

# **Multi-agency Practice Principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm**



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# 1. Introduction

## Aims and intended audience of the Practice Principles

The Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Support Programme was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to develop a set of Practice Principles intended to inform local and national responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm.

The Practice Principles are deliberately relevant to all children and young people on the basis that any child or young person can experience child exploitation and / or extra-familial harm, and many do without our knowledge. Those affected by child exploitation and / or extra-familial harm are due the same rights and protections as other children and young people, though the complexities and presentation of child exploitation and extra-familial harm can mean that responses sometimes undermine the realisation of these rights. The term ‘children and young people’ is used to refer to those under 18 years of age and to those for whom there are extended support entitlements beyond 18 (for example, those with special educational needs and disabilities, care leavers and so on). Use of the term is not intended to undermine the legal ‘child’ status, but to reflect young people’s own preferences around terminology. Recognising that some terms might feel more familiar to some professionals than others, the glossary (see section 7) offers an explanation of how key terms have been defined within the Practice Principles.

Though focused on child exploitation and extra-familial harm, the Practice Principles are relevant to other forms of harm that children and young people experience. They also recognise that child exploitation and extra-familial harm, though often overlapping, are not interchangeable terms. Child exploitation can include harm that is both intra and extra-familial in nature, whilst extra-familial harm can include other forms of harm beyond those classified as child exploitation.<sup>1</sup> As such, the Practice Principles promote a holistic response that recognises the potential presence of different and multiple forms of harm in children and young people’s lives.

The Practice Principles are underpinned by a recognition of the interconnected conditions of abuse.<sup>2</sup> This emphasises the importance of attending not only to the needs of the child or young person, but also to any (potential) sources of harm, the presence or absence of protective structures around the child or young person and the influence of wider contextual factors. For this reason, the Practice Principles are intended to apply to:

- all agencies within local partnerships, particularly those involved in safeguarding
- professionals working at all levels, from strategic leaders through to operational management and those working directly with children, young people, parents and carers.

The Practice Principles may also be useful to those working with young adults facing exploitation (although the legislative frameworks differ, many of the needs young people have can extend into adulthood).

<sup>1</sup>For further information on definitions, see Brodie (2021) [Child exploitation. Definitions and language.](#)

<sup>2</sup>For further information on the inter-connected conditions of abuse, see Beckett et al. (2017) [Child Sexual Exploitation Definition and Guide for Professionals. Extended Text.](#)



The Principles are designed to be broad and flexible enough to support effective partnership working across different local contexts, while providing a common language and framework to better respond to child exploitation and extra-familial harm. They aim to guide, but not prescribe, how local partnerships and individual agencies or professionals might usefully shape their approach, i.e. the Practice Principles are intended as a compass, rather than a map. Recognising the wealth of local and national activity already underway in the field, the Practice Principles are also intended to both complement what is already in existence and to have continued relevance as policy develops.

## The development and context of the Practice Principles

The Principles draw on the learning and expertise that already exist and, as such, should feel familiar and obvious. Adopting an **evidence-informed approach**, they draw upon:

- the published research evidence base<sup>3</sup>
- learning from years 1 to 3 of the TCE Support Programme<sup>4</sup>
- consultations with professionals across the sector<sup>5</sup>
- consultations with children, young people, parents and carers.<sup>6</sup>

The rich insights gathered from multiple sources during the development of the Principles highlight the challenging context in which responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm are developing. This context includes factors like:

- the evolving nature of these forms of harm and how they can manifest
- the unique context of every local area (e.g. its size, socioeconomic characteristics, urban / rural / coastal etc.)
- system-based challenges
- resource constraints
- the range of local and national partners and agencies involved in ensuring an effective response, with diverse policy and practice priorities.

The Practice Principles operate within, not outside of, these challenges and tensions. They cannot offer a simple ‘one size fits all’ solution to an array of complex problems. Instead, they aim to provide all professionals with a starting point to counter what can feel like an overwhelming set of challenges: ‘start small, start somewhere’. For those already working in this way, the Principles aim to provide an opportunity for reflection.

The Principles do this by focusing on the ‘how’ – achievable and actionable ways of working

<sup>3</sup>All supporting resources, including a research summary, will be published on the [TCE microsite](#).

<sup>4</sup>See [learning from the first three years of the TCE Programme](#) (2019-22).

<sup>5</sup>Consultation with over 750 professionals across government and strategic bodies, statutory and non-statutory safeguarding partners, universal and specialist support services, and voluntary and community organisations.

<sup>6</sup>Consultation with 242 children and young people and parents / carers, with direct and indirect experience of the issues under consideration, from across England.



- rather than dictating 'what' to do in every specific situation. By offering a steer on how to work - with children and young people, parents and carers, communities, and colleagues across the multi-agency partnership - the Principles aim to support coherent, collaborative and creative responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm.

## 2. Summary of the Practice Principles

There are eight Practice Principles, which together support a more holistic response to child exploitation and extra-familial harm, characterised by:

1. Putting children and young people first.
2. Recognising and challenging inequalities, exclusion and discrimination.
3. Respecting the voice, experience and expertise of children and young people.
4. Being strengths-based and relationship-based.
5. Recognising and responding to trauma.
6. Being curious, evidence-informed and knowledgeable.
7. Approaching parents and carers as partners, wherever possible.
8. Creating safer spaces and places for children and young people.

These Principles are interdependent. No one Principle is more important than any other, and none can be considered in isolation from the others. Similarly, none are the domain of any one person or any particular role.

Each Principle speaks to what it means for those engaged in direct work, operational managers who support this work, and those in strategic leadership and partnership roles. Although written for a multi-agency audience, some of the terminology will likely feel more familiar to some agencies than others. More specialist terms and approaches are explained in the glossary at the end of the document.

Keeping children and young people at the centre, each Principle is framed around what it might mean to them and how - from their perspective - it feels when these Principles are enacted effectively. Composite quotes,<sup>7</sup> drawn from Programme consultations, are used to illustrate this.

<sup>7</sup> Composite quotes are used to represent the breadth of contributions made within the consultations in an accessible form, whilst protecting the anonymity of individual contributors.



## Common themes

Four common themes are noted in multiple Principles. These are:

- **effective communication**
- **critical thinking**
- **collaboration**
- **high-quality learning and development**

To explain what these terms mean, within the context of the Practice Principles, a brief description is offered:

| Theme                                   | Description  |
|---|--|
| <b>Effective communication means...</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• focusing on the purpose and intended audience, in terms of content, tone and communication methods</li><li>• using language that is clear, trauma-informed, respectful and accessible for colleagues across partnerships, and for children, young people and families, and avoiding terms which can stigmatise or re-traumatise</li><li>• ensuring communication is two-way and inclusive, i.e. ensuring feedback can be given and received, and that people can check their understanding</li><li>• ensuring that the way the message is communicated aligns with the spirit of what is being communicated.</li></ul> |
| <b>Critical thinking means...</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• taking a disciplined approach to thinking about an issue in a reasoned, rational and open-minded way</li><li>• exploring an issue from multiple perspectives or angles, to gain new insights and deepen empathy</li><li>• using reflective practice and reflective supervision to question assumptions, including our own, and being receptive to challenge or alternative views and interpretations</li><li>• assessing and analysing information logically to better understand the implications of an idea, including considering unintended consequences.</li></ul>  |



| Theme   | Description  |
|---|--|
| <b>Collaboration means...</b>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reaching across boundaries or silos (professional, geographical or other divides), to find common ground and create connections</li> <li>• considering power dynamics and proactively creating conditions in which everyone feels able to contribute as equals</li> <li>• working towards a shared vision, understanding and language in order to achieve shared goals</li> <li>• ensuring information sharing practices are clear and purposeful, that all professionals are working from a shared understanding of the ‘whole story’ from the perspective of the child, young person, and family, and avoid practices which require them to retell distressing or traumatising experiences</li> <li>• combining skills, expertise and perspectives to create something greater than the sum of its parts.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>High-quality learning and development means...</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supporting professionals at all levels (not only those in direct practice) to develop knowledge and skills, using a range of methods including formal training, team-based learning, self-directed study, structured skills-exchange activity, and 1:1 or group supervision</li> <li>• ensuring the activity is evidence-informed in terms of content (e.g. up to date research) and methods (e.g. effective approaches for the type of learning required)</li> <li>• activity is evaluated for impact (specifically, the extent to which learning is transferred to practice) rather than just feedback, and organisations and individuals are able to adapt or change ways of working in order to accommodate new learning</li> <li>• ensuring activity responds to learning needs, which have been identified through analysing feedback from the children, young people and families / carers being supported, as well as from professionals and their managers</li> <li>• reflecting the evolving context of responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm, rather than delivering the same training year on year.</li> </ul> |



## Putting the Principles into practice

Depending on a particular professional's role, or the specific remit of any individual agency, some of the Principles will likely feel more immediately aligned with 'core business' than others. For example:

- a police officer will likely have more opportunity to implement disruption tactics and create safer spaces and places
- a youth worker may feel more confident in undertaking meaningful participation work in order to respect children and young people's voices
- a social worker might feel more skilled in applying the theory underpinning strengths-based practice
- a mental-health professional may feel more knowledgeable in adopting a trauma-informed approach.

However, feedback from consultation emphasised that all professionals and agencies have the opportunity to enact the spirit of the Principles within their existing remit. During consultation, colleagues across the country shared examples illustrating ways in which the Principles can be - and in many cases already are - enacted in practice. Section 6, 'What the Principles mean for us', shares some of these examples and also summarises feedback on each of the Principles from children, young people, parents and carers.

Section 5, 'Further learning resources', provides links to key policy documents and practice resources that relate to each of the Principles. Additionally, six supporting resources are available to help professionals apply them.<sup>8</sup> These include:

- an interactive, reflective tool for local partnerships to assess their responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm, using the eight Principles to identify areas in which they can strengthen their partnership approach
- an animation to explain the evidence, ideas and interdependencies that underpin the Principles
- a succinct summary of the research drawn upon in developing the Principles
- a professional development tool to support practitioners to reflect on the Principles, and how to apply them to their own practice
- a resource to help local agency leaders and partnerships involve children and young people and include their views at a strategic level
- a resource to support local agencies and partnerships to approach parents and carers as partners at both operational and strategic levels.

<sup>8</sup>All supporting resources will be available on the TCE microsite <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/>





### 3. The Practice Principles at a glance





## Practice Principle 1:

Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must...  
**put children and young people first**

### 'Unpacking' the Principle and why it matters

All children are entitled to the support and protection of a child-centred response. Prioritising this within the context of child exploitation and extra-familial harm is particularly important because, too often, this has not been the case. Putting children and young people first is at the heart of a **child-centred** approach. It means 'keeping the child or young person in focus when making decisions about their lives and working in partnership with them and their families.'<sup>9</sup> It means seeing the child or young person behind the presenting behaviours, i.e. considering them holistically, including their family circumstances, trauma, physical and mental health, identity and experiences of inequalities.

A child-centred response must span the full spectrum of support, from prevention and early help through to specialist services, and include those children and young people who are in or leaving care. This approach may also need to be part of any transitional support - neither trauma nor young people's development stops at the age of 18 and those facing exploitation and extra-familial harm may need support into adulthood.

Ensuring a **child-centred** response may be challenging if the child or young person is causing harm to others. However, it is very important to ensure that children and young people are not excluded from support and protection where a criminal justice response is required. This means understanding the needs and vulnerabilities that might be underpinning harmful behaviours, as part of managing risks. This aligns with the **Child First approach** established within youth justice.



**How it should feel for a child / young person being supported**

**I feel understood, believed and treated like a human being. I feel my worker is interested in me and on my side. I know they don't judge or blame me.**

<sup>9</sup>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)



**“** *I feel like if a person has the courage to come forward and admit that something's happened to them, then you should always believe them first. I don't feel there should be blame. I feel like I have been shamed a lot, and that I'm a burden. I don't think a lot of the professionals mean it, but I feel like there's always... judgement. Like about my background. You want someone to speak to you like you're worth speaking to... that'd just make such a difference, because then you'd feel like they respected what you were saying. I just need someone to be with me, not against me.* **”**

**(Young person)**

**“** *I keep getting told, basically, this is teenage behaviour, this is your son's choice, he knows what he's doing. The fact is, my son has complex issues, he has complex needs. My son should have been treated as a victim, and he hasn't been. He's treated as a criminal. If you don't put in the right support, it looks like the problem is behavioural. It looks like a child's choosing to misbehave. If you put in the right support, behaviours will change for the better because he has a disability and a learning need. Please see him as a young person who needs support, not a criminal with no prospects, or someone who is not deserving of help.* **”**

**(Parent / carer)**

## Practice Principle 1:

What putting children and young people first asks of those...

**working directly with children, young people and families**



- Recognise the complex dynamics at play in child exploitation and extra-familial harm; see the child or young person as more than the harm they have experienced; be curious about all aspects of a child or young person's life and offer a holistic response.
- Keep the child or young person in focus when making decisions about their lives and work in partnership with them and their families
- Prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Consider their diverse communication, social and development needs, including the impact of trauma and **adverse childhood experiences** on neurological and social development, and ensure the support offered is accessible.
- Demonstrate an understanding that a child or young person's developmental age or cognitive abilities may not match their chronological age, and that harm, trauma, and development do not stop at 18 years old. Advocate for children and young people where this is not being recognised.
- Recognise that exploring boundaries and risk are a normal part of adolescent development. Take care to understand young people's motivations and perceptions of their situation, and to provide a proportionate response.
- Ensure all language and non-verbal communication is non-blaming, and reflect on terminology that could imply blame (for example, 'out of parental control', 'disengaged', or 'putting themselves at risk'). Respectfully challenge others if their language places responsibility on the child or young person.
- Avoid responding in ways that are intrusive or punitive; ensure children and young people are not made to feel responsible for harm caused by others.
- Be alert to and challenge all discrimination and negative stereotypes, which might lead to false assumptions around blame and responsibility.
- Demonstrate an understanding that children and young people who cause harm to others are children first and foremost.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the impact on children, young people and their families who are dealing with prosecution or live criminal cases, act sensitively to ensure they feel informed and supported.
- Wherever possible, avoid making decisions that might significantly limit future options for a child or young person, such as time out of school<sup>10</sup>, placing them out of area, or criminalisation, while acknowledging that these interventions may be needed in some circumstances (for example, when they are at risk of serious violence).

