

# SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN HARMED OUTSIDE THE HOME

**Guidance for  
practitioners**



# Introduction



**As part of the Better Together shared vision, Tower Hamlets has developed a new approach to safeguarding designed to tackle the risk of harm faced by children outside their homes.**

We will be looking at where risks arise and putting plans in place to make spaces and places safer. We will work with young people to co-produce plans wherever possible. It's part of the C-Change approach, that puts relationships at the heart of our practice, working together to bring about change and repair harm.

## Harm outside the Home - a new approach

The child protection system was designed to protect children from risk of harm in the home. It addresses direct threats from family members and reduced capacity of families to safeguard those they care for. Threat from outside the family makes safeguarding harder because of the way the system works.

Traditional approaches - intervening to increase families' safeguarding capacity, or moving children away - are far less effective against harm outside the home.

As children get older the risks they face and the way they respond to them changes. They may face new and more complex risks posed by peers, partners and adults outside their families. So, the way we engage with them and their families to manage risk and reduce harm needs to change as well.

Harm outside the Home safeguarding approaches seek to identify hotspots, disrupting risky situations in spaces and places outside the family instead of moving children and families away from them. Parents and carers may be unable to change the risky situations but professionals who manage or deliver services in these spaces can. They become critical partners in this safeguarding approach. We also need to work with partner agencies to make spaces and places safer for young people.



**WE ARE TAKING THE 'CAPACITY TO SAFEGUARD' ROLE BEYOND THE FAMILY, OUT TO PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS ACTIVE IN THE SETTINGS WHERE OLDER CHILDREN MIGHT BE AT RISK**

# Approaches to safeguarding

**1 Complex safeguarding** seeks to understand and respond to the experience of significant harm beyond the family. It provides longer term intensive multi-agency support to address the risk and harm outside the home. Tower Hamlets' Exploitation Service was developed using this approach.

**2 Contextual safeguarding** recognises the impact of the public context on older children's lives and potentially their safety. It seeks to identify and respond to harm and abuse outside the home posed by adults or other young people. It looks at how interventions can change processes and environments to make them safer for all, not just individuals.

**The spaces and places that young people spend time in outside the family are significant risk factors.**

**It's crucial to engage with them to help keep them safe.**

**By only looking and acting inwardly we fail to understand and safeguard vulnerable young people, particularly during adolescence, when the influence of school and peer groups is much greater.**



**3 Transitional safeguarding** focuses on responding to older teenagers' and young adults' particular developmental needs and acknowledges emerging evidence that adolescence extends into the early or mid-twenties. It is an approach that is in the early stages of development, due to the challenge of navigating the differing legal frameworks and service thresholds. In Tower Hamlets we are working closely with our adult services to improve support for those transitioning from child to adult support.

**These three ways of understanding the issues and working with them are not mutually exclusive or conflicting.**

**They complement and overlap in several ways. If we make use of one perspective, we should probably be considering the others as well.**

**We want to use them to develop more effective ways of working with older children being harmed outside the home.**



# How can we use the three approaches together?



Luca is nearly 17 and currently attends LEAP PRU. He is one of a group of 6 who socialise at a basketball court in the Aberfeldy area.

Luca and his friends are being exploited by adults from the area, for the purposes of drug dealing. They have known these adults all their lives, as all have grown up locally.

Luca has begun to go missing for days at a time, either turning his phone off, or ignoring calls and texts from his parents.

Luca's parents feel they are losing control of him - when they try to lock him in the house, he physically attacks his mother to get out.

**Currently, Luca and his family would be referred, assessed and receive intervention to address his behaviour, often with little impact.**



## 1 Complex safeguarding

This approach would see Luca referred to the Exploitation Service and his case would be open to the police and support team within the service.

The Exploitation Service could explore whether Luca already had a relationship with a professional who could take on a long-term intensive support worker role.

If not, a worker would be allocated to him and work would be undertaken with Luca about the risks involved and harm he faced.



## 2 Contextual safeguarding

The contextual approach sees Luca's neighbourhood and the group who have groomed him as being the primary risk - intervening with Luca's family is unlikely to impact the risks he is facing in the community, or the challenges at home.

A mapping meeting would seek to understand the group dynamics, the risks and the contexts - the basketball court, Luca's peer group and the exploiters would be assessed and discussed by the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) panel.



A plan would be developed to disrupt the risk in that context, thereby safeguarding all six young men and addressing the child criminal exploitation - intelligence about the basketball court would go to the police and be fed into Community Safety Partnership tasking meetings.

