

## Adolescent Safeguarding in London in 2021

This paper identifies the key pan-London adolescent safeguarding activities planned by partner agencies for the next 12 months, in order to ensure these are aligned and can coalesce in a shared partnership approach. There will no doubt be activity not captured in this document which will subsequently need to be incorporated.

It is striking that there are numerous initiatives with common aims of seeing children involved in extra-familial harm as, first and foremost, children, who are vulnerable and require safeguarding responses. The key challenge will be to develop shared strategic and operational approaches that balance 'risks to' children with 'risk from' (often the same) children.

**London Child Exploitation Protocol:** due to be launched in March 2021 this MPS-led protocol is jointly owned by safeguarding partners. The protocol seeks to expand the existing Pan-London CSE Protocol to incorporate wider forms of exploitation, notably child criminal exploitation, to promote a consistent 'child-first' response across partners dealing with children who experience forms of exploitation. This shift in practice also has significant ramifications for associated work on reducing racial disparities.

**Adolescent Safeguarding Practice Framework (ASPF):** in the course of 2019 and early 2020 a range of senior children's services representatives from across London developed the ASPF as part of the ALDCS adolescent safeguarding priority programme. Engagement with multi-agency partners had begun in order to develop the framework as a shared partner response to safeguarding adolescents but has been put on hold because of the pandemic. The plan for 2021 is to return to shared development and implementation of the practice framework. The ASPF is available to download from our website [here](#).

**Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme (TCE):** this national programme sponsored by the Department for Education aims to promote more effective strategic responses to child exploitation across local and pan-London safeguarding partners. TCE is supported by a London-wide multi-agency steering group, which will oversee a range of activities to promote strategic join-up in relation to child exploitation. TCE offers external expertise and resource which can support activities such as embedding of the ASPF and Child Exploitation protocol.

**London Crime Reduction Board:** activity is underway to promote strategic join-up of child criminal exploitation and serious youth violence responses, aimed particularly at addressing racial disparities in the justice system. Black boys in London are disproportionately affected by criminal exploitation but are often viewed primarily as requiring criminal justice rather than safeguarding responses. Developing shared and coherent partnership approaches to violence and exploitation will contribute to addressing racial disparities in the justice system. The LCRB has an action plan and a

working group seeking to promote this alignment of partner strategy and practice. This work will support the Mayor's Youth Justice Disproportionality Action Plan which is to be launched in February 2021.

**In addition** to these significant work programmes and practice developments, there are a range of other activities which are taking place which can helpfully to be aligned. These include:

**London Child Protection Procedures:** these are currently being reviewed to clarify CP responses to extra-familial harm. A working group of London's leads for social care is shaping recommendations for the London CP Procedures Editorial Board. The aim is to provide clarity on child protection responses for harms occurring outside of the home, particularly in relation to risks from criminal exploitation, gang involvement and associated violence.

**Youth Justice Board:** a range of 'child first (offender second)' initiatives including a number of London pathfinder projects on resettlement, alternative to custody accommodation and diversion are being launched in 2021. More broadly the child first approach offers the potential for better integration of youth justice responses with a coherent practice framework for adolescents.

**MOPAC / Violence Reduction Unit:** a wide range of projects working at LA, sub-regional and pan-London level are supported by MOPAC and the VRU to reduce exploitation and violence and to help recovery for those who have been harmed. Effective join-up of these resources with those of local government and other partners is a key objective of the ALDCS programme and work is increasingly integrated with MOPAC / VRU for this purpose.

**Contextual Safeguarding Scale Up:** supported by VRU funding, 4 boroughs are engaged in the scale-up pilot led by the University of Bedfordshire. This programme includes an offer of support for all London boroughs to embed contextual safeguarding approaches.

**Reducing Looked After Children's Criminalisation Protocol:** this MOPAC led work will be finalised and launched by the London Crime Reduction Board in the coming months. In common with the initiatives above this protocol promotes partnership practice which emphasises diversion, identification of trauma / vulnerability and seeks to get beyond presenting behaviour to deal with underlying causes of children's offending.

**Transitional Safeguarding:** many London boroughs and partnerships are developing services which support young adults in recognition of the cliff-edge that 18 years of age often presents, in terms of service responses and the continuing needs for support and protection that older adolescents require. The MOPAC-led 'transitional hub' approach, which draws together services for 18-25, will be piloted in at least one borough this year.

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