<sup>10</sup>Children may have time out of school for a variety of reasons including exclusions, authorised and unauthorised absence



## Practice Principle 1:

What putting children and young people first asks of those...

**managing and supporting direct work**



- Model a child-centred approach through service responses, which considers the lived experiences of children and young people, including their motivations and perceptions of their situations.
- Create structured opportunities for individual and peer reflection and learning, including universal and preventative services. Create opportunities for staff to have the opportunity to learn about issues such as:
  - the diverse communication, social and development needs of children and young people
  - the nature of **constrained choice**, including **survival choices**, that children and young people face
  - how discrimination and negative stereotypes can lead to false assumptions around blame and responsibility.
- Advocate to senior colleagues for high-quality learning and development support or resources for professionals, which equip them to meet the diverse needs of the children and young people they are working with, including those approaching or over 18.
- Support staff to plan and deliver holistic support and protection, drawing in expertise from across the partnership including universal and voluntary / community sector organisations.
- Create and model a culture where **victim-blaming** language or attitudes across multi-agency partners are challenged wherever they are found.
- Support staff to advocate for children and young people, including where they need more specialist support from across the partnership.
- Support staff to recognise and hold the tension where children and young people are both victims and harming others; manage a response that addresses both.
- Adapt and improve - or escalate to senior leaders - any documentation, tools, or protocols which impede a child-centred approach that prioritises safety and welfare.

## Practice Principle 1:

What putting children and young people first asks of...

### local strategic leaders and partnerships



- Set and model an organisational culture that sees children and young people as children first and prioritises their safety and wellbeing.
- Create opportunities for strategic scrutiny, audit and review activity that include attention to latest data on discrimination, disadvantage, and child welfare inequalities.
- Develop clear expectations for **information sharing** practices that enable the partnership to work to a shared understanding of the 'whole story', informed by respectful and purposeful gathering and sharing of children and young people's perspectives. Ensure the sharing and use of data supports early identification of, and response to, need.
- Create opportunities to share learning and expertise across the partnership, including universal and preventative services, to support professionals in meeting the diverse needs of children and young people in your local area.
- Use the expertise of children, young people, parents, carers and the wider workforce to identify where multi-agency learning and development will have the most impact.
- Role model an organisational or partnership culture where children and young people are not blamed or held responsible for the harm they face, paying particular attention to language.
- Demonstrate an understanding of **Transitional Safeguarding**; work with partners across age-related boundaries to develop a coherent approach to supporting young people affected by exploitation and extra-familial harm into adulthood.
- Support agencies across the partnership to effectively manage the tension where children and young people are both victims and harming others, including ensuring documentation, tools and protocols all support a response which puts children and young people
- Take care that a focus on disruption or behaviour management does not inadvertently criminalise or permanently exclude children and young people. Challenge policies and procedures where evidence suggests this might be happening.



## Practice Principle 2:

Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must...  
**recognise and challenge inequalities, exclusion and discrimination**

### 'Unpacking' the Principle and why it matters

Children, young people, parents and carers can face discrimination in a number of ways, including racism, sexism, classism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia and ableism, amongst others.<sup>11</sup> Latest data shows that disparities continue to exist between ethnic and social groups in a number of areas, including safeguarding, childhood outcomes, and criminal justice.

**Inequality** and **marginalisation** can be both a driver for, and a consequence of, exploitation and extra-familial harm, and professional efforts can inadvertently reinforce **inequity**.<sup>12</sup> An effective response therefore attends to both the interpersonal discrimination and inequalities facing children and young people, parents and carers, communities and many of the professionals supporting them. Addressing this means creating an inclusive culture for professionals and those they support, in which everyone is respected regardless of their social, ethnic, or gender characteristics. It requires those who do not face discrimination to ensure that marginalised voices are heard and injustice is not tolerated.



How it should feel for a  
**child / young  
 person being  
 supported**

**I am seen, respected and accepted  
 for who I am, professionals can  
 relate to me, and they challenge any  
 discrimination I face**

<sup>11</sup> This is not an exhaustive list of all discrimination, and it should not be assumed that those mentioned are more important than any not specifically mentioned.

<sup>12</sup> It is recognised that 'equality' and 'equity' are connected but distinct terms (both promote fairness - equality aims to achieve this through treating everyone the same regardless of need, while equity aims to achieve this through treating people differently depending on need)

**“** *If you're saying some ignorant weird crap about a person of colour or a trans person, it's just uncomfortable. How can I trust somebody who makes me feel uncomfortable about my identity? We're all human and everyone should be allowed to be themselves. If someone has gone out of their way to find something out about something important to me, it feels like they're welcoming and they're supportive of who I really am, which makes me feel really safe.* **”**

**(Young person)**

**“** *Professionals should challenge inequality but first have to recognise and accept that there is inequality! It's important to try to understand the family and their experiences, because everyone's different, aren't they? I can explain how my child is uniquely wired, and if you ask, can give you some ideas about what might work for them. It's about trying to get an idea of their perspective on the world, and their life, because it can affect how you help them.* **”**

**(Parent / carer)**





## Practice Principle 2:

What recognising and challenging inequalities, exclusion and discrimination asks of those... **working directly with children, young people and families**



- Access and use a variety of individual and peer reflective learning opportunities to understand how inequality, exclusion and discrimination:
  - manifest in practice, systems and society
  - impact on children, young people, families and communities.
- Be aware of **disproportionality**, i.e. the under and over-representation of some groups of children and young people and the assumptions and negative stereotypes that underpin these.
- Remember not all minority identities are visible (for example, faith, neuro-divergence, and some learning and behavioural needs), but can have a significant impact on how children and young people experience harm, how they are perceived by others, and how they perceive and are able to access support
- Recognise that everyone has biases, makes assumptions and can be influenced by stereotypes, including in ways they may be unaware of. Use the support of peers and managers to reflect on your own identity and experiences, and how these shape your perspective and practice.
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of, and commitment to, anti-discrimination law, guidance, and practice, including in your work with colleagues across the partnership. Challenge discrimination and negative stereotypes wherever found.
- Use accessible language and methods and safe spaces and social environments for building trust with children, young people, parents and carers, recognising that what constitutes a safe space will differ for different children, young people, parents and carers.
- Remember that a child or young person's identity is multifaceted and can be informed by a range of multiple, overlapping characteristics; listen to how children and young people define and describe their own identities and what's important to them.



- Offer support in ways that are inclusive, respectful and attuned to children and young people’s identities; remember some protected characteristics can change over time:
  - Children and young people may still be exploring and understanding their own emerging identity, especially around sexuality and gender.
  - Children and young people may have undiagnosed or unmet learning and / or neuro-divergent needs.
  - Children and young people’s behaviours may be driven by a learned response or developmental coping strategy related to trauma.
- Advocate for children and young people from minority social, faith, and ethnic groups where they feel they have been treated unfairly and want to challenge this.
- Acknowledge children and young people’s experiences of discrimination. Proactively seek feedback from children and young people, families and communities about their experiences of professional involvement and how it could be more inclusive or accessible.

## Practice Principle 2:

What recognising and challenging inequalities, exclusion and discrimination asks of those... **managing and supporting direct work**



- Understand how **disproportionality** and under or over-representation manifests within your team or service, including considering what data is and is not collected, how it is used and shared, and how this could contribute to disproportionality and / or under or over-representation. Have a clear plan to address this, including challenging the biases that underpin it.
- Raise disproportionality in partnership meetings and ask questions about any gaps or concerns more widely than your own team or service or area of responsibility.
- Recognise that everyone has biases, makes assumptions and can be influenced by stereotypes, including in ways they may be unaware of. Set an example by reflecting on your own identity and experiences and how these shape your perspective and management practice.
- Prioritise management and supervision approaches that help staff to develop their confidence in identifying and challenging discrimination and negative stereotypes, including within inter-professional working, and support them to notice and address gaps in knowledge.



- Ensure that a collective effort is made by all to fully understand and address issues relating to inequality and inclusion.
- Model and proactively support staff to develop anti-discriminatory practice which is informed by a robust understanding of anti-discrimination legislation including through formal learning and development, group and individual supervision, and reflective spaces.
- Pay attention to unintended consequences, including where professional intervention inadvertently replicates and / or compounds discrimination. Support staff to recognise the impact of their decision-making.
- Where inequalities are contributing to a child or young person's risk of harm, capture evidence of this and raise it with senior colleagues to inform local strategic approaches.
- Strive to attract and retain a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community it serves, and create an inclusive culture for staff from all backgrounds:
  - Pay particular attention to recruitment and retention approaches to ensure fairness and inclusion in access to learning and development and progression opportunities.
  - Establish accessible and safe routes for staff to report discrimination. Act swiftly and decisively where discrimination is proven to have occurred.
  - Be alert to the potential that individuals working with children who have faced discrimination and / or other traumatic life experiences may themselves be emotionally impacted by this, especially if they relate to those experiences. Ensure adequate support for colleagues who may experience this.
  - Invite critical feedback from staff to inform continuous improvement in relation to the above points.
- Ensure there are clear and accessible ways for children, young people, parents and carers to raise concerns about discrimination and bias experienced from professionals. Respond sensitively and act decisively where concerns are substantiated, recognise the importance of responding with empathy where experiences of discrimination are not substantiated, and create opportunities for shared learning with other teams or services.

## Practice Principle 2:

What recognising and challenging inequalities, exclusion and discrimination asks of... **local strategic leaders and partnerships**



- Proactively identify and challenge discrimination and negative stereotypes within your organisation and across the partnership. Explore under or over-representation of key groups (both in terms of children and young people and the workforce) and use this information to underpin local strategy.
- Look for patterns of disproportionality and under or over-representation across different service pathways, invite challenge from staff and communities in order to create greater equity.
- Proactively seek to understand how marginalised groups experience support, and what could be done to make this inclusive and equitable.
- Recognise that everyone has biases, makes assumptions and can be influenced by stereotypes, including in ways they may be unaware of. Lead by example, reflecting on your own identity and experiences and how these shape your perspective and leadership.
- Model courageous and transparent leadership, challenge discriminatory attitudes and negative stereotypes and promote the embedding of anti-discrimination practices.
- Ensure that a collective effort is made by all to fully understand and address issues relating to inequality and inclusion.
- Model an evidence-based understanding of how discrimination, inequality and exclusion affect children, young people, their families and communities, in all conversations with colleagues and partners.
- Create an organisational or partnership culture where diversity is celebrated, inclusion is paramount and everyone is respected, heard and understood.
- Proactively encourage greater diversity of perspectives and experiences within the workforce and strategic leadership across the partnership. Put in place robust measures to ensure people from minority groups are represented at a strategic level.
- Create opportunities for qualitative evidence from those who have experienced discrimination and disadvantage to directly inform the strategic approach to redressing discrimination and promoting diversity and inclusion, alongside professional expertise and research evidence.
- Establish accessible ways for professionals, children and young people, parents and carers and communities to have their views heard and to safely raise concerns.
- Act collectively, sensitively, and decisively where discrimination has been experienced and / or identified. Be transparent about any decisions taken.



**Practice Principle 3:**

Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must... **respect the voices, experiences and expertise of children and young people**

**‘Unpacking’ the Principle and why it matters**

All children and young people have the right to have a say about matters that affect them and be heard in decisions made about them. Listening to, hearing and responding to what children and young people are communicating (remembering that communication does not have to be verbal) helps to build trusting relationships and helps professionals to better engage children and young people. This in turn can increase their safety; participation is a core part of protection.

Respecting the voice, experience and expertise of children and young people means ‘working with them’ rather than ‘doing to them’; involving them in decision-making wherever possible and, where decisions cannot align with their wishes (for safety reasons, for example), having honest conversations around this. These behaviours form the basis of meaningful **participatory practices**. A child-centred approach to participation provides opportunities for children and young people to exercise control and choice. This is a powerful and practical way of inverting the coercion and manipulation associated with child exploitation and some forms of extra-familial harm.

Children and young people’s voices should be heard at all levels of safeguarding systems to influence decision-making about their own support, as well as at strategic level.

Particular attention must be paid to children and young people whose voices are sometimes under-represented or overlooked. These might include - but are not limited to - disabled children and young people, **unaccompanied asylum-seeking children** and young people, those placed far from home, those with complex mental health needs, those with **no recourse to public funds** and children and young people from ethnic minority groups.

**How it should feel for a child / young person being supported**

**I feel heard, acknowledged and validated because my views and opinions are sought and included. This matters to me and makes me want to talk to them.**

**“** *Let me know I’m an important person in that room by asking me what I need. Give me time, and be patient enough to let me think about what I want as well, because I don’t know straightaway what I want or the best ways to help me. You need to be patient and take the lead from me about how much I want to be involved. You never know, you might learn something too.* **”**

**(Young person)**

**“** *If I know you care about what I think, and that my views matter, it gives me that confidence when I’m in a room of professionals. If you know me and have my back, it’s like, then I know that I’m okay. I know that I can be confident in what I’m saying, and can stand up for myself. And that helps give me a mind-set moving forwards, that I matter, that I deserve respect. It helps me get my voice out and makes me want others to be accountable.* **”**

**(Young person)**



### Practice Principle 3:

What respecting the voice, experiences and expertise of children and young people asks of those... **working directly with children, young people and families**



- Demonstrate an ability and willingness to listen, acknowledge and respond to children and young people's views and experiences.
- Be creative, curious and proactive in your efforts to understand children and young people's views and experiences.
- Develop an understanding that participation - that is listening to, involving and respecting the expertise of children and young people - is a core part of protection.
- Understand that children and young people can express themselves in many different ways and the 'voice' of children and young people can include both what is said and unsaid, as well as verbal and non-verbal indicators.
- Recognise that some children and young people's voices are often under-represented, or overlooked. Proactively find ways to include and amplify these voices, drawing on the support of colleagues and managers to develop new skills and approaches.
- Show a genuine interest in the child or young person's life, beyond their experience of harm, and use this as a starting point to work towards building trust.
- Actively support all children and young people, in line with their **developmental capacity**, to inform and be included in decisions about their support and safety.
- Tell them who their information will be shared with, and why. Provide feedback on how their views have been taken into account and, where decisions cannot align with their wishes (for safety reasons), have meaningful conversations around this.
- Practise purposeful information sharing which includes taking into account the perspectives of children and young people.
- Approach differences of opinion between a child or young person's perspective and those of their parents / carers and professionals **restoratively**, with the aim of building positive relationships and promoting increased understanding.
- Give children and young people as much choice and control as possible, recognising the coercive dynamics the child or young person may have experienced and ensuring that practice does not replicate these.
- Where possible, try to enable children and young people to exercise choice about the support they receive - e.g. who is best placed to be their **lead professional** or **appropriate adult**, where feels safe to talk, or which interventions might work for them.
- Seek children and young people's feedback on how your practice could be more participatory, use their expertise to inform ongoing practice development.

