

5.3.11 Children and Young People Affected by Exploitation and Serious Violence

This is the multi-agency procedure for Children and Young People Affected by Exploitation and Serious Violence.

If you consider that a child/young person is at immediate risk, the police should be contacted on 999.

Date:	December 2022
Date Review Due:	December 2023
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Related Chapters & Protocols

See also chapters and protocols:

[5.3.6 Safeguarding Children from Abroad \(including Children who are Victims of Trafficking and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children\)](#)

[5.3.7 Safeguarding Children Abused Through Sexual Exploitation](#)

[5.4.1 Children & Young People Who Go Missing from Home or Care, or Who are Vulnerable to Sexual Exploitation](#)

[Modern Slavery: Safeguarding Children Who May Have Been Trafficked](#)

See also:

[Policy on Herts Sexual Assault Referral Centre with Information Regarding the Referral Process for Practitioners](#)

[Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit \(Home Office\)](#)

[4.1.6 Multi-Agency Protocol for Working with Vulnerable Adolescents](#)

Introduction

These multi-agency procedures provide guidance to professionals and volunteers from all agencies in safeguarding children and young people who are affected by exploitation and serious violence (including gangs).

Whilst Hertfordshire's Safeguarding Partnership is led by the three statutory safeguarding partners, namely Hertfordshire County Council (children's services), Health and Police, there are many organisations in Hertfordshire supporting young people. The strength of local partnership working is dependent on all partners working collaboratively together with relevant agencies, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Working together across agencies is key to early and effective identification of risk, improved information sharing, joint decision making and co-ordinated action. Strong and effective multi-agency working provides the foundation for all that we, ensuring the best possible outcomes for the young people we support.

For many, this will mean being alert to the ways in which young people can become vulnerable to exploitation, the indicators that they are being drawn into exploitative situations and knowing how to report these concerns. For others, who have more specific safeguarding responsibilities, it will involve complex work to support victims and disrupt and prosecute perpetrators. For everyone, it will involve questioning attitudes and beliefs that may get in the way of recognising that children are being exploited and providing the consistent, determined non-judgemental support they and their families need.

Context

Although safeguarding risks are traditionally associated with the home environment and linked to parenting capacity, children and young people can also face significant safeguarding risks outside the home (extra-familial harm), for example from drugs, gangs and youth violence and sexual and criminal exploitation.

Adolescents may be more vulnerable to these forms of extra-familial harm as they are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviour, be sensitive to peer influence and are undergoing emotional, social and neurobiological changes which can impact on their decision-making ability and behaviour.

In recent years Hertfordshire has adopted a statutory multi-agency response to exploitation. This shift was, in part, influenced by the findings of an independent scrutiny report¹ and the transition from a Targeted Youth Support (TYS) service to our current Specialist Adolescent Service (SASH)², but also against a national backdrop of the increasing complexity of exploitation and the significant impact it has on those affected by it.

Key indicators of need that affect adolescents in Hertfordshire have been researched and assembled into a number of [Joint Needs Assessments \(JSNA\)](#) that are published on the Hertfordshire site. These needs analyses collate information from a variety of sources to identify the needs of specific cohorts.

¹ [Independent Scrutiny Report: Missing / Exploitation of Children](#)

² SASH KPIs: 145.7% increase in referrals for statutory support between 2020 and 2021 (323 – 548); 733% increase in Strategy discussions held between 2020 and 2021 (27 – 225)

Definitions

This section seeks to provide a glossary of terms commonly associated with exploitation. For many definitions the government provide set descriptions, where these are not available partnership definitions have been agreed to ensure consistent and cohesive understanding and practice. This is not an exhaustive list.

Exploitation, is a form of abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person into sexual or criminal activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

Child exploitation typically involves physical violence, threats of violence and intimidation. Involvement is usually characterised by the child or young person's limited availability of choice as result of their social, economic or emotional vulnerability.

The victim may have been exploited even if the activity appears consensual.

Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

It is a multi-faceted and complex type of abuse which comes in many forms which often are layered and interconnected.

