

01 Background

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership have made contextual safeguarding a priority for the next 3 years.

The exploitation and abuse of children, young people and adults is not new, but where the exploitation comes from outside the home, the traditional child protection approach is inadequate and inappropriate to safeguard them.

07 What to do

Use the tools for assessment and planning to ensure you understand the risk and the impact of constrained choice [\[Link\]](#)

Attend the training and understand the model and relevant legislation

Report the concerns and share the information.

Contextual safeguarding requires resilient practitioners, use supervision – individual and group.

06 What Will Be Different?

Plans will consider the context (peers, school, social network, neighbourhoods) and address how we can make that safer.

Our language and approach will reflect an understanding that the young person/adult is not complicit in their exploitation, i.e. if we find a young person in possession of weapons or drugs, we will ask 'what are the vulnerabilities for this young person; have they been criminally exploited?' and assess the risk of exploitation when considering our response to them.

05 What We Know

Children and young people have told us that we "haven't got a clue" and often know little about the truth of their lives. Engaging with them at a superficial level can prevent them trusting us and make them reluctant to talk to us.

For those exploited, the age commonly ranges from 14 onwards, with a peak in the 15-19 year age group. In most cases (81%), the weapons used are knives. The significant home and parental characteristics were; parental separation, domestic abuse and substance misuse and criminality within the home. The vulnerability for the young people are characterised by; criminality with drugs, knives and missing reports. Most of the young people (88%) were excluded, in a Pupil Referral Unit, alternative provision or had no school or were Not in Education, Employment or Training. For the 66% of children known to children's services, 33% were receiving services as Children in Need. The most common route children were first identified as being at risk of Criminal Exploitation is through the criminal justice system. Which is too late. In Cheshire 1 in 5 children in the YJS are identified as being at high risk of criminal exploitation, and strongly suspected of being under the control of an organised criminal group.

02 Why it Matters

To be effective we need to work differently and develop plans with new partners. Contextual Safeguarding recognises that the relationships that young people and adults form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. These risks are a child protection issue, but need us to work with the young people as our partners in their own safeguarding but **never** responsible for their exploitation.

A contextual safeguarding framework is required that addresses these external risks and reduce the harm they cause to young people, their families and within communities

03 Some Core Principles

The young person will be always be at the centre of, and a partner in their safeguarding plan.

All partners will understand the young person as being exploited, for which they are not responsible; we have a common language, understanding and application of the child welfare system first and juvenile justice system second. We will use strength based models of practice.

Services will respond to the whole of the young people's needs; practical i.e. education, a home, a job, as well as physical, emotional and psychological

04 Some Core Principles

Young people in Cheshire East entering adulthood will not experience a 'cliff-edge' in terms of support, there will be no differences between thresholds / eligibility criteria of children's and adults' transitional safeguarding for this cohort of young people (from 10 to 25 years).

All partners recognise that child exploitation can have traumatic impacts on the wider family; parents/ carers need to be supported and not feel 'blamed', the focus of work with them will be to develop strategies together that help them to keep their family safe. In order to do this we will ensure that plans are developed in equal partnership and reflect the needs of the whole family

We will recognise that children and young people with SEND may be at additional risk outside the family home or setting due to their specific needs and abilities