## Practice Principle 3:

What respecting the voice, experiences and expertise of children and young people asks of those... **managing and supporting direct work**



- Promote genuine **participative practice** to all staff and support them to integrate participatory methods into their practice, rather than it being the sole responsibility of participation workers. Emphasise that all children and young people have the right to be heard in relation to decisions made about them.
- Help staff have access to resources and training to use participatory methods with all children and young people, regardless of their needs. This includes:
  - enabling staff to make adaptations and adjustments, emphasising the importance of inclusion, and helping them to be flexible and creative where necessary
  - reflecting with individuals and teams on negative stereotypes, or gaps in skills, that might impede professionals from hearing minority voices or from recognising children and young people as experts in their own lives.
- Support staff to access high-quality learning and development opportunities, including drawing on support and expertise from across the partnership and from specialists in participatory practice, and advocate for these opportunities where they are not available.
- Provide supervision and management support that helps staff to recognise and manage the emotional impact of paying deeper attention to children and young people's voices. Where this is not in place, advocate for it.
- Model a commitment to hearing children and young people's views and understanding them holistically, rather than seeing them only in terms of the harm they may face or be causing to others.
- Support agencies across the partnership to practise purposeful information sharing, and ensure professionals understand the perspectives of children and young people when sharing information.
- Support staff to reflect on and manage tension or conflict respectfully and restoratively where children and young people's views and wishes differ from those of other professionals and / or their parents / carers.
- Ensure participation work is inclusive, meaningful and ethical. Offer constructive challenge regarding this in quality assurance, audit, supervision and other management oversight activity.
- Create inclusive and accessible opportunities for direct feedback from a diverse range of children and young people. Use their expertise to inform:
  - service and staff development
  - adaptations or measures needed to support minority voices being heard
  - co-production of learning and development tools and training.





### Practice Principle 3:

What respecting the voice, experiences and expertise of children and young people asks of... **local strategic leaders and partnerships**



- Establish and lead an organisational and / or partnership culture that respects children and young people's voice, experiences and expertise.
- Embed participatory practice into the operational and strategic responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm, within individual organisations and across the partnership.
- Where children and young people's views are limited or absent in needs assessment, monitoring, impact reporting and review activity, hold agencies to account and support them to find ways to prioritise this.
- Ensure approaches are inclusive and proactively seek to hear from all children and young people, especially those whose voices are under-represented.
- Create meaningful ways for children and young people to influence change at partnership governance level, avoiding tokenistic representation. This might include employing young inspectors, peer researchers, or establishing a children and young people's board or advisory group with the power to hold agencies to account. Ensure children and young people's time and contributions are valued.
- Model a commitment to meaningful participation by being prepared to hear challenging feedback from children and young people and being willing to respond constructively and transparently.
- Where children and young people offer critical feedback, be transparent and open in sharing it. Create time and space to reflect on key learning and be clear on what will or will not happen as a result.
- Establish clear ethical guidelines across the partnership to ensure all levels of participatory activities, i.e. consultation, engagement and co-production work with children and young people, prioritises their welfare and wellbeing. Ensure that efforts to engage **experts by experience** do not:
  - limit young people's ability to move on from harmful experiences
  - re-traumatise them
  - inadvertently replicate exploitative dynamics they may have encountered previously.
- Use the expertise of children and young people to inform:
  - service provision
  - policy development
  - multi-agency learning and development
  - innovation and improvement activity.



## Practice Principle 4:

Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must...  
**be strengths-based and relationship-based**

### ‘Unpacking’ the Principle and why it matters

Being strengths-based and relationship-based means seeing a child or young person holistically and identifying their strengths and assets and the positive factors in their lives, rather than just seeing them as at risk, being harmed or causing harm to others. It also means understanding and using the positive power of relationships as a way to support growth and change.

Working in this way, particularly in the context of child exploitation and extra-familial harm, requires professionals to exercise power with care, recognising that children, young people, parents, carers and wider family networks may feel worried, upset or angry with professionals.

Strengths-based and relationship-based approaches can help ensure safeguarding activity moves beyond a focus on risk and behaviours to include building genuine connections and relationships with children and young people - and those who care about them. This can allow a better understanding of their lives, thereby enhancing their protection, safety and resilience.

Being **strengths-based** and **relationship-based** is important in inter-agency working too, and this needs to be modelled and promoted in management and leadership in order to be embedded in practice. Strong multi-agency relationships can enable greater alignment and coherence, and may support effective information sharing and resource allocation, which can help to ensure children and young people receive the most effective support at the right time.



**How it should feel for a child / young person being supported**

**I have someone to go to who genuinely cares about me and my future. They do things to actually help me. I feel safe with them and can trust them.**

*“ I need to feel some type of connection to feel comfortable. I need some reassurance that they will try to do something about what is going on, but I need them to be honest about what they can and can't do. It takes time to build trust. A lot of people give up on me really easily because they don't see that I'm engaging, or they don't think I'm trying or something. It's not that, it's just that I don't trust them yet, if that makes sense. I need them to show that they'll stay a bit before I can be honest and open up to them. ”*

**(Young person)**

*“ What I really need is to be listened to... it can be a really, really lonely, isolated world when your child is being exploited. Having somebody who encourages you to speak and really hears you, who doesn't judge you and maybe offers advice or advocacy - even if we only speak once or twice. To be vulnerable in front of professionals is a massive thing, because you can't expect me to be vulnerable if you're not going to show me that you're not always sure or clear, too. Having trust in the system can be really hard. If you've been hurt by experiences, like feeling blamed or something, you stop wanting to work with other people and sometimes, you're just trying to survive and keep things ticking over. ”*

**(Parent / carer)**

## Practice Principle 4:

What strengths-based and relationship-based approaches ask of those...  
**working directly with children, young people and families.**



- Develop an understanding of what relationship-based practice and strengths-based working mean. Use these approaches both with children and young people and their parents / carers and with colleagues and multi-agency partners. Seek to resolve differences of opinion with professional peers in a restorative and respectful way.
- Show children and young people that you see them as a whole person, not just as the harm they face, or may present to others. See the best in children and young people, and those who care about them. Take care to avoid **deficit-based** assessments or reports, which only focus on the risks or concerns.
- Consider the needs of other children and young people who might also be affected, for example, siblings, wider family or peers, and how they might be supported.
- Proactively look for strengths and positive features alongside a child or young person. Support them to recognise their aspirations, strengths and skills. Use these to identify changes they would like to make for themselves.
- Work collaboratively with children and young people - and their parents / carers and wider support networks - to identify the strengths and positive factors in their wider relationships. Recognise these in assessments and plans and reflect on how your practice can increase and build on these strengths. Be sensitive to the fact that those who care about a child or young person might need time and space to express worries and anger before they can think about strengths.
- Understand that relationship-based practice includes modelling consensual and respectful relationships with the child or young person, their parents / carers, and wider networks of support.
- Where children and young people have additional needs (for example, special educational needs and disabilities, communication needs and / or mental or physical health problems) or where they face additional difficulties in their lives (for example, housing needs or poverty), work alongside them to understand what adaptations or approaches work best for them. Proactively create opportunities where they can exercise control and choice within the work being done with them.
- Share the strengths you see in the child or young person - and their parents / carers and wider support networks - with other professionals across the partnership. Emphasise their strengths and abilities, ensure the positive aspects of their family or social network are recognised and advocate for their involvement.
- Build their capacity for **resilience** (while recognising that resilience is not an innate trait or a substitute for support), including their ability to live safe, healthy and happy lives without professional support when the time comes.
- Use supervision or peer support to reflect on how you can further demonstrate relationship-based and strengths-based approaches in your role.

## Practice Principle 4:

What strengths-based and relationship-based approaches ask of those...  
**managing and supporting direct work.**



- Model strengths-based and relationship-based approaches in your own professional relationships, within your team or service and with partners.
- Provide the tools and support needed for staff to offer strengths-based and relationship-based approaches with both children and young people. Help staff understand that these approaches are underpinned by theory and are a means of increasing safety; they are not simply ‘being nice’ or having no professional boundaries. Encourage critical thinking about these approaches and the pitfalls professionals might face in applying them.
- Support staff to understand that strengths-based and relationship-based working with other agencies does not mean avoiding challenge. Help them to offer challenge in a clear and constructive way, showing empathy for inter-agency colleagues whilst retaining a focus on children and young people’s needs.
- Emphasise that strengths-based and relationship-based approaches should be applied to all children and young people, including those causing harm to others.
- Create opportunities for professionals within specialist and universal services to learn from and support each other about relationship-based and strengths-based working.
- Use structured opportunities for individual and peer reflection and learning to explore tone and language used in interactions with children and young people, reports, case recording, assessments and plans. Identify examples of strengths-based and relational language and share these to build a shared culture across services or teams.
- Support staff to access high-quality reflective learning and development that enables relationship-based and strengths-based practice to be embedded into practice.
- Develop your own skills in strengths-based, relationship-based management and supervision - e.g. **coaching methods** and Restorative Practice. Proactively identify opportunities to put this learning into management practice.
- For those managing staff who are able to form long-term relationships with children and young people, develop plans to manage the impact for children, young people and their parents / carers if a trusted professional moves on.
- For those managing staff whose roles involve short term or episodic interactions with children and young people, emphasise the importance of building rapport and being relational, even if only for short periods of time.
- Role model strengths-based language about children and young people, e.g. in audit and quality assurance activity, in meetings and with partners.



- Work collaboratively with other managers or partners so that, where possible, you are able to respond to children and young people’s preferences in relation to the support they receive, and who they work with.
- Create a culture within teams and services where it is safe to constructively challenge colleagues when they are not working in a strengths-based and relationship-based way

## Practice Principle 4:

### What strengths-based and relationship-based approaches ask of...

#### local strategic leaders and partnerships



- Set and model a culture of strengths-based and relationship-based approaches to leadership and multi-agency partnership working. See the best in partners, invest time into building strong relationships.
- Ensure strengths-based and relationship-based approaches are evidence-informed and one part of a comprehensive service offer (rather than a solution in and of themselves).
- Adopt strengths-based approaches to leadership and governance; implement formal ways to identify and learn from individual or collective strengths across the partnership (e.g. **Appreciative Inquiry** and **Serious Case Reviews**).
- Set clear expectations that inter-professional relationships are respectful, trusting and collaborative. Incorporate these expectations within Terms of Reference and other partnership governance documentation.
- Develop clear and safe channels for raising concerns and escalations if standards of behaviour reflected throughout the partnership fall short of respectful, trusting and collaborative.
- Invest in high-quality learning and development for professionals (including managers) across the multi-agency partnership, which builds collective understanding and confidence regarding relationship-based and strengths-based approaches with both children and young people facing harm, and those harming others.
- Prioritise approaches to commissioning services and support that allow for long-term relationship-based work.
- Emphasise to colleagues working in roles that involve very short-term or episodic interactions with children and young people that they still have the opportunity to be relational.
- Proactively support local partners to engage in collective problem solving, rather than blame; this should be evidenced within annual reports, audit / self-assessment, inspection or peer review feedback.



## Practice Principle 5:

Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must...  
**recognise and respond to trauma**

### 'Unpacking' the Principle and why it matters

An effective response to child exploitation and extra-familial harm requires a collective understanding of how trauma impacts on development and behaviour, and how individuals perceive and respond to threats and support. This means recognising the wide-ranging impacts of trauma and attending to non-verbal means of communicating an experience of trauma. It also means recognising how a professional's and organisation's decisions, language, processes and interventions can compound traumatic experiences and impact on a child or young person's engagement and ability to develop trusting relationships. Enabling children and young people to exercise voice, choice and control - all of which are undermined by trauma - is important, as is a recognition that 'non-engagement' or 'negative' coping strategies may be a direct or indirect result of trauma.

Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm need to consider trauma on three different levels:

- The direct trauma children and young people - and potentially their parents / carers, wider family and social networks - have experienced, both from the harms and (potentially) from the professional response to those harms.
- Trauma that can impact individuals and wider communities, stemming from shared experiences such as serious violence.
- The **vicarious**, or secondary, **trauma** that can impact those working to support and protect traumatised individuals, often in distressing circumstances.



How it should feel for a  
child / young  
person being  
supported

People understand how I have been  
affected by what has happened to me  
and they show that in the way they  
help me. I feel like I matter.

