

Keeping Young People Safe Strategy 2025-2028

Multi-Agency Safeguarding approach to tackling child and young adult exploitation

Caring for people, our places and the planet

This strategy was completed in partnership with the following organisations:





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1. Foreword

Children have the right to grow up safe from harm in their families and in their communities. We know that there are adults and organised criminal groups that seek to sexually and criminally exploit children and when they do, it has a devastating impact on their physical, educational and emotional development and psychological safety. We must act to keep children safe and bring those who cause them harm to justice.

This Strategy will drive our ambition for a Family Friendly Barnet in which all children are able to grow up happy, healthy and safe. It has been developed in collaboration with our multi-agency partnerships and is informed by the voices and experiences of children, young people and their families and the many services supporting children in the borough.

We will work together to deliver the Strategy alongside our wider strategies that support children and young people including our Early Help Strategy, Education Strategy, Youth Justice Plan, Corporate Parenting Strategy, Serious Violence Strategy and Combatting Drugs Partnership Action Plan and Domestic Abuse & Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, all of which are focused on improving outcomes for children and young people and making our community safer.

Our borough works hard for children, we have excellent schools and we are rightly proud of our child first approaches that inform the strong services we deliver in partnership for children across the borough. As the Family Friendly portfolio holder, I am committed to ensuring Barnet continues to deliver effective services in collaboration with those who are most affected and those with the capacity to create change for children.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of this Strategy and who are working to keep our children and young people safe.



Cllr Pauline Coakley-Webb
Cabinet Member for Family
Friendly Barnet



Cllr Sara Conway
Cabinet Member for Community
Safety and Resident Participation

2. Introduction

The exploitation of children is a complex problem which requires multi-faceted solutions delivered by a partnership of agencies, community providers, schools, parents and the children and young people who most affected by it.

Barnet's Corporate Plan: Caring for people, our places and the planet 2023-2026 acknowledges that Barnet is of London's safest boroughs, although crime is a priority concern for 36% of adults and 41% of young people. The Plan makes clear the borough's commitment to ensuring children are safe at home and in their communities through the work of our local partnerships with the police and other key stakeholders.

The recognition that some young people are more likely to be victims, exploited and/or drawn into crime is set out in the Corporate Plan, Barnet's Children and Young People's Plan 2023-27¹, Youth Justice Plan 2023-2025² and the Serious Violence Strategy 2024 – 2027³ alongside a

commitment to fight inequalities, work closely with the police and the justice system to ensure the "most vulnerable are protected, safe and supported to make the best choices and to build trusted relationships."

This strategy builds on the work of the council, its partners and local communities and is shaped by the voices of those who are most affected by child exploitation. We are grateful for the time given by all those who have co-produced this strategy and for sharing your candid views, personal and professional experiences, insights and knowledge which have enabled the development of an agreed set of priorities which we will work towards together.

Our agreed partnership priorities for 2025-2028 are:

Cohesive Partnerships and Leadership

Identify Young People at Risk and Supporting Survivors

Stopping Perpetrators and Persons of Concern

Supporting Community Capacity & Improving Confidence

Through this strategy the Council and its partners will drive our shared ambition to safeguard all children from harm caused by child criminal and sexual exploitation.

1 CYP Plan 2024-27.pdf (barnet.gov.uk)

2 Youth Justice Plan 2023-25.pdf (barnet.gov.uk)

3 Serious_violence_strategy_2024-27.pdf (barnet.gov.uk)

2. What is Child Exploitation?

“..any child, young person or young adult can be exposed to harm at any point during their journey toward adulthood.

As children develop through adolescence, harms can arise from relationships beyond the home, in peer groups, schools, neighbourhoods, online and in wider environments. Evidence suggests that children who experience adversity - whether during childhood or adolescence - are more likely to have poor outcomes and meet further harms as they grow (EIF 2020). These harms occur both within and beyond their family. Threats of harm outside of family life include sexual, physical, and emotional abuse and exploitation in different places and spaces. Young people and young adults can be harmed and exploited in different ways, including sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, County Lines, trafficking, modern slavery, online abuse, and extremism that leads to radicalization”

