

CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING BOARD

Strategy and Delivery Plan:
Tackling Exploitation of
Children & Young People
2023-2026



BIRMINGHAM
**Safeguarding
Children**
PARTNERSHIP



WEST MIDLANDS
**VIOLENCE
REDUCTION
PARTNERSHIP**

CONTENTS

Glossary	4
1. Statement of Intent	5
2. Vision and Principles	6
2.1 The Vision	6
Participation of and Partnership with Children, Young People, their Families and Community	6
2.2 Principles	6
3. Governance	9
4. Scope	10
Definitions	10
4.1 Definition of Child Sexual Exploitation (Home Office)	10
4.2 Definition of Child Criminal Exploitation	10
4.3 Definition of Serious Youth Violence	11
4.4 Definition of Children Missing from Care and Home	13
4.5 The West Midlands Region Definition	12
5. The Birmingham Picture	13
5.1 Serious and Organised Crime in the City	13
What We Know About Our Children and Young People	13

CONTENTS

5.2 Locations	14
5.3 Missing Children	14
6. The Birmingham Approach to Exploitation	16
Contextual Safeguarding Domains of Abuse	18
Current Delivery Mechanisms	19
Service Overview: EMPOWER U	19
7. What We Have Achieved So Far	21
8. Key Priorities 2023-2026	23
Delivery Plan	Appendix 1

GLOSSARY

CEM	Criminal Exploitation and Missing
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CE	Child Exploitation
CCE	Child Criminal Exploitation
CL	County Lines
CSSB	Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Board
CYP	Children and Young People
CSP	Community Safety Partnerships
BSCP	Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership
BSVRB	Birmingham Serious Violence Reduction Board
EMPOWERU	Birmingham Exploitative and Missing Service
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
OCG	Organised Crime Group
PNC	Police National Computers
ROCU	Regional Organised Crime Unit
VRP	Violence Reduction Partnership
WMP	West Midlands Police
YOT	Youth Offending Service

1. Statement of Intent

1.1 This strategy is developed and delivered under the auspices of the Birmingham Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Board (CSSB) to drive forward the development and implementation of a whole system strategic and operational partnership response to the exploitation of Children and Young People (C&YP). The CSS Board acts on behalf of the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership Board and Community Safety Partnership both of whom hold a shared responsibility for Child Exploitation.

1.2 The exploitation of children (CCE) both criminal and sexual is completely unacceptable. Children and young people who are exploited are the victims of child abuse, and their needs require careful understanding, assessment, and interventions often beyond the scope of Children's Social Care alone, as stipulated in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. They and their families are likely to need swift access to wider support services and in some instances protection under the Children Act 1989. We understand that this type of risk (commonly referred to as extra-familial or contextual) requires a very different response to that of traditional statutory safeguarding designed largely as a response to harm within a family setting. We make a joint commitment to a Contextual Safeguarding Model to ensure that risk is managed, and effective interventions are delivered appropriately.

1.3 We recognise that child exploitation has both a serious immediate and long-term impact on every aspect of a child or young person's life, health, and education. It damages the community and the lives of families and carers often leading to family breakdown and children being subject to significant harm and/or death. It is our collective responsibility to identify those children and young people at risk of exploitation and our joint responsibility to protect them and safeguard them from further risk of harm. It is also our joint responsibility to prevent children from becoming victims of this form of abuse and reduce the opportunities that offenders may have to exploit children in the future. We strongly believe that where possible agencies should ensure that victims are not criminalised and prosecuted, with such action only used as a last resort.

1.4 We aim to raise the profile of child exploitation to protect and safeguard children from harm. We shall achieve this by developing and maintaining effective local responses through the delivery of this effective multi-agency strategy and delivery plan delivered by key partners and the community through the Board. This includes the implementation of timely and effective risk management and the execution of a comprehensive range of child-centred interventions for children who are at risk or are victims of sexual and/or criminal exploitation. We will also strategically collaborate with the Reducing Serious Violence Board (formerly Birmingham Gangs, Violence and Serious Organised Crime Board) in addition to other criminal justice/community safety forums to ensure adult perpetrators of exploitation are identified, disrupted and brought to justice.

2. Vision and Principles

2.1 The Vision

Our vision is to reduce the level of and impact of child exploitation affecting children and young people in Birmingham, to keep them safe so they can lead healthy, productive lives. We want to make Birmingham a safer city for our communities to live in whilst also making it an undesirable city for perpetrators of exploitation. We commit to taking new, innovative, and evidence-based approaches, focusing on harm reduction in our communities, preventing victimisation and repeat victimisation, and ensuring the lived experiences of the child and family sit at the centre of our approach. Whilst acknowledging the role of traditional approaches to safeguarding and criminal justice, we will prioritise a strong core offer alongside statutory partnership responsibilities. A joint approach seeks to increase engagement and long-term safety resulting in sustained positive outcomes for our communities. The partnership recognises there may be a risk associated with this approach, however, accepts this as a necessity to deliver resilient, thriving communities.

Participation of, and in Partnership with, Children, Young People, their Families and Community

The exploitation of children and young people cannot be tackled by statutory agencies alone. Parents/carers and communities play a vital role in supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of all children and it is vital that positive, strong trusting, open and honest relationships are built with parents/carers and communities and that they are also seen as safeguarding partners.

Parents, carers and families play a vital part in the development and delivery of services and effective participation ensures that services develop/reflect local needs. Parents and carers are the experts and their child's primary educators. As a service, we pledge to ensure that we engage and work flexibly with children and young people and parents/carers. This will include ensuring we are inclusive in terms of disabilities, communication barriers, for example, language and cultural differences, as well as providing tangible resources, access and time.