“ Have a think about the way young people behave and why that behaviour might be happening. Your disruptive kid at the back of the class - is that kid traumatised and acting out because they don't know what to do? You can't turn around and be like, 'You're just being naughty.' Surely if you're going through something, your behaviour's going to change. And it could change in different ways, depending on what the trauma does to you. Feeling safe is the most important thing. When I'm feeling safe, I can express how I'm doing, and what I'm going through, and not feel like something bad is going to happen when I speak about it. ”

**(Young person)**

“ The most important thing is having the skills and the tools to recognise if a child or a parent has gone through trauma, these are the first things they need to recognise. And then respond. Just a phone call to say, 'Right, okay, we've noticed this. This is what we think is happening. Is that right? How can we support you? How can we support your child?' With exploitation, there's a real emotional toll on families. I suffer anxiety and I never used to be like that; I'm not that kind of person, but just with everything that I've had to deal with over the past four or five years, it's led me to be like this. I cry a lot, and I get anxiety. And it's hard to find the right person to talk to, especially in my culture. I can't ring my aunties and uncles; they'd think 'what the hell?' ”

**(Parent / carer)**





## Practice Principle 5:

What recognising and responding to trauma asks of those...  
working directly with children, young people and families



- Engage with high-quality learning and development so you are able to recognise and respond to:
  - individual trauma
  - trauma that can impact wider communities stemming from shared experiences
  - vicarious / secondary trauma.
- Understand the difference between:
  - **trauma-informed practice**, sometimes called trauma-informed care, which is a potentially useful approach for all those working with children, young people and their families
  - **therapeutic interventions**, which are designed to be delivered by specialists to 'treat' trauma or specific / diagnosed mental health conditions.
- Proactively use supervision, line management support and organisational wellbeing support to help manage the potential for vicarious / secondary trauma.
- Recognise and respond to how trauma can affect an individual's presentation and ability to engage with support.
- Attend to the potential existence of trauma in all engagements, as rates of harm are higher than those disclosed.
- Adapt your approach to respond to trauma where necessary. This might include changing how and where meetings are held, what language is used, being flexible and avoiding sanctions where possible (for example, for non-attendance), and adapting expectations placed on children, young people and those who care for them.
- Sensitively manage the potential for inadvertent re-traumatisation for children and young people and families through assessment and intervention. Avoid and challenge 'box-ticking' or unethical approaches to assessing a child or young person's experience of adversity.
- Recognise that children, young people, parents and carers may be nervous about their information being shared. Maximise opportunities for control over what information is shared, and how, unless this could undermine safety plans or on-going investigations.
- Remember the importance and benefits of trusted relationships. Support children and young people to identify and work with the person they feel most comfortable with, recognising the importance of choice and control to a person's feelings of safety.



- Advocate for children, young people and their families where historic or ongoing trauma is making it hard for them to engage with other professionals.
- Recognise the impact on children and young people of disclosing distressing or traumatic experiences. As far as possible, aim for children and young people only needing to share their experiences once.

## Practice Principle 5:

What recognising and responding to trauma asks of those...  
**managing and supporting direct work**



- Support staff to access high-quality, reflective learning and development. Encourage them to apply an evidence-informed approach in response to:
  - individual trauma
  - trauma that can impact wider communities stemming from shared experiences
  - vicarious / secondary trauma.
- Work with colleagues across the partnership to share learning and ensure consistency of understanding and approach.
- Develop the skills, expertise and structures needed to help mitigate vicarious / secondary trauma amongst staff you manage.
- Model an expectation that support is always sensitive, person-centred and responsive.
- Work with partners across agencies to develop pathways for those children and young people that need specialist support (such as therapeutic support).
- Provide protected time for individual, peer and management reflection, including **trauma-informed supervision** where appropriate.
- Use structured opportunities for individual and peer reflection and learning to explore tone and framing in reports and case recording and to review assessments and plans. Seek assurance that offers of support have been flexible and that a reluctance to engage is met with empathy and curiosity by staff. Challenge terms such as 'hard to reach' or 'non-compliant'.



- Take care that the language used about children and young people, parents, carers, families and communities in meetings, supervision and audit activities models an understanding of trauma.
- Recognise the impact on children and young people of disclosing distressing and traumatising experiences with professionals. Work with colleagues across the partnership to ensure children and young people, as far as possible, only need to share their experiences once.
- Advocate for enhanced provision and smoother pathways to meet the needs of all children, young people, parents, carers and wider family members who have experienced trauma.
- Support information sharing that is timely, purposeful and reflects the views of children and young people, and families. Ensure information sharing practice prioritises a welfare response and keeps families informed while not undermining safety plans or live investigations.
- Think critically about the ways in which professional intervention could leave children, young people, parents and carers feeling (re)traumatised. Take care that restrictive interventions (for example, curfews, stop and searches, the use of restraints, etc.) are justified and proportionate and only taken where it is necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person.
- Be alert to the potential for re-traumatising people with lived experience when involving them in service design without sufficient preparation and support. Ensure any consultation, co-production or training support is undertaken ethically and sensitively.

## Practice Principle 5:

What recognising and responding to trauma asks of...

local strategic leaders and partnerships



- Invest in high-quality learning and development for professionals (including managers) across the multi-agency partnership, which builds collective understanding and confidence regarding trauma-informed approaches.
- Stay alert to new and emerging evidence and critiques of trauma-informed approaches. Be clear that it is not a 'quick fix' nor a substitute for addressing wider social inequality and harms.
- Make a strategic commitment for local services (**universal, targeted** and **specialist**) to work to a shared understanding of trauma. Ensure service leads understand their responsibilities in responding to trauma. Establish effective referral pathways and set clear expectations around appropriate information sharing practices.
- Seek assurance that the local strategies, tools and processes organisations are employing ask the right kinds of questions to identify trauma as early and sensitively as possible.
- Be aware of the impact of vicarious / secondary trauma within the workforce; proactively interrogate trends in sickness and vacancy rates to ensure the support in place, through line management and commissioned services, is fit for purpose.
- Model trauma-informed and **compassionate leadership** approaches within partnership activity, with particular attention paid to this in the context of a serious incident or significant challenge.
- Set a clear expectation that all agencies make reasonable adaptations to tools, processes and approaches for children, young people, parents and carers who have - or may have - experienced trauma; hold partners to account on this.
- Continually review and actively manage the tension where policies that are in place to protect the safety and wellbeing of staff inadvertently lead to children and young people being denied access to that support because of their behaviour.
- Be alert to the potential for re-traumatising people with lived experience when involving them in service design, consultation activity and professional training without sufficient preparation and support. Establish clear protocols so this work is undertaken ethically and sensitively.



## Practice Principle 6:

**Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must...  
be curious, evidence-informed and knowledgeable**

### 'Unpacking' the Principle and why it matters

Responding to the complexity of child exploitation and extra-familial harm requires curiosity, critical thinking and analysis skills, a commitment to reflection and learning, and the thoughtful use of evidence at all levels of the system.

Critical thinking, evidence synthesis and analysis are crucially important in considering multiple sources of information and intelligence in order to:

- build an accurate picture of how child exploitation and extra-familial harm is manifesting in a local area
- understand what is happening in a child or young person's life
- keep up to date with evolving knowledge and research.

In direct practice and in management and strategic partnership activity, curiosity is needed to actively challenge assumptions and consider what is not known, alongside what is known. This kind of approach requires individuals and agencies to acknowledge uncertainty, invite expertise from others, to be creative and to try new things. No single individual or agency can know everything and there are no simple answers.

This approach means using data or research to ask questions, rather than expecting definitive answers. It also means learning from children, young people, their parents / carers and other sources of knowledge and insight within their wider communities, and paying attention to the potential for unintended consequences as a result of professional intervention(s).



**How it should feel for a  
child / young  
person being  
supported**

**I feel properly seen, because the people  
who are there to help me put in the  
effort to understand me and my life.  
They are knowledgeable and always  
learning about how to help me feel safer.**

*“ At the end of the day to truly beat those exploiters, you need to actually recognise the strength and the techniques of the exploiter, if that makes sense. Every exploiter has different things they do to lure in the young person, and I feel probably the best thing that you could ask the young person is, ‘What do they give you?’ The exploiters fed off the idea that I thought I didn’t mean anything to anyone. We could figure that stuff out together. ”*

**(Young person)**

*“ I’m not a checklist, everyone’s individual in their own right. We’ve found a lot, especially with professionals, everyone’s risk assessed as if they’re the same. We’re not asked about where we live and what we are living with. Or about the culture that we’re from, or our specific needs as a family. A lot of professionals, I find, kind of narrow the exploitation down to the specific reasons, instead of stepping back, and branching out their thinking. Sometimes they have a plan in their head and then don’t want to change it based on their assumptions at the beginning. ”*

**(Parent / carer)**



## Practice Principle 6:

### What being curious, evidence-informed and knowledgeable means for those... working directly with children, young people and families



- Demonstrate **professional curiosity** to understand the **lived experiences** of children, young people, parents and carers. This includes being curious about:
  - their understanding of their identity
  - the meaning of presenting behaviours and what might be underlying them
  - any potential unintended consequences of interventions.
- Actively challenge and / or resist making assumptions about children or young people and their parents / carers. Pay attention to their context and protective factors as well as the harms they may face.
- Demonstrate a commitment to using **robust research** evidence, where available, to inform practice.
- Think creatively about new or different ways of working, drawing on the insights and expertise of all multi-agency partners, as well as those facing or affected by harm.
- Seek to understand ‘what does child exploitation and extra-familial harm look like here?’ - both for individual children and young people and in terms of any wider contexts of harm applicable to your work with them. Be aware of the different forms that child exploitation and extra-familial harm can take and the range of children and young people who can be affected by it, while remaining alert to new and emerging forms.
- Be transparent with children and young people about the information being used to inform decisions; help them to understand the wider evidence base you are drawing on to inform your thinking.
- Be aware of the potential problems associated with **risk assessment** and risk management approaches that over-simplify or obscure nuance:
  - apply professional judgement alongside evidence from other sources
  - question information that might be partial or out of date
  - seek the views of children, young people, parents and carers.
- When planning work, clearly distinguish between what is known, what is being assumed / hypothesised, and what is still unknown, adapting this as new knowledge emerges.
- Demonstrate active engagement in continuous professional development, seek out expertise from colleagues and offer expertise to others.
- Recognise this is still an emerging area for research. Adapt practice with increasing knowledge by balancing research with what you know from children, young people and their families, and your wider professional judgement.

## Practice Principle 6:

### What being curious, evidence-informed and knowledgeable asks of those... managing and supporting direct work



- Normalise the premise that ‘we can’t know everything’ and so must maintain a position of permanent curiosity; invite in new partners where needed.
- Promote and model professional curiosity, critical analysis and openness to trying new ways of working both within your organisation and across the multi-agency network.
- Horizon scan for emerging evidence and ways of working that align to local child exploitation and extra-familial harm contexts.
- Model critical thinking skills and encourage reflective discussions about what is known and as yet unknown about child exploitation and extra-familial harm in your local area, including around the use of data, information and intelligence in relation to this.
- Advocate for data to be used in ways that enable partners to ask better questions. Consider what data is collected, how it is analysed, what assumptions are drawn from it and how it is used.
- Support staff to use and share different forms of data appropriately and consider any unintended discrimination and / or harm that may arise through the gathering of intelligence or sharing of data.
- Through supervision and other safe spaces, support those you manage to assess and manage risk thoughtfully, paying attention to children and young people’s context and culture, rights and needs. Avoid and challenge the use of checklist-based assessment tools that can obscure nuance and create an inaccurate picture.
- Model a commitment to learning and development in your own management practice and demonstrate an ability and willingness to change your mind in light of new knowledge.
- Through management and supervision, consider the evidence-base your team is using to distinguish between what is known, what is being assumed / hypothesised, and what is still unknown.
- Support staff to draw upon relevant and robust evidence from trusted sources, including research.
- Provide management and supervision support that helps those you manage to manage uncertainty, consider new approaches and challenge binary conceptualisations.
- Provide structured opportunities and protected time for colleagues across universal, targeted and specialist services to engage in peer-learning and knowledge-exchange, peer-audit, group supervision and observation.





## Practice Principle 6:

### What being curious, evidence-informed and knowledgeable asks of... local strategic leaders and partnerships



- Model professional curiosity and a culture where partners have permission to say they 'don't know what to do'. Ask challenging questions, try new approaches and demonstrate critical thinking skills.
- Work together to identify and analyse patterns of child exploitation and extra familial harm locally - how it is happening, to whom and its impact. Use this information to inform service planning and practice development.
- Demonstrate courageous and adaptive leadership, creating the conditions in which professionals can navigate complexity and uncertainty.
- Use data in ways that support learning and dialogue. Avoid simplistic performance management approaches to data that can obscure nuance and yield unintended consequences (e.g. focusing on performance targets at the expense of purposeful partnership working). Be alert to the new, not just what you have already captured.
- Ensure ethics and rights are foregrounded in the partnership's approach to information sharing and data gathering; take steps to identify biases and processes that disproportionately affect people from minority groups.
- Be aware of the problems associated with risk assessment and risk management approaches that can over-simplify or obscure nuance. Avoid simplistic scoring exercises that can create an inaccurate picture and may provide false reassurance to staff and senior leaders.
- Demonstrate a culture of continuous improvement and learning at strategic partnership level, evidenced in local strategy, governance and innovation activity.
- Set and model a culture where space is protected for individual and peer reflection and create opportunities for this to happen across the partnership.
- Set clear expectations that the work of all partners should be evidence-informed and model this commitment at a strategic level by drawing on robust research, professional expertise and expertise from experience.
- Promote access to high-quality, evidence-informed learning and development for all partner agencies. Interrogate the impact of learning and development and use feedback (including from children, young people, parents and carers) to inform commissioning.



## Practice Principle 7:

**Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must...  
approach parents and carers as partners wherever possible**

### 'Unpacking' the Principle and why it matters

Recognising the expertise of parents and carers offers valuable potential gains for safeguarding partnerships, enhancing agencies' abilities to support and protect individual children, young people and whole communities. Parents and carers can hold invaluable information about their child and the contexts of their lives, and can also hold important information about exploiters, unsafe places and community strengths and challenges.

This Principle requires professionals at all levels to model a mind-set that sees parents and carers first and foremost as sources of protection, support and love for children and young people, unless there is evidence to indicate otherwise. It requires them to recognise the care, protection and support parents and carers bring. It means seeing them as an asset, respecting their contribution and being sensitive to the distress they are likely to be experiencing. Critical to this approach is a welfare-oriented lens that builds an understanding of the child or young person's needs as part of their family network.

This approach does not mean applying a 'one size fits all' solution; circumstances will differ between families. However, approaching parents and carers as partners in safeguarding should always be the starting point.