Child Sexual Exploitation	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.
Child Criminal Exploitation	Occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into criminal activity.
Gangs* <i>* The only statutory definition of a gang relates to serious and organised crime which does not meet the needs of this document.</i>	<p>A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group; ii. engage in criminal activity and violence; and may also iii. lay claim over territory (not necessarily geographical, but can include an illegal economy territory); iv. have some form of identifying structural feature; and/or v. be in conflict with other, similar, gangs.
Trafficking	Recruitment, movement or transportation (across houses or hotels; towns or cities; within communities and sometimes internationally) of children who are then exploited, forced to work or sold between groups of perpetrators. Includes child sexual exploitation (organised /networked sexual exploitation); benefit fraud; domestic servitude; criminal activity such as pickpocketing,

	begging, transporting drugs, working on cannabis farms, selling pirated DVDs and bag theft.
County Lines	County lines is 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.
Cuckooing	Where people take over a person’s home and use the property to facilitate exploitation. The most common form is where drug dealers take over a person’s home and use it as a base to store and distribute drugs Money and weapons may also be stored at the property. <i>See HSAB Cuckooing Practice Guidance</i>
Grooming	When someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them. Children and young people who are groomed can be sexual abused, exploited or trafficked. Grooming can take place online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know.
Contextual Safeguarding	Children and young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts. Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding and responding to young people’s experiences of significant harm beyond their families, termed extra-familial. It recognises that the relationships adolescents form in neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents have little influence over these contexts, and adolescents’ experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine child-parent relationships.
Radicalisation	Radicalisation is defined as the process by which people come to support terrorism and extremism and, in some cases, to then participate in terrorist groups. <i>See HSCP Prevent Guidance</i>
Missing	Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located, and their well-being or otherwise confirmed.

[Tri.x](#) is a free, live online glossary, containing key definitions for social care practitioners. It can be accessed by partners.

Glossary of terms/language used by CYP

Young people engaged in activities associated with forms of exploitation often have their own unique terms to evade detection. [The Children's Society's Slang Dictionary](#) seeks to support professionals in better understand the language young people may be using.

Principles for Working with Those Affected by Exploitation

- Victims of exploitation will be seen as children first and their welfare will be the paramount consideration.
- Children who are in the criminal justice system as a result of their exploitation should be regarded as being a victim rather than a perpetrator of crime.
- Agency responses will be proportionate to the level of risk to the child, with responsibilities coordinated across the partner agencies, achieving a balance of safeguarding, public protection and legal interventions to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.
- Agencies must share information and intelligence in a timely manner to help identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children.
- Agencies will use language that adequately describes the child's experience of exploitation and will avoid victim-blaming or suggesting that they may be complicit in the abuse. Language can have a significant impact on the ability to build a trusting relationship with an adolescent and in turn how they initially respond to services.

See also [Appropriate Language: Child Sexual and or Criminal Exploitation](#)

Identification and Risk Factors

Who is Vulnerable to Exploitation?

Whilst it is important to remember that all children and young people can fall victim to exploitation, regardless of their family background or other circumstances, we know that perpetrators often target our more vulnerable children.

Identifying the risk factors that make children and young people more susceptible enables us to identify who is at the greatest risk: the children who have multiple interlinked vulnerabilities – both at the individual level (such as mental health or special educational needs) and the family level (such as abuse and neglect). These vulnerabilities cause children to act out or may make them susceptible to inducements or threats. These risks can be moderated or exacerbated by whether and how services respond when the child's needs first emerge.

Some young people may be vulnerable to exploitation due to their circumstances or personal attributes, and may be specifically targeted by exploiters, for example young people:

- with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- who are looked after or leaving care, particularly those in residential care with interrupted care histories
- who are Separated Migrant Children (formerly known as Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC))
- who have experienced abuse or trauma and/or known to social care services
- who are excluded from mainstream education, on part-time timetables, electively home educated (EHE), attending an Education Support Centre (ESC)
- with mental health or emotional wellbeing issues
- with substance misuse issues
- who are involved in gang activity, anti-social or criminal offending behaviours
- who are living in unstable accommodation or have had an unstable home environment, for example neglect, domestic abuse or sexual abuse
- who regularly go missing from home, care settings or educational settings.

This is not an exhaustive list, and these risk factors should not be looked at in isolation - a multiplicity of risk factors is likely to exist for a child who is vulnerable to exploitation. The list should be used as a guide to aid professional judgement in identification, referral and assessment of young people.

See [4.1.6 Multi Agency Protocol for Working With Vulnerable Adolescents](#) for more information on Hertfordshire's ways of working with adolescents and an outline of some of the most prevalent areas of needs or risks that adolescents experience.

Indicators of Exploitation

There are a range of potential indicators of exploitation, some of the most common are listed below. It requires knowledge, skills, professional curiosity and an assessment which analyses the risk factors and personal circumstances of individual children/young people to ensure that

the signs and symptoms are interpreted correctly, and appropriate support is given. Not all individuals with these indicators will experience exploitation. Exploitation can also occur without any of these indicators being present.