2.2 Principles

The strategic plan is based upon the principles set out below, as identified in the 'See Me, Hear Me Framework'.

A. The Child's Best Interests Must be the Top Priority

The strategy takes a child-centred; relationship-based approach, whilst at the same time recognising that to protect other children and future abuse there is a need to identify, disrupt and prosecute offenders.

Children do not make informed choices to enter or remain in exploitative situations., they do so, through coercion, enticement, manipulation, or desperation. Children under 16 years old cannot consent to sexual activity and sexual activity with a child under 13 years is statutory rape.

Sexually exploited children or those at risk, should be treated as victims of abuse and never as offenders. Prosecution should be focused on those who abuse children and young people in this way. County Lines West Midlands Police data includes markers for people involved in county lines as victims, perpetrators or suspects. The learning and best practice in place around CSE should be extended to include victims of all forms of exploitation.

‘Children who are exploited and groomed for criminal purposes are equally as deserving of support. The language of ‘criminal exploitation’ is rarely understood and therefore those affected are not offered the same response. All forms of exploitation should be considered in the same way, with an understanding of grooming and vulnerability,’

For more information see:<https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/get-help/help-services/exploitation-and-county-lines/what-is-county-lines>

B. Enduring Relationships and Support

Support should consider age, ethnicity, beliefs, sexual orientation, disability, language, and maturity in order to be tailored to meet the needs of the individual.

Lasting, trusting relationships with professionals identified as the ‘trusted adult,’ who offer consistent support are crucial to support and protect children and young people and aid their recovery. Professionals should be supported to allow time to build relationships with the children and young people they are working with.

C. Early Identification and Prevention is Better

The effective safeguarding of children and young people is best achieved through early help and intervention. All professionals working with young people are well placed to identify risks and access support at an early stage without delay.

D. Intelligence-Led Delivery

The strategy must be intelligence-led and informed by comprehensive problem profiling based on victim, perpetrator, and location, which is also shared across key partners to inform meaningful activity concerning the prevention and disruption of child exploitation.

C. Effective Information Sharing

Information sharing should be facilitated by an agreed protocol predicated on the best interests and safeguarding of children and young people in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018). All relevant agencies and services should be signatories and it should clearly state what information should be shared, by whom and the process and purpose for doing this.

D. Supervision, Support, and Training for Staff

Agencies within Birmingham should invest in the development and support of staff through regular supervision (including clinical supervision) and the opportunities for staff to reflect on practice. Those professionals who offer direct support to exploited children and young people might require further intensive training and must have frequent planned opportunities for meaningful reflection on their practice with a skilled line manager or supervisor.

E. Evaluation and Review

Quarterly reviews and an annual evaluation of this strategy and delivery plan, will be undertaken to ensure services are progressing activity and interventions are achieving their intended outcomes.



3. Governance

The Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Board (CSSB) acts on behalf of the Birmingham Safeguarding Children and Adult Partnerships and Community Safety Partnership, this provides strategic governance for the incremental implementation of Contextual Safeguarding across Birmingham. The initial focus has been the exploitation of children and young people and children missing from home and care.

The CSS Board includes, but is not limited to the Police, Children's Social Care, Youth Offending Service, Health, Education, Early Help, Community Safety Partnership, National Probation Service and Chaired by Senior Representatives.

The CSS Board also works in collaboration with a number of key strategic boards including but not limited to:

- Birmingham Serious Violence Reduction Board (BSVRB Subgroup)
- The West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership
- The West Midlands Criminal Exploitation and Missing Board
- The Prevent Executive Board
- Birmingham Protecting People from Harm (BCSP Subgroup)

In developing this strategy we have considered the City's vision as outlined in Birmingham's Corporate Plan 2022-2026 to strengthen Birmingham's position as a thriving, young, diverse global city. It also reflects the developing Birmingham Children and Young People's Plan 2023-2028 with its aim for children and young people to stay SAFE at home and in places outside of our families and schools.

The CSS Board provides governance, support and performance monitoring to the specialist partnership exploitation and missing hub known as EMPOWER U. The Board receives quarterly reports from the Head of Contextual Safeguarding who holds responsibility for the EMPOWER U Hub and the development of a contextual safeguarding approach across the Trust and wider partnership.

The CSS Board will ensure the development of approaches to tackling sexual and criminal exploitation work is prioritised and coordinated through the Child Exploitation Priorities and Plan. The plan will be refreshed every three months and reviewed annually.

4. Scope

The following is within the scope of this strategy in respect of children and young people up to age 25:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Child Criminal Exploitation
- Serious Youth Violence (where exploitation is a feature)
- Exploitation relating to trafficking and missing
- Children Missing from Home and Care

The focus on the areas above does not underestimate the impact of other forms of exploitation however, there are existing processes, systems, and practice guidance in place to respond to teenage relationship abuse, forced marriage, bullying, peer-on-peer abuse, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and radicalisation. The areas identified as within scope are key priorities for the city.

Definitions

4.1 Definition of Child Sexual Exploitation (Home Office)

Child sexual exploitation is not defined in law. Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity 'causes harm, to the victim's needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact, it can also occur through the use of technology (online child abuse and sexual exploitation). The definition of exploitation includes the element that the child has been, 'controlled, coerced, manipulated or deceived into sexual activity.'

4.2 Definition of Child Criminal Exploitation (Home Office)

CCE is not defined in law but is a term that has come to be associated with 'county lines'. The government definition of county lines is set out below together with our definition of Child Criminal Exploitation, which is increasingly used to describe this type of exploitation where children are involved.