**How it should feel for a  
child / young  
person being  
supported**

**I am included in decisions about  
involving my parents and carers.  
Supporting my parents and / or carers  
to understand what has happened  
to me can help improve family  
relationships and the support I receive.**



**“** *Parents have lots of the information that professionals need, but they don't always listen to us. So, for them to partner up with parents, it's so important from day one. There's nobody on this earth more worried about my child than me. I feel like we're disregarded a lot of the time, or told we have the wrong information, or that we're exaggerating, or that we don't know what we're talking about. My ideas weren't trusted or valued.* **”**

**(Parent / carer)**

**“** *This is my family. Treat us as a unit, help us communicate. Help us with everything that's changed at home. We need help to understand each other and how we're all reacting to this, and what we're going through.* **”**

**(Parent / carer)**

## Practice Principle 7:

### What approaching parents and carers as partners asks of those... working directly with children, young people and families



- Treat parents and carers with respect and empathy, seeking wherever possible to develop trusting relationships with them and their child's wider family.
- Recognise that parents and carers are often best placed to understand both the needs and the strengths of their child / children, including how to engage and communicate with them. Respect this expertise.
- Consider the child or young person's views about their parents / carers being involved as partners; navigate and negotiate any tensions. Note that working with parents and carers is not a proxy for working directly with their children.
- Proactively create opportunities for parents, carers and other appropriate individuals in a child or young person's support network to have the opportunity to actively participate in risk assessment, safety planning, interventions and reviews. Identify and remedy any barriers to engagement, through timely and appropriate communication, sensitive use of language and flexible approaches to planning engagements.
- Approach the family with a welfare-oriented lens, recognising that child exploitation and / or extra-familial harm may be occurring within the context of wider challenges and difficulties.
- Look for learning and development opportunities to increase knowledge and skills in evidence-informed approaches that promote collaboration with parents and carers and support **culturally sensitive practice** with families. Proactively put learning into practice.
- Work to strengthen family communication and relationships and, wherever needed, identify other individuals who can enhance support for the child or young person.
- Provide clear explanations about who their information will be shared with and why, and feedback on how their views have been taken into account. Where decisions cannot align with their wishes (for example, for safety reasons), have meaningful conversations to ensure they understand why decisions have been made.
- Offer parents and carers ways to contribute as partners, whilst also recognising the difficult emotions they are likely to be experiencing as a result of the harm facing their children, poor prior experiences of services, or other life circumstances.
- Demonstrate a nuanced understanding that, whilst parents and carers should be approached in the first instance as protective partners, child exploitation can occur within the family context, so professionals need to remain alert to the possibility that not all parents and carers can be partners in safeguarding their child.



- Respond to parents and carers sensitively and respectfully, recognising that the circumstances of some parents may make it very difficult to act protectively.
- Support parents and carers through advocacy and access to peer support. Recognise parents and carers may need support around how circumstances are impacting them personally, as well as how they might support their child.
- Consider any additional or unmet needs of parents and carers (e.g. disabilities, learning disabilities or communication and social skills) and any support that may be required because of these needs to help maximise their potential as safeguarding partners.
- Provide clear, safe and non-judgemental mechanisms to allow for feedback from parents and carers. Always respond to feedback.

## Practice Principle 7:

### What approaching parents and carers as partners asks of those managing and supporting direct work



- Model a mind-set that sees parents and carers first and foremost as sources of protection, support and love for children and young people, unless there is evidence to indicate otherwise.
- Prompt and support those you manage to maximise opportunities for developing trusting relationships with parents and carers.
- Actively seek out - and be receptive to - challenges regarding language, processes or approaches which stigmatise, de-value or exclude parents and carers. Undertake, or advocate for, adaptations and reasonable adjustments where necessary.
- Provide line management support and hold space for reflection where a nuanced understanding is needed about the ability of parents or carers to safely act as partners.
- Use structured opportunities for individual and peer reflection and learning to explore tone and framing in reports and case recording, etc., and / or to review assessments and plans to ensure that parents' or carers' expertise have been taken into consideration.
- Support staff to access high-quality reflective learning and development that enables collaborative decision-making models (for example, **Family Group Conferencing**) and culturally sensitive practice to be embedded into service delivery.
- Be alert to the potential emotional impact on those you manage of supporting parents and carers who may be experiencing a range of emotions and wider challenges.



- Recognise, facilitate and, where necessary, advocate for the time and space needed for those you manage to develop long-term trusting relationships with parents and carers.
- Where necessary and appropriate, advocate for support from across the partnership to engage with parents and carers to meet any additional needs as a result of their experiences of trauma, poor prior experiences of services or other life circumstances.
- Create opportunities for parents' and carers' expertise to inform service and practice development. Ensure these opportunities are inclusive and accessible for parents and carers, in order to maximise their participation.

## Practice Principle 7:

What approaching parents and carers as partners asks of...

local strategic leaders and partnerships



- Make a strategic commitment to services approaching parents and carers first and foremost as sources of protection, support and love for children and young people, unless there is evidence to indicate otherwise.
- Set clear expectations that all partners treat parents and carers with respect and empathy. Actively seek and consider parents' and carers' views and perspectives when undertaking service review and audit work. Create feedback loops which are actively used.
- Actively review - and be receptive to challenges regarding - language, processes or approaches which stigmatise, de-value or exclude parents and carers; commission or authorise adaptations where necessary.
- Invite cross-partnership review and constructive challenge in relation to what is working well or less well in terms of engaging and supporting parents and carers.
- Invest in evidence-informed initiatives that promote collaboration with parents and carers and wider support networks (for example, Family Group Conferencing, **Lifelong Links**).
- Invest in evidence-informed, whole-family therapeutic initiatives aimed at strengthening family relationships. Examples might include **Multi-systemic Therapy** and **Functional Family Therapy**.
- Create opportunities for parents' and carers' expertise to influence local strategic activity and governance - this might include establishing a Parent Reference Group, investing in peer-support and/ or involving parents and carers in impact monitoring and strategy development.
- Model respect for parents' and carers' expertise, and acknowledge their contribution to safeguarding at a strategic level.



## Practice Principle 8:

**Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must...  
create safe spaces and places for children and young people.**

### 'Unpacking' the Principle and why it matters

To effectively tackle child exploitation and extra familial-harm, safeguarding partnerships and wider professionals need to pay attention to the context of children and young people's lives – the spaces and places they spend their time, the potential for harms that can exist there and the actions that can be taken to mediate and address these.

This applies across all spheres of children and young people's lives - including education settings, peer groups, community spaces and online interactions - and, as such, all these spaces and places become arenas for potential intervention. Attending to places and spaces in this way allows the response to move beyond individualised interventions, to consider wider patterns of harm and risk, wider cohorts who might be affected and the ways in which this might be prevented and addressed.

This principle also emphasises the importance of a holistic understanding of safety, i.e. the need to think beyond the physical safety of the child to also support and strengthen their relational and psychological sense of safety.



**How it should feel for a  
child / young  
person being  
supported**

**In my community I have opportunities  
to do activities and make new friends.  
The spaces and places where I spend  
my time feel safe and give me a sense  
of belonging.**

**“** *I think there should be a place where young people can just walk into that's quite local to them, but they don't have to have an appointment or they don't have to wait 'till next Tuesday, when they're back from holiday. I think it's important there's always that confidential advice and support, in person but also where I can message and get a response. A good community place can keep everyone and everything calm and safe and just having a good time at the end of the day, that's what you want... A safe space isn't always physical, and it can just be talking to someone who is patient and, like, kind and doesn't assume things about you.* **”**

**(Young person)**

**“** *We're a community - we look out for each other's children. I kept driving around looking for my son and his mates because I was absolutely worried sick. We want to work with the police, and the school and council, because we all know what's happening. Kids need more positive stuff to do in their community but safer spaces aren't just going to magically make these scary people disappear. More needs to be done to stop them. Places will never be 100% safe but we could feel safer if there were more community programmes, youth groups, etc. with vetted adults around.* **”**

**(Parent / carer)**





## Practice Principle 8:

What creating safe spaces and places for children and young people asks of those...  
**working directly with children, young people and families**



- Demonstrate a contextual understanding of child exploitation and extra-familial harm, recognising the multiple factors that drive these harms.
- Consider the contexts in which child exploitation and extra-familial harm take place so that responses:
  - attend to the needs of an individual child or young person
  - identify and analyse patterns of harm, risk and protective factors to protect wider groups of children and young people.
- Demonstrate an understanding of **disruption tactics** used to prevent harm by learning who can act and how, recognising some forms of disruption tactics are necessarily covert.
- Make time for cross-partnership engagement when making decisions - even in high-risk scenarios - about the places and spaces children and young people use (both in person and online).
- Avoid unintentionally 'moving the problem' (or lowering risk in one area to increase it in another) by collectively and holistically considering the risks and mitigating factors present.
- Provide a response to children or young people who are also causing harm that not only focuses on the harmful behaviours, but also reflects the context in which this harm occurs (for example, school-based harassment may require a whole-school intervention; violence in the context of peer groups may require a peer-group intervention).
- Be curious about children and young people's digital lives, recognising both the potential benefits and risks. Avoid making assumptions about a child's or young person's digital literacy, particularly those children and young people with learning disabilities and /or neuro-divergence who may need additional support to access online spaces / platforms safely.
- Demonstrate a commitment to **digital professionalism**, seeking opportunities to build your knowledge and confidence in digital working.
- Identify and work in partnership with non-traditional partners in the community including faith groups, night time economy staff and people working in sports.



- Recognise that different groups may experience spaces, and interventions into these spaces, differently. Invite children and young people's expertise on the spaces and interventions that help them feel safer.
- Ensure that the support put in place to keep children physically safer does not unintentionally undermine their sense of relational and psychological safety.
- Look for opportunities to connect children and young people with activities and support that respond to their interests and strengths, including but not limited to youth clubs, youth centres and other safe youth-oriented spaces.

## Practice Principle 8:

What creating safe spaces and places for children and young people asks of those... **managing and supporting direct work**



- Demonstrate a contextual understanding of child exploitation and extra-familial harm, recognising the multiple factors that drive these harms.
- Champion and support approaches to practice that embody this contextual understanding, such as the **Contextual Safeguarding** approach.
- Provide support to staff across services that enables them to understand the full range of disruption tactics and how to use them appropriately, and review the impact of these; recognise that some disruption tactics are necessarily covert.
- Focus disruption activities and wider interventions on the places and spaces where children and young people spend their time. Draw on children and young people's expertise to help understand their local context.
- Support staff to undertake activities such as **peer group mapping** / intelligence mapping in ways that are thoughtful, paying particular attention to the ethical use of data and avoiding discriminatory practice.
- Use structured opportunities for individual and peer reflection and learning to support those you manage and partners to expand their focus to spaces and places and where harm occurs.
- Proactively engage universal and early help organisations (including, but not limited to, education, youth, disability and primary healthcare services, and the voluntary sector), transport providers and local communities to ensure their expertise is captured and used to inform the whole partnership's understanding of the local area and context.

- Recognise that children and young people may continue to feel unsafe beyond the spaces and places where harm occurred. Proactively support those you manage to think holistically and focus on the relational and psychological safety of children and young people, as well as their physical safety.
- Advocate for children and young people where you have concerns that moving them / placing them out of an area is not something that will make them safer.
- Advocate to senior colleagues for services and support that provide positive opportunities to connect children and young people with protective activities in the spaces and places in which they want to be.

## Practice Principle 8:

What creating safe spaces and places for children and young people asks of..

**local strategic leaders and partnerships**

- Model an understanding that child exploitation and extra-familial harm are to be understood contextually, recognising that children and young people are not harmed because of their behaviours or vulnerabilities, but because there is someone willing to exploit these and inadequate protective structures are in place to mitigate against this.
- Draw on the expertise of community safety, commissioning and early help colleagues to consider what preventative and disruption actions can be put in place to make spaces and places safer for children and young people.
- Ensure disruption activity is focused on a shared partnership understanding of the spaces and places where children and young people encounter risk and harm, taking care to ensure that '**problem profiling**' does not direct attention and resource away from other areas where children and young people may be facing harm.
- Ensure agencies undertaking activities such as peer group mapping / intelligence mapping are doing so thoughtfully, paying particular attention to the ethical use of data and avoiding discriminatory practice.
- Set a clear expectation that all partners have a role in making spaces and places safer. Proactively engage communities in this approach. Create opportunities for community groups to feel empowered to hold statutory partners to account.



- Proactively seek to include education settings in strategic safeguarding activity. Advocate for their role in creating safe spaces, challenging abusive and harmful behaviour, and prioritising children and young people’s inclusion in education, as part of a wider partnership response.
- Invest in training and support for local businesses, transport providers, stewards of public spaces, community groups and the night-time economy. Interrogate the impact of this training; engage these wider partners in strategy development and impact monitoring.
- Take care that local protocols and processes intended to respond to child exploitation and extra-familial harm are proportionate and in the child or young person’s best interests. Avoid responses that could be unintentionally punitive towards the child or young person, or undermine their rights (by considering, for example, **deprivation of liberty**, out of area placements, and inflexible housing policies). Promote a thoughtful partnership approach, while acknowledging that, in some circumstances, such measures may be necessary to keep children and young people safe.
- Promote commissioning arrangements across the partnership that prioritise a welfare approach by including services and support:
  - for children and young people’s relational and psychological safety, as well as their physical safety
  - to make contexts safer, working collaboratively with young people, using strengths-based approaches.
- Engage wider partners, for example housing associations, to establish flexible responses where a child or young person and their family may require immediate protection.



## 5. Further learning and resources

A suite of supporting resources have been developed alongside the Practice Principles, to support professionals to implement them in their local area. These are all available on the [TCE Microsite](#). Each resource has a specific aim and audience:

**Animation** - developed as a clear introduction to the Practice Principles, in order to support multi-agency sharing and dissemination.

**Partnership reflective tool** - developed to support multi-agency partnerships to reflect locally on the Practice Principles and consider how they are reflected within their multi-agency responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm.

**Practice tool** - developed to support individual and peer reflection on how the Practice Principles might be used in practice, through a scenario-based exercise.

**Evidence summary** - developed for those interested in understanding in more depth the academic research underpinning the Practice Principles.

**Key messages from children and young people** - developed to illustrate ways to meaningfully integrate expertise from lived experience into strategic decision-making.

**A reflective resource to support working with parents and carers** - developed to help enable multi-agency professionals to approach parents and carers as safeguarding partners wherever possible.

