

# SASH Risk Management Arrangements for Extra-Familial Abuse and Exploitation

## *Risk Briefing*

### 1. Purpose of Briefing Note

It is acknowledged that during adolescence the nature of risks faced by young people, and the impact of these risks, often differs from earlier in childhood. Young people are faced with a new and complex set of risks outside of the family home. Specifically, these are risks posed by peers, partners and/or adults in the community.

These risks are usually manifested in extra familial environments and:

- are informed by peers and relationships;
- involve young people perpetrating, as well as experiencing harm;
- often feature forms of exploitation: grooming, coercion, criminality and serious risk of sexual and physical harm that can create a climate of fear and reduce engagement with services;
- are beyond the control of parents / carers;
- can lead to large numbers of relocations including children over 12 coming into care for the first time often following a rapid escalation in risk; and / or managed moves across schools.

There have been an increasing number of children and young people who are living at home or in care that have become victims of child exploitation and this briefing sets out the overview of safeguarding arrangements for such young people.

### 2. Context

Hertfordshire Children's Services and partners have for some time recognised that a different approach is required to address these risks and have for several years used the Multi-Agency Risk Management (MARM) process.

A review into the risk management arrangements for vulnerable young people was completed in March 2019 on high risk cases open to Targeted Youth Support. The outcomes of the review were:

- A need for clearer thresholds for young people suffering extra-familial abuse and exploitation.
- An improved risk management process.
- A proposal for a review of Risk Panels with the aim to have a single panel for young people:
  - at high risk of, or experiencing extra familial harm;
  - at high risk of, or already perpetrating harm against other young people outside their family unit.

There have been an increasing number of children and young people who are living at home or in HCC care that have become victims of child exploitation and this briefing sets out the overview of safeguarding arrangements for such young people.

### **3. Child Protection System and Adolescents**

The Child Protection process is primarily in place to protect children from abuse. In the Children Act, 1989, this is referred to as ‘harm.’

The severity of harm informs the response that a child can expect. Children experiencing ‘harm’ are defined as ‘children in need’ and their families may be offered support that they can engage with voluntarily. Those at risk of or experiencing ‘significant harm’ can expect statutory intervention, where social workers may conduct enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act to ascertain whether the child in question is to be made subject of a child protection plan.

Despite recent additions to statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2018)* noting social workers role to safeguard children in extra-familial contexts, there remains limited policy or practice frameworks that support this shift (Firmin, 2019). There has been a rise nationally in first-time referrals for adolescents into social care presenting more complex needs (ADCS, 2018). It is within this context that despite experiences of extra familial abuse / exploitation presenting risk of significant harm to young people, existing child protection responses to these issues have been subject to challenge (Firmin, 2017; Hill, 2018; Home Affairs Select Committee, 2019).

The first presenting challenge being that while young people affected by extra familial abuse / exploitation are at risk of significant harm, this is rarely instigated by, or solely the consequence of, actions taken by their parents (Firmin, 2017; Hill, 2018). The child protection system was primarily created to protect children from abuse within families. In theory, while cases of extra familial abuse / exploitation might reach a threshold for statutory intervention in terms of the significance of harm, they will not necessarily do so on the grounds of parental involvement or responsibility. Secondly, young people who experience extra familial abuse / exploitation will often be involved in, or instigate, the harm of other young people as well as being harmed themselves – whereas child protection is primarily intended to respond to young people solely as ‘victims’. (Firmin, 2011; Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 2013; Khan et al., 2013).

### **4. Extra Familial Abuse / Exploitation and Significant Harm Process**

#### **4.1 Child and Family Assessment**

In order to ensure consistency of intervention a Child and Family Assessment will be completed for every young person who has a pattern of going missing, is being exploited or is very vulnerable to exploitation, or where there is one single significant incident.

Where there are concerns but of a lower level of need, an Early Help intervention through a Families First Assessment (EHM) process will be warranted.

A Child and Family Assessment will be undertaken by a Social Worker within the Specialist Adolescent Service Hertfordshire (SASH). If the young person is considered to be a Child in Need following the Child and Family Assessment, a Child in Need Meeting will take place; where a Child in Need plan is to be

formulated this will include a risk management plan. Where there are concerns in relation to a young person being likely to suffer significant harm or having suffered significant harm, as outlined below, then a Strategy Discussion should take place.

## 4.2 Strategy Discussion

Adolescents who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm in the form of extra familial abuse and exploitation will require a strategy discussion, this includes:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Child Criminal Exploitation
- Missing for a significant period, there are concerns of high risk of harm, or the young person has a pattern of going missing
- Human Trafficking
- Extremism
- Is suffering or at likely to suffer significant harm, not listed above, which is extra-familial.

If there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, Significant Harm (Section 47, Children Act 1989), the Team or Practice Manager needs to agree that a S47 strategy discussion/meeting is required and that S47 enquiries are needed. These enquiries are to enable the local authority to decide whether they need to take any further action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. Enquiries can take place before or after the strategy discussion/meeting depending on the circumstances of the concerns, but they must be completed within 15 days of a Strategy Discussion.

Where concerns are substantiated and the child is judged to be at continued risk of Significant Harm in relation to familial abuse, an Initial Child Protection Conference should be convened and held within 15 working days of the Strategy Discussion. (See Social Work Procedures).

It is expected that child exploitation and extra-familial abuse concerns following a Strategy Discussion would have risk managed via a Child in Need Plan and CIN Review Meetings held regularly to ensure that there is just one plan for the young person.

## 4.3 Multi-Agency Risk Management Meeting (MARM) – CLA

MARMs are multi-agency risk management meetings that are convened by Children's Services when a child looked after is missing, at risk of repeat missing episodes, subject to exploitation or vulnerable to exploitation.

A Multi-Agency Risk Management Meeting (MARM) is attended by the Police, Social Worker and his/her manager and any other professionals involved. Roles, responsibilities and actions are agreed to strengthen risk management planning. A MARM form is available on LCS in order to record actions and outcomes of the meeting and to ensure consistency of minutes and recording.

#### 4.4 MARM – CIN

A MARM for a young person, who is open as a Child In Need, can be held if there are Child Exploitation concerns which have not met the threshold for a Strategy Discussion and it is agreed that a one off multi-agency risk management professionals meeting would strengthen the risk management process. This meeting would not create a separate plan but would better inform the risk assessment and ongoing work with the young person through the Child in Need process.

### 5. Recording Exploitation on EHM/LCS

The LCS/EHM hazards must be added to reflect a young person where they are subject to or at risk of Child Exploitation and associated vulnerabilities and updated when needs and risks have decreased. The categories are:

- Subject to CSE
- At risk of CSE
- Subject to CCE
- At risk of CCE
- Exploitation - Prevent
- Gang affiliation

# Child Exploitation and Extra-Familial Harm Flowchart