- Going missing from home or school or staying out late;
- Being found in areas away from home that they have no connection with or in areas connected with exploitation;
- Being found in possession of drugs and money;
- Having more than one mobile phone, secretive and excessive use of mobile phones;
- Changes in peer relationships, being secretive about who they are associating with
- Relationship with controlling or significantly older adult – including domestic abuse
- Dis-engagement with education, disruptive behaviour and/or exclusion;
- Involvement in criminal behaviour;
- Decline in physical and mental health and wellbeing;
- Returning home looking dishevelled or with injuries;
- Out of parental control.

Hertfordshire's Vulnerabilities Toolkit can help support identification of children/young people who may be vulnerable to exploitation; criminal, sexual, gang and youth violence. The Toolkit includes the most common indicators of exploitation against corresponding levels of low, medium and high risk.

[Vulnerabilities Toolkit Part One - Screening Tool](#)

[Vulnerabilities Toolkit Part Two - Resources](#)

Case Study 1

Child A, a thirteen-year-old female lived at home with her mother and three siblings. Child A's older sister (an adult) was in an intimate relationship with a man known to consume and deal drugs.

Child A's behaviour deteriorated at school, and she began causing anti-social behaviour with peers in the community. She was excluded from mainstream education and attended an ESC school. She was arrested for various offences, including possession of, and supplying cannabis to her peers in the community, and she began going missing from school and home.

Her sister and sister's partner were also both prosecuted for drugs offences and latterly prosecuted for their involvement in a gang-style shooting of another child. It is believed that Child A was recruited by and required to work for her sister and sister's partner in a county lines context.

Child A was also tasked to recruit her peers and groomed a ten-year-old boy to assist her in transporting drugs to an unknown address in Barnet via the bus networks. Child A began using scare tactics and violence against the ten-year-old to ensure his compliance in these activities.

Child A's eleven-year-old brother has now begun to demonstrate similar behaviours and is on a similar trajectory, influenced by Child A.

Mother had demonstrated clear awareness of this concern over the course of exploitation, yet obstructed professionals through disguised compliance and a failure to report concerning behaviours, including missing episodes.

Concerns were raised by professionals at various points and the signs of exploitation, particularly county lines criminal exploitation were clear. There was a significant delay in formal action by professionals due to a lack of understanding around this contextual risk meeting the threshold test.

Impact of Exploitation

Exposure to and involvement in exploitation and serious violence comes at a huge cost to individuals, families, professionals and communities. At the most extreme end it can result in the loss of life, but the trauma caused through both the physical and psychological injuries suffered and encountered also has significant impacts.

Child or Young Person

Children and young people who are being exploited are the victims of abuse and will be especially vulnerable. Being a victim of exploitation and exposure to the violence, harm and trauma, often associated with exploitation can have a detrimental impact on a child or young person in a variety of ways.

- There may be a risk of sexual violence
- Suspicion or mistrust of others
- Disconnecting from previous protective factors, including relationships and activities
- Increased hypervigilance and anxiety
- How the individual perceives themselves including negative self-critical thoughts and feelings of shame as a result of carrying out criminal acts
- Suppression of feelings, such as anxiety, low mood, fear and trauma related symptoms
- Taking substances like alcohol and drugs, which can increase risk-taking behaviour and impact mental health. Substances may also be used as either a coping mechanism, including as a way to increase confidence and numb emotional stress
- Being involved in exploitation during early adolescence can impact on psychological development, including emotional regulation, communication, concentration, memory and focus.

Children and young people who have been affected by exploitation may be defensive and reluctant to engage with professionals. Agencies should recognise that many children and young people might not think that they want or need protection from exploitation and might be resistant to what they perceive as interference from authorities. Often perpetrators have groomed their victims so that they are compliant to being exploited and are frightened to report their abuse.

Listening to children and young people about their experiences is key to providing them with the support they need. Professionals will need to show curiosity and compassion when working with young people and be given the time to build trusted relationships with them. It can take time for professionals to build up trust and overcome their resistance to being helped and supported to exit the abusive situation.

Whole Family

Focusing only on an 'event' or the specific child involved can result in insufficient attention being given to the family as a whole.

Professionals must widen their lens beyond the child and their parent(s)/carer(s) as ‘person who needs to be parented’ and ‘person who needs to parent’. It should be recognised that exploitation affects families in multiple ways and the impact is different for each family member – Think Family.

Families may experience unknown people coming to their address; being threatened, assaulted, indebted and/or their property being damaged and having to relocate, or the parent of a regularly missing child may often spend considerable time working to locate them, liaising with relevant authorities, all the while fearing their child being involved in a serious incident.

This will impact on their availability to their other children, who will be confused and fearful about the frequent absence of their sibling. Sometimes siblings too have been drawn into exploitation and suffered physical, sexual and emotional harm. The whole family therefore needs to be assessed comprehensively, with recognition of the need for both prevention and protection for all family members and detailing explicitly what ‘support’ means.

