

Contextual Safeguarding and Serious and Organised Crime

December 2022 – January 2025

# 1. Introduction

***Cheshire East Safeguarding Children Partnership (CESCP)*** - Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (CESCP) have worked TOGETHER to provide this strategy which outlines our approach to protecting children, adults and communities from exploitation and serious and organised crime across Cheshire East. This is a complex area of risk that requires the partnership, agencies and stakeholders within Cheshire East, to have clear objectives with measurable outcomes to demonstrate the IMPACT we are having on improving the lives of children, adults and communities from the effects of exploitation and organised crime. The specific deliverables within this strategy and supporting actions will allow the Cheshire East partnerships to respond to the full range of serious and organised crime threats and thus make Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime (CS / SOC) ‘**Everybody’s Business’**. This strategy is relevant for children, adults and communities and incorporates all individual agency strategies that link to Contextual Safeguarding, Complex Safeguarding and Serious and Organised Crime.

The following Strategies also exist across Cheshire East and partner agencies and feed into this Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime Strategy:

* ***Safer Cheshire East Partnership (SCEP***) is Cheshire East’s Community Safety Partnership produce an annual Strategic Intelligence Assessment 2021-2025 (SIA)
* ***Adults Complex Safeguarding Strategy* -** ADASS (Directors of Adults Social Services across the North West)
* ***PAN Cheshire All Age Exploitation Strategy 2023*** – Due to be launched in January 2023
* ***Cheshire Police Serious and Organised Crime Strategy 2021-2025*** - This plan directly informs the National Serious and Organised Crime Strategy (2018) overarching objectives:
* Relentless disruption and targeted action against the highest harm serious and organised criminals and networks.
* Building the highest levels of defence and resilience in vulnerable people, communities, businesses and systems.
* Stopping the problem at source, identifying and supporting those at risk of engaging in criminality.
* Establishing a single, whole-system approach.

The strategy also considers the evaluation criteria outlined in the ***Joint Target Area Inspection (JTAI) Framework*** for the effectiveness of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) across Cheshire East.

**Who is this document aimed at?** - This strategy is aimed at practitioners from a wide range of agencies both statutory and non-statutory working with children and adults either regularly or occasionally.

Throughout this document reference is made to child or children, as per the legal definition this includes anyone up to their 18th Birthday. Cheshire East Safeguarding Children Partnership (CESCP) are fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of children by taking all reasonable steps to protect them from exploitation and the impact of serious and organised crime. Practitioners need to be open and curious to recognising and working with families to prevent and respond to exploitation; identifying how exploitation presents and what “good outcomes for children” look like. The development and implementation of this strategy is to be seen as an integral part of our determination to provide high quality responsive services, which meet the needs of children and young people.

Cheshire East Safeguarding Adults Board is a statutory body with a strategic responsibility to work with its members and partners to protect and support adults with care and support needs from abuse, neglect, and self-neglect in Cheshire East. The SAB has 4 key ambitions sitting within its current Strategy, one of which is to “Enable staff to respond to Complex Safeguarding issues and further develop multi-agency approaches to Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation”. The Board is keen to adopt best practice and evidenced based principles and to work with local and regional partners to provide a person centered, outcomes focused approach to all forms of Adult Abuse and Exploitation.

# 2. Defining Contextual Safeguarding, Complex Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime

***Contextual Safeguarding*** - is an **approach to understanding, and responding to, children (those under the age of 18 yrs) and young adult’s experience of significant harm that lies outside their families**. Contextual safeguarding includes child sexual exploitation, missing children, gangs, county lines, radicalisation, modern slavery and all forms of criminal exploitation. There are clear links across these areas.

***Child sexual exploitation*** is a form of child sexual abuse. It can occur 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 in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or 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 any criminal activity:

* in exchange for something the victim needs or wants.
* for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator.
* through violence or the threat of violence.

The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact, it can also occur through the use of technology. The criminal exploitation of children is not confined to 'county lines' but can also include other forms of criminal activity such as theft, acquisitive crime, knife crimes and other forms of criminality.

***Definition Adult Safeguarding -*** “Safeguarding means protecting an Adult’s right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while the same time making sure the adults wellbeing is promoted.” Care Act Statutory Guidance 2020

***Complex Safeguarding Adults -*** It is recognised that People have complex lives and often being safe is only one of the things they want for themselves. Complex Safeguarding is a term used to describe situations where adults are at risk of serious harm to themselves or are being drawn into behaviour associated with organised Criminal Activity (often organised), resulting in exploitation. Such individuals are likely to be known by several Agencies, thus requiring a coordinated response.

