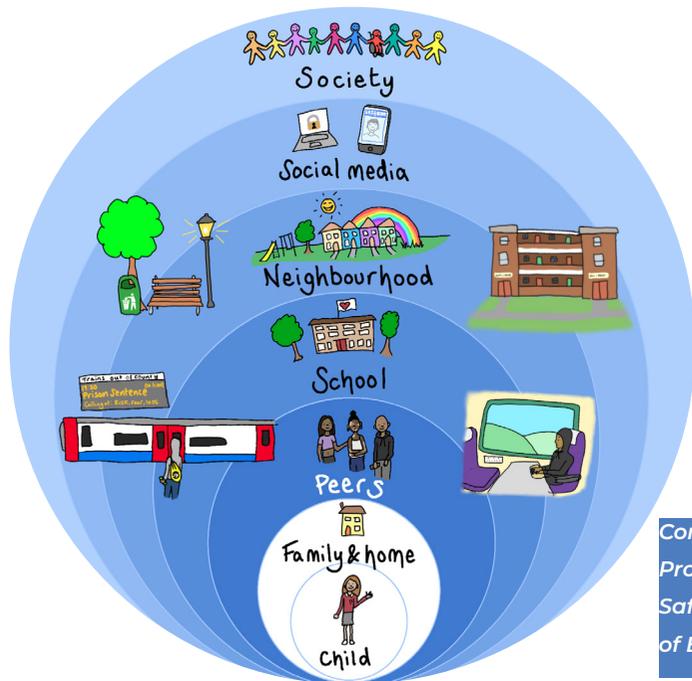
Contextual model adapted from the work of Professor Carlene Firmin and the Contextual Safeguarding research teams at University of Bedfordshire and Durham University

Questions for leaders about multi-agency arrangements and transitional safeguarding

In the context of extra-familial harms, which may involve young people as victims *and* as potential perpetrators of exploitation, abuse or violence, Transitional Safeguarding approaches not only challenge how we think of young people and young adults in transition, but also how we define concepts of *safeguarding*. […] (Huegler and Rush 2021)

- 'In your local partnership, how do you respond to vulnerable young adults exposed to exploitation, abuse and violence?
- What are the data and lived experience of young adults telling you?
- What are the opportunities to explore safeguarding approaches with 18–25-year-olds?
- How would a multi-agency service featuring co-located staff from police and local authority support you to prevent more young adults from harm?'

Collaborative safety planning with young people

Safety planning depends on collaboration between young people, professionals, families, and community. The diagram below lists some best practice advice on how to maintain a collaborative approach and how children's social care, heath, police, and youth offending teams can include peer groups, schools, neighbourhood, and social media in your collaborative assessments.

Safety mapping

What information is gathered about groups of young people, places, spaces, and neighbourhoods?

What is the source of this information and are there any gaps that can be followed up, including about building safety as well as preventing harm?

Case consultations

What information is gathered from case consultations, or 'team around the young person' meetings?

Can you include information about places, spaces, and neighbourhoods to support partners agencies to think about safety planning with the young person?

Questions for leaders about peer groups, places, spaces, and neighbourhoods

Return home interviews

What information is gathered from RHIs about groups, places, spaces and neighbourhoods?

Have young people been involved in design of the interview scripts for your local RHIs? How can you draw lived experiences of young people into safety planning?

Operational panels

What information is gathered from early intervention panels about young people exposed to harms?

How can you encourage all partners to share and assess the quality of information to support safety planning for and with young people?

Contextual Safeguarding Scale-Up Toolkit

Contextual Safeguarding team at Durham University have developed the **Scale-Up Tookit**, with resources to start thinking about creating a Contextual Safeguarding system. **There are further resources around safety planning using a Contextual Safeguarding approach.**

Follow this link to explore the resources.

Building safety with young people placed out of local area

The following protocol for building safety with young people placed out of local area features a series of proposals to local system leaders. These proposals are for exploration and commitment with the intention of creating a region-wide commitment.
Following consultation with Directors of Children's Services, Practice Leaders, and their system partners, we will seek to ratify the protocol for London-wide action.

Thank you to professionals working with young people in East London for attending a workshop in March 2022 to develop the ideas on this page.

Real experiences of children moving across local area boundaries.

- Minimal or no involvement in decision making about the placement out of home local authority

- Fear of displacement, rejection, out-of-sight-out-of-mind, thrown into the 'too hard' pile and forgotten,

- Feeling blamed and described as the cause of problems, pushed out of school, home, community and safety

- Loss of sense of community or network especially when support or services are

not available in new area

- Housing issues: young person wants to stay with home area, but local area wants to place them out of borough due to lack of available housing

- Feeling indifferent to the change due to having experienced transitions previously

- Anger toward adults who have not protected them from harm whether family, support networks or professional

- Having to tell stories of adversity or harm multiple times

- Being launched into the unknown without familiar supports: new home, school, and peers and facing complicated service systems in the transition from one local area to another

- Breakdown in communication between professionals and parents and carers, causing young person confusion, frustration, anger, and disappointment

- There is a disconnect in direct support and access to services from one area to the next, and young people may lose support that they relied on in the previous area. For example, there may be fewer CAMHS services available.

- Feeling less safe or being exposed to

more harms in the new local area, and could contribute to expanding County Lines exploitation to that area

- Young person is not known to police in the new local area and may not be stopped as frequently although this can also be an issue, as this may prevent safety

- Don't see local authority boundaries and gravitate back to familiar, associating with people and places they know

Questions for leaders

- How many children from your local area are placed out of borough each year?
- How many children from other local areas are placed in your borough each year?
- How does your local partnership build safety with and around these young people?

London protocol for young people who move between local areas

The protocol is for all children, young people and young adults who move between Local Authority areas. The protocol is not about children who go missing from school, home or care. It can be read usefully alongside the London Child Exploitation Operating Protocol 2021.

Young people experience transitions to new local areas for several different reasons, such as:

- Individual young person who is looked after by a local authority and moved to a regulated residential placement out of that local authority area due to lack of suitable or safe regulated placements within that area

- Individual young person placed in a different local area due to safety issues and exposure to harm, including criminal exploitation and/or serious group violence in places and spaces in the home local area

- Individual young person with complex care and support needs moved to a local area where there is a settings or services with appropriate facilities available

- Whole family moved to a new local area due to young person and/or family members being involved in criminal exploitation and/or serious group violence in places and spaces in a home local authority area

These decisions might be ordered by a court or by a department within a local authority, or by a multi-agency panel that allocates out-of-area placements.