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas [within the UK], using dedicated mobile phone lines or another form of 'deal line'. This can also happen in borough.

They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

Child criminal exploitation occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity:

- Causes harm to the child
- For the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator
- Through violence or the threat of violence
- In exchange for something the victim needs or wants

The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact, it can also occur through the use of technology. The criminal exploitation of children is not confined to county lines but can also include other forms of criminal activity such as theft, acquisitive crime, knife crimes and other forms of criminality.

4.3 Definition of Serious Youth Violence

Serious Youth Violence is defined as incidents whereby children/youths either under 19 or under 25 years old and are involved in any offences (such as manslaughter, rape, wounding with intent and causing grievous bodily harm, assault/injury that is life-changing and involves weapons such as knives or firearms). We know children can be exploited into committing violence, and that their experiences in childhood and adolescence can increase their likelihood of becoming a victim or offender in adulthood (at times the two can go hand in hand). We are ambitious about retaining focus on 'children as children' whilst challenging the complex and nuanced issue of serious youth violence.

The service continues to develop and implement a clear and consistent approach to responding to serious youth violence, which rightly focuses on children and adults. A review of the previous Gangs Violence Organised Serious Crime Board has taken place and informs the strategy. Existing governance and operational functions are facilitated via the Violence Reduction Board with a sub-operational group that looks specifically at individuals and groups of children and places to address SYV as a growing trend.

4.4 Definition of Children Missing from Care and Home

A missing child is defined as a child reported to the Police or by Police as someone whose whereabouts are unknown by their families or carers, whatever the circumstances of their disappearance, and they are considered missing until located. Any missing person under the age of 18 is classified as a missing child.

The statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care (Department of Education, January 2014) sets out the steps Local Authorities and their partners should take to prevent children from going missing and to protect them when they go missing.

In respect of children missing, we are informed by the knowledge that children (and children in care) who go missing can be an indicator of exploitation and a child missing is vulnerable to exploitation.

4.5 The West Midlands Regional Definition

The West Midlands Region also have a combined definition for all types of exploitation:

‘An individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child, young person or adult and exploits them:

- through violence or the threat of violence, and/or
- for financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or
- in exchange for something the victim needs or wants

The victim may have been exploited even if the activity appears consensual due to his /her specific situation. Exploitation does not always involve physical contact, it can also occur through the use of technology, e.g., as the result of a grooming process which takes place during conversations in chat rooms, or through the use of social media.’



5. The Birmingham Picture

Birmingham is the largest city in the UK outside of London with a significantly young population (25% of its one million residents are under 16). Birmingham is also an ethnically and culturally diverse city (47% of its residents identified as non-white British in the 2011 census- a figure which has likely increased in the decade since). Like many cities in the UK, inequalities and deprivation are evident and there are areas of deep poverty. Many of our city's young people live in low-income families and along with neighbouring Sandwell and Wolverhampton in the West Midlands, Birmingham is one of the 20 most deprived local authorities in the country (all being more deprived in 2019 than they were in 2004).

5.1 Serious and Organised Crime in the City

Serious and organised crime affects more UK citizens, more often, than any other national security threat and leads to more deaths in the UK each year than all others combined.

Serious and organised crime persists to be a significant challenge for Birmingham, due to the hidden nature of crimes, such as the trafficking of individuals into Modern Slavery, Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Criminal Exploitation, the importation, supply or production of illicit drugs, and the use or supply of firearms. There are currently 66 tracked Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) in Birmingham. The likelihood of this threat increasing is real and a failure to recognise the impact is likely to lead to further exploitation of vulnerable children and adults; more murders and serious violence, fractured communities and increased harm to our economy and institutions.

The Birmingham Serious Violence Prevention Strategy (2022-2023) and Action Plan reflect the actions that the services will take to respond to serious and organised crime <https://westmidlands-vrp.org/data-insights/strategic-needs-assessment>

What We Know About Our Children and Young People

At the time of writing (September 2022) in Birmingham there are a total of 469 children deemed at risk of exploitation (192 CSE and 337 CE). The number of children criminally exploited is higher than those sexually exploited but we know for a city the size of Birmingham the number of children identified as being sexually exploited is too low. The number of children criminally exploited is significantly higher for children from a black and ethnic background and in terms of gender, males tend to be higher (in terms of numbers than girls). For CSE, girls are more likely to be identified as being at risk of/or being sexually exploited than boys and White girls are more identified than Black and ethnic minority girls.

5.2 Locations

In terms of vulnerability, Birmingham East has the most children identified as vulnerable (Regional Organised Crime Unit). Concerns remain consistent with those identified in 2021 where individuals have been recognised by the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) or arrested for County Lines Offence and/or with a County Lines flag on PNC (for those aged 20 years or under). Aston/Lozells/Winson Green (Birmingham West area) are persistently arising as areas of need, whilst emerging areas of concern include Sparkbrook (Birmingham East).

Within the Aston /Lozells (Birmingham West) area there are addresses where young people within the NRM, CL arrest and/or PNC flag data have multiple missing episodes within the last 12 months, a similar pattern occurs in Winson Green (Birmingham West) and Sparkbrook areas (Birmingham East).

A clear link also exists between exploitation and children excluded (permanently/temporarily) from education. Birmingham has primary school permanent exclusion rates above both the national and regional averages with primary school suspension rates also surpassing the national and regional picture. Some of the schools listed in Regional Organised Crime Data (ROCU) are within the areas of concern noted above.