**Adolescent Safeguarding in London:
A Handbook for Collaboration
(ALDCS, LIA)**

Research in Practice outlines the following definitions of child exploitation.⁴

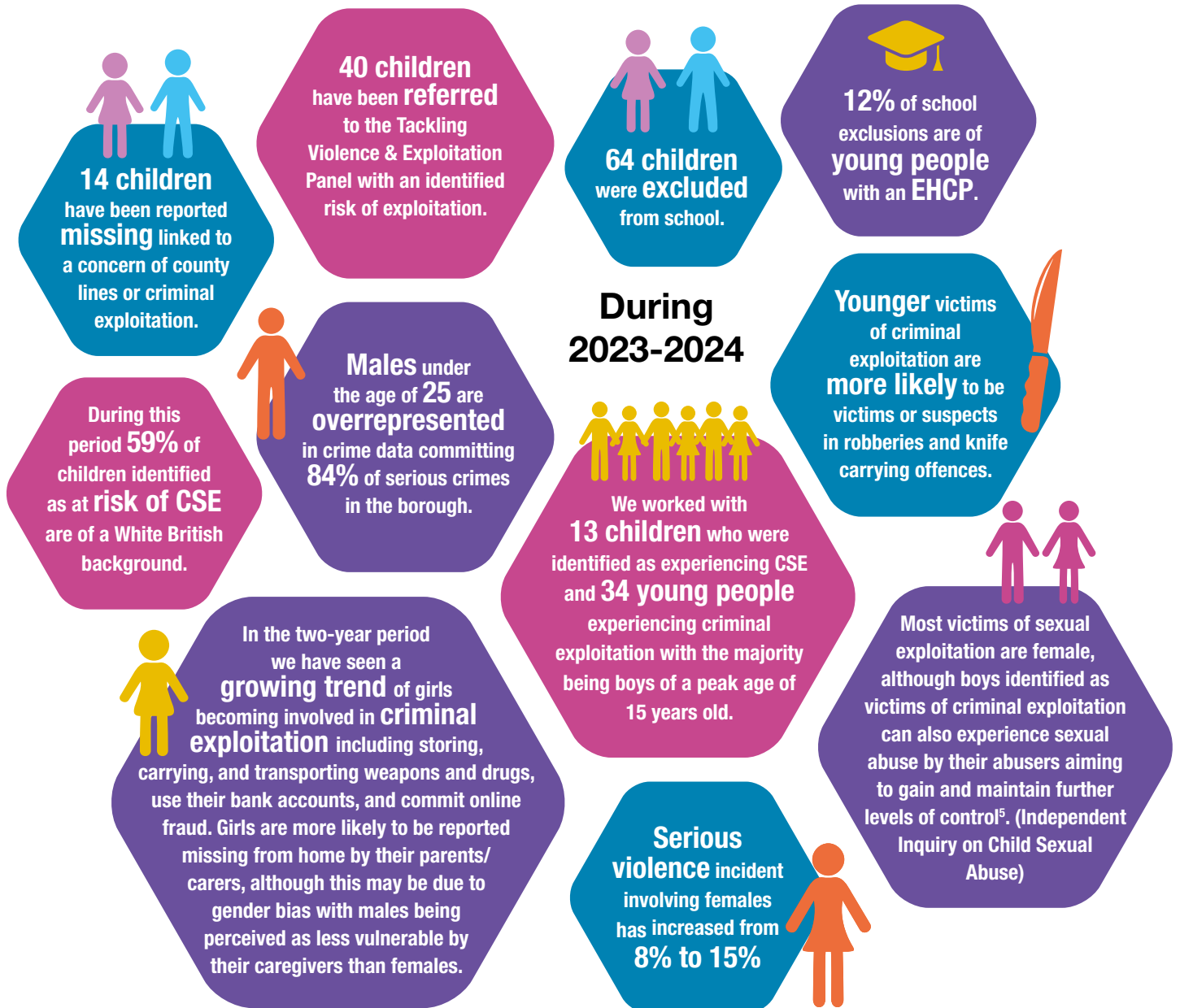
| Category of exploitation | Power | Exchange | Consent | Definition |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| Child sexual exploitation | Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity... | ...(a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) 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. | Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2018a) Child sexual exploitation: Definition and guide for practitioners (Department for Education, 2017) |
| Child criminal exploitation | Child criminal exploitation occurs where 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... | ...(a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. | 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 | Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2018a) Serious Violence Strategy (HM Government, 2018b) |
| Human trafficking and modern slavery | (a) “Trafficking of persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. | Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. | (b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this Article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in sub-paragraph (a) have been used (c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking of persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in sub-paragraph (a) of this Article; (d) “Child” shall mean any person under eighteen years of age. | Palermo Protocol (UN, 2000) Modern Slavery Act 2015 Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked (Department for Education and Home Office, 2011) |

4 Approaches to safeguarding and exploitation | Research in Practice

4. Local Context

Barnet is the second largest borough in population in London, home to over 389,000 residents, 26,000 business and 1,000 charities; a quarter of residents are children and young people, the large majority of which will enjoy happy healthy childhoods and safe transitions into adulthood.