Think Family means securing better outcomes for adults, children and families by coordinating the support and delivery of services from all organisations. Working together to reach decisions is critical to effective care planning and requires consideration of what might be required to support the active involvement of all concerned. Parties may have different views on the best course of action; however, identifying what work is required to sustain, develop and repair relationships and strengthen the networks around a family is essential to reducing their vulnerability to exploitation.

Professionals

It is important to create a system which supports colleagues to prevent and respond to vicarious trauma, ensuring an understanding of how to identify and respond to signs and symptoms.

Hearing traumatic stories can trigger our own trauma history or even dysregulate us which leads services to become reactive.

Practitioners should be supported to have spaces to self-reflect through reflective supervision and to be aware of their own triggers and resist becoming reactive. Colleagues working with trauma should be supported to understand and recognise when they themselves become dysregulated and how to address this, acknowledging that it will not be possible to support the regulation of those we work with until we are confident in ourselves to do this.

This in turn also needs to be acknowledged by the whole system and management in supporting colleagues to self-care and put in place a range of spaces where they can process and ‘off-load’ this as well as a holistic and satisfying home and work life balance. Encouraging staff to consider self-care strategies they can adopt outside of work can also help them look after themselves.

Some recommended avenues of support to counteract vicarious trauma:

[NHS Every Mind Matters](#)

[Mind](#)

[Heads Together](#)

[Action for Happiness](#)

Children Looked After

Children Looked After (CLA) refer to children who are under the care of a local authority and who have been provided accommodation for over 24 hours.

Placement planning for every CLA must include consideration of the likelihood of them going missing, and any associated risks and vulnerabilities. This information should then be used to inform an agreement with the placement provider about how to respond if the child is absent, missing or 'away from placement without authorisation'.

Full guidance can be found in Section 10 of [Hertfordshire's Children and Young People Who Go Missing from Home or Care, or Who are Vulnerable to Exploitation.](#)

Adolescents with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

Some young people with undiagnosed/diagnosed SEND may be at additional risk due to their specific needs and abilities. For example, for those who are at an earlier developmental stage than their chronological age and/or those who may not be able to communicate their experiences, the safeguarding concerns may be equivalent to those of younger children.

Some adolescents with SEND may be less likely than others to move their social circle beyond the home. In some senses, this keeps them safe, but practitioners need to be aware of the risks that arise for adolescents within a relatively closed circle where outside scrutiny is limited.

The dynamics within some peer groups may increase the risk that an adolescent with SEND will be marginalised or be the focus of peer-on-peer abuse. This can include peers who take advantage of adolescents with SEND, asking them to carry out unsafe or criminal activities where they may not fully understand the risk or consequences. This form of abuse may be carried out by gang-affected adolescents.

Practitioners should remain curious and be aware that the young person may also have experienced trauma related to their SEND e.g., through medical episodes and procedures, prejudice from others, failed educational placements. Those with SEND may not be able to identify or communicate their traumatic experiences. Where communication is not effective, choices may be constrained as the young person may be limited in how they are able to express a wish not to take part in an activity or to associate with a peer.

Safeguarding risks and needs may not cease when a child chronologically reaches 18 years old, and the local area may need to consider needs that continue into adulthood. This is sometimes referred to as Transitional Safeguarding:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/990426/dhsc_transitional_safeguarding_report_bridging_the_gap_web.pdf.

Where you consider there are continuing risks then conversations with Adult Safeguarding colleagues or social work teams might be helpful to determine whether an ongoing plan is necessary to support transition.

Procedures with regards to safeguarding disabled children can be found in the [0-25 Together Service Procedures Manual](#).

For adolescents aged 16 and 17 there are a range of critical areas practitioners should consider when making decisions with people who may (at times) lack capacity. These are detailed in [Hertfordshire's Social Work Procedures Manual](#).

Further Information

[DfE, Safeguarding Disabled Children](#)

[SEND 0-25 Code of Practice](#)

[NSPCC](#)

[Council for Disabled Children](#)

[HSCP Safeguarding Disabled Children 7-minute briefing](#)

[Legal framework for over 18s, including escalation](#)

Responding to Exploitation

Children and young people at risk of exploitation should be referred to children's social care via the Customer Service Centre (0300 123 4043) where the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) will undertake an assessment of risk through a variety of checks and information gathering to identify the most appropriate and proportionate response according to the risk level identified.

The [Continuum of Need](#) guidance sets out the 'levels of need' experienced by children, young people and families and is an important tool to support early intervention and multi-agency working. Adolescents will move into, out of and between these levels of vulnerability according to their circumstances.