It is evident from the data that the number of children identified as being vulnerable or being criminally exploited is increasing and those identified as vulnerable or being sexually exploited is decreasing. There has been a specific focus and drive on the identification of criminal exploitation, which could account for the decrease in CSE identification. As such, continuous awareness raising in this area is a minimum requirement and is ongoing.

5.3 Missing Children

Children missing from home and care can be at increased risk of criminal and sexual exploitation. The number of children within Birmingham that are reported missing continues to increase month on month and the period of January 2022 to December 2022 saw 265 children reported missing from home or care where exploitation was identified. Children are often missing for short periods, but at times have multiple missing episodes. Of the 2197 children currently in care in Birmingham, 9% have at least one missing episode.

The reasons for children being reported missing appear from the data, to centre around family conflict, wanting to be with family /friends or unhappiness within their home away from home (placement).

The Birmingham Child Exploitation and Missing Service (EMPOWERU) continues to advocate on behalf of children, working closely with placements, area teams and care homes to resolve many of these issues and reduce missing episodes. In addition, where there is family conflict, Family Group Conferences are utilised to repair vital relationships and empower families to develop their own plans as to manage situations moving forward.

In the period October 2020 to September 2021, there were also a total of 104 County Lines recognised to be operating in Birmingham. Of those identified, 94 lines were assessed to be originating from Birmingham, impacting areas outside of Birmingham and ten lines are believed to operate presently in the City of Birmingham. Some children who have been reported missing from home or care have been located by Police (usually following arrest) in Scotland, Wales, London or in neighbouring regions such as Leamington Spa or Coventry having been trafficked for the purpose of exploitation. A number of children placed from Birmingham outside of the area who have been reported missing have been located in and around the city. The service recognises the need for fuller, more robust locality-based assessments when placing children outside of the local authority and when supporting families to move due to threats to life.

EMPOWER U continue to work with parents and carers as safeguarding partners in relation to identifying the indicators of exploitation and links with children missing to increase parent reporting and intelligence gathering.

In addition, the service continues to increase awareness raising around the vulnerability of children who are missing from education and /or at increased risk of exploitation through special educational needs or additional special educational or emotional needs. The service is developing a formal pathway and response to children missing from education working and reducing permanent exclusions in partnership with the SAFE (Support, Attend, Fulfil, Exceed) Taskforce and the AP (Alternative Provision Taskforce) to ensure children have the right access to support that promotes their emotional, physical and health needs, maximising all opportunities for children to fulfil and exceed their aspirations.



6. The Birmingham Approach to Exploitation: Assessment and Response to Risk to Children Outside the Family Home

Children are being groomed and coerced into carrying out various acts of criminality often by ruthless and sophisticated OCGs, sometimes resulting in them being at risk of significant harm, exposed to County Lines activity and/or sexual exploitation. Many parents, despite their best efforts, are unable, as opposed to unwilling, to protect their children from these external risks. Partner Agencies find safeguarding within the traditional legislative framework challenging as it is fundamentally designed to mitigate risk within, or very close to the family home. Working Together recognised these challenges and the responsibilities that non-traditional agencies hold in addressing this risk.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (pg. 25: 2018) states that:

‘As well as threats to the welfare of children from within their families, children may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from outside their families. These extra-familial threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or more widely from within the wider community and/or online. These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including: exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines; trafficking; online abuse; teenage relationship abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation. Extremist groups make use of the internet to radicalise and recruit and to promote extremist materials. Any potential harmful effects to individuals identified as vulnerable to extremist ideologies or being drawn into terrorism should also be considered’.

It also states that:

‘assessments of children in such cases should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child’s life and are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. Children who may be alleged perpetrators should also be assessed to understand the impact of contextual issues on their safety and welfare. Interventions should focus on addressing these wider environmental factors, which are likely to be a threat to the safety and welfare of a number of different children who may or may not be known to local authority children’s social care. Assessments of children in such cases should consider the individual needs and vulnerabilities of each child. They should look at the parental capacity to support the child, including helping the parents and carers to understand any risks and support them to keep children safe and assess potential risk to the child.’

and:

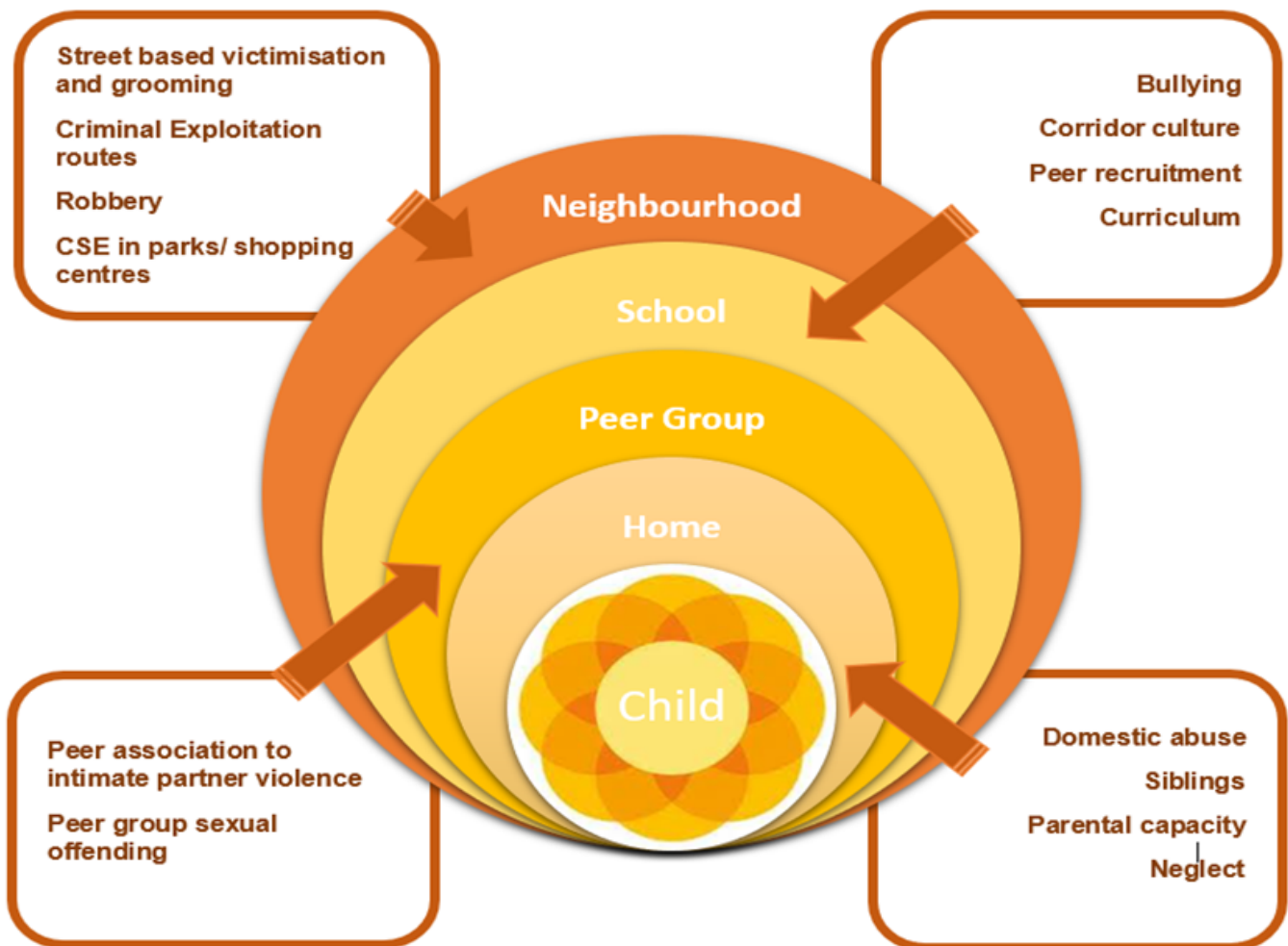
*early help services will typically include.....responses to emerging thematic concerns in extra-familial contexts (Chapter 1 Para 2)
information sharing is also essential for the....when multiple children appear associated to the same contexts or locations of risk (Chapter 1 Para 25)
social workers...understand the level of need and risk in, or faced by, a family from the child’s perspective (Chapter 1 Para 56)*

*(organisations) should have arrangements in place for: ‘creating a culture of safety, equality and protection within the services they provide’ (Chapter 2 Para 3)
in schools, it is important that staff are aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.*

YOTs....are therefore well placed to identify children.....and the contexts in which they become vulnerable to abuse’ (Chapter 2 Para 41-9)

Other Local Authorities have adapted alternative plans/arrangements for responding to this type of extra-familial harm a development which is also ongoing in Birmingham. The approach we are developing builds upon the work of Dr Carlene Firmin driving its approach from the concept of Contextual Safeguarding.

6. The Birmingham Picture



(Adapted from C. Firmin, 2017)

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding and responding to risks to children and young people outside the family home, which recognises that children, young people and vulnerable adults can be at risk of violence and abuse within the context of their neighbourhoods, schools and online. These risks are safeguarding issues and require us to work together with children, young people (as partners in their own safeguarding), all partner agencies, communities and parents.

Contextual safeguarding includes many types of extra-familial risk including child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation (missing children can be an indication of exploitation) urban street gangs, county lines, radicalisation and modern slavery. It should be noted that children and young people can be subject to multiple types of risk at any one time. Both males and females can be exploited, and it can affect any class and race of children and young people, not withstanding that there are additional

factors (such as adverse childhood experiences, poverty and disabilities) that can add to vulnerability. Children and young people can be exploited to commit serious youth violence, crime and can be exploited online as well as within the community. It is vital that everyone, whether a professional or a member of the public, are able to identify exploitation and how to respond. It is important to note that exploitation causes trauma which can display itself in the behaviour of the child and in turn undermine parent/child relationships and relationships with professionals, such as teachers. The child's abuse is often beyond the control of their parents/ carers.

It should be acknowledged that exploitation does not stop at age 18, yet often or not support and intervention does. Research in relation to the adolescent brain indicates that the brain does not fully mature until the late twenties, reinforcing the need for effective transitional safeguarding arrangements to continue beyond age 18. Whilst it should be noted that Mental Capacity Act legislation will apply from this age, the commitment to offer support in line with this strategy will not change.

Current Delivery Mechanisms

The EMPOWER U Exploitation and Missing Hub is a partnership team which takes a contextual approach to protecting children and keeping them safe and free from risk and harm outside of the family home. Taking a coordinated and proactive response from prevention through to safeguarding and prosecution. It is not the sole provider of services for children and young people who are exploited and/or missing from home and care but is the lead agency for driving forward the contextual approach to safeguarding.

The EMPOWER U Exploitation and Missing Hub works alongside colleagues in existing statutory and non-statutory provision, offering a range of services to both children in care and other children to reduce the risk of child exploitation and missing episodes.

Service Overview – EMPOWER U

Taking a trauma-informed response, which is culturally competent and sensitive, whilst keeping the child's needs at the centre, recognising children are victims whilst building meaningful and trusted relationships, EMPOWER U:

- Identify and have full oversight of all children exploited and missing.
- Share information in relation to these children, review all screening tools to identify exploitation and /or serious youth violence
- Identify disruption opportunities and formulate /implement disruption plans
- Connect children to the relevant and appropriate services with a focus on intervention and support
- Build relationships with parents and utilise them as safeguarding partners
- Provide support, advice, and guidance to the workforce and partner agencies in relation to children exploited or missing.

