



Harm Outside the Home (HOTH) Strategy 2026-2029

**Working Together to Tackle Child Exploitation across Cheshire East and cross
boarders**

Introduction

The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership has developed this strategy to strengthen our collective response to harm outside the home (HOTH) from 2026–2029. Safeguarding has traditionally focused on risks within the family home, but as children grow older, they spend more time in external environments and online spaces. These contexts introduce new risks that differ from those faced in early childhood.

Exploitation outside the home can be subtle and hard to detect, often only becoming apparent after harm has occurred. Cheshire East recognises the need to adapt safeguarding approaches to address these extra-familial risks.

The Strategy sets out a vision for agencies, communities, and partners to work collaboratively to protect children from individuals and groups who cause harm. The aim is to prevent children coming to harm, identify signs, indicators early, provide effective support to children and families ensuring that children are at the centre of everything we do and disrupt harmful networks.

Home Office Definition of Contextual Safeguarding *“According to Home Office guidance, Harm Outside the Home (also called extra-familial harm) refers to abuse or exploitation that occurs beyond the family setting. This includes harm in schools, peer groups, public spaces, or online. Forms of harm include child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation (such as county lines), serious youth violence, modern slavery and trafficking, online abuse, teenage relationship abuse, and radicalisation. “*

Our Vision

Cheshire East recognises the evolving nature of harm faced by children beyond the family home. Our partnership is committed to a strategic response that prioritises relationships with children, families, and communities. We aim to create safe environments where risks are identified early and addressed collaboratively. This approach reflects our shared responsibility to protect children wherever harm occurs.



While harm outside the home takes many forms, our primary focus remains on preventing and responding to exploitation. Children targeted for sexual or criminal exploitation will be supported by skilled professionals delivering trauma-informed, child-centred interventions. Locality-based work will ensure that support is accessible and tailored to individual needs. Our ambition is to disrupt exploitation and safeguard every child.

Strategic Objectives

Our strategy is built on five key strategic objectives, each supported by specific actions and initiatives designed to achieve our overall vision:



Prevention and Early Identification

We aim to prevent child exploitation by raising awareness of what it is, its complexities, and its devastating impact. Through education and awareness, we can identify vulnerable children earlier and deliver timely interventions that reduce risk and prevent harm.

Protecting Through Support and Intervention

Listening to and validating children's experiences while fostering trust with trauma-informed adults is essential. Many exploited children may not recognise what is happening, so specialist support that respects their voice and autonomy is key to promoting safety and positive change.

Pursuing and Disrupting People and Places of Harm

Using intelligence-led approaches, statutory partners analyse data to identify patterns, hotspots, and networks linked to exploitation. Working together to disrupt organised crime, dismantle harmful networks and increase the use of civil orders to restrict perpetrators' activities.



Reducing Cultural and Social Barriers

We will promote awareness of child exploitation through education campaigns, media engagement and training for local businesses and community organisations. Families are empowered with guidance and targeted support to challenge cultural norms and reduce vulnerabilities.

Collaboration and Partnership Working

Strong leadership and a united partnership underpin a zero-tolerance approach to child exploitation. By enhancing cross-sector collaboration and improving data sharing, we demonstrate a shared commitment to safeguarding children across Cheshire East.

Principles and Values

The following principles and values guide our approach to tackling Harm Outside the Home

- **Child-Centred:** The needs and well-being of the child are at the heart of our practice. We prioritise the safety and welfare of children and young people in all our actions and decisions.
- **Trauma informed:** Creating environments and processes that help children feel safe by building trust through honesty and transparency. Focussing on strengths and potentials to help aide recovery.
- **Family-Focused:** We recognise the importance of supporting families to provide a nurturing and safe environment for their children. We work with families and their wider members to build their strengths and address any challenges they may face.
- **Collaborative:** We work in partnership with children, families, their networks and other agencies to achieve the best outcomes. We value the contributions of all partners and strive to maintain open and effective communication.
- **Evidence-Based:** Our interventions and practices are informed by research and evidence of what works from the family and, from established and respected organisations that promote government advice and guidance. We continuously seek to improve our knowledge and understanding of neglect through ongoing learning and development.
- **Inclusive:** We ensure that our services are accessible and responsive to the diverse needs of our community. We respect and value diversity and work to promote equality and inclusion in all our activities.



Key Actions

- **Prevention and early identification**

Deliver multi-agency training for professionals to recognise and respond to signs of harm outside the home, including child sexual abuse, criminal exploitation, and online risks. Training will target schools, early years, health, police, probation, and voluntary sector partners.

Use Cheshire East community spaces such as Family Hubs to raise awareness among families and the wider public about exploitation and abuse, building resilience within communities and networks.

Equip practitioners with tools for direct work with children to explore concerns, alongside embedding safeguarding policies and age-appropriate education on healthy relationships and online safety.

Engage education and early years providers who have daily contact with children to identify subtle signs of distress or behavioural changes that may indicate harm, ensuring early intervention and trusted relationships for disclosure.

Implement robust screening and assessment tools across all partner agencies to identify harm outside the home at the earliest opportunity.

Enhance practitioner capacity through continuous professional development to recognise and respond to exploitation and abuse.

Establish clear referral pathways and assessment processes to ensure timely reporting and coordinated responses to suspected harm.

- **Support and Intervention**

Provide tailored support for children and families affected by harm outside the home, addressing trauma, mental health, and family dynamics. Create a child-friendly and adult-friendly directory of support services to offer choice and accessibility.

Deliver coordinated interventions through multi-agency teams and increase awareness of therapeutic services for children and young people.

Facilitate reflective discussions across the partnership to support learning and improve practice.