***Adult at Risk* -** An Adult at Risk is defined as any person aged 18 years or over who requires Care and Support from Community Services due to mental health issues, learning or physical disability, sensory impairment, age or illness and, who is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and is/maybe unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

***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 adults at risk of harm to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

***Serious and Organised Crime*** – People who have worked together for an extended period of time to plan co-ordinate and conduct serious crime. More often than mot these people are motivated to commit serious crime by the potential of financial gain.

# 3. Strategy objectives

**Objective 1 Prevent**

To preventchildren, adults and communities experiencing or continuing to experience, exploitation, harm and abuse by ensuring effective awareness-raising and preventative work is in place across the locality, staff benefit from quality learning and development opportunities and that there is an effective response to information and intelligence, that identifies individuals, groups or locations of concern, and highlights patterns or trends. This will be delivered through:

* + Early identification of children and adults who are at risk of Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime (CS / SOC) with a range of focused early intervention and prevention resources
  + Use data across the partnership to understand our local context and intervene at the earliest opportunity to prevent escalation of risk
  + Ensure education settings are equipped to identify and support children at risk of Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime (CS / SOC)
  + Given the known association between educational exclusion and exploitation educational settings should promote and prioritise inclusive agenda and trauma informed approach
  + Ensure ALL frontline staff across the partnership and key stakeholders have access to training and development regarding exploitation and organised crime to be able to recognise early warning signs
  + Use intelligence from a range of sources to prevent anti-social behaviour becoming exploitation and organised crime
  + Using data, analysis and intelligence to identify ‘hot spot’ areas across the borough and work with partners to develop bespoke action plans to reduce and remove the risk
  + Work with partners to ensure the delivery of focussed intervention to prevent the embedding and tolerance of serious and organised crime in local communities.

**Objective 2 Prepare**

To develop a comprehensive and accurate intelligence picture which will inform local partnership understanding of context, and locations of concern to enable swift coordinated multi-agency responses to safeguard children, adults and communities and prevent, divert or prosecute those who seek to facilitate and /or perpetrate exploitation, abuse and harm. This will be delivered through:

* Launching the Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime (CS/SOC) strategy accompanied with practice guidance and a training package for all frontline staff and stakeholders
* Working with a range of partners and stakeholders to understand the causes of Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime (CS / SOC) for our children, adults and communities such as poverty, and seek to address at the cause.
* Prepare our workforce through training and learning to identify CS / SOC and feel confident is escalating intelligence regarding risk or harm
* Using data across all agencies and organisations to inform trends, themes, threats, risks and direct prevention/diversion/disruption
* Strong governance and scrutiny of the IMAPCT of prevention through the Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime Strategic Board, CESCP Executive Board, SCEP and Police Commissioners
* Develop appropriate information and media that is accessible for our communities to support their understanding of contextual safeguarding and serious and organised crime across Cheshire East

**Objective 3 Protect**

To develop effective child / person centred practice and service provision, to protect children, adults and communities, and ensure positive outcomes for all, whilst empowering individuals to build resilient communities. This will be delivered through:

* + Collaboration between partners to build a strong resilient community where ‘places’ are *actively targeted* where increased intelligence is known to dismantle and disrupt organised crime
  + Harm reduction such as target hardening measures in identified hot spot areas
  + Use information through the focus of PREPARE (objective 2), to meet local need and demand. Every local area will have a different population and context – our intervention and support needs to be tailored to that local community.
  + Work with statutory partners and the voluntary sector to ensure that children, adults at risk of harm and locations are identified and protected.
  + The safe and secure sharing of information across agencies is to enhance ‘intelligence’ and have a direct impact on the reduction of risk to children, adults and communities.
  + An overarching operational framework in which the multi-agency will assess, plan and intervene when risk is identified and evidence the IMPACT of harm reduction to individuals and the community
  + The development of a parent/carer forum to enhance resilience in local communities

**Objective 4 Pursue**

Use information intelligently to assess and intervene with contexts and groups, to safeguard children, adults and communities and prosecute those who seek to facilitate and /or perpetrate exploitation, abuse and harm; ensuring that a holistic, person-centred approach, from intervention to where necessary prosecution, is adopted and employed. This will be delivered through:

* + The partnership will use legislation to support the disruption of organised crime networks
  + Maximise the use of civil powers (e.g. Closure Orders, Serious Crime Prevention Order SCPO, Criminal Behaviour Order CBO) and ensure effective ownership, management and monitoring of orders.
  + The key partner agencies will effectively investigate threat, risk and harm to children, adults and communities and intervene to reduce harm
  + Proactive development of intelligence and local knowledge to support at strategic and operational level in delivering services and resource
  + Fully utilise the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) protocols to ensure highest harm offenders are managed with the communities once released.