Listed below are some further resources that may be helpful in considering how to enact each of the Principles. They are not a comprehensive list, nor are they designed to replace any helpful resources you already use. The resources reflect the views and expertise of the original source, and their inclusion does not infer that they are endorsed or validated by the Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme, Research in Practice, University of Bedfordshire, The Children's Society or Government.

Links and sources are accurate at the point of publication. Resources are listed against the Principle they primarily address, but given the interconnected nature of the Principles, many hold broader relevance.



## Putting children and young people first



Beckett, H., Holmes, D., & Walker, J. (2017): [Child sexual exploitation. Definition & Guide for Professionals: Extended text](#)

College of Policing, The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme: [National Vulnerability Action Plan](#)

College of Policing: [Victims' Code for policing](#)

Department of Health and Social Care: [Bridging the Gap](#)

NPCC: [Child-Centred Policing](#)

Ofsted: [Protecting children from criminal exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery: an addendum](#)

Research in Practice: [Mind the Gap: Transitional safeguarding - adolescence to adulthood: Strategic Briefing](#)

Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Support Programme: [Beyond the victim/offender binary](#)

The Adolescent and Children's Trust (TACT): [Language that Cares](#)

The Association of London Directors of Children's Services and London Innovation and Improvement Alliance: [Adolescent safeguarding in London: A handbook for collaboration](#)

The Children's Society: [Appropriate language guide](#)

The Children's Society: [Youth Voice on School Exclusions](#)

Youth Justice Board: [Guide to Child First](#)

## Recognise and challenge inequalities, exclusion and discrimination



British Association of Social Workers (BASW): [Anti-Poverty Practice Guide for Social Work](#)

Check Your Thinking: [Anti-racist practice in children's safeguarding](#)

Children's Commissioner: [Family Review](#)

College of Policing: [Police Race Action Plan](#)

GOV.UK: [Ethnicity Facts and Figures](#)

Department for Education: [Equality Act 2010: advice for schools](#)

Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB): [FJYPB's top tips for respecting children and young people's diversity](#)

Government Equalities Office and Equality and Human Rights Commission: [Equality Act 2010: guidance](#)

Race Disparity Unit and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: [Inclusive Britain: the government's response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities](#)



**Recognise and challenge inequalities, exclusion and discrimination**



Listen Up: [Professional Inter-Adultification Model](#)

Mencap: [Disability Inclusion Toolkit](#)

Research in Practice: [Supporting young people who identify as LGBTQ+](#)

TCE Support Programme:

- [‘County lines’, inequalities and young people’s rights: a moment of pause and reflection](#)
- [The hyper-visible and invisible children](#)
- [Unseen? Overlooked? Stigmatised? The role faith organisations can play in tackling child exploitation](#)
- [Using data to explore equalities, diversity and inclusion](#)

The Traveller Movement: [BESTIE: A toolkit for working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people](#)

**Respect the voice, experiences and expertise of children and young people**



Autism Toolbox: [Templates and Resources | Autism Toolbox](#)

Camden Young Inspectors: [Young Inspectors](#)

Manchester Centre for Youth Studies: [Participatory Youth Practice \(PYP\) framework](#)

Queen’s University Belfast: [Participation for Protection \(P4P\) Resources](#)

Safer Young Lives Research Centre Young Researchers’ Advisory Panel:

- [Resource: Participation as protective poster](#)
- [Resource: Participatory groupwork with young people affected by sexual violence: risks, challenges, benefits \[PPT slides\]](#)
- [YRAP Resources: ‘What is CS?’ - a workbook for practitioners and young people to support understanding of Contextual Safeguarding](#)



**Respect the voice, experiences and expertise of children and young people**



TCE Support Programme:

- [Joining the Dots: Bridging Boundaries](#)
- [Hearing young people's voices; reflective questions for strategic leaders](#)
- [Child exploitation and youth participation](#)
- [Laying the groundwork for effective engagement with children and young people](#)
- [How do we empower young people to meaningfully engage in participation work?](#)

The Centre for Youth Impact:

[Youth Voice, what exactly are we talking about?](#)

The Children's Society: [Big Up the Bill](#)

Vulnerability, Knowledge and Practice Programme:

[Voice of the Child Briefing](#)

Warrington, C. (2020): [Creating a safe space: Ideas for the development of participatory group work to address sexual violence with young people](#)

**Be strengths-based and relationship-based**



Department of Health and Social Care: [Strengths-based approach: Practice Framework and Practice Handbook](#)

Early Intervention Foundation: [Building trusted relationships for vulnerable children and young people with public services](#)

London Borough of Bexley: [Quality Assurance Framework](#)

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence: [Evidence for strengths and asset-based outcomes: A quick guide for social workers](#)

Owens, R., Ruch, G., Firmin, C., Millar, H., & Remes, E. (2020): [Relationship-based practice and contextual safeguarding: key messages for practice](#)

Practice Supervisor Development Programme:

- [Using the supervision relationship to promote reflection](#)
- [How relationship-based and reflective are you as a middle leader?](#)

Research in Practice:

- [Leading strengths-based practice frameworks: Strategic Briefing](#)
- [Compassionate leadership](#)

TCE Support Programme: [Joining the Dots: Leading with Care](#)





## Recognise and respond to trauma



Ace Hub Wales: [Trauma-Informed Wales: A Societal Approach to Understanding, Preventing and Supporting the Impacts of Trauma and Adversity](#)

Early Intervention Fund: [Understanding the potential of trauma-informed training in Violence Reduction Units](#)

Goad, E., Ioannou, A., Briggs, M., Mosley, L., & Jarratt, E. (n.d.): [Trauma Informed Care: A toolkit for carers](#)

Hickle, K. (2016): [A Trauma-Informed Approach: Policing Responses to Child Sexual Exploitation](#)

Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: [Working definition of trauma-informed practice](#)

Research in Practice:

- [Trauma-informed approaches with young people: Frontline Briefing](#)
- [Developing and leading trauma-informed practice: Leaders' Briefing](#)

Scottish Government: [Trauma-informed practice: toolkit](#)

Trauma-Informed Community Network: [Creating Trauma-Informed Spaces: Facility Review Checklist](#)

Treisman, K. (n.d.): [Trauma informed organisational culture](#)

Youth Endowment Fund: [Trauma-informed training and service redesign](#)

## Be curious, evidence-informed and knowledgeable



Beckett, H., Holmes, D., & Walker, J. (2017): [Child sexual exploitation. Definition & Guide for Professionals: Extended text](#)

Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse: [Seven Principles for using tools and checklists to assess risk of child sexual exploitation](#)

College of Policing: [Vulnerability-related risks](#)

Department for Education: [Working Together to Safeguard Children<sup>1</sup>](#)

Department for Education: [Mental health and behaviour in schools](#)

Department of Health and Social Care: [Building the Right Support for People with a Learning Disability and Autistic People](#)

Home Office: [Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines](#)

Ministry of Justice and Youth Justice Board: [Standards for children in the youth justice system 2019](#)

NHS England and NHS Improvement: [Safeguarding Policy](#)



**Be curious,  
evidence-  
informed and  
knowledgeable**



Practice Supervisor Development Programme:

- [Leading and evidence-informed practice initiative](#)
- [Using group supervision in children's social care](#)
- [Using the supervision relationship to promote reflection](#)
- [Safe uncertainty](#)

Public Health England and Department for Education: [Promoting Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)

Royal College of Nursing: [Safeguarding Children and Young People: Roles and Competencies for Healthcare Staff](#)

TCE Support Programme:

- [Joining the Dots: Working with Complexity, Curiosity and Uncertainty](#)
- [The power in data and how to share it](#)
- [Clearer signals: moving towards purposeful multi-agency data sharing](#)
- [Making strategic use of data](#)
- [Building better data systems for strategic insight](#)
- [Risk assessing child \(sexual\) exploitation](#)
- [Slowing down for stronger momentum in tackling child exploitation](#)

The Children's Society and National Working Group: [Missing Benchmarking Tool](#)

The Children's Society: [#LookCloser](#)



## Approach parents and carers as partners



Department of Health and Social Care: [Building the right support for people with learning disability or autistic people](#)

Family Rights Groups: [What is a Family Group Conference?](#)

Parents Against Child Exploitation (PACE): [Resources for Parents](#)

Shuker, L. (2017): [Virtuous circles: theorising the impact of Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation \(Pace\): discussion paper](#)

Stop and Prevent Adolescent Criminal Exploitation (SPACE): [Resources for Professionals and Parents](#)

TCE Support Programme:

[Birmingham Children's Trust Parent Case Study](#)

The Children's Society, Victim Support and NPCC:

[Supporting Parents and Carers of Children and Young People Affected by Sexual Exploitation: A Toolkit for Professionals](#)

## Create safe spaces and places for children and young people



BASW: [Digital Capabilities Statement for Social Workers](#)

Check Your Thinking: [Resources on risk, safety and wellbeing](#)

College of Policing, NPCC, Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme: [National Vulnerability Action Plan](#)

Contextual Safeguarding: [Scale Up Toolkit](#)

Contextual Safeguarding:

[The Contextual Safeguarding Young People's Podcast Series](#)

Department for Education: [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

Home Office: [Child exploitation disruption toolkit](#)

NSPCC: [Safer internet resources for professionals](#)

National Crime Agency, Marie Collins Foundation and The Children's Society: [The Dark Web Explained](#)

Reclaim: [Listening to the experts: Getting beyond the headlines to hear what young people want and need to stay safe from violent crime](#)

Research in Practice:

- [Safeguarding and exploitation - complex, contextual and holistic approaches](#)
- [Online abuse - recognition and response: Frontline Briefing \(2017\)](#)

Shuker, L. (2015): [Multi-dimensional safety for children in care affected by sexual exploitation](#)

TCE Support Programme: [Community Awareness Raising: key issues for strategic leaders](#)



## 6. What the Principles mean for us

During consultation, children, young people, parents and carers explored each Principle and offered ideas on what professionals needed to hold in mind in order to enact them. Their expertise is woven throughout the Practice Principles, and this section offers more detail on their views.

Professionals contributed examples of how their team, service or agency demonstrated a commitment to the Principles, or are working towards doing so. These examples - also included below - show that many multi-agency partners are already working in ways that reflect one or more of the Principles, and there is much good work to build on.



### **Practice Principle 1:**

**Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must...  
put children and young people first**

#### **Children, young people, parents and carers told us they want professionals to:**

- Understand that body language, facial expressions, positioning and tone of voice are just as important as the language used when communicating with children, young people and families. Showing acceptance and using non-victim-blaming language helps to build hope for the future.
- See the whole of the child or young person; acknowledge that children and young people are more than the harms they face, or cause towards others.
- Understand the reasons behind children and young people's behaviours and make the time to explore what they are thinking and feeling, particularly when a child or young person has done something that is considered 'bad' or hurtful.
- Adapt support to children and young people's needs during every interaction and engagement, particularly when behaviours are difficult to understand.
- Help all children and young people to understand their rights and ensure these are met within the context of their experiences and the services they are accessing.
- Be open-minded during every interaction with children and young people; afford them the protection they are entitled to, even at ages 16, 17, 18 and over. Remember, many people are still maturing and developing up into their mid twenties.
- Be mindful of questions and language, particularly when seeking to understand 'why exploitation is happening'; avoid questions and language that suggest children, young people, parents and carers are to blame.
- Avoid making assumptions about the family home, dynamics and circumstances. A welfare-oriented, open-minded interest in the child and their family can help build an understanding of strengths and challenges.



## Examples of how agencies are putting this Principle into practice:

- Police forces are drawing on multi-agency expertise to support evidence-led prosecutions that are not (solely) dependent on victim engagement. Provisions have also been introduced to allow case progression without child victims having to be cross-examined within court (section 28).<sup>13</sup>
- Challenging a culture of victim-blaming language by asking practitioners to write case notes and reports in the first person, using direct quotes from children and young people where possible.
- Examples of the valuable community role Police Community Support Officers can play, illustrated in this quote from a young person: ‘Coming to my house in the morning and waking me up and taking me to school was annoying, but it showed he cares.’
- Establishing multi-disciplinary groups of professionals to rethink approaches to complex cases through a relational lens. These peer-reflection approaches can help professionals to:
  - discuss worries, fears and hopes for a child or young person
  - see the child or young person as a child first and not only someone who has experienced and / or is causing harm
  - identify resource when cases get ‘stuck’.
- Local partnerships exploring the opportunity to offer secondments between services, both as a way of immediately embedding specialist expertise into teams offering more universal support (for example a police force introducing a youth work role to support children and young people taken into custody) and as a longer-term way to build common language and culture across partnerships.
- Some alternative provision schools are introducing specialist roles, including professionals from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), youth justice, and speech and language therapists. These colleagues are co-located within the alternate provision setting but can retain a link to their home agency, and can undertake assessments as well as supporting the child / young person directly.
- Services are drawing on learning from other areas (such as Adult Services, Children with Disabilities / 0-25 disability services, and Leaving Care teams) to look at ways to develop a person-centred approach.

<sup>13</sup> Where the judge directs, section 28 allows vulnerable victims and witnesses to have their cross-examination video-recorded before the full trial. This helps in memory recall and to reduce the distress experienced by some witnesses when giving evidence to a full courtroom. This evidence is then played during the live trial, which, in most cases, means the vulnerable person does not need to attend in person (See further details [here](#))



## Practice Principle 2:

**Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must... recognise and challenge inequalities, exclusion and discrimination**

### Children, young people, parents and carers told us they want professionals to:

- Be interested in and respect their identity, background, heritage and culture to inform better responses.
- Understand that social attitudes are different now and take responsibility for continuing to learn about what matters to children and young people today.
- Create environments that respect children and young people's sense of identity.
- Recognise and acknowledge the different forms of discrimination and prejudice that children, young people and their families face daily, including from systems that are meant to protect them.
- Understand the impact of racism, ableism, sexism, classism, transphobia and homophobia, and act to challenge discrimination. This means acting in a timely way, not just when things 'get bad'.
- Make every interaction, support and future services accessible and inclusive. Keep trying new ways of working to meet the needs of each individual.
- Understand how discrimination and bias may have led children, young people, parents and carers to become fearful and worried when interacting with safeguarding services. This may lead them to behave in ways that can be perceived as defensive or disengaged. Counter this with openness, honesty and approaches that convey understanding and awareness, while challenging discrimination and bias.
- Take children, young people, parents and carers seriously if they are courageous enough to name any discrimination or bias they are facing or hearing (e.g. by commenting on language used or taking a different perspective). Being open to their experiences will help validate their feelings, build trust and strengthen working relationships.