- Ensure where relevant and appropriate, that children who go missing from care or home are offered a return home interview to reduce further missing episodes and identify any further risk and safeguard.
- Ensure that staff attend and participate in strategy meetings (and where appropriate any safeguarding meetings) where exploitation, missing or serious youth violence is a concern and support with disruption planning
- Chair any complex strategy meetings or complex disruption planning meetings utilising the Home Office Disruption toolkit as a guide to alternative powers
- Work closely with all Trust staff to support them to identify and respond to missing children and children exploited.
- Undertake community profiling, mapping peer groups, locality/place-based assessments and support with the collation of information to inform intelligence package to support arrest and prosecutions
- Ensure coordinated response of resources for children of note who were part of any significant incident or who are connected through Urban Street Gangs to prevent and reduce further risk of harm

The Agencies that form the Hub (co-located or virtual) are noted below (this list is not exhaustive):

- Birmingham Children's Trust (BCT)
- West Midlands Police SOCEX (Serious Organised Crime and Exploitation Team/LOCATE)
- Education Safeguarding
- Health/Redthread
- Probation
- Youth Offending Services
- Youth Services
- Violence Reduction Partnership
- Housing
- Barnardos
- Children Society
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Community Interest Companies
- Multi Systemic Therapy Exploitation Team
- Rape and Sexual Violence Programme

Other key services to which the Hub are aligned include (but not limited to):

- The SAFE Taskforce funded for three years by the Department for Education (DfE)
- The Alternative Provision (AP) Taskforce, funded for two years by the DfE.
- Catch 22. funded for two years by the Violence Reduction Partnership (rescue and response mentoring children exploited)

- Barnardos Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship Service (ICTGS)
- National Working Group Exploitation Network (provides independent scrutiny of practice)

7. What we have achieved so far

This strategy and delivery plan defines our vision, priorities and objectives over the next three years. It also takes stock of the significant progress that has been made over the past two years across the City.

What we have done so far:

Service Delivery

- Development and implementation of the Child Exploitation and Missing Service – EMPOWER U
- Development and implementation of Multi Systemic Therapy Service for younger children at risk of or being criminally exploited.
- Established the SAFE Taskforce – DfE funded provision for mainstream educational settings to reduce exclusions for children at risk of serious youth violence.
- The Alternative Provision (AP) Taskforce, DfE funded to provide multi-disciplinary interventions within the City of Birmingham School (CoB/PRU)
- Commissioned a range of additional services appropriate to need and demand via VRP and BCT.

Practice/Process Improvement

- Improved information sharing and risk assessment between West Midlands Police (WMP) ROCU, WMP gangs Team and LOCATE (WMP Missing Team).
- Reviewed and implemented practice guidance and procedures in relation to Child Exploitation and Missing
- Review of the screening tool (simplified and combined to include CE/CSE)
- Review of Right Help Right Time threshold document to include additional extra-familial risk
- Development of the Regional protocol concealing drugs (VRP) to inform response and approach
- Development of Effective Placement planning for children in partnership with VRP(guidance) to ensure consistency in terms of placement of children and families (home and care)
- Review of Missing children's process and practice
- Practice development locally and regionally looking at South Asian and Romanian missing children cohort Supporting Children and Young People from Roma Communities who are at Risk of Trafficking and Exploitation to improve the response/ approach to children in a culturally sensitive way

- Gather the lived experiences from children, parents, and carers in order to ensure good practice and that the service is taking a holistic approach in meeting the needs of children and families
- Plan and implement residential placements for children, parents, and carers to build resilience, raise awareness around exploitation and serious youth violence related to exploitation, and empower and support parent-child relationships
- Working with Care Homes to improve their response when children go missing
- Work with community and faith groups to increase awareness and response to risk outside the family home

Awareness Raising/Training

- Multi-agency and single agency workforce development and awareness raising programmes around children exploited and who go missing with a training plan in place
- Formal arrangements developed for training with the hospitality trade
- Training Community Interest Companies to ensure good practice when working with children exploited or vulnerable to Serious Youth Violence
- Place based and peer assessments/Mapping complex groups and Contextual Assessment (awareness raising with staff)

Performance

- Development of partnership performance and regional performance dashboard to gain a better understanding of the need, demand, patterns and trends in relation to missing and exploitation
- Improved evidence gathering, intelligence/mapping and information sharing to inform police and partnership problem profiling, disruption and prosecutions working in partnership with the gang's team
- Partnership problem profiling based on victim, location and perpetrator (WMP analyst)
- Community profiling to understand resilience, risk and how to respond and disrupt.



