



Extra-Familial Harm

Safeguarding Adolescents Strategy 2024-26

February 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1 All partners in the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP) are clear that anyone under the age of 18 is a child. *The welfare of the child is paramount*, and we remain committed to a 'safeguarding first' and 'child focussed' approach to practice. We also remain committed to developing our understanding about the contexts of children's lives and the vulnerabilities that can create pathways to greater harm. This focus is central to everything we do, as is a culture where children are seen heard and helped.

- **Seen**; in the context of their lives at home, friendship circles, health, education and public spaces (including social media).
- **Heard**; by practitioners taking time to hear what children are saying and put themselves in their shoes and think about what their life might truly be like.
- **Helped**; by practitioners remaining curious and by implementing effective and imaginative solutions that help children and make them safer.

1.2 The CHSCP's Extra-Familial Harm Strategy has been developed with these principles in mind. It takes account of the [pan-London Adolescent Safeguarding Handbook](#) and complements the [pan London Child Exploitation Protocol](#), the [London Child Protection Procedures](#), [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#) and other statutory guidance. It focuses on the following priorities:

- **Knowing our problem, knowing our response**
- **Strong leadership**
- **Prevention and early intervention**
- **Protection and support**
- **Disruption and prosecution**

2. Definition

2.1 *'Some children experience abuse and exploitation outside the home. This is often referred to as "extra-familial harm". Harm can occur in a range of extra-familial contexts, including school and other educational settings, peer groups, or within community/public spaces, and/or online. Children may experience this type of harm from other children and/or from adults. Forms of extra-familial harm include*

exploitation by criminal and organised crime groups and individuals (such as county lines and financial exploitation), serious violence, modern slavery and trafficking, online harm, sexual exploitation, teenage relationship abuse, and the influences of extremism which could lead to radicalisation^{98 99}. Children of all ages can experience extra-familial harm.’ (Working Together 2023, Page 67).

3. Purpose and Scope

3.1 This strategy’s primary purpose is to make children safer and to define the credible pathways to tackle extra-familial harm in all its forms. It seeks to ensure that multi-agency practice is focussed on the reduction of risk and the range of associated vulnerabilities that can exacerbate this.

3.2 Collaborating with other strategic partnerships (such as the Community Safety Partnerships, Safeguarding Adults Board and the Health and Wellbeing Boards), the CHSCP will continue to develop and promote integrated arrangements that actively consider these vulnerabilities. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Child Sexual Exploitation (including Harmful Sexual Behaviours).
- Criminal Exploitation - Children exposed to risk through gang involvement, county lines, trafficking and serious youth violence.
- Radicalisation.
- Children missing from home, care and education.
- Domestic Violence and Abuse.
- Violence Against Women & Girls.
- Adolescent Neglect.
- Self-harm and Suicide.
- Substance Misuse.
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

3.3 The decision to widen this strategic scope reflects the fact that children often face multiple risks and can have multiple needs. Dealing with the response to certain threats in isolation can hinder our understanding of vulnerabilities that frequently overlap. This has the potential to limit the effectiveness of intervention. We are committed to seeing the child in the context of their lives, not simply in the context of the harm they have suffered or are exposed to.

3.4 Furthermore, as children get older their experiences of abuse are often associated with the public spaces in which they spend their time. As such, a critical focus of this strategy will be on how children are better protected and supported by a wider range of individuals and bodies in a wider variety of contexts. This will include ensuring we enable children to engage with services when they need them and that we support their safety in the virtual world too. How children are safeguarded in the context of their '*access to technology and their use of social media*' is an underpinning concept to this strategy.

3.5 To improve the effectiveness of interventions, practice should align with the following set of principles, upon which a distinctive and adolescent centred approach to intervention can be based. (Hanson and Holmes 2014)

- ***Work with adolescent development*** - in particular perception, agency, aspiration and skill – for example, identity formation, friendship attachments, risk-taking. This includes avoiding policies and practice that respond to adolescent choice and behaviours in ways that could 'ensnare' them and constrain positive development and to avoid responses that 'do to' adolescents rather than 'work with' them.
- ***Work with young people as assets and resources.***
- ***Promote supportive relationships*** between young people and their family and peers (where possible).
- ***Prioritise supportive relationships*** between young people and key practitioner(s) within the system response.
- ***Take a holistic approach*** to young people and the risks they face.
- ***Ensure services are accessible and advertised*** – for example, services should incorporate self-referral mechanisms, social marketing, and assertive outreach to target hard-to-reach groups.
- ***Equip and support the workforce***, including through high quality learning opportunities and regular supportive supervision.

4. Vision

4.1 Our safeguarding arrangements will seek to create the following conditions within the City of London and the London Borough of Hackney.