Further information around referrals can be found in the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) procedures in Section 3 of [4.1.1 Contacts and Referrals](#).

Immediate Safety

If there is a risk to the life of the child or a likelihood of serious significant harm, agencies with statutory child protection powers should act quickly to safeguard the child from immediate harm.

When deciding whether emergency action is required, consideration should be given to whether action is also required to safeguard and promote the welfare of other children in the same household.

It may be necessary to ensure either that the child remains in a safe place or is removed to a safe place, either on a voluntary basis or by obtaining an emergency protection order (EPO). Police powers should only be used in exceptional circumstances where there is insufficient time to seek an EPO or for reasons relating to the immediate safety of the child.

A Strategy Discussion including all relevant local agencies (including CLA Health Team when concerns Child Looked After or Care Leaver) should take place as soon as possible after any emergency action is taken to plan next steps. Legal advice should normally be obtained before initiating any legal action, in particular when an EPO is to be sought. It is important to recognise that emergency action addresses only the immediate circumstances of the child. Any emergency action should be followed up quickly by the agencies involved working with the child and family to assess the needs and circumstances of the child in the longer term.

Information Sharing

An important way that agencies can support each other to assess and tackle a child exploitation problem is by regularly and proactively sharing relevant information with each other, in accordance with relevant legislation.

Practitioners must be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children, whether this is when problems are first emerging, or where a child is already known to local authority children's social care (e.g., they are being supported as a child in need or have a child protection plan), this must include health professionals and police.

Information sharing is also essential for the identification of patterns of behaviour when a child is at risk of going missing or has gone missing, when multiple children appear associated to the same context or locations of risk.

Information sharing must happen at all stages of referral, assessment and ongoing case management.

See also [1.4 Information Sharing and Confidentiality](#).

HCC Exploitation Hub

Currently in development, HCC's Exploitation Hub will be a specialised virtual team dedicated to supporting adolescents and young adults (up to 25) who are at risk of or subject to exploitation. The HCC Exploitation Hub will function as a focal point for partners (Children Services (SASH), Police, Health, District/Boroughs, voluntary etc.) to exchange information relating to young people who are at risk of or subject to exploitation, and subsequently lead to faster, improved communication and joint planning between partners. This will mean that young people who are at the highest risk have a timely safeguarding response, and that young people have the right support and interventions at the right time.

The HCC Child Exploitation Hub will also seek to monitor the profile of exploitation across Hertfordshire through regular reporting, consolidating data (qualitative and quantitative) from several partner sources. This will help build up a picture of hotspots across the county and allow for improved identification of young people at risk or subject to exploitation.

Hertfordshire Constabulary

Criminal Exploitation Team

This team contributes towards safeguarding vulnerable people and disrupting criminal exploitation. They work with partner agencies to provide police safeguarding and disruption tactics/ strategies, where appropriate. This team also works alongside partner agencies to improve partnership working practice and training intensification to improve Hertfordshire's response to Criminal Exploitation.

The Criminal Exploitation Team do not action investigations. Criminal investigations will be managed and actioned by the appropriate policing team.

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit (MSHTU)

This unit is responsible for providing investigative strategies and support to policing teams, including the management of National Referral Mechanisms. They also ensure consideration of any immediate interventions that could be implemented from other teams to support the children or young person, for example via Gangs and School Team.

Children and Young People Gangs & School Team

This team of police officers provide an early intervention and preventative approach for children at risk of gang affiliation, criminal exploitation (County Lines) and knife crime across the County, to include safeguarding work. The team work closely with local policing resources and partner agencies to co-ordinate a bespoke response for each young person as well as creating and delivering targeted diversionary events and activities.

This team is also proactively involved in the sharing of information regarding children and young people with appropriate agencies and through various partnership arrangements.

Examples of information shared includes details of children held overnight in custody as well as information from other police forces.

Other Involved Parties (Contextual Safeguarding)

Any assessment, [Strategy Discussion](#) or [Section 47 Enquiry](#) needs to consider the role and identity of any other adults or young people involved, e.g. parents, peers, significant figures, or any individuals who pose a risk of harm to children.

Agencies should also establish whether those who are known to exploit children are parents or carers of children themselves. If this is the case, an assessment of the needs of those children should be completed.

Case Study 2

Child B is a 15-year-old male who lives at home with his mother who is believed to misuse substances and alcohol.

Child B is open to Children's Services and has had very minimal interaction with Hertfordshire police who hold minimal information around any exploitation concerns. Child B was travelling into North London with another Hertfordshire child where they were staying within multiple cuckooed addresses and involved in county lines drug dealing, associated to a north London gang.