PROPOSAL:

OUR PLEDGE: EVERY YOUNG LONDONER MATTERS

Ideas contributed by professionals in East London have been augmented below with important work undertaken by Contextual Safeguarding Team at University of Bedfordshire and Durham University Securing Safety project (**CST 2021**).

London local authorities make a pledge to all young Londoners:

We put your welfare and safety first in all circumstances.

All young people and young adults matter, including all those who experience adversity and harm, and all those who have caused harm to others: we don't run out of empathy.

You will be involved in all our decisions and updates about their transition, with attention to the emotional impact of transition on the young person and their network. (CST 2021)

We adhere to shared principles in practice across and between London local authorities, and we recognise the crucial roles and responsibilities of agency partners that sit outside of statutory safeguarding framework, such as all organisations that work with young people in the voluntary and private sectors.

AMBITION:

Outcomes for children who move across boundaries

London local areas work together across local safeguarding partnerships and with young Londoners, who are supported to:

- **Move to a new local area is a last resort** that creates opportunities for safety, and is always carefully considered, and is chosen after other options have been exhausted (CST 2021)

- **Build safety** in a new place, reduce exposure to harm, and exploitation in peer groups, places, and spaces. (CST 2021)

- **Get a fresh start:** break away from harmful associations, pull factors, stigma, and violence. Perhaps create a new identity. In the right circumstances, with the right team around the young person, a move can be a legitimate safety measure.

- **Build new positive relationships** with carers, peers and make new connections

with people, places, and professionals in the new local community. (CST 2021)

- **Develop a sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem** through enduring relationships with professionals
- **Access new education, training, and employment opportunities** for future life chances (CST 2021)

These outcomes are supported when:

Family network is supported by professionals with the fresh start (if moving with the young person)

Return to the former local area (if possible) is prepared for and supported by the team around the young person and family who help to build safety in that area

Services and key people in the young person's life communicate effectively and share information about needs, including working across local authority boundaries to create seamless transition of support.

PROPOSAL:
SETTING UP CROSS AREA AGREEMENTS

London local safeguarding partners commit to data and intelligence sharing agreements across and between areas to understand the patterns, trends and insights regarding adolescent safeguarding, extra-familial harm,

exploitation and what might be happening at regional, subregional, and local area levels, and

Use Multi-agency child exploitation (MACE) panels in local areas for strategic oversight, analysis, planning, reporting and coordination of safe transitions.

Use multi-agency safeguarding hubs MASH) and child exploitation panels (or local area equivalent) for operational oversight where children are harmed by sexual, criminal and other forms of exploitation. We commit to transfer of relevant information to a new area to support safety planning.

Include partners from all relevant agencies in information sharing agreements including education, health, housing, police, probation, and UK border agency with the challenge to work together across and between sectors.

Set up a cross-area agreement for two or more areas setting out arrangements for safety and welfare planning, including:

- Young person's voice, consent and lived experience,
- Children's social care information, including children who have been known, but do not currently have a social worker.
- Health information including GP, CAMHS and other relevant clinical

information
- Education information from mainstream and out-of- mainstream (AP/PRU) settings
- Information from police and complex BCU and systems
- Other relevant services information.
- Consideration of different case management systems (Mosaic, Liquid Logic, Azeus, ChildView, etc)
- Secure data transfer protocols to prevent data breach

- **Agree timescales for communication between local areas** with milestones understood by two or more local authorities involved with standards set for safety and welfare
- **Allocate a single transition coordinator from each local area** to oversee quality and timeliness of information gathering, information sharing and communication between areas about a young person or young adult transition.
- **Home area to send a child community safety plan on a standard regional template** with all information about the young person's journey, including strengths, protective factors, concerns, lengths of previous placements and level of support needed. This should be in line with adolescent safeguarding principles, demonstrating that every young Londoner matters, and go beyond legislative duties.

- **Agreement that home local areas will withdraw from transition** if expectations and support cannot be agreed, and because a safe and supportive transition cannot be achieved.

Local leaders can make use of the service system and panel analysis models on page 57 and page 58 of this handbook for comparison and benchmarking.

ARRANGEMENTS TO SUPPORT SAFE TRANSITION

Local areas commit to working in partnership and:

- **Continuity in support prepared before transition** including links to named professional for young person and family via transition coordinator in home area linked to coordinator in new area.

- **Sustain professional network and communication** between areas to respond to children who are still spending time in home area: reality is that "boundaries" between local areas may not be recognised by young people.

- **'Buddy borough' arrangements in every London area** with allocated 'fresh start' workers to support young people through the transition introduce young people to housing, shops, amenities and services everyone working in the

adolescent safeguarding offer to support links between buddy boroughs.

- **Welcome pack built around regional template** to including fresh start information, supports, as well as tips on safety, welfare, and what to expect from professional network.

PROPOSAL:
REGIONAL & SUB-REGIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

- **Sub-regional or regional transition mentoring scheme** that all local areas can access - young people who have experienced the fragmented system who could mentor/advise other young people. Recognising the pull and push factors in grooming which stop young people from building enduring relationships with professionals

- **Allocate regional and sub-regional roles and responsibilities f**or out of area placements and transitions.

- **Inter-area community of practice on transitions** to build relationships and work on consistency of information sharing, roles and responsibilities, transition coordination, safety planning, support offer in each area, desistance

activities, education, and VCFS networks.

- Meetings troubleshoot common transition problems and set reports to local panels.

- **Secure sign off from DCS in each London local area at sub-regional level** with review and agreement to policy and financial arrangements within statutory frameworks for each local authority area, consulting with legal and finance partners in the process.

- **Regular mapping exercise and monitoring to compare and align transfer protocols** including regional and sub-regional monitoring

- Availability and quality of residential placements, considering impact of implementation of Ofsted regulations.