- **Pursuing and Disrupting People and Places of Harm** taking proactive and decisive action to identify those who cause harm and hold them accountable. It involves disrupting harmful activities, networks, and environments to prevent



further risk. Ultimately, it is about creating safer communities by removing threats and reducing opportunities for abuse or exploitation.

- **Create and develop local profiles of people and perpetrators** who cause harm to children and young people.
- **Cross boarder collaboration** – exploitation is a transnational crime which can extend internationally. Working closely with our local, neighbouring authorities to share information and knowledge about exploitation that crosses borders.
- **Create partnership campaigns** – raising awareness of child exploitation and promote this in local areas and hotspots to deter perpetrators.
- **Seeking to mobilise support from regulatory bodies** such as Trading Standards to intervene and disrupt places of harm that enable exploitation.

- **Reducing Cultural and Social Barriers** by addressing norms, beliefs, and social dynamics that stop young people from seeking help or feeling safe to disclose harm outside the home. It involves challenging stigmas, power imbalances, and cultural expectations that may silence or marginalise them. By breaking down these barriers, the strategy enables earlier support, stronger trust, and safer access to protective services in community settings.

- **Recognising the importance of relational working** and partnering with parents, carers, communities and families. Fostering community engagement with local neighbourhoods, forming networks of support, providing safe environments for children until adulthood.
- **Understanding, respecting, and appropriately responding to the cultural backgrounds** of children and families who experience exploitation.
- **Educate and support families and carers** around the risks of child exploitation and how to protect children both on and offline.
- **Build trust** by establishing strong trust-based relationships within communities that encourages children to seek support and report incidents without fear of retaliation.
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- **Collaboration and Partnership Working**
Strengthen communication and information-sharing protocols to ensure timely multi-agency risk management and coordinated safeguarding responses.
Engage community and voluntary organisations to provide additional support and resources for families, reinforcing a whole-community approach to tackling harm outside the home.

- **Evaluation and Impact Measurement**



Collect and analyse data on harm outside the home, including child sexual abuse and exploitation, to monitor trends and measure the effectiveness of interventions.

Conduct regular reviews and audits to ensure responses align with best practice and deliver positive outcomes for children.

Develop Harm Outside the Home framework to capture the voices of children and families with lived experience in a safe and meaningful way, using their feedback to inform learning and improvement.

Governance and partnership working

Strategic Governance

The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children Partnership (CESCP) provides overarching leadership and accountability for the Harm Outside the Home strategy. It sets priorities, approves policies, and ensures alignment with statutory duties and national guidance. Strategic boards review progress against objectives and KPIs, ensuring that interventions deliver measurable improvements in safeguarding outcomes.

Operational Oversight

Multi-agency forums such as the Weekly Contextual Safeguarding Screening Meeting and the Child Exploitation Operational Panel (CEOP) oversee case-level decision-making and risk management. These groups ensure timely identification, escalation, and coordination of interventions for children at risk of exploitation or harm outside the home. Operational governance guarantees consistency with strategic aims and promotes intelligence-led practice.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is embedded through regular audits, performance monitoring, and thematic reviews. KPIs track early identification, reduction in repeat harm, and improved child well-being. Findings are reported to strategic boards to inform continuous improvement. Reflective learning sessions and multi-agency reviews ensure that practice remains evidence-based and responsive to emerging risks.

Partnership Accountability

Clear protocols for information-sharing and joint working underpin accountability across agencies. Each partner is responsible for delivering its role



within the strategy, supported by shared reporting mechanisms and escalation routes. Governance structures ensure transparency, enabling the partnership to address gaps and drive collective responsibility for safeguarding outcomes.

Continuous Improvement

Governance arrangements include mechanisms for capturing feedback from children, families, and professionals to inform service development. Insights from lived experience and serious case reviews shape policy updates and workforce training. This learning culture ensures that interventions remain effective, adaptive, and focused on achieving the best outcomes for children and families.

6. Conclusion

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children Partnership is committed to tackling harm outside the home through a strong, collaborative, multi-agency approach. This refreshed strategy aims to create safer environments for children and young people, reducing risks and promoting resilience. By embedding contextual safeguarding into practice, we will protect those most vulnerable and strengthen community awareness. Our focus remains on prevention, early identification, and effective intervention.

We recognise that addressing harm outside the home is complex and requires sustained effort. The partnership will continue to engage children, families, professionals, and communities to ensure the strategy remains responsive and impactful. By listening to lived experiences and adapting to emerging risks, we will maintain a dynamic and evidence-based approach. Together, we will work to reduce exploitation and improve outcomes for every child.

As we move forward, we will call on all partners to share responsibility and commitment to this vision. Through strong leadership, shared intelligence, and coordinated action, we can disrupt harm and safeguard children effectively. Our collective efforts will ensure that children grow up in safe, nurturing environments where they can thrive. Partnership working is the cornerstone of success in tackling harm beyond the home.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our dedication to implementing this strategy with rigor and accountability. Continuous evaluation, learning, and improvement will drive quality and effectiveness across all interventions. By working together and building on progress, we will create lasting change for children and families in



Cheshire East. Every child deserves safety, stability, and the opportunity to reach their full potential—and this strategy ensures we deliver just that.

Practice Support and References

- 🔗 [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(Statutory Guidance\) \[gov.uk\]](#)
- 🔗 [Pan-Cheshire All Age Exploitation Strategy 2023–2026 \[Cheshire...ter.gov.uk\]](#)
- 🔗 [Cheshire Serious Violence Strategy 2024–2029 \[cheshire.police.uk\]](#)
- 🔗 [Cheshire East Plan 2025–2029 \[cheshireeast.gov.uk\]](#)

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