Child B was subsequently attacked by a rival gang where he sustained multiple machete blows to critical locations on his body. Child B almost died because of his injuries and now requires significant physical and psychological therapy to rebuild basic functions.

Child B was provided money by his mother through bank transfer to his friend during their stay in London, with full knowledge of their activities, risk they were exposed to and whereabouts. She did not report Child B missing or raise concerns to professionals and has essentially enabled his exploitation, which resulted in a critical and violent attack on her child.

Transitional Planning

The risks associated with exploitation do not cease to exist when a young person reaches the age of 18, a point at which safeguarding services traditionally withdraw support.

The experience of adversity in childhood can make some adolescents particularly vulnerable to harm and the effects of such harm can persist into adulthood. This means that there will likely be a proportion of adolescents who either need to transition directly into receiving support from Adult Services, or who are more likely to require them later in life.

Where work is already taking place with a young person then a transition plan should be considered in advance to support the young person and ensure they are kept as the focus when transitioning to adult care.

Agency Roles and Responsibilities

There are a variety of contexts in which professionals and agencies may come into contact with children who are at risk of extra-familial harm or who are being groomed for or experiencing exploitation.

Each agency should assure themselves that their staff have access to appropriate information / training to enable them to identify and respond to risks to children and young people from exploitation and serious youth violence and, that local policies are in place to support this.

A. Children's Services

Staff across all parts of Children's Services may, at some point, have concerns that a child or young person with whom they work is presenting as being vulnerable to or experiencing extra-familial harm or exploitation. See Section 4 of [Risk Management Arrangements for Extra-Familial Abuse and Exploitation](#) (includes flowchart) which outlines process to follow according to level of risk.

All staff working across both EHM and LCS should follow Practice Guidance relating to the Recording of Exploitation Using Hazards.

All Children's Services staff should also familiarise themselves with guidance relating to [Personal Safety and Lone Working](#).

B. The Youth Justice Service come into contact with children who have been arrested and enter the criminal justice system.

Where appropriate, an Asset Assessment will be undertaken by the Youth Justice Service initiating a proportionate response for both out of court and in court disposals.

C. Police

Police are responsible for the investigation of crime and the preservation of life. The role for police in criminal exploitation incidents is to progress actionable information and intelligence to support the initiation or continuation of a criminal investigation.

Criminal Exploitation generally comes to police attention when notified by the police referral process or via an NRM submission/ modern slavery investigation. Potential victims of CE may come to police notice as a suspect of a criminal investigation. Police have an ongoing responsibility to consider appropriate safeguarding. This may also include disruption measures which will be considered in line with the needs of the child or victim and the requirement to mitigate risk for the duration of the investigation.

D. Health professionals are most likely to be the first agency to become aware of a child who is experiencing harm as a result of extra-familial harm and exploitation. Young people who are being sexually exploited may request contraceptives or present with sexually transmitted infections or be pregnant. Health professionals are most likely to become aware of children with physical injuries linked to criminal exploitation or gang violence.

Health professionals have a key role to play, school nurses, GPs, drug and alcohol services, CAMHS staff, midwifery, sexual health services and other Health staff will be mindful of the circumstances/risk indicators outlined above. They will be aware of their duty to confidentiality and also the duty to share information in order to protect children and young people. Whenever there is a concern about a young person and it is not clear if there is a duty to share information, they will contact their Safeguarding

Lead to discuss the appropriate action. If further clarity is required, they should contact the Designated Children's Safeguarding Team.

- E. **Schools & Education Providers** may become aware of pupils who are vulnerable to or experiencing extra-familial harm, particularly those who are frequently missing from education, and may have information about individuals who may be targeting the school for grooming purposes.

School staff should be alert and competent to identify and act upon concerns that a child is at risk of or experiencing abuse or harm through exploitation.

Escalation Process

There is a clear expectation that any differences of opinion are resolved at practitioner level. Only if the professionals are unable to resolve differences through discussion and/or meeting within a timescale that is acceptable to both based on the risk to the child/ren, their disagreement must be escalated and addressed by more experienced / more senior staff.

See [4.5.3 Escalation of Concerns and Professional Disagreements about Decisions](#)

Police Powers

Police will utilise a variety of powers and processes to provide effective safeguarding, where required. Each case will be considered individually. Including, but not limited to:

- Closure Orders on addresses
- Child Abduction Warning Notice (CAWN)
- Slavery Trafficking Risk / Protection Order's (STRO/ STPO)
- Other civil ancillary orders
- Proactive Targeting (Stop and Search, Warrants, etc)
- Arrest and Investigation
- National Information Markers and Cross-Border Policing Alerts
- Surveillance Tactics

The police have specialist units such as the [Gangs and Schools Team](#), Criminal Exploitation Team, Safer Neighbourhood Teams and Modern Slavery HTU who can provide bespoke and innovative strategies and direct engagement with the child (Gangs and Schools) to disrupt and divert CE.