- Availability and quality of alternative education providers who can provide support and build safety in the lives of young people

- Transfer of education, health, and care plans (EHCPs) and support arrangements

- Transfer of CAMHS support and other clinical services for health and care needs, including Personal Health Budgets

- Comparison of costs of youth detention accommodation and alignment with pathfinder work at London regional level

Adolescent safeguarding in education

Whole school approach to restorative practice

To be effective, restorative approaches must be in place across the school. This means all pupils, staff (including non-teaching staff), management and the wider school community must understand what acting restoratively means and how they can do it. As a result, restorative schools adopt a whole-school approach to restorative methods.

The evidence

There is good evidence that restorative practice delivers a wide range of benefits for schools.

A **report** published by the Department for Education gave whole-school restorative approaches the highest rating of effectiveness at preventing bullying, with a survey of schools showing 97% rated restorative approaches as effective.

An independent **evaluation** of restorative justice in Bristol schools found that restorative justice improved school attendance and reduced exclusion rates.

In **Barnet**, an evaluation by the local authority found a reduction in exclusions of 51% in restorative justice trained schools compared to a 65% increase in exclusions in the thirty two Barnet schools that have received no restorative justice training. They also found increased confidence among school staff to deal with bullying and conflicts in the school.

(**Restorative practice in schools | Restorative Justice Council**)

A whole school, whole place approach to reducing school exclusion

The evidence is strong that children who are permanently excluded from mainstream education are significantly more likely to be exposed to extra-familial harms, such as violence, criminal exploitation and County Lines (Just for Kids Law 2020, Child Safeguarding practice Review Panel 2020, Research in Practice 2021, Wood 2021).

Since publishing their report Pinball Kids (RSA 2020), a Royal Society of Arts research programme (RSA 2021) has continued to explore how local areas can support nurturing, inclusive approaches that reduce school exclusion. They have published a toolkit of findings (RSA 2021). RSA findings and aligned with research aims currently being carried out by Oxford University under the Excluded Lives project (2020), and also with the themes of this handbook:

- **Trauma-informed policy and practice** across education settings schools supported by local area collaboration
- **Ongoing professional development for school staff** in ACEs, trauma, emotional wellbeing, mental health relational and inclusive practice
- **Improvements to multi-agency collaborative working** between schools, AP settings, local authorities, health, social care, housing, youth services, youth justice and adult services
- **Adopting relationship-based approaches** with children, young people and families that build on understanding of emotional wellbeing and relationships with whole families
- **Supporting education leaders to create inclusive school cultures** and sharing models of practice across sectors to create whole-place inclusive cultures

The following elements of policy and practice are being explored by local areas across London to break the link between school exclusion, exploitation and other harms:

- Education settings updating 'behaviour' policies to create trauma-informed, inclusive, relational policies with an understanding of adversity and extra-familial harm

- Data analysis of children permanently excluded from mainstream schools and/or educated at alternative education provision to identify opportunities for earlier intervention based on:
  - special education needs
  - emotional wellbeing and mental health
  - adversity and social welfare factors
  - age, gender, ethnicity, and deprivation

- School-led projects to tackle racism, disproportionality in sanctions, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia and other lived experiences of structural discrimination

- School-to-school peer challenge and support on inclusive and relational practice

Restorative response to conflict in lessons

Responding calmly to a moment of disruption is critical to maintaining a restorative approach in the classroom. Children bring disagreements and conflict into class, and teachers must respond quickly to return the class to the learning task.

"**DELAY.** Now is the not the time – learning ime is too valuable – but there might be time at the end of the lesson/at the end of the day

DIVERT. Separate the children for the lesson/session so they have space to think about other things – that is, space to be distracted by others or space so you can get to them should it spark off again.

DIVE INTO THE WORK. Don't allow their behaviour to be the talk of your lesson. Keep the work as the focus and submerge the bickering by learning about something far more interesting."

After the Adults Change, p72, Paul Dix

Restorative conversations after school consequences

A restorative conversation to hear the voice of the young person and set the terms of reintegration should follow consequences including suspensions (previously known as fixed period exclusion or FPEs) and it is also good practice to hold restorative conversations after brief removal to an inclusion classroom.

The restorative conversation is focused on understanding emotions that led to the situation, which means that as soon as it is possible, the teacher – or another member if staff, if appropriate – seeks to find out the young person's views on what has happened, what they were thinking about and feeling when it happened and who was affected by the behaviour.

When restorative conversations are used as part of a consequence of serious breach of school rules, they can contribute – alongside inclusion classrooms - to avoiding the need for suspensions altogether.

Benefits of suspensions

Teaches the student that negative behaviours have consequences

Removes the struggling student from the classroom or school environment for a short time

Reduces the classroom disruption for other students

Takes pressure off the teacher

Issues with suspensions

Sustains stigma and labelling of students

Reinforce attention and status for 'bad student' image

Temporary approach without lasting effects

Those who were disrupted get little from the process

Lack of accountability for student

Not used to teach anything,

FPE can expose vulnerable students to risk outside of school including criminal exploitation

(Adapted from Hacking School Discipline, Maynard & Winstein, 2019)

A trauma-informed approach in schools

Besel Van Der Kolk advised that "children from chaotic backgrounds often have no idea how people can effectively work together, and inconsistency only promotes further confusion" (2014, p353).

A trauma-informed approach must "translate the brain science into everyday practice" (Ibid) and provide a response via the behaviour policy that considers the specific needs and sensitivities of children who have experienced trauma. (Creating Trauma-Informed Systems | The National Child Traumatic Stress Network):

A school with a trauma-informed perspective is one in which schools:

- Routinely work with local agencies to understand the signs and symptoms of trauma exposure and related symptoms.
- Engage in efforts to strengthen the resilience and protective factors of children and families impacted by and vulnerable to trauma.
- Maintain an environment for staff that addresses, minimises, and treats secondary traumatic stress, and that increases staff wellness.

- Make resources available to children, families, and providers on trauma exposure, its impact, and treatment.

Taking the stigma out of seeking professional support, such as a GP, counsellor, therapist, or other sources of support. This approach works best when modelled by all senior leaders in school to encourage openness about emotional wellbeing and mental health.

School staff taking part in a range of self-care activities such as exercise, mindfulness, connecting with nature

Parental and community engagement and support can help to understand the needs of children and expand support that prevents children from experiencing crisis and traumatic events.

The wider system of local agencies and service providers (including alternative provision and clinical services) with a trauma-informed approach will:

- Address parent and caregiver trauma and its impact on the family system.
- Emphasise continuity of care and collaboration across service systems.