### Examples of how agencies are putting this Principle into practice:

- Some local partnerships are seeking to explore the ways in which they can embed active allyship by those who do not face discrimination; some senior leaders are modelling this publicly. There is recruitment of dedicated practitioners to tackle racial discrimination in some social work teams.
- Some local partnerships and individual agencies are trying to embed approaches which tackle racist and discriminatory practices, in order to enable protective engagement, including:
  - a clear expectation to make reasonable adjustments for children, young people, parents and carers where their needs or circumstances require it (for example using interpreters)
  - modelling inclusive practice approaches (for example using a child or young person's chosen pronouns, or adapting approaches for children and / or young people who are neuro-diverse)
  - embedding specialist support within services to enable engagement (for example the use of SEND workers within YOTs)
  - creating dedicated time and space for groups with particular needs (for example dedicated sessions within youth services for young refugees and asylum seekers).
- Some local partnerships are adapting strategic plans and workstreams so that issues of equality, equity, diversity and inclusion are woven throughout, rather than being a separate activity.
- Some local multi-agency data collection activity is being adapted to include a requirement that partners explain over and under-representation.



### Practice Principle 3:

Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must...  
**respect the voices, experiences and expertise of children and young**

#### Children, young people, parents and carers told us they want professionals to:

- Actively listen, understand where they are coming from, act and then follow up. A feedback loop is important so they feel informed and in control in terms of what will happen next.
- Ask questions, listen and hear the experiences of children and young people and their families, to truly understand their perspectives in their own words.
- Avoid jumping to conclusions or making assumptions about them, their lives, or the support they need.
- Reassure them and take what they are saying seriously, no matter how big or small their concern is.
- Ask children and young people how they want to be involved and give them choices about how to engage. Children and young people want to influence decisions and have their say about what support they need.
- Slow down conversations and meetings and check with children and young people, and their parents and carers, that they understand what is happening and are able to actively take part in the conversation.
- Remember that support should be done 'with' them and not 'to' them.
- Take time to help children, young people and their parents and carers to reach an agreement together where there is a difference in views.
- Give **all** children and young people the opportunity to have their say and to understand that it might take longer for some children and young people to express their views.
- Tell the child or young person what is happening to the information they have shared and explain how confidentiality will work.





### Examples of how agencies are putting this Principle into practice:

- Some services are exploring whether and how they can offer children and young people a choice of worker when allocating professionals to support them.
- Some agencies are trying to think creatively about how unhelpful perceptions of children and young people can be directly challenged within an organisation, for example by ‘flipping’ traditional mentoring dynamics and asking children and young people to take on a mentoring role for workers.
- Some strategic groups or boards are trying to embed children and young people’s expertise, for example:
  - inviting children and young people to set part of the agenda at meetings
  - inviting children and young people to routinely offer feedback on papers
  - establishing clear pathways for strategic leaders to receive recommendations from children and young people
  - asking children and young people to develop independent advisory groups / service improvement plans
  - establishing and investing in young inspector groups, peer researchers and expert-by-experience boards
  - challenging the diversity and representation of board memberships.



## Practice Principle 4 :

Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must...  
**be strengths-based and relationship-based**

### Children, young people, parents and carers told us they want professionals to:

- Make time and commit to building trusting relationships with children, young people and their families.
- Develop approaches to work alongside children, young people and families rather than approaches that are done 'to' them.
- Show children and young people they genuinely care by regularly checking in and asking them how they are.
- Be honest, patient, persistent, consistent and interested in each child and young person's life, including their family and home life.
- Understand children's, young people's, families' and communities' experiences; how they have been treated in the past by people in authority matters. Make time to rebuild this trust when it has been damaged.
- Support transitions between previous and new workers to maintain relationships and trust with services.
- Follow through with actions, be honest and transparent about what action must be taken, and what can and can't be done.
- Show vulnerability to build mutual trust and address power imbalances. Putting themselves 'in the shoes' of a child, young person, parent or carer can help professionals to understand different perspectives and build some middle ground.
- Be flexible, creative and needs-led, i.e. adapt their support and processes to the person / people being supported.
- Understand that some children and young people may feel supported or cared for by exploiters. Offering professional support with genuine care, kindness and consistency will help to build relationships that can, over time, challenge the power of exploiters.

### Examples of how agencies are putting this Principle into practice:

- Some local areas are exploring adaptations to child protection processes and terminology, to avoid blaming either parents and carers or children and young people.
- Some local areas are investing in youth work expertise and using it to lead partnership-wide work on embedding strengths-based approaches to working.
- The use of youth workers and family workers within some alternative provision schools is receiving positive feedback, with these colleagues taking a lead on building relationships and helping children / young people to engage with education. These workers can help children and young people benefit from and engage with other specialist interventions, such as CAMHS or Speech and Language Therapy, and also ensure alternative provision settings are well connected to local partners.
- One local authority, with support of partners, has developed a Risk in the Community (RIC) model for situations where children / young people are experiencing harm within their own communities:
  - RIC records assess strengths, vulnerabilities and threats to create a plan. This includes identifying who is best placed to support the young person, recognising this will not always be a social worker.
  - Holding ‘RIC chats’ with young people and parents before RIC meetings helps ensure their voice is heard within a multi-agency context. Experiences of parents are also given weight as secondary victims.
  - Consent and boundaries are clarified throughout, to guide young people and their parents / carers through each step and how information is shared. Professionals work with young people and families under S.17 as much as possible, gaining consent to establish faith and trust.
  - An RIC ‘Thinking Tool’ helps practitioners to think in a strengths-based way, including strengths-based language, and to better understand young people who harm others.
  - RIC plans / chats are written to the child, not about them, and use strengths-based language.



## Practice Principle 5 :

Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must...  
**recognise and respond to trauma**

### Children, young people, parents and carers told us they want professionals to:

- Acknowledge that trauma-informed support does not just mean responding to a 'traumatic event' but should be reflected throughout engagements with services and professionals. Be aware that parents and carers may suffer from previous trauma, and / or trauma related to child exploitation and / or extra-familial harm.
- Understand that children, young people, and families can experience trauma based on shared experiences and on how they perceive society and systems treat them, and this may impact how they engage with professionals.
- Affirm and validate how children, young people and their parents / carers are feeling as this helps to make them feel believed and understood.
- Remember it can take time for children and young people to feel able to 'open up' to professionals. Sometimes just sitting in a room with a professional without the pressure of having to say something is valued by children and young people.
- Recognise that parents and carers are likely to have an emotional response to child exploitation and extra-familial harm. They will need space to verbalise and process feelings, so show them some compassion.
- Create safe conditions for support; being aware of the surroundings and understanding triggers helps to build trusting human relationships.
- Recognise if a child, young person, parent or carer is being triggered by something and respond sensitively. Take a step back, allow them space, be patient and don't push for a response.
- Be honest about the timeframes of support and keep children, young people and their parents / carers updated, especially when there are delays.
- Understand that healing isn't a linear process. Sometimes children and young people can have 'good days' but this doesn't mean they no longer need support.
- Create opportunities for parents and carers to interact with peers who have had similar experiences, including face-to-face and online group meetings, support groups and one-on-one support (with culture and gender-specific options available). This can help parents and carers to feel less alone.



### Examples of how agencies are putting this Principle into practice:

- Some local authorities and multi-academy trusts are implementing positive behaviour management approaches that draw on trauma-informed and restorative approaches.
- Some police forces are investing in trauma-informed training and supervision for officers, to help build understanding and confidence in supporting children, young people, parents and carers affected by child exploitation and other harms.
- Some GP practices are seeking to adopt whole-team, trauma-informed approaches to ensure all staff within a surgery understand and are able to support when a child or young person needs a safe space or additional time within an appointment to explore issues.
- Some health and local authority services are offering parents and carers increased information about the approaches that specialist services take to providing support, and an informal opportunity to talk through and ask questions, to help them understand their child or young person's behaviour and support their engagement with professionals.
- Some clinical providers have introduced support for specialist nurses working with exploited children and young people, including developing group supervision as a means to:
  - support nurses to respond to risks and concerns in a strengths-based way
  - share skills and expertise on building relationships with children and young people
  - provide space and support for nurses to explore what helps them in their role.



## Practice Principle 6 :

Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must...  
**be curious, evidence-informed and knowledgeable**

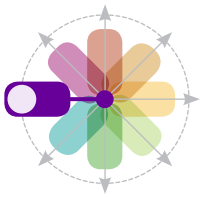
### Children, young people, parents and carers told us they want professionals to:

- Be curious about the children, young people and families who are not ‘on the radar’ or known to services.
- Be knowledgeable about the area of support being provided and be open to new ways of working, including learning from other professionals.
- Take an interest in children and young people’s friends and peers. This can support a better understanding of young people’s wider experiences and could inform early intervention.
- Acknowledge that it is important for professionals to strike a balance between taking an interest and avoiding asking too many questions that appear suspicious or could be interpreted as blaming the child or their family for the harm.
- Avoid making assumptions and judgements about children and young people’s lives, experiences and communities.
- Challenge out-of-date views and stereotypes on topics such as gender identity, digital lives, neurodiversity and mental health.
- Go at children and young people’s pace when working with them. Slow down to make sure they understand each other and allow silences to be.
- Accept that all families are different and will require different responses. One size will not fit all.
- Provide support to parents and carers on:
  - identifying levels of risk or harm
  - understanding perpetrator behaviours
  - recording information about the exploitation or harm their child is facing
- Acknowledge families who have not previously had a trusted and positive relationship with those offering support and help them to rebuild trust.



## Examples of how agencies are putting this Principle into practice:

- Some regions and local areas have produced adolescent safeguarding frameworks to support all those working with young people to understand the underpinning evidence and promote consistent practice.
- Some local partnerships have introduced multi-agency supervision to:
  - draw on a broader range of expertise to help when things feel ‘stuck’
  - increase the understanding of each agency’s approach and ‘offer’
  - develop clarity and consistency around thresholds.
- Some health services are bringing different specialisms together so they can share holistic health information as part of partnership discussions (for example, that a regularly missing young person also has type II diabetes).
- Some local partnerships are working with alternative provision schools, to promote stronger collaboration across partners, host specialist roles on-site and to ensure these expertise are included in the partnership’s collective response to child exploitation and extra-familial harm.
- One local partnership is using multi-agency child exploitation panel (MACE) meetings to create a learning culture:
  - MACE meetings are co-chaired by social care and police
  - MACE coordinators collate partner data, identify trends from MACE data, and highlight impacts and outcomes to help inform partner service delivery
  - reviews aid continuous learning and improvement
  - MACE processes emphasise harm reduction rather than risk management to instil a sense of complexity and recognise uncertainty.
- A number of local partnerships are working to embed evidence-informed approaches, for example:
  - introducing evidence principles into quality assurance frameworks
  - using audit tools to highlight values and principles, not just compliance with processes
  - introducing reflective practice groups to regularly reflect on learning, including feedback from children, young people, parents and carers
  - ensuring strategic leaders receive the qualitative narrative alongside quantitative data.



## Practice Principle 7:

Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must...  
**approach parents and carers as partners, wherever possible**

### Children, young people, parents and carers told us they want professionals to:

- Affirm the parent / carer's knowledge about their child and their community.
- Approach parents and carers as partners and allow their experience and insight to be used as a valuable resource. Parents and carers want to understand their role, and build their confidence, in safeguarding their children.
- Work with children, young people and their parents / carers to understand their individual needs, home life, relationships and safety within their community.
- Help parents and carers to learn more about the developmental stages of childhood and adolescence where necessary.
- Help parents and carers to understand the nature of grooming and child exploitation, where necessary. This will help them to make sense of what they and their child are experiencing and to ensure the blame is placed with the perpetrator(s).
- Help bridge relationships between children, young people and their parents / carers, when these have been damaged. This can help to improve communication, address conflicts and solve disagreements.
- Avoid making assumptions and explore the situation and context, e.g., why might parents and carers not attend all meetings? Why are the family not always reporting missing episodes or sharing intelligence with the police?
- Remember that parents and carers are human beings. They may feel scared about the risks their child / children and family might be facing and need to feel validated and supported.
- Provide support to parents and carers. This can help increase the support and safety of their children.
- Acknowledge the support parents and carers will continue to provide to their child / children when services step back. Plan for this in advance.
- Seek to understand the protective measures already in place and try to build upon them.
- Focus on giving information and support that helps parents and carers keep their child / children safe, rather than focusing only on improving their parenting.





### Examples of how agencies are putting this Principle into practice:

- Some local areas are developing, or have established, dedicated ‘Parent Practitioner’ roles in child exploitation teams as an explicit recognition that they needed to work directly with parents to effect change.
- Some social care teams are using collaborative action planning tools which include parents and carers in planning, so their expertise is reflected. This gives parents and carers increased ownership and a shared understanding of the roles and remits of different professionals.
- Some child exploitation services are routinely allocating a separate lead or link worker for parents, to include them in planning, to explain support and services and to provide emotional support. This is not (necessarily) offered by the same service that holds the relational lead with their child, but based on a mutual decision about who might be best placed.
- Some alternative provision schools are seeing the benefits of dedicated Family Workers, who are unlocking opportunities for parents and carers to engage positively with their child’s education, and to receive support themselves.
- Some services have employed parents and carers with direct experience of child exploitation and / or extra-familial harm as a means of embedding lived experience into professional roles.