Pathways

Early Help

Services for Young People

[Services for Young People](#) deliver a number of programmes to support young people to stay safe from exploitation, crime and antisocial behaviour. Visit [Helping young people to stay safe](#) to find out more about the programmes on offer.

No More Service

The [No More Service](#) supports clients ages 11 to 21. Dedicated Support Workers take a holistic approach to address the impact alcohol, substance misuse and/or offending have on all areas of a client's life and help them develop practical solutions to address these.

Youth Action Panels (local variations depending on district/borough)

These are multi-agency early intervention panels/meetings who receive referrals for young people at risk of serious violence and criminal exploitation and assess the level of risk and identify appropriate support. Referrals can be made via the [No More Service](#) coordinated via Stevenage Borough Council.

Children and Young People Gangs & Schools Team

Police officers in this team deliver an early intervention and preventative approach for children at risk of gang affiliation, criminal exploitation (County Lines) and knife crime across the County, to include safeguarding work.

The team work closely with local policing resources and partner agencies to co-ordinate a bespoke response for each young person as well as creating and delivering targeted diversionary events and activities.

The team also delivers universal educational packages to educational establishments designed to raise awareness of the dangers of knife crime, gang affiliation and criminal exploitation (County Lines).

The referral process for targeted / one to one support is via police officers, frontline staff or the Gangs and Schools officers themselves (identified during the course of their work in their CSPs, schools or multi-agency meetings).

General enquiries can be sent to CYPgangsandschools@herts.police.uk

Youth Justice

A Youth Justice Asset+ structured assessment which includes information gathering and an assessment of risk of serious harm, risk of reoffending, and safety and wellbeing is undertaken on all young people subject to an Out of Court disposal (2nd Youth Caution and Youth Conditional Caution) or a Youth Court Order. Risks are reflected in the Asset+ intervention planning and incorporated in three monthly reviews, or sooner where there are changes in circumstances or further offending.

Youth Justice interventions are based on trauma informed strengths and relationship- based practice and staff have access a range of awareness training and resources to support and manage risk and safeguarding in response to exploitation.

Risk of exploitation may be apparent based on the offence type and circumstances such as possession of drugs weapons and violent offending assault. It may also be identified through information sharing from partner agencies. For cases transferring into Hertfordshire information regarding gang affiliations and rivalries is requested prior to accepting a transfer and this first-hand information is shared with local police at the point these young people come to Hertfordshire.

Exploitation risk may also be identified via multi-agency forums to explore local area and group concerns, at a MARM meeting or Return Home discussion where young people have been missing. It may also arise through further offending or disclosure from the young person during the intervention.

Youth Justice staff should refer young people, where risk is identified, to the central Youth Justice / SASH Risk and Safeguarding Panel (or other relevant forums such as Young MAPPA where the criteria is met) as part of the multi-agency risk management and planning process and to identify relevant support to manage risk and safeguarding.

National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the national framework for the collection and collation of data on victims of trafficking and modern slavery in the UK. The NRM allows agencies to share information and intelligence in order to support victims and gather evidence against exploiters. Where it is established through multi-agency discussions that a child is a victim of trafficking and modern slavery as a result of their exploitation, the meeting may decide that it is appropriate to make a referral to the NRM.

See [HSCP Modern Slavery Protocol](#)

Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE)

Hertfordshire's MACE model is designed to facilitate effective, timely and efficient multi-agency information sharing and individual safety planning, as well as learning and best practice.

MACE is an operational panel where cases are identified and reviewed where there is known exploitation, encompassing criminal and sexual, and those individuals identified as vulnerable to exploitation due to missing episode(s) or other behaviours/incidents which identify them as at high risk.

The Vulnerable Adolescents Strategic Group (VAS) considers options necessary to tackle CE threats through analysing trends, patterns and identifying hot spots in order to inform partnership activity, commissioning decisions and delivery of interventions to reduce risk.

It is expected that children and young people referred to MACE are already known to Children's Services however an external [MACE Referral Form](#) is available.

As outlined above, it is expected that the majority of referred cases will be known to Children's Services and therefore the Risk Assessment on LCS is sufficient to make a referral. Referrals should be made electronically, in accordance with information sharing guidelines, to the designated email inbox MACE@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Police

Partner agencies referrals are received into The Safeguarding Hub via email (HQSafeguarding@herts.police.uk) or via the Single Competent Authority through NRM submissions. The Safeguarding Hub adds the case to Athena (police system) and completes police checks.