Less than 1% of children living in Barnet were known to have experienced sexual and/or criminally exploitation in 2023/24. Whilst this a relatively small number of children, it is recognized that not all exploitation is reported, and the scale of the direct and indirect harm caused by exploitation is significant. Victims of exploitation can often also be victims of violence and suffer emotional trauma, shame, guilt, fear alongside familial and educational disruption and contact with the police and criminal justice system.



IT TAKES ON AVERAGE PROFESSIONALS 18 – 24 MONTHS TO BUILD TRUSTED RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SIGNIFICANT HARM THROUGH EXPLOITATION

5. The Progress we have made

Barnet's multi-agency partnership has been working together to tackle child exploitation since 2018, since this time progress has been made through a range of innovative projects and programs that have been developed, enabling continuous learning from which we continue to shape and develop our local approach; this is our third Strategy.

In 2023-24

- Since 2018, **£4.4m** of external project funding has supported the development of local programs designed to reduce crime, violence and exploitation of children and young adults.
- More than **70 children** and young people were reviewed by our multi agency Tackling Violence and Exploitation Panel.
- **255** Child Exploitation and Missing (CEAM) risk assessments were completed with **52** Young People having multiple reviews, **20** young people showed a positive reduction in risk scoring.
- **29** parents are trained parent champions, and **17** additional parents are schedule to attend the program and will support work with other parents of adolescents.
- **304 children** and young people were supported by our Engage (Across Barnet Harrow and Brent). **25** young people were engaged through our diversionary Turnaround program to diver them from offending.
- **121 young people and young adults** were engaged in a new Detached Engagement Project over a six-month period.
- **75 children** were supported by MOPAC reducing exclusions mentors.
- **32** Serious Incident Response Meetings were held, providing a robust school and community response to incidences of serious violence, recognizing collective trauma of affected communities, residents, professionals, and businesses.
- **93 young people and adults** were referred to our Victims Hubs and supported to access resources in accordance with their rights under the Victims Code of Practice





- **9 schools, 83 Police Officers, 3 Residential care homes, and 7 multi agency training sessions** were completed on Restorative Justice Approaches.
- **99 young adults** aged 18 -25 years were referred to our multi-agency Adults at Risk Panel enabling wrap around transitional safeguarding support.
- Over **160** multi-agency participants attended Contextual Safeguarding training.
- **7** Quarterly Intelligence briefings are disseminated with over **260** staff from across the partnership attending and being updated to identified themes and risks.
- Over **30** Community Capacity Building sessions have been held with local community groups to find local solutions to local challenges.
- **9** children engaged in review and co-production of Return Home Interviews
- All of our residential and semi-independent providers have been engaged in information sharing on local resources and Philomena Protocols, with over **70** staff accessing our contextual training.
- Clear Hold Build saw over **300 people** arrested, most of which were adults. Arrested resulted in the disruption of **2** known county lines.

Partnership working to improve identification, safety planning and disruption activities for children where there is a concern for exploitation has strengthened. Our approach is to ensure that children are rapidly signposted to support and positive activities where they can build positive and trusted relationships with adults.

Regular newsletters ensure key stakeholders, elected Members and our wider partners are kept informed of local developments and emerging themes and trends.



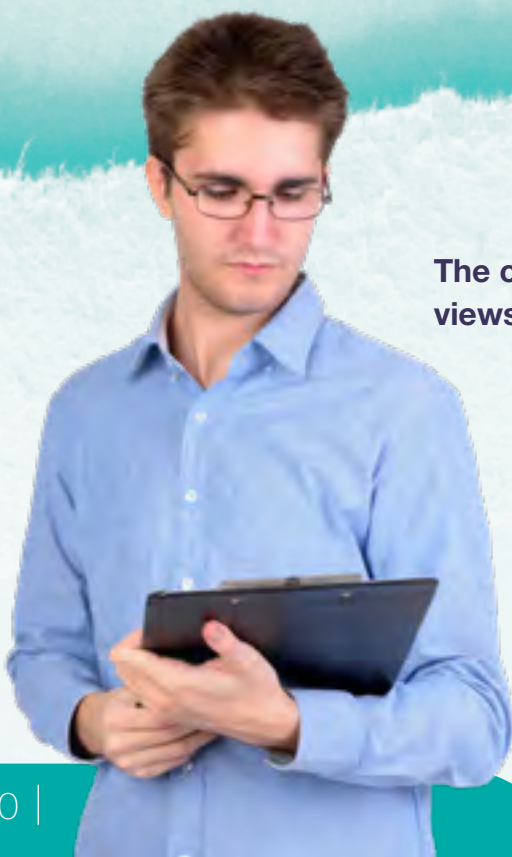
6. Development and Co-production of our Strategy:

This strategy has been co-produced in consultation with more than 75 young people, 200 professionals from the council community safety team, family services, youth justice services, police, health, education and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector organisations, residents, local businesses, and elected members who have participated in focus groups, surveys and online sessions. Their collective lived and professional experience and ideas have been instrumental in shaping this strategy.



The consultation period sought views on three key areas:

- Views and perception on exploitation in the borough.
- Factors that support individual and collective safety living and moving around in the borough,
- Areas and priorities for the partnership to consider and implement to drive and improve safety and our response to exploitation.



6.1. What Matters to Our Young People?

The **understanding of 'exploitation' and what it means**, varied greatly between professionals and young people themselves, highlighted by the Adolescent Safeguarding Handbook, there is often a gulf between adults and young people in terms of language.⁶ and the perspective of professionals and definitions and awareness of exploitation. This also extends to when young people are deemed by missing by professionals in which many young people do not see themselves as missing but instead just being with their friends.

Young people shared that they are sometimes unwilling to share their experience of exploitation or when they are missing due to them **feeling blamed** that they have done something 'wrong' or caused it.

Several young people felt that posters and acknowledgement of exploitation may help to **support greater awareness** with young people in the community. Awareness work could also include older young people sharing their experiences of being previously involved with exploitation.

In terms of exploitation, our young people said that **they feel safer in groups** with their friends and occupying areas that they know, or they know are covered by CCTV such as public transport.

Some of our young people felt that they wanted **increase presence of the Police** and partners on foot, rather than in their cars and that young people wanted to see all our partners to be more present and integrated into the community and open spaces.

Many young people felt there needed to be **more awareness work done within and out of school**. Young people shared that they would like to see more youth groups and street-based mentors.

Young people said that; **social media, prominent local influencers, and the online world is incredibly important to them**. It is where they consume the most amount of information and local news. Young people shared that professionals do not do enough to understand this world use it enough to engage with them.



6.2. What Matters to our Residents and Community?

Our residents wanted to see **more activities and safe spaces for young people**, including training, employment, education, and vocational opportunities.

They wanted to understand how professionals support young people and their families in addressing root causes of exploitation, like adverse experiences or deprived settings.

Our community wanted to see **improved presence in our community** from all partners and know how to navigate and access services, they wanted to have improved access to mental health, Special educational needs support for children and families that need it.

Our community wanted **opportunities to increase their awareness of exploitation** and how to respond to it through training and workshops for residents, parents and young people. Training and awareness workshops should incorporate different languages and be culturally sensitive.

To improve representation with marginalised communities and ensure that their unique experiences, culture and background are considered in terms of support engagement and awareness raising.



6.3. What Matters to our Partners?

Our partners highlighted that there **should be a focus on early intervention & support** and that young people and families should be able to access combined services which includes enforcement in areas where there is crime in shared spaces, recognising behavioural issues need early at initial stages, and implementing trauma-informed practices across support systems.

Partners wanted to see **improved education and awareness raising** as to how to recognise and report concerns of criminal and sexual exploitation. This offer should be inclusive to; parents/carers, local businesses, public facing roles and leads within the community.

Partners and professionals felt that training and support should include how to **foster conversations and engage with young people** around relationships and exploitation. Training should be inclusive of parents carers and community leaders.

Our partners felt that **community engagement & support could be strengthened and better coordinated** to support marginalised communities; strengthen community cohesion; prioritise role of the community in early intervention; foster better police-community relationships.

To continue to support professional collaboration & training: Training for Professionals should include how to effectively identify risks; promote multi-agency collaborations with emphasis on safeguarding and disruption techniques.

Our partners wanted to ensure that **youth opportunities and support is widely available:** Provide affordable after-school activities, supporting non-academic youth, and focusing on anti-poverty practices. And that **Mental Health & Holistic Support provides timely support and services** and is holistic to families facing trauma, address substance misuse.

Our partners wanted to **ensure that Barnet champions policy change and alternatives to harmful policing and school exclusions**, ensuring justice system leans more towards rehabilitation, and