- Strong leadership and strong partnerships facilitate an effective early help and safeguarding response to risk and vulnerability.
- Multi-agency practice is actively anti-racist, and practitioners routinely consider, address and challenge racism, discrimination and inequality.
- Children are educated and empowered. They better understand the range of risks that they can face as they grow up and are supported to develop healthy friendships and relationships. They recognise when they or others are at risk and are confident to seek support.
- Children at risk of extra-familial harm are identified, safeguarded and supported for as long as they need. Practitioners, local businesses, families, parents / carers, friends and local people can identify the signs of vulnerability in a variety of contexts.
- Comprehensive multi-agency assessments identify risks within families, schools, peer groups and public spaces. Specifically, extra-familial relationships and environments that impact upon a child's safety are better understood.
- Families/carers, practitioners, and communities support vulnerable children to build resilience against harm.
- New partnership approaches are implemented alongside peer group informed assessment models and interventions. Relevant interventions are developed that address risk and harness the strength of peer relationships.
- Child protection and safeguarding practice effectively responds to a range of extra-familial risks.
- Practitioners engage with individuals and sectors who have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, engaging them in creating safe spaces.
- Trauma Informed Practice supports practitioners to take account of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in their understanding of the needs of children and consequently, in the responses and interventions offered to children and their families/carers.

- Whole-school responses are developed that promote safe and supportive interactions and relationships; and engagement with community members to enable them to support children through applying this approach.
- The CHSCP's safeguarding arrangements focus upon changing public and social environments (including schools) where children may encounter significant harm, rather than relocating them to remove them from harmful contexts.
- Those who seek to harm or exploit children are identified, disrupted and convicted. Robust offender management post-conviction and/or effective intervention strategies reduce the risk presented by identified abusers.

5 Strategic Priorities

- 5.1 The CHSCP understands the need to place this work in the context of other strategies and plans that influence the safety and wellbeing of children. As such, it is essential that the risk from extra-familial harm forms part of ongoing dialogue and scrutiny at key strategic forums; ensuring everyone is working together to respond to these issues and understanding their connectivity. It will involve ongoing dialogue with relevant groups representing local communities across both areas.
- 5.2 The following strategic priorities, informed by local issues and self-assessment, provide the focus for further developing our safeguarding arrangements. Individual action plans covering the City and Hackney have been developed against these areas.

Knowing our problem, knowing our response

- 5.3 The focus of this strategic priority is to ensure that all practitioners working in the City and Hackney, along with parents/carers, local businesses, and children, know about the problems facing children in the context of extra-familial harm. They understand the signs and symptoms of exploitation and the factors that enhance risk to children. Individuals know what to do if they are worried about a young person. Leaders and managers understand the intelligence picture and use this to target interventions to make children safer.

Outcomes

- Practitioners have relevant and proportionate knowledge of the broader profile of extra-familial harm in the City of London and Hackney. This includes the factors that exacerbate risk and the consequential vulnerabilities arising from exploitation.
- Practitioners, parents/carers, children, local businesses, in addition to residents of the City and Hackney, can identify adolescent vulnerability, know who to contact, and know what will be done in response.
- Engaging the broader community¹ has created public confidence in the actions of agencies whilst encouraging communities to be vocal about exploitation and the unacceptability of abuse.
- Children, families and communities are engaged to understand their perceptions and to gather relevant intelligence. All participate in being part of the solution.
- Analytical support is coordinated across a range of agencies to identify themes, patterns and trends relating to adolescent vulnerability. Stronger intelligence gathering on individuals, peer groups and locational hotspots engages a tactical response from the partnership to make children safer.
- Practitioners recognise the impact of racism, disproportionality and inequality and how such aspects impact on a safeguarding first and child focused response.
- Practitioners similarly recognise the impact of discrimination and disadvantage (including issues relating to child poverty) and how these can create conditions for enhanced vulnerability.
- Practitioners within the City and Hackney are confident in both how and when to share information. Any barriers are swiftly identified and addressed. Communication at an operational and strategic level is frequent and effective, with intelligence sharing extending beyond LA areas.

Strong leadership

- 5.4 The focus of this strategic priority is on the need for ongoing strong leadership to successfully tackle the range of risks facing adolescents in the 21st century. This leadership is required from all levels, but particularly from those at the top. Political leaders, Chief Executives and senior leaders in all organisations, together with

¹ Community should be referred to in its widest context – not just communities based on geographic population, but those where a group of people have common characteristics.

leaders in the local community, have a responsibility to set the culture within which abuse, and exploitation is not tolerated.

- 5.5 Continuing to promote a culture that encourages professional curiosity, challenge and appropriate escalation of concerns is fundamental. Strong leadership ensures this approach is embedded into the professional and community response to child abuse and exploitation. Governance arrangements of the CHSCP engage other partnership forums to ensure ongoing connectivity between policy areas impacting the welfare of children and extra-familial harm.