- Use evidence-based, culturally responsive assessment and treatment for traumatic stress and associated mental health symptoms.
- Build partnerships that create a sense of mutuality among children, families, and professionals at an individual and organisational level.
- Address intersections of trauma with culture, history, race, gender, location, and language, acknowledge the compound impact of structural inequity, and are responsive to the unique needs of diverse communities.

Youth work principles and trauma

Youth work principles are defined by the NYA:

"Ethical principles

Youth workers have a commitment to:

1. **Treat young people with respect**, valuing each individual and avoiding negative discrimination.

2. **Respect and promote young people's rights to make their own decisions and choices,** unless the welfare or legitimate interests of themselves or others are seriously threatened.

3. **Promote and ensure the welfare and safety of young people**, while permitting them to learn through undertaking challenging educational activities.

4. **Contribute towards the promotion of social justice** for young people and in society generally, through encouraging respect for difference and diversity and challenging discrimination.

Professional principles

Youth workers have a commitment to:

5. **Recognise the boundaries between personal and professional life** and be aware of the need to balance a caring and supportive relationship with young people with appropriate professional distance.

6. **Recognise the need to be accountable to young people**, their parents or guardians, colleagues, funders, wider society and others with a relevant interest in the work, and that these accountabilities may be in conflict.

7. **Develop and maintain the required skills** and competence to do the job.

8. **Work for conditions in employing agencies where these principles are discussed, evaluated and upheld.**

Trauma-informed approaches can be understood as consistent with the principles of youth work, as follows, adapted from:
Plymouth Trauma-Informed City:

- **Safety**: recovery from trauma occurs within relationships, families and communities, but also with supportive professionals. The role of those relationships is to provide physical and emotional safety and to bolster the courage to tolerate, face and process the reality of what has happened. Safe relationships build confidence, resilience, and trust in those affected by trauma. Each youth work interaction is an opportunity to show someone that they are valued and to help build self-esteem.

- **Young Person-Centred**: when building trusting relationships people need to be given choices in how services will be delivered and focus is placed on the outcomes that best meet their needs, rather than those that enable an agency or service outcome to be delivered. To be young-person centred means working with individuals and communities on their priorities, starting where they are at.

- **Kind**: The relationships we seek to establish can provide physical and emotional safety for those who have experienced trauma. A critical aspect of a trauma-informed approach is about avoiding judgement, having and understanding empathy, or simply being kind. These are crucial factors in creating connections and enhancing wellbeing with a young person.

- **Collaborative**: Working together and collaborating to achieve the best possible actions for those who use our services. Being trauma informed recognises that our own agencies and our multi-agency systems can also traumatise, particularly when multiple professionals are involved with a person or a family. Seeking the most proportionate and least intrusive interventions; avoiding where possible a narrow focus on single-agency.

outcomes; and focusing instead upon a fully coordinated, integrated and compassionate response in order to help people feel safe and supported.

- **Empowering**: In creating a sense of safety, being young-person centred, creating connection through empathy, and collaborating with young people to achieve the best outcomes, we seek to be empowering, helping young people to build resilience to support healing and move forward. In working with others, we become empowered to make a difference. (Hardwick, Moss & Shaw, 2019, p.14-19)

> **Why do you think that people sometimes don't notice when young people are exploited?**
>
> "Sometimes I sit there and wonder, how many helplines or types of support do I know that I could go to for something like this? Well, not many! I think all you can do is go the police, or if you're in social services, then maybe go to your social worker. But it's like, what can they do? They want you to 'fess up and then you could end up in a much worse situation, and targeted by the gang.
>
> Some young people say that they don't notice the signs, but I think they are probably just blocking it out, and not saying anything because in my experience, young people are aware, in this day in age, it's right there, it's right in your face."
>
> *Young Londoner*

Services for young people who identify as LGBTQ+

A 2022 briefing for Research in Practice advises that grounding our understanding about gender identity and sexuality in intersectional thinking enables us to appreciate the diversity of LGBTQ+ identities and the issues of oppression, privilege, discrimination and racism that position young people differently in society (**Marsh 2022**).

Barnardo's (2022) have also noted that:

- "There is little in the way of educational resources or general information that provides advice to LGBTQ+ young people about healthy relationships.
- Societal attitudes towards sexual relationships among LGBTQ+ people can result in unhealthy or unsafe sexual relationships being accepted as 'normal'.
- Professionals should only share information about a young person's sexuality and gender identity if the young person has agreed that they can do this. Agreement should also be reached on those individuals with whom this information may be shared.
- Possible sexual exploitation in lesbian and trans relationships should be given equal consideration as sexual exploitation within male gay relationships.
- LGBTQ+ communities might be reluctant to talk about or acknowledge exploitation for fear of exacerbating homo/bi/transphobia"

LGBTQ+ young people, grooming and online exploitation

All children and young people are potentially at risk of online grooming and exploitation, and all need support with digital literacy and safer use of social media.

There may be additional safety issues for young people who are exploring their gender identity and / or sexual orientation:
- Young people may use adult websites with content unsuitable for their age as they may think it is an easier way to explore their sexuality, remain anonymous or feel accepted and not-judged.
- When someone feels the need to hide their sexuality and / or gender identity this is a vulnerability that may be exploited.
- Young people may be particularly susceptible to online exploitation due

to feeling socially isolated and wanting to fit in, or to please new or established 'friendships'. In some cases, these virtual connections can lead to an increased risk of exploitation, including the sharing of indecent images (Stonewall, 2020b).

- 'Young people might be at risk of being 'outed' through the content they share or use, or someone could use the threat of 'outing' them as a means of exploiting them' *(Marsh 2022)*

Galop provides services for LGBTQ+ young people who have experienced abuse and violence.

Young people from racially minoritized communities

Conscious and unconscious bias can lead professionals not taking child protection concerns about children from minority ethnic communities as seriously as they might do for children from other communities. Professionals might dismiss certain behaviours or practices as being part of that community's culture and as a result not take the necessary protective action (IICSA, 2020).

Some professionals might worry about being perceived as culturally insensitive or racist if they raise concerns about children in racially minoritised communities. This can also lead to them ignoring child protection concerns (IICSA, 2020; SCRA, 2017). Because they are worried about stereotyping, some people might try not to acknowledge another person's race or ethnicity. Professionals might believe this helps them treat everyone equally and take an 'everyone's welcome' approach.