# 4. Strategic Delivery across Cheshire East

***Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime Strategic Board (CS/SOC)***

The CS/SOC Strategic Board will meet quarterly and measure success against the objective outlined within this Strategy. The Strategic Board will scrutinise data through a Partnership scorecard and narrative from all of the Operational Meetings to ensure we are effectively allocating resource, delivering a high standard of practice and evidencing IMPACT. This Group will report into the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Executive Board and Safer Cheshire East Partnership.

***Safer Cheshire East Partnership (SCEP) -*** is a statutory requirement of the Crime and Disorder Act 1988, bringing together partner agencies to reduce crime and reduce the fear of crime and reduce levels of re-offending across Cheshire East. Following analysis of all the data, intelligence, information and commentary collated as part of all data document, the following are the emerging priorities for the partnership for 2022-2025:

* + Violence Intimidation Against Women and Girls (VIAWG)
  + Exploitation of adults and children (The manipulation and exploitation of vulnerable people to gain power and control often for financial gain) Examples include, County Lines gangs and Home Invasion
  + Cybercrime
  + Serious and Organised Crime
  + Domestic Abuse
  + Anti-Social Behaviour
  + Knife Crime

Community Safety Partnerships have a statutory responsibility to undertake a strategic assessment annually. This assessment focusses on crime and disorder using data and intelligence supplied by partner agencies across Cheshire East. The Strategic Intelligence Assessment (SIA) will provide a rich source of data to share with other Strategic Boards to focus and target resources to impact on identified priorities.

***Cheshire East PREVENT Board***

The Counter- Terrorism and Security Act 2015 contains a duty on specified authorities to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into Terrorism. This is known as the Prevent Duty. Cheshire East has an established PREVENT Board and facilitates a multi-agency Channel Panel to support individuals who may be at risk or radicalization. The Cheshire East PREVENT Board provides Strategic oversight to identify, share and assess risk and co-ordinate the implementation of PREVENT activity across the Borough. It is responsible for developing and overseeing the delivery of a partnership PREVENT Action Plan, which sets out how partners are working together to meet the requirements of the PREVENT Duty and are responding to and managing identified risk.

# 5. Operational Delivery across Cheshire East

* **Weekly Contextual Safeguarding Screening Meeting (Children’s Services)**

The weekly Contextual Safeguarding Screening Meeting ensures that children who have had an Exploitation Screening tool completed and/or have been Missing from Home are considered in a multi-agency forum to screen, share and risk assess information effectively. Decisions and actions are collectively agreed based upon the information shared in the Child Exploitation screening tool, Return Home Interviews (RHI), information presented by the attending lead professional, and information shared by the members of the meeting. The meeting will agree any escalation to the Contextual Safeguarding Operational meeting based on level of risk. The weekly meeting will retrospectively review the immediate safety planning for children at risk of exploitation following receipt of a screening tool and a contact.

* **Contextual Safeguarding Operational Group (Children’s Services)**

The primary objective of the Contextual Safeguarding Operational Group is to share information within a multi-agency arena to safeguard and protect children from potential sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, FGM, radicalisation and honour based violence. The meeting will provide an arena to share intelligence and knowledge on young people, persons of interest and places/premises where there could be links to such exploitation and/or significant harm beyond a young person home. These children will already be subject to a multi-agency plan and this group will ***enhance the already existing plan*** by directing interventions / disruptions for children, adults and communities

* ***Child Exploitation and Serious Organised Crime Steering Group (Children and Adults)***

The Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime (CS / SOC) Steering Group will analyse the work of the Operational meetings across both Children’s and Adults Services. It will provide an operational forum to support information gathering and directing interventions for children, adults and communities. The objective of the steering group will be to provide multi-agency oversight to assess impact and outcome of these processes.