Where Child Exploitation is identified, referrals are sent to the Child Exploitation Team for review/Triage. Criminal investigations are allocated to an appropriate police team for action.

Any Child Exploitation related strategy discussion and/or multi-agency meeting will be attended by a Child Exploitation team member, where appropriate with any actions being fed back to the owning team.

Where the information shared with police constitutes intelligence, and not an actionable safeguarding concern, this must be shared using a *Multi-Agency Information Submission Form* ([Appendix A](#)) following the process outlined in *Multi-Agency Information Submission Guidance* ([Appendix B](#)).

HALO

Halo is the Hertfordshire Constabulary team which investigates the most serious cases of CSE. The team, based at Police Headquarters, consists of detectives, police officers and police staff and will respond jointly with our multi-agency partners to reports of serious Child Sexual Exploitation.

The Halo team also plays a pivotal role in raising awareness of CSE. The Halo team will be able to offer support and advice and take forward more complex investigations focussing on Child Sexual Exploitation.

See [HALO CSE Reporting Form for Professionals](#)

Channel Panel

Channel Panel is a multi-agency panel used to assess the nature and the extent of the risk of individuals being drawn into terrorism and provide appropriate support packages to help divert and support the individual at risk. Referrals can come from a wide range of individuals and partners and could include youth offending teams, social services, health, police, education and local communities.

See HSCP [Prevent Guidance](#) for more information and the process for making a referral if there are concerns.

Appendix A – Multi-Agency Information Submission Form



HERTFORDSHIRE
CONSTABULARY

INTELLIGENCE SUBMISSION



If this information is the reporting of a crime – please call 101 / report directly online to the force concerned.

If the information is of an urgent nature and there is a high level of risk involved, please call the force control room and report this over the phone via 101 or 999 if relevant.

Date of information		Submitting Person	
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Subject of intelligence
<p>Please detail below the information you wish to submit to Hertfordshire Constabulary.</p> <p>Name (Subjects details or the Location if known):</p> <p>DOB:</p> <p>Address:</p> <p>Ethnicity:</p> <p>Nationality:</p> <p>Date of original event (or when information was first known):</p> <p>Known Associates: (These may be friends or persons of concern - Please include as much information as possible, names, DOB, addresses, or any identifying factors, phone details, vehicle details, nicknames etc)</p> <p>Original source of information: (who / where has the information come from in the first place?) If yourself, or the subject themselves, please state. If another source or third party also state.</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Address:</p> <p>Contact details:</p> <p>Tel:</p> <p>Mobile</p> <p>Risk to Source: <i>The protection of the source of Intel is a priority to the Police; <u>*please bold source any intel in red if you feel there is risk to the source through the sharing of this information clearly state that it is 'SENSITIVE' and needs to be managed accordingly.</u></i></p>

Intelligence Submission

Please see Submission Guidance Advice

PLEASE EMAIL TO CIB@HERTS.PNN.POLICE.UK

The information you have provided in this form will be added to Herts intelligence systems, reviewed, sanitised and disseminated. Please note in some cases the intelligence may need be disseminated to other Police forces and Partner agencies.

Appendix B – Multi-Agency Information Submission Guidance

Information gathered by Police Forces in the United Kingdom comes from many varied sources. Your submissions at this stage are probably some of the most important pieces in the jigsaw that is the intelligence picture for Hertfordshire. Therefore, we would encourage you to submit information to the police of matters that concern you and/your organisation, however small or insignificant you feel them to be.

This guidance is written to be utilised in conjunction with the 'Multi-Agency Information Submission Form'.

It is a quick reference guide to assist in the decision whether or not to submit information to the police and what to write in the submission report.

Risk to Source/Reporting Person: The protection of the source of Intel is a priority to the Police;

Please record the reporting person details including contact details. We may need to refer back to you urgently. These details are confidential and kept confidential throughout the process.

If you wish to remain anonymous, please note this on the report.

Record details of the subject of the information both in the box provided and within the intelligence submission box.

Known associates of the subject of the report are always useful, in particular gang members or those involved in drug supply.

Police look for information containing one or more of the areas: -

P – Person (Full name, Date of Birth, Home address, School Attended etc.)

O – Object (Drugs, Weapons other items subject of the report)

L – Location (Location of the matter being reported plus the Time, Day Date)

E – Event (describe what has occurred)

Your report should contain at least one of the above categories with as much detail as possible.

If your submission is long, consider breaking it up into two or more reports.

Once complete please submit this report to: CIB@Herts.pnn.police.uk

If you have any questions about the process, please also use this email address. We will reply to your enquiry as quickly as possible.