But this can result in professionals attempting to apply only a 'universal' approach to all families, without considering or finding out about parenting practices and beliefs in the child's family and culture (SCRA, 2017). This can prevent professionals from asking open questions about a child's lived experiences, building up a picture of the child's life and identifying any concerns.

Local services must take up an explicitly anti-racist approach in working to build safety and support with young people from racially minoritised communities.

White privilege and unconscious bias

White privilege is the innate advantage White people have within society solely based on their race. This can manifest in a vast variety of ways. The term does not discount the challenges White people have faced but describes the reality that,

although White people and people of all races can have similar negative and disadvantageous experiences, White people will not suffer the biases of race in addition. ([The Law Society 2022](#))

For example, professionals may sometimes have preconceived concerns about whether a child's parents or carers are legal immigrants. By focusing on the parents' residency rather than their child's welfare, professionals might not consider the lived experience of that child and miss indicators of abuse.

Unconscious bias might also lead professionals to interpret behaviour differently depending on the ethnicity of the person displaying it. For instance, if a child from minoritised ethnic community shows fear around a family member, this may be interpreted as a cultural expression of respect rather than an indicator of abuse (SCRA, 2017).

Professionals might also have unconscious bias about who experiences different types of abuse, for example by connecting specific abuse types with specific groups of people. Without acknowledging and challenging these perceptions, professionals might overlook the risk to children who do not fit the stereotype.

Questions for professionals who work directly with young people

CHILD-FIRST + TRAUMA-INFORMED + CONTEXTUAL
What are the circumstances of young people who present disruptive or harmful behaviour toward their peers, in school, in the community or on social media?

STRENGTH-BASED + LIVED EXPERIENCE + SAFETY PLANNING
How can you plan your work with young people to engage with them using a strength-based approach?
How can you help young people to deal with conflict and build safety in these contexts in a constructive way?

Questions for leaders

RELATIONSHIPS-BASED + RESTORATIVE
What are the benefits and challenges for your partnership to introducing more relationship-based practice with families and restorative practice with young people?

COLLABORATION + LEARNING
What would help your partnership to overcome these challenges and gain benefits of implementing evidence-informed approaches?

5

Part 5 **REFLECTION** learning across boundaries.

PART 5: REFLECTION: learning across boundaries

Part five of this handbook is about reflection, supervision and review. This part covers:

» **Reflective practice**

» **Attitudes, values and beliefs**

» **Supervision and safe uncertainty**

» **The need for reflective supervision**

» **Supporting professionals to prevent vicarious trauma**

» **Reflective exercise for safeguarding partnership**

» **A maturity framework for adolescent safeguarding**

» **Further reflections on developing a whole-place culture for adolescent safeguarding**

Illustration by Juliet Young

Reflective practice

Reflection on conversations and actions with young people, with families and with other professionals can help professionals to better understand and overcome the barriers to engagement and building relationships. Reflective practice is a skill you can explore in line management, with your peers or with a supervisor from outside your agency. Reflection can help you to explore an event and the thoughts and feelings you have about what happened.

You may consider your own response, the response from others, and any other factors that influence an event. When you explore your behaviour and your relationships with young people in this way, you can begin to learn more from your experiences.

Reflective learning cycle

A significant part of professional learning and development happens in the course of working with young people and families. The reflective learning cycle helps professionals to take a structured approach to learning from experience:
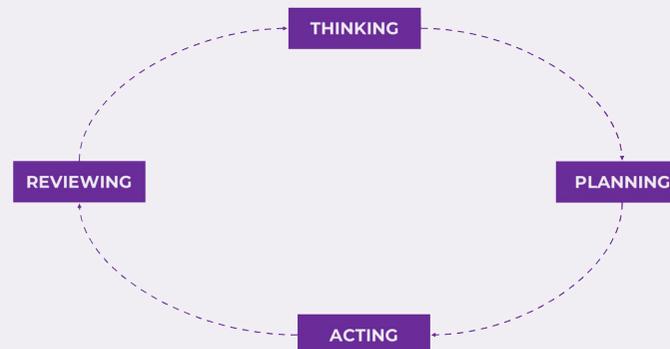
Kolb (1984) as adapted by Hawkins and McMahon (2020)

You may find that the event you explore does not match with your previous ideas or beliefs. If the outcome of an event was not expected, you can explore what might have changed the outcome if you had behaved differently. Reflection is an ongoing process throughout your work

with young people and can be used in any discipline and at any level of need. Reflective practice is not just for social care and mental health workers and can be applied by any practitioner in informal settings, as well as during formal supervision.

Learning short circuits

Peter Hawkins and Aisling McMahon (2020) have developed a model based on the reflective learning cycle above, that identifies stuck learning patterns that can happen for leaders, managers and professionals working with young people.

In summary:

Fire fighting: the professional is stuck at the level of trial and error and does not reflect on practice.

Post-mortemizing: the professional is stuck in error correction, and does not involve effective thinking and planning.

Navel-gazing: the professional is stuck in theorizing, and never puts ideas into a plan of action.

Paralysis by analysis: the professional is stuck in fear of getting things wrong and/or fear of uncertainty.