The objective of the steering group will be to provide multi-agency oversight to assess impact and outcome of these processes. The meeting will also include oversight for children who go missing and/or at risk of exploitation in Cheshire East as well as those Cared For children who are placed outside of the borough. This contributes to the three common principles which underpin the work of effective partnership working:

* Information sharing
* Joint decision making
* Co-ordinated interventions which offer the right service at the right time

* ***Cheshire East Multi-Agency Operational Level Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) Group (Adults)***

Core purpose of the group is to develop and implement mechanisms at a local operational and tactical level to lead, support and co-ordinate the Cheshire East response to the requirements of the Serious and Organised Crime National Strategy and the Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime (CS/SOC) Strategy.

To support this, the group will:

* Develop and share information and intelligence in a timely manner to inform the tactical response using secure, available technology
* Use the available intelligence to develop a common understanding and to identify priorities for action to disrupt the harm of organised crime
* Work together, to identify and utilise organisational capabilities, in determining local actions to respond to priorities
* Disrupt and dismantle the highest harm, serious and organised crime networks
* Receive direction from the Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime CE/SOC Strategic Group on the recommended approach to deliver coordinated and effective local responses to address identified priority
* ***Cheshire East Multi-Agency Complex Safeguarding Forum (Adults)***

Core Purpose of the Group is to develop a partnership approach to lead, support and co-ordinate the Cheshire East response to those adults identified as ‘High Risk’ requiring a multi-agency response to address complex safeguarding concerns. Adults identified to be discussed at the Forum resulting from one or more categories from the following list: -

* Cuckooing
* Exploitation / Coercion
* Self-Neglect
* Hoarding
* Human Trafficking
* Modern Day Slavery
* Harmful Practices

# 6. What our children and adults at risk have told us…

*“At first you think it’s a laugh but then it’s not funny and you’re in too deep”.*

*“I don’t feel like anyone listened to me at school and people just told me I need to go back there. That’s why I took an overdose. Then I started hanging round with different people outside of school because I didn’t have anyone at school to turn to, and that’s when I became vulnerable to exploitation. I wanted friends and that’s how I met everyone hanging around town.”*

*“Face to face support needs to be accessible immediately and ongoing as and when needed after the incident”*

*“It all started at school, I couldn’t concentrate when all the kids were being noisy and the teacher had no control over the class, my anger grew then I punched the locker & got in trouble. No one understood.”*

*“Social care professionals have been amazing but before their involvement my child was just seen as a problem in education*”

*“I’m in a much better place now, I know I’ll not do all that again. I’m past it.”*

*“I realised my friends weren’t real friends when they left me there with that lad when I was drunk. They didn’t care, I would never have done that to my friends”*

# 7. Measures for success

**Measures for success – Information that will tell us of the IMPACT**

* Safely and appropriately reduce the number of children becoming Cared For due to Exploitation
* Reduce the length of time a child is considered to be HIGH RISK of exploitation
* Reduce the number of children in custody for crimes linked to exploitation / SOC
* Reduction in the number of children with a CSE flag open to Youth Justice Services
* Increase the number of Early Help Assessments for children where ASB and low level exploitation is recognised and early intervention provided
* Education attendance will improve for children with ASB notification and flagged as being at risk of exploitation.
* The number of children who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) will reduce
* Reduction of transitional timetables for children flagged as being at risk of exploitation
* Increase in criminal prosecutions and civil order linked to serious and organised crime
* Reduction in Emergency Department attendances for children and adults with knife wounds
* Reduction in fixed term and permanent exclusion for children flagged as risk of exploitation
* Number of Adults At Risk referred to the Complex Safeguarding Forums where Making Safeguarding Personal Outcomes have been achieved/partially achieved.
* Number of Adults at Risk referred to the Complex Safeguarding Forum where Risk has remained the same or reduced
* Number of successful Police Prosecutions of Perpetrators of Adults at Risk who have been subject to criminal or sexual exploitation
* Number of referrals to regulatory bodies i.e., NMC/SW England/DBS as an outcome of a S42 Enquiry/PIPOT Enquiry/HR investigation
* Number of successful prosecutions via Trading Standards Legislation – i.e., for Doorstep Crime/SCAMS etc
* Hospital admissions for substance misuse (15–24-year-olds)
* Alcohol specific admissions (persons)

**We will know we have raised awareness regarding exploitation and serious organised crime when we see:**

* Increased number of frontline practitioners across the Partnership accessing training regarding Exploitation
* All levels of Practitioners, Managers and Senior Leaders to have an awareness of this Strategy and how this is being driven from their role.
* Increase in the use of Exploitation Screening Tools for children at risk
* Increase in the use of National Referral Mechanism