8. Key Priorities 2023-2026

Priorities

1. Increase reporting of children identified as being at risk of exploitation and being referred to services
2. Ensure the needs of those children, young people and families identified as being at risk are appropriately and effectively met with the right help and the right time
3. Ensure that safeguarding, enforcement and commissioning activity is evidence and needs led; with an understanding of what works.
4. Maximise opportunities for strategic and operational solutions with local, regional and national partners to disrupt exploitation and associated serious youth violence (including parents and community) and bring offenders to justice

We will achieve this by:

- Continued awareness raising amongst the community and partnership to identify and report both victims and perpetrators
- Ensure a skilled and responsive workforce via continued workforce development across the partnership and threshold continuum to better recognise, understand and respond to victims of exploitation.
- Ensure all agencies have a procedural framework to support staff in responding to extra-familial risk
- Continued development of an extra-familial practice model within EMPOWER U learning from evidence base and voices of children and their families.
- Collaboration with the Early Help, Prevention and Universal services
- Ensure the EMPOWER U hub is appropriately resourced by Partner agencies
- Ensure that appropriate arrangements for transition to adult services are in place

- Increased Partnership awareness of the problem profile and demand to enable better safeguarding and public protection
- Ensure that commissioning arrangements are evidence-based and in accordance with need and demand
- Maximise the potential of the additional SOCEX investment via full integration with the existing delivery model in EMPOWER U (including alignment with existing tactical teams/operations).
- Collaboration with the Reducing Serious Violence Board to agree on cross-cutting priorities and actions

The delivery plan in Appendix 1 will be reviewed quarterly by the Board with an annual refresh.

January 2023

Contextual Safeguarding Board Partnership Priorities and Delivery Plan

APPENDIX 1

April 2023 - 2026 Strategic Priorities

Priorities

1. Increase reporting of children identified as being at risk of exploitation and being referred to services
2. Ensure the needs of those children, young people and families identified as being at risk are appropriately and effectively met with the right help and the right time
3. Ensure that safeguarding, enforcement and commissioning activity is evidence and needs-led; with an understanding of what works.
4. Maximise opportunities for strategic and operational solutions with local, regional and national partners to disrupt exploitation and associated serious youth violence (including parents and community) and bring offenders to justice

We will achieve this by:

- Continued awareness raising amongst the community and partnership to identify and report both victims and perpetrators
- Ensure a skilled and responsive workforce via continued workforce development across the partnership and threshold continuum to better recognise, understand and respond to victims of exploitation.
- Ensure all agencies have a procedural framework to support staff in responding to extra-familial risk
- Continued development of an extra-familial practice model within EMPOWER U learning from the evidence base and voices of children and their families.
- Collaboration with the Early Help, Prevention and Universal services
- Ensure the EMPOWER U hub is appropriately resourced by Partner agencies
- Ensure that appropriate arrangements for transition to adult services are in place
- Increased Partnership awareness of the problem profile and demand to enable better safeguarding and public protection
- Ensure that commissioning arrangements are evidence-based and in accordance with need and demand
- Maximise the potential of the additional SOCEX investment via full integration with the existing delivery model in EMPOWER U (including alignment with existing tactical teams/operations).
- Collaboration with the Reducing Serious Violence Board to agree on cross-cutting priorities and actions
- Continued work with partners including parents and the community to identify, assess and respond to vulnerable locations across the city in line with the localism agenda

PRIORITY 1: Increase reporting of children identified as being at risk of exploitation and being referred to services

How	Action	Responsible Officer/Agency	Timescale
<p>A continued programme of awareness raising amongst the community and partnership to identify and report both victims and perpetrators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening youth, parent/carer and community voice through COMMS and engagement by: Ensuring through consultation with children and communities through the Communication and Engagement strategic and operational group that there is a formulated COMMS plan to raise awareness in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Hospitality awareness raising ·Transport awareness raising ·Faith /Community groups awareness raising ·Exploitation campaigns ·Parent/carer awareness raising ·Continued work with Care Providers (identify reduce exploitation/respond/ reduce missing) ·Utilise national campaigns such as, 'See me, Hear me' to create opportunities to raise local and regional awareness around exploitation ·Engage and participate in targeted COMMS such as County Lines Intensification weeks ·Utilising youth engagement to convey information about the service in a language that is simple 	<p>VRP EMPOWER U</p> <p>VRP Barnardos Children Society CSP</p> <p>Care Home Forums (WMP)</p>	<p>Year 1</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Promotion of the BCT Practice Model across the service (child at the centre of everything we do, how we are, what we do, what we achieve, evidence-based, culturally and trauma-responsive) ·Designated leads appointed in each service to implement the strategy 	EMPOWER U	Year 1
		All agencies	Year 1
Ensure all agencies have a procedural framework to support staff in responding to extra-familial risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting contextual safeguarding approaches to reducing exploitation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·BSCP to request agencies undertake self-assessment of current extra familial procedures ·Agencies to develop internal extra-familial procedures where required 	BSCP lead	Year 1
		All agencies	Year 1
		All agencies	Year 1
Continued development of an extra-familial practice model within EMPOWER U learning from evidence base and voices of children and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with OLA/researchers and develop an extra-familial model to inform service review • A review of Missing and return home services to be completed to ensure a needs-led response to volume and demand • Service review to be undertaken (to align with SOCEX developments) 	HoS Contextual Safeguarding	Year 1
		HoS Contextual Safeguarding	Year 1
		EMPOWER U Hub	Year 1
Collaboration with the Early Help, Prevention and Universal services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current joint working arrangements between EMPOWER U, prevention/Early Help agencies including Schools, Early Help, Alternative Provision Taskforce, Safer Taskforce, Youth Service, Youth 	HoS Early Help HoS Contextual Safeguarding HoS Youth Service	Year 1

	·Utilising conferences to deliver key messages and ensure staff awareness as to what the service has to offer(to include multi-agency conferences and parent/carer/children conferences)		
PRIORITY 2: Ensure the needs of those children and families identified as being at risk are met with the right help at the right time			
How	Action	Responsible Officer/Agency	Timescale
Ensure a skilled and responsive workforce via continued workforce development across the partnership and threshold continuum to better recognise, understand and respond to victims of exploitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the workforce development in coordinated training across all systems and all partners by ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Training needs analysis for each partner agency ·Training plan (bespoke to each agency) ·Work in partnership with all partner agencies and ensure that all are familiar with the powers within the Home Office ·Multi-agency training and implementation across the workforce inclusive of partners. Working in partnership with the Violence Reduction Partnership support all agencies (Education, Health West Midlands Police to identify, respond, prevent, and reduce exploitation) 	<p>All agencies/Practice Hub</p> <p>Birmingham Local Safeguarding Board EMPOWER U</p> <p>All agencies/Local Safeguarding Board</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 1</p>