Totalitarian: the professional is stuck thinking in private, then imposing action, without collaborative planning or review.
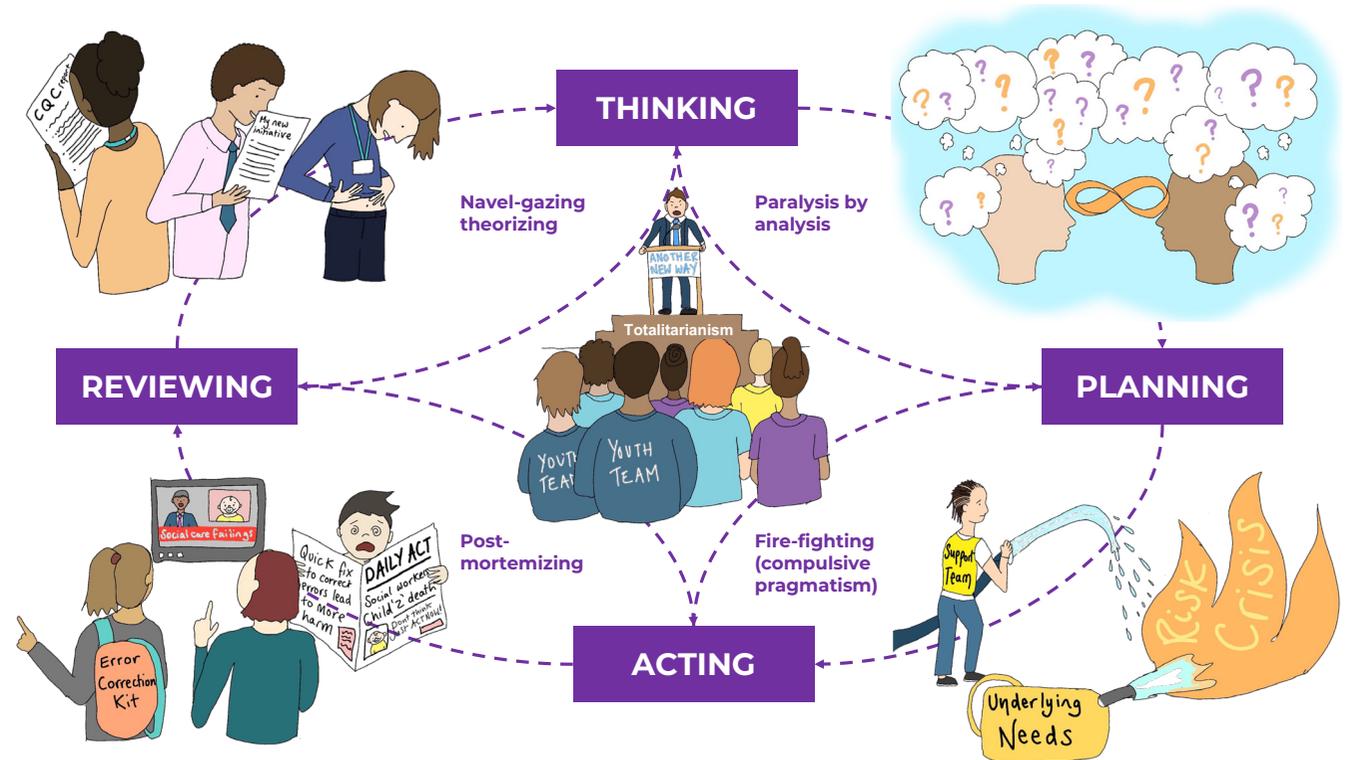
Kolb (1984) as adapted by Hawkins and McMahon (2020)

Illustrations by Juliet Young.

Attitudes, values and beliefs

Your attitudes and beliefs can act as a barrier that prevents young people from accessing the support they need. Investigations into high-profile child exploitation cases have highlighted how professional attitudes and beliefs about those who have suffered harm contribute to systemic failings in safeguarding young people.

Young people experience different barriers to engaging with professionals, and professionals will not always be able overcome the barriers. It may be that the ethnicity, gender and/or age of a professional lead a young person to feel they cannot identify with. A young person with SEND, from a racially minority group or who identifies as LGBTQ+ may feel that a professional does not understand their lived experiences, or has a negative attitude.

To overcome these barriers and to maximise opportunities for young people to engage with services, professionals must be aware of their own emotional experiences, attitudes, values, beliefs, privilege and cultural positioning and the impact these factors may have on professional relationships.

Reflective supervision with managers or peers in a one-to-one or group setting can be an effective way to examine some of these factors and the effects they may be having in building relationships with young people. Experiential learning activities can support professional development and reflective capabilities.

Supervision, safe uncertainty and young people

Ideas like child-first, extra-familial harm and professional certainty can be reviewed and explored during supervision. Reflective questions can help supervisors to consider how they can support professionals who work directly with young people to understand harms, assess risk factors in places, spaces and communities, and support safety planning.

The concept of 'safe uncertainty' is used in relationship-based and systemic practice. The concept was coined by Barry Mason, a systemic family therapist, and is used to hold reflective conversations about harm and likelihood of harm. The diagram on this page and on page 114 will help professionals to critically reflect on safety with young people, and supports child

work with young people and families and to explore what their first approaches to safeguarding, own perceptions of harm, harmful dynamics, and how much anxiety from uncertainty professionals can cope with.

Questions for leaders

Professionals, managers and leaders must consider how to safeguard a young person who is exposed to harm, or who has harmed others. Reflective supervision is a safe conversation to explore thoughts and feelings about the balance between safety and enforcement.

Does your agency have supervision policy based in systemic and relational practice?

How can your partnership introduce systemic approaches to collaborative work that build safety with young people, and supports child first approaches to safeguarding?

Unsafe uncertainty
Hopeless, having a problem and feeling there is no solution.

Unsafe certainty
Having a problem but being clear what is causing it and what will solve it.

Safe certainty
That the problem can be solved or is solvable, that risk can be eradicated.