## Practice Principle 8 :

**Responses to child exploitation and extra-familial harm must...  
create safe spaces and places for children and young people**

### Children, young people, parents and carers told us they want professionals to:

- Understand that children, young people and families still need safe, affordable and accessible spaces and places in the community, available when they need them.
- Acknowledge that community spaces feel safer for children and young people when youth groups and services are available to access, when there is more CCTV, improved lighting, and when trusted adults are in the area.
- Prioritise children and young people's safety when they are working in the community, rather than criminalise them.
- Understand that children and young people perceive 'safe' services to be those which feature professional adults who are non-judgemental and are trusted to listen. These people make children and young people feel comfortable and like they belong.
- Actively challenge discrimination to ensure harmful behaviours aren't normalised in schools, services, and communities.
- Partner with other professionals to identify and disrupt people who are responsible for harming children and young people.
- Use their power to influence government and social media companies to make online spaces safer for children and young people.
- Understand from children and young people what helps them to feel safe, and acknowledge this doesn't always mean physical spaces of safety.
- Work with parents and carers to help them understand online dangers and practical ways they can make their child safer.
- Value the significant knowledge and intelligence parents and carers hold about their local communities and use it to help safeguard children and young people. Recognise that parents and carers need support to participate safely.
- Account for the direct threat and use of violence, both actual and implied towards family members, and respond quickly.

## Examples of how agencies are putting this Principle into practice:

- Police colleagues in many areas are leading analytical activity to ensure that information and intelligence about those harming children and young people can support effective disruption and prosecution activity.
- Some local partnerships are ensuring transport hubs are actively engaged in tackling child exploitation and extra-familial harm, for example through safety audits and training staff.
- Some local areas are exploring how they can improve local disruption activity in order to:
  - create a shared sense of risk-ownership and responsibility across partners
  - ask all partners to contribute to disruption plans and potential solutions
  - embed an expectation that everyone plays their role in disrupting harm.
- Some areas are replacing their 'antisocial behaviour meetings' with 'community resource meetings' or 'community conferencing' (drawing from restorative and family group conferencing approaches) to address situations where communities have raised concerns.
- Some local authorities are exploring adaptations to child protection systems to ensure that assessments, interventions and reviews are undertaken at the level of context, i.e., the spaces and places where children and young people encounter harm.
- Some local authorities are seeking to promote collaboration between housing services, wider partners managing public spaces and child exploitation teams, so that intelligence can be shared about places and spaces rather than identifying children or young people individually.



## 7. Glossary

Many of the terms below have a number of different interpretations. This glossary is not intended to dictate how these terms are defined, but instead aims to explain how the terms are understood and applied within the Practice Principles and accompanying resources. Further context to, and discussion of, many of the terms can be found in the research summary.

**Ableism** – refers to discrimination in favour of able-bodied people.

**Adolescence / Adolescent** – refers to (an individual in) a particular developmental life stage. Within the Practice Principles, this is interpreted as covering the years between 10 and 18, although wider definitions extend the upper age limit to 24 years, and many of the messages within the Principles apply to this wider age range.

**Adverse childhood experiences** – are experiences that occur in childhood that negatively impact upon a child's sense of safety, stability and/or wellbeing. The nature of these experiences can vary (sexual abuse, bereavement or living with parental substance misuse, for example) and children can experience one or many of these during their childhood.

**Allyship** – is the process of recognising one's own power and privilege and taking steps to challenge discrimination against more marginalised individuals or groups, in a manner that is respectful of the individual/group.

**Anti-discriminatory practice** – is a term, often used in social work practice, that refers to efforts to combat individuals' experiences of discrimination from other individuals and agencies/organisations.

**Appreciative Inquiry** – is a strengths-based

approach to organisational change, that identifies and uses what is already working well as a basis for future development.

**Appropriate adult** – is a parent/guardian or other responsible person over 18 who acts to safeguard the interests, rights, entitlements and welfare of children and vulnerable people who are suspected of a criminal offence

**Child-centered** – means keeping the child as the central focus when making decisions about their lives. It means working in partnership with children/young people and their families to ensure that any decisions made are aligned with their best interests, and informed by their views and perspectives

**Child exploitation** – there is no official definition of child exploitation in England. It is an umbrella term used to encapsulate a range of different forms of exploitation affecting children, including child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, child trafficking and modern slavery.

**Child-First** – is an approach that has become central to youth justice policy and practice; however, in relation to the Practice Principles, it refers more broadly to the need to see the child first, beyond their actions.

**Child welfare inequalities** – refers to the ways in which children and/or their parents face unequal experiences or outcomes



of involvement with child welfare services (for example children's social care) that are connected to social disadvantage (see [here](#) for more detail)

**Children and young people** – refers to those under 18 years of age and those for whom there are extended support entitlements beyond 18 (those with special educational needs and disabilities, care leavers). This terminology does not undermine the legal 'child' status, but rather reflects young people's own preferences around terminology.

**Classism** – also known as class discrimination, is discrimination based on (perceived) social class.

**Coaching methods** – are collaborative, solution-focused approaches to development, in which a 'coach' facilitates self-directed learning and development, with the aim of moving towards tangible change.

**Compassionate leadership** – prioritises attendance to relationships, recognising the importance of staff welfare and the relationship between staff feeling valued, respected and cared for, and reaching their full potential in work.

**Constrained choice** – recognises the external contexts that limit the choices available to individuals, and understands any choices made within these contexts as reflective of these impact of these external constraints.

**Contextual Safeguarding** – is an approach to understanding, and responding to, children and young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families (see [here](#) for more detail)

**Critical thinking** – refers to a disciplined and proactive approach to thinking about an issue – that attends to assumptions and

biases, different perspectives, and potential unintended consequences – to gain new insights, deepen empathy and make informed and effective decisions.

**Culturally sensitive practice** – refers to adapting services and interventions to the specific cultural needs of diverse families by valuing the strengths and resources they bring from their cultures and communities.

**Deficit-based** – refers to approaches that focus on the needs, problems or behaviours of individuals or groups when seeking to understand, assess or respond to an issue; often in the context of suspected risk or harm. Such approaches see the person(s) as the problem, rather than contextually understanding their experiences and seeing them as part of the solution.

**Deprivation of liberty** – refers to situations where children/young people are 'deprived of their liberty' for safety, youth justice or mental health reasons, through mental health wards, youth custody or secure care placements, for example.

**Developmental capacity** – refers to children and young people's ability to make choices, express feelings and preferences, demonstrate understanding of their environments and to participate and make informed decisions.

**Digital professionalism** – refers to the responsible and ethical use of digital technologies and communications platforms by professionals, including the maintenance of professional boundaries and respect for service users' rights and privacy.

**Disproportionality** – occurs where groups are under or over-represented in data or services



and/or disproportionately (unequally) experience an issue compared to the general population. Disproportionality can occur in a wide range of contexts including child protection, educational exclusions and youth justice, for example.

**Disruption tactics** – are civil remedies and other approaches that can be used by police and other professionals to disrupt known or suspected harm and/or sources of harm.

**Diversity** – is a multi-dimensional concept that recognises – and embraces – the fact that individuals and groups differ in many different ways – their identities (gender, sexual orientation etc), their abilities, their life experiences and their views and values, for example.

**Evidence-informed approach** – means drawing on the best available research evidence, practice wisdom (individual and team knowledge), and expertise that comes from lived experience. Using these different sources of knowledge to inform decision making and direct work with people is known as evidence-informed practice.

**Experts by experience** – are people whose expertise and insights are based on personal experience of the issue being considered.

**Extra-familial harm** – refers to harm occurring outside of the family environment

**Family Group Conferencing** – is a decision-making meeting in which a child's wider family network comes together to plan around meeting the needs of the child/ren (see [here](#) for more detail).

**Functional family therapy** – is a strength-based model built on a foundation of

acceptance and respect. At its core is a focus on assessment and intervention to address risk and protective factors that occur within and outside of the family (see [here](#) for more detail)

**Inclusion** – is the practice or policy of promoting and ensuring equal access to opportunities, services and resources, irrespective of one's identity or biography. Inclusive approaches identify and act to remove any barriers to this.

**Inequality** – refers to the state of groups and individuals experiencing disparity (unevenness), especially in status, rights, outcomes and opportunities. Efforts to achieve equality focus on treating everyone the same regardless of need.

**Inequity** – refers to a lack of fairness or justice, recognising this to be a result of current and historical systems of power and privilege. Efforts to achieve equity are based on the premise that different people will need different treatment, based on differential need.

**Infantilisation** – is treating someone in a more child-like manner than appropriate based on their age, maturity or experiences. This can be more likely to occur to some children and young people than others; those with special educational needs or disabilities, for example.

**Information sharing** – is the process of professionals across different agencies sharing information about the children, young people and parents/carers they are working with to inform decision-making. When referred to as purposeful information sharing, this means information sharing that is: necessary and proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely, and secure.



**Homophobia** – is used to describe a range of negative emotions towards, or discrimination against, homosexuality and/or gay people.

**Lead professional** – is the person within the network of practitioners supporting the child and family who is responsible for making sure that the different agencies act as a team and the help they are all offering fits together seamlessly to provide appropriate support for the child and family.

**Lifelong Links** – is an initiative which aims to ensure that a child in care has a positive support network around them to help them during their time in care and into adulthood. (see [here](#) for more detail)

**Lived experience** – refers to the subjective experiences of individuals, including their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions, as well as their social and cultural context. It is an important source of expertise in research and practice development.

**Marginalisation** – describes the relegation or de-prioritising of a group or individual, treating them as less important and/or placing them in a powerless position within society.

**Minority groups** – are groups and communities that experience exclusion and discrimination (this could be social, political and/or economic) because of unequal systems and power dynamics.

**Multi-systemic therapy (MST)** – is a family and community-oriented intervention that aims to break the cycle of anti-social behaviours by keeping young people safely at home, in school, and out of difficulties (see [here](#) for more detail).

**Neuro-divergent / neuro-atypical** – are non-medical umbrella terms that refer to the

way that some people's brains learn, process or function; in a manner that is not usually considered 'typical'.

**No recourse to public funds (NRPF)** – refers to an individual whose legal status means they will not be able to claim most benefits, tax credits or housing assistance that are paid by the central government.

**Participatory practices** – are means of meaningfully involving those (who may be) affected by case management decisions or broader service planning or strategic directions, in these direction-setting and decision-making processes.

**Peer group mapping** – is a process whereby professionals (from different agencies) can map associations between different young people, and contextually consider the strengths, risks and vulnerabilities within these networks (see [here](#) for more detail).

**Poverty-aware** – refers to having an understanding of how poverty affects individuals and groups. Poverty-aware practice is using this understanding to inform direct work, processes and services.

**Professional curiosity** – means avoiding assumptions and instead proactively exploring what might be going on in individuals, families and groups; seeking to understand what lies beneath the presenting issues and maintaining an open mind.

**Problem profiling** – refers to the mapping of established and emerging patterns of harm and risk. Often (though not always) led by police, it brings together information from different agencies, with the aim of 'mapping' what is known about particular harm types, locations and/or groups.



**Protected characteristics** – refers to categories set out in law, against which a person cannot legally be discriminated. These characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

**Relational or relationship-based practice** – are approaches which prioritise the relationship between practitioners and children/young people and/or families. The relationship is seen as a key part of the intervention, with emphasis placed on creating meaningful connection to promote positive change.

**Resilience** – is being able to draw on internal and external resources in response to challenges, in order to be able to mitigate some of the impact of these challenges. It is not an innate characteristic of individuals; it can be developed and supported.

**Restorative (approaches/practices)** – describe behaviours and practices which aim to empower people to find solutions to and reach their full potential; with a focus on repairing harm, and addressing conflict in ways that strengthen relationships.

**Risk assessments** – are generic or issue-specific tools and frameworks used to assess levels of risk, and associated required responses.

**Robust research** – refers to the process of conducting research that are thorough, systematic, and rigorous.

**Specialist services** – generally refers to services for children and families with multiple or significant needs which require particular expertise. Examples include child protection services, specialist child and

adolescent mental health services, and services for children with disabilities, or severe and complex needs. This term might also be used to describe an issue-specific service with particular expertise and interventions, for example a therapeutic services focused on sexual harm.

**Strengths-based approaches / working** – describe a way of working with people that focuses on their strengths, capacities and potential to support positive change. The emphasis is on ensuring people have power over their lives and are seen holistically. It is a counter to deficit-based approaches (see above).

**Survival choices** – are choices made, in the context of constrained circumstances, in order to meet immediate and/or foundational needs.

**Targeted services** – refer to services for children, young people and families who have additional needs or difficulties which require more intensive support than can be provided by universal services, but may not need specialist intervention. An example might be intensive family support, or programmes to divert a defined cohort of young people away from offending.

**Therapeutic intervention(s)** – describes a range of interventions used to support the psychological and/or emotional wellbeing of people. Within psychology, the term is often used to describe interventions for people who have experienced trauma and/or have specific/diagnosed mental health conditions.

**Transitional Safeguarding** – is an emerging approach to safeguarding adolescents and young adults fluidly across developmental stages, in a way that foregrounds people's





rights and emphasises person-centred practice (see [here](#) for more detail).

**Transphobia** – refers to negative and/or discriminatory attitudes, behaviours, and actions directed towards people who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming.

**Trauma** – is defined as an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that are experienced as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that have lasting adverse effects on the person's well-being.

**Trauma-informed practice/care** – though not precisely defined, the term is used to describe approaches that embed an understanding of trauma and its impact on people. Trauma-informed approaches should be applied to organisational policy and culture, as well as direct practice.

**Trauma-informed supervision** – is an approach to supervision that combines an understanding of both direct and indirect trauma, in order to support practitioners in providing trauma-informed practice and care (see above).

**Trusted Relationships** – generally means relationships in which there is a high degree of trust and security. In this context, the term refers to professional relationships between practitioners and children/young people – and parent(s)/carer(s) – that are based on clear roles and boundaries, transparent communication and a commitment to the creation of safety.

**Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children**

– are children who are seeking asylum in the UK but who have been separated from their parents or carers.

**Universal services** – refers to services that are available to all children and young people such as schools, health visiting and General Practice.

**Vicarious / Secondary trauma** – refers to the (often cumulative) negative effect on a person that arises from being exposed to someone else's trauma, for example the impact on a practitioner who is supporting people who have had traumatic experiences, or whose role involves engaging with graphic and/or distressing material.

**Victim-blaming** – inappropriately locates responsibility for harm with the person who has experienced it, rather than the person(s) who caused it, through (directly or indirectly) asserting that the harm occurred because of something the 'victim' did or didn't do, or say.



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