		Adult Social Care and Contextual Safeguarding	
PRIORITY 3: Ensure that safeguarding, enforcement and commissioning activity is evidence and needs led			
How	Action	Responsible Officer/Agency	Timescale
Increased Partnership awareness of the problem profile and demand to enable better safeguarding and public protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership problem profile based on victim/location and perpetrators to be developed Provide a good analysis of the data to support the partnership in reducing exploitation and understanding and responding to risk OCGs exploiting children to be identified and tracked - increased risk rating Procure relevant software and tools to effectively and efficiently gather relevant information and accurate data Review current Children Social Care system and forms to ensure they are fit for purpose and able to collate the data required(data dashboard also required to 	<p>WMP/SOCEX & Partners ROCU</p> <p>WMP</p> <p>WMP</p> <p>HoS Contextual Safeguarding</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 2</p>

	<p>ensure timely live data can be extracted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure local trends and needs are fed into the regional data to enable the commissioning of services on a local and regional needs basis. 	EMPOWER U Hub/VRP	Year 1
Ensure that commission arrangements are evidence based and in accordance with need and demand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Needs assessment based on Problem profile to be completed. • Feedback and data from children, parents, carers and partner agencies to inform needs assessment and commissioning. • Work in partnership with commissioning to commission and review services 	<p>VRP</p> <p>BCT IMT Team & VRP /WMP data and Trust Commissioning Team in partnership with EMPOWER U</p>	<p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 2</p>
<p>Priority 4: Maximise strategic and operational solutions with local, regional, and national partners to disrupt all types of exploitation and associated serious youth violence</p>			
How	Action	Responsible Officer/Agency	Timeline
Maximise the potential of the additional SOCEX investment via full	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop with agency leads to be undertaken to develop full integration of SOCEX within the existing EMPOWER U delivery model 	EMPOWER U and all partner agencies.	Year 1 Q1

<p>integration with existing delivery model in EMPOWER U.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An operational model for the new SOCEX EMPOWER U model is to be agreed upon and presented to CS Board. • Performance dashboard including disruptions and prosecution to be presented to CS Board. • Ensuring suitable premises, facilities and co-location • Work in partnership with all partner agencies and ensure that all are familiar with the powers within the Home Office Disruption Toolkit 		<p>Year 1 Q2</p> <p>Year 1 Q2</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 1</p>
<p>Collaboration with the Reducing Serious Violence Board to agree cross-cutting priorities and actions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint review of action plans and priorities • Joint Board 6 mid-year • Formal reporting arrangements to be agreed 	<p>Chairs of CS and RSV Board</p>	<p>Year 1</p>
<p>Continued collaboration with the Violence Reduction Partnership to ensure local and regional</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in partnership with the Violence Reduction Partnership through strategic meetings the service will ensure that any recommendations and improvements in practice are driven by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The feedback findings from Rapid Reviews, problem profiles and performance data (locally and from partners) to understand the patterns and themes in terms of exploitation 	<p>VRP</p> <p>VRP & HoS Contextual Safeguarding</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 1</p>

<p>consistency in terms of identification, reporting, responding, awareness raising, and reduction of children exploited and who go missing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Utilising these strategic board meetings to ensure a consistent response and approach to exploitation and serious youth violence locally and across the region in terms of process, practice and guidance across the seven regions to prevent, reduce, respond and support children exploited, who go missing and vulnerable to/ or involved in serious youth violence. ·Utilising the Child Exploitation and Missing operational group to implement the procedures, practice and guidance agreed upon at strategic board operational across the seven regions ·Influence and support (using the information gathered from the data, problem profiling feedback from children, parents and carers) to identify support and intervention required to commission services funded via the VRP. 	<p>VRP & HoS Contextual Safeguarding</p> <p>VRP & HoS Contextual Safeguarding</p> <p>VRP & HoS Contextual Safeguarding</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 1</p>
<p>Continued work with partners to including parents and the community to identify, assess and respond to vulnerable locations across the city in line with the localism agenda.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and strengthen community initiatives by building, establishing and maintaining trust and confidence with parents and carers and communities. This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Residential placements/stays for children (to be trained as accredited Youth Inspectors) ·Residential placements/stays with children, parents, and carers to rebuild relationships between children and their parents affected by exploitation and serious youth violence ·Residential placements /stays for parents to be trained and accredited in awareness raising around exploitation and missing, advocacy, and empowerment. 	<p>EMPOWER U Parent /Carer forums</p> <p>EMPOWER U Parent /Carer forums</p>	<p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 2</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Advocacy and empowerment accredited training required to look at an independent Family Advisory Board ·Supporting place-based approaches to exploitation prevention and reduction by community profiling, working inside local areas to understand needs locally and individually to ensure that prevention, response and intervention are effective. ·Regular feedback from parents/carers via the regular parent /carer forum and children 	<p>EMPOWER U Parent /Carer forums</p> <p>EMPOWER U Parent /Carer forums and partner agencies</p> <p>EMPOWER U Parent /Carer forums</p>	<p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 2</p>
--	---	--	---

To be reviewed quarterly

Annual Refresh due January 2024 for completion April 2024