Safe uncertainty
Is not fixed and is always in a state of flow and exploration with multiple explanations for the problem and the solution.
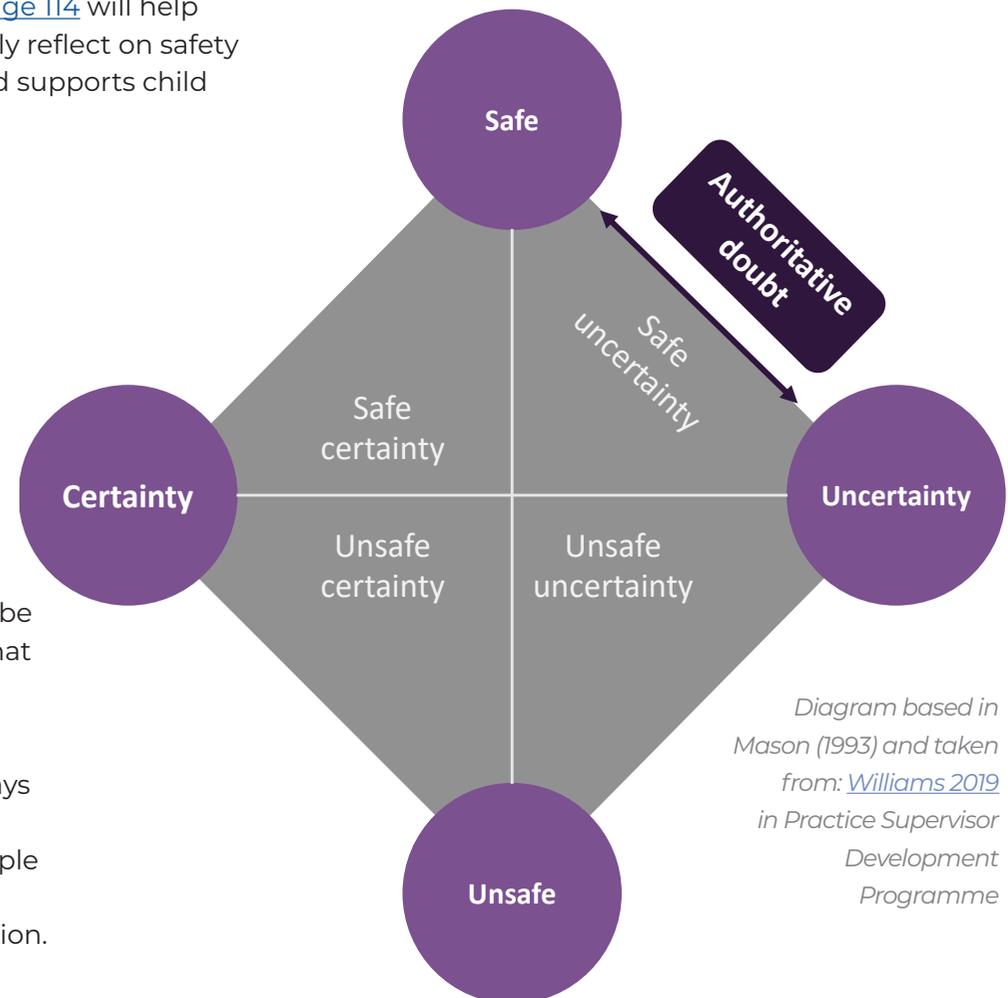

Diagram based in Mason (1993) and taken from: Williams 2019 in Practice Supervisor Development Programme

The need for reflective supervision

Professionals who support young people who have experienced trauma are at risk of vicarious trauma. Vicarious trauma is an aspect of any profession that involves caring for others and can be more acute for professionals who work with traumatised children. Empathising with clients is vital, but can mean that professionals take on trauma. To remain effective and to get the best possible outcomes for traumatised children, professionals must have access to support they need to protect themselves (Vicarious trauma: NSPCC 2013).

Secondary Trauma or Compassion Fatigue

Refers to the presence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms caused by at least one indirect exposure to traumatic material. Compassion fatigue is a less stigmatizing way to describe secondary traumatic stress, and is used interchangeably with the term.

Burn out

This is characterised by emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced feelings of accomplishment. While it is also work-related, burn out develops due to general occupational stress; the term is not used to describe effects of indirect trauma exposure.

Identifying signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma

One way to prevent the onset of vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue is to be able to spot the signs and symptoms in staff. Staff showing any of the following signs and symptoms (list not exhaustive) may need extra support to address the impact of their practice on their wellbeing:

Social withdrawal	Sleep disturbances	Difficulty managing boundaries
Mood swings	Cynicism (and blaming young people for abuse they have experienced)	Physical health impacts e.g. frequently ill
Aggression		
Greater sensitivity to violence/abuse		
Somatic symptoms	Intrusive imagery	

Professionals may also experience reduced professional capacity. Performance levels may be affected, ability to relate to clients may be diminished and morale may suffer. It is in practice leaders, supervisors and managers' interests to actively prevent the onset of these states.

Reflection: supporting professionals to prevent the onset of vicarious trauma

Good practice examples for actively supporting professionals to prevent the onset of vicarious trauma include:

- Access to reflective supervision i.e. supervision not target or performance-driven, either on a one-to-one or peer group basis
- Increase your self-observation - recognise and chart your signs of stress, vicarious trauma and burnout.
- Take care of yourself emotionally - engage in relaxing and self-soothing activities, nurture self-care.
- Look after your physical and mental wellbeing.
- Maintain a healthy work/life balance - have outside interests.
- Be realistic about what you can accomplish - avoid wishful thinking.
- Don't take on responsibility for your patients' wellbeing but supply them with tools to look after themselves.
- Balance your caseload - mix of more and less traumatised clients, victims and non-victims.

- Take regular breaks, take time off when you need to.
- Seek social support from colleagues, family members.
- Use a buddy system - particularly important for less experienced doctors.
- Use peer support and opportunities to debrief.
- Take up training opportunities.
- If you need it, take up time-limited group or individual therapy.
- There are also significant organisational factors that can increase the risk of a person being vicariously traumatised, which should be assessed and addressed.

Quality assurance questions for leaders

- Have you developed a sense of what 'good' and 'outstanding' look like at each level of your whole-place approach to adolescent safeguarding including.
- Have you reviewed your strategic and operational meetings with attention to building safety in peer groups, places and spaces?
- How are your independent scrutiny arrangements focused on adolescent safeguarding? Have you received feedback?
- Are the voices of children and their families helping inform your responses and your quality assurance?

Reflection for local partners: emerging themes from ALDCS London Adolescent Safeguarding Group

Regional adolescent safeguarding ambition	Learning questions for local safeguarding children partnerships
Leadership and governance: a pan-London shared strategic vision, strategic decision making and implementation across local areas and between partners, considering the interface between established working groups and boards. The strategy recognises that all young people are potentially vulnerable to harm, and also identifies specific approaches for some young people who are more likely to experience safeguarding concerns in adolescence.	• Is there a shared strategic vision for adolescent safeguarding? • How effective is strategic decision making between partners? • How effective are strategic boards in response to local problems? • How effective are operational meetings in building safety?
Models and structures: to enhance adolescent safeguarding and respond to build safety in places.	• Have system and practice leaders designed and implemented a shared framework for collaboration and practice that can be applied across boundaries of agency, discipline and sector?
Adolescent development, young people's voice & lived experience are at the centre of planning and framework for practice.	• How far does an understanding of adolescent development inform your local approach to adolescent safeguarding and to improve outcomes for and with young people? • To what extent is your local vision based on the lived experience of young people in your area and informed by their voice and participation?
Sharing Information, developing data and intelligence (locally, pan-London and with partners) including approaches to sharing information for young people and families moving between boroughs.	• Is there a data, information and intelligence sharing agreement that was co-designed by safeguarding partners, and any other agency partners? • Is there a protocol in place for working across local authority boundaries and building safety in the lives of children who move between local areas?