Outcomes

- The safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children at risk of extra-familial harm continues to be prioritised across all relevant organisations and community settings and this is evidenced in respective strategic planning.
- The culture of organisations set by senior leaders and active engagement with children gains their trust. They are confident that their concerns are taken seriously and help is provided when needed. This culture helps drive a stronger response by peer groups in helping protect their friends and associates.
- Partnership activity in the City of London and Hackney engages a broader range of organisations and individuals in the protection of vulnerable children in extra-familial settings (i.e. schools, neighbourhoods, public, transport hubs, community centres, youth hubs / centres or in areas where children congregate). Leaders fully commit to engaging their staff in this work.

Prevention and early intervention

- 5.6 The focus of this priority is to ensure an unswerving focus on early intervention to prevent vulnerability escalating. In the context of extra-familial harm, this priority relates to risk being effectively mitigated by partners both before a child reaches adolescence and when they are in the adolescence stage itself. It involves the partnership focusing its response to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).
- 5.7 Strong early help systems and robust responses to tackling ACEs are key to improving outcomes. These need to involve arrangements that directly work with children; educating and empowering them to support their friends, build resilience to

exploitation and better understand the risks that they might face (both off-line and on-line).

Outcomes

- The performance of early help systems across the City of London and Hackney reduce the need for statutory interventions – effectively dealing with ACEs as they arise, meeting need and reducing vulnerability.
- Children who are particularly vulnerable to forms of extra-familial harm (i.e. looked after children, missing children) are identified early and supported by their families/carers, practitioners, and their community.
- The following approaches across the City of London and Hackney are effective in reducing vulnerability and subject to ongoing scrutiny and challenge by the CHSCP:
 - Community Safety in respect of gang activity / youth crime (including the Serious Violence Duty)
 - DVA / VAWG
 - Neglect
 - Think Family – Parental Substance Misuse / Mental Health / Learning Disabilities & Difficulties
 - Prevent
 - Suicide Prevention
 - Young People’s Substance Misuse
 - Safeguarding Children in the Context of their Access to Technology and use of Social Media
 - SEND
- Schools deliver high quality SRE and where they strive to take a whole-school approach to gender equality, safeguarding, and preventing exploitation.
- Practitioners engaged in providing universal and targeted services to children, identify vulnerabilities and harmful attitudes and are able to empower children to build positive and healthy attitudes towards relationships and friendships, gender identity, and sexuality.

Protection and Support

- 5.8 This priority focuses on two key aspects - the basics and innovation. Building on the positive work to date, the focus on 'the basics' across the City of London and Hackney refers to aspects of practice that are known to be essential to the effective protection of children. This focus does not detract from the need to consider new ways to address vulnerability, but covers areas such as information being shared appropriately, risks being assessed comprehensively, work remaining focussed on the child, escalation being engaged as appropriate and case recording being contemporaneous and accurate.

Outcomes

- Quality assurance processes by the CHSCP and partners provide reassurance that basic standards are met in respect of safeguarding practice.
- The embedding of approaches across the partnership (that address extra-familial risk) creates a system and approach that improves outcomes for children.
- Enduring support to children who have been exploited is delivered, ensuring that what is offered is appropriate for each individual child based on their gender, age, ethnicity, disability, and the nature of the extra-familial harm that they have experienced.
- Children demonstrating harmful sexual behaviours are identified and support put in place to address their behaviours.
- The City of London and Hackney develop their collective expertise through joint learning exercises and strong partnership.

Disruption and Prosecution

- 5.9 The focus of this priority is on ensuring a clear focus on the use of a range of disruption techniques to build the trust and confidence of victims. Such techniques need to move beyond a focus on managing an individual or a group of individuals, to developing location-based interventions through, for example, schools or shopping centres or other spaces that children congregate. Through the implementation of such strategies, public confidence will increase; with individuals and communities empowered to report the signs of extra-familial harm – knowing that robust and effective action will follow. It also focuses on the targeting and pursuit of offenders

that brings them to justice and interventions with children to reduce and manage any risks that they may pose to others.

- 5.10 It also includes a focus on ensuring that vulnerabilities of children engaged in the criminal justice system are effectively identified. It recognises that for some children, they do not neatly fit into the categories of victim / perpetrator and this needs to be better understood when considering the most effective response to their needs and/or actions.

Outcomes

- Practitioners identify, assess and mitigate any vulnerabilities that might reduce the chances of children exiting gang culture or involvement in youth crime and violence.
- Robust policing responses to perpetrators are in place.
- All agencies effectively share information and routinely utilising intelligence-led disruption in relation to any local businesses, individuals or groups associated with exploitation.
- Agencies flexibly applying the full range of disruption tactics available through both criminal and civil routes to protect children, including powers available in relation to licensing, health and safety, fraud, housing provision and other related legislation.
- Where identified, to strongly advocate changes in legislation to better protect and better deter offenders from exploiting children for the purposes of criminal activity.
- Robust offender management strategies post-conviction and/or effective intervention strategies that reduce the risk presented by identified abusers.