# C-Change

**Contextual safeguarding offers a framework to shape the development of policy and practice models for safeguarding young people affected by risk of harm outside the home. It can be used to identify the resources, structures and partnerships needed to build and test new ways of working.**

## 3 Transitional safeguarding

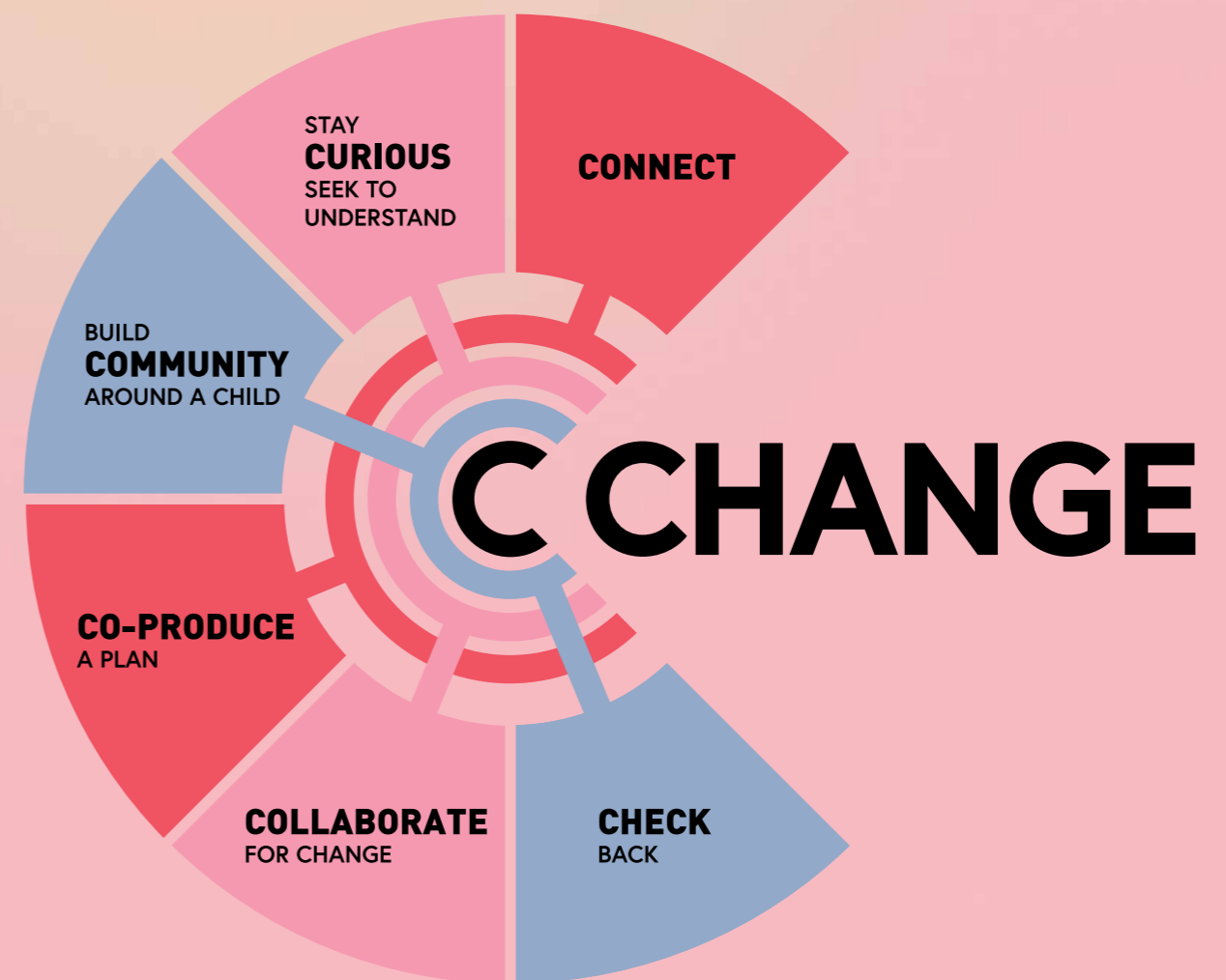
If his case progresses and Luca nears 18, it would be referred for discussion to the transitions panel to see what ongoing support Luca could be offered. MACE considers young people up to 24 who are care experienced or have SEND.

Tower Hamlets are currently exploring how we can support all young people being harmed through exploitation and or violence up to the age of 24.



Our Harm Outside the Home approach is part of the Supporting Families Division's Better Together Practice Framework and links directly to the C-Change approach. The 6 Cs are the core practices that enable us to put relationships at the heart of our practice.

They help us work together, bring about change and repair harm.



# Tower Hamlets Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy

In 2021, we launched our proactive, partnership-based approach to tackling criminal and sexual exploitation and serious violence affecting children and young people. The strategy takes a whole-systems approach.

We want partners working with young people, families and the community to deliver evidence-based interventions that keep young people safe by reducing risk and strengthening the protective factors in their lives.

## Overarching priorities

- 1** Prevention and early intervention - identifying children and young people at risk of exploitation or serious violence and making sure they get support as early as possible to protect them from serious harm
- 2** Protection and ongoing support - children and young people at the highest risk of harm, and survivors of exploitation or serious violence, get ongoing support that reduces the risks they face, finds them alternative pathways and helps them rebuild their lives.
- 3** Disrupting and pursuing those who pose risk - potential perpetrators of criminal or sexual exploitation, and those who might involve them in violence, are targeted so that risk and harm is reduced.

**WE CAN ONLY MANAGE THE RISKS OF HARM TO CHILDREN OUTSIDE THE HOME BY WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP.**



## Children in Need / Child Protection / Care Planning Harm Outside the Home process

- A decision needs to be made about whether the harm to the child is within or outside the home, or both.
- Where it is outside the home, the approach will be to apply existing CiN, CP or Care Planning processes, but to understand and manage where the risk and harm are coming from.
- If risk is only outside the home, it will be dealt with as CiN (Harm outside the Home). If there is also risk in the home that meets the threshold, it should be dealt with as CP.
- For children we care for, where harm is coming from the community we will ensure that care planning includes responding to this risk of harm and where it is coming from.
- The difference in process will be how meetings are conducted and who attends, so the focus is on the source of risk and harm.
- It is crucial that organisations that can support work to make the risky environment safer, and work directly with those at risk of harm, attend these meetings.



For further information, please see the **'Working with Adolescence'** guidance and the **'Developing effective CIN/CP/Care Planning for Harm Outside the Home meeting guidance'** in the documents folder.

# MACE

**Multi-Agency Child Exploitation panel meetings will be co-chaired alternately by the DI for Public Protection with the Head of Service for Exploitation, and the DI for Local Investigations with the Head of Service for Community Safety - Neighbourhood Operations.**

We want the right people to spend enough time considering the impact of exploitation, violence, gang affiliation and the drug market on young people and to develop the partnership work moving forward. MACE will be the forum for this. MACE will look at high-level strategic priorities through the Victim, Offender, Location, Theme (VOLT) model, as required in the Pan-London Protocol for Exploitation.

## **Safer Space/Safer Places Meeting**

MACE meetings, and daily and weekly intelligence briefings, can flag locations and groups of concern to the Safer Places/Safer Spaces part of the Neighbourhood Tasking meetings. The Neighbourhood tasking meeting will support the activity developed through plans to make those spaces and places safer.

**Plans will be developed to make these locations safer once they have been raised as a concern, and there should be better understanding of peers and adults of concern in terms of risk to young people.**



# Tower Hamlets and the national context

**Our new approach is grounded in current national thinking and recommendations. The Care Review, May 2022, gave us a framework to develop this work.**

**As we develop our approach, we will keep the recommendations in mind.**

In some areas “young people’s plans” or “community risk plans” with a different emphasis to traditional child protection plans are being used. They focus more on the wider environment.

The Care Review recommended the introduction of plans flexible enough to respond where families are clearly not the only sources of risk.

“A more tailored and coherent response is needed to harm outside the home, like county lines, criminal or sexual exploitation or abuse between peers.

We recommend a bespoke child protection pathway – through a Child Community Safety Plan – so that the police, social care and others can provide a robust child protection response.”

**Care Review, May 2022**

# Working together to make a difference

We want our new Harm Outside the Home framework to make sure we focus on risky hotspots and bring the right partners together to develop plans that reduce harm. We want to stop discussing unsafe spaces but not taking action to manage risk.

Implementing our new co-located service and the Harm Outside the Home CiN/CP/Care planning processes, and using the additional support from across the Supporting Families Division and partners, means we can continue to develop this work as well as anywhere in the country.

“Serious Case Reviews, Joint Targeted Area Inspections of Child Sexual Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation (Ofsted, 2016), and Ofsted inspections have highlighted professionals frustration about time spent discussing dangers, without taking corresponding actions to address them.”

Care Review, May 2022





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**Better  
Together**  
BUILDING  
RELATIONSHIPS,  
STRENGTHENING  
FAMILIES

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