Regional adolescent safeguarding ambition	Learning questions for local safeguarding children partnerships
Disproportionality and racially minoritized groups: what are we going to do differently together with and for young black men and boys? Deprivation, discrimination and structural disadvantage increase the likelihood of experiencing harm and local partners pay attention to tackling the underpinning context for these children and families and ensure that safeguarding responses do not exacerbate underlying inequalities through overly intrusive or punitive interventions.	• Does data analysis about young people from different racially minoritized groups inform partnership strategy and commissioning? • Which children are predominantly affected in your area? • What is your response to your local dynamics? • Is disproportionality identified in school sanction and exclusion systems as well as in youth justice and children's social care?
Children missing: making responses to missing a safeguarding asset.	• How effective are responses to data and intelligence about missing children including return home interviews? • How effectively do inter-borough arrangements for missing children support learning and collaboration for safeguarding children from harm?
Developing practice in safeguarding young people The approach to young people reflects the practice framwork adopted by safeguarding partners, and recognises that impact will only thrive if the wider conditions for effective work with children and families are met.	• Is there a population-based approach to the needs of young people in the local area that informs prevention, early and late intervention responses? • How far do corporate structures and policies support the three safeguarding partners to develop and implement practice aligned to adolescent safeguarding principles?
Developing practice in response to serious youth violence – particularly where exploitation and crime meet and responding to the involvement of young children in sexual and criminal exploitation.	• Is there intelligence gathering, safety mapping and analysis about the groups, organisations, places and virtual spaces where young people are exposed to serious violence, exploitation and other harms? • Is there a multi-agency arrangement in place to oversee the effectiveness of responses to serious youth violence and exploitation?

Regional adolescent safeguarding ambition	Learning questions for local safeguarding children partnerships
Developing practice in creating inclusive education: inclusion in schools and AP settings, exclusion, managed moves, off-rolling, including quality of alternative provision and SEND interface	• Is there an approach for developing inclusive schools, reducing exclusion and improving access to and quality of alternative education provision? • How effective are joint arrangements for inclusive schools and reducing exclusion for children with SEND?
Identifying and sharing what works to improve outcomes across complex, contextual, and transitional safeguarding including in work with girls and young women	• What safeguarding arrangements are in place locally and between local areas to respond to situations of complex harm? • places, spaces and communities where young people are harmed or likely to be harmed? • the needs of vulnerable young people and young adults age 19 and over?
Enhancing practice workforce skills, capability and resilience	• Do you know the levels of risk your frontline staff are routinely managing? • Do you know how well they are supported and supervised in this work? • Have you articulated an approach to safety planning that is shared across all agencies? • Is there a learning and development plan for adolescent safeguarding shared by the local partnership? • Is there effort across the partnership to provide guidance on support, supervision and promoting workforce wellbeing?
Evaluation, independent scrutiny, and quality assurance	• Has the local partnership agreed quality assurance and evaluation frameworks to oversee adolescent safeguarding processes and measure impact on outcomes? • How are your independent scrutiny arrangements focused in this area of work? • Have you developed a sense of what 'good' looks like in this work? • Are the voices of children and their families helping inform your responses and your quality assurance?

Further reflections on developing a whole place culture: how we all do things here…

So, local system and practice leaders have…

✔ Reviewed the national, regional and local policy, evidence and guidance on adolescent safeguarding.

✔ Consulted with young people, families and community groups, creating opportunities to codesign our vision, values, principles and our new offer.

✔ Agreed the vision, values and principles with all partners, and gained political support from council leaders.

✔ Developed population analysis and joint problem profile to understand health, development, and harms in our area, and compared this with statistical neighbours, examining what other areas are doing in response to similar problems.

✔ Mapped the offer across the system in our area, identified assets, strengths, gaps, weaknesses and threats around policy and practice across different sectors and services.

✔ Worked with all partners to agree on a new framework for practice, based on the vision, values and principles.

✔ Drawn up a strategic programme to

create changes over a defined period and agreed a set of process and outcomes indicators to measure the impact of impact of our shiny new partnership strategy for adolescent safeguarding.

…but after one year, things are moving slowly, and…

✔ Professionals in social care, police and health are not developing the relational practice skills for direct work with young people and families, and there does not seem to be capacity in the system to build enduring relationships!

✔ Managers from all sectors are not contributing information to panel meetings, and agencies do not have capacity or experience to allocate workers who can attend meetings or build safety in places and spaces outside of the home!

✔ There is conflict and tension between partners and sectors!

…what's happening?! We thought we had it sorted!

Creating a whole-place culture is a journey…

Setting direction is only the beginning. Collaborative implementation of new approaches involves a committed process of relationship-building, appreciative enquiry, planning, action, review and learning between local leaders, managers and professionals. The improvement journey may take a number of years.

Questions for leaders

· How can people in senior roles be more visible, with opportunities to communicate vision and demonstrate values?

· How can you make sure that this includes leaders from adult services, education, housing, probation and community sector?

A template for maturity assessment of your adolescent safeguarding partnership strategy

	Basic	Early progress	Good progress	Mature	Score	Reflection and action
	Year 0	Year 1-2	Year 3-4	Year 5 onwar		
Collective leadership, vision, values, principles and practice framework	Collective commitment to action	25% of key indicators are in evidence	50% of key indicators are in evidence	75%+ of indicators are in evidence		
Lived experience, data analysis, & intelligence gathering						
Partnership offer to young people: prepare, prevent, protect, recover						
Workforce, learning, development and supervision						
Evaluation, monitoring quality assurance and independent scrutiny						
Power of collaboration.	**The stage, not the age.**	**Practice, places, spaces and communities.**	**Learning beyond boundaries**	**Child-first.**	
Collective leadership, vision, values, principles and practice framework	**Lived experience, data analysis, and intelligence gathering**	**Partnership offer to young people: prepare, prevent, protect, recover**	**Workforce, learning, development and supervision**	**Evaluation, monitoring quality assurance and independent scrutiny**	
Local indicators	Local indicators	Local indicators	Local indicators	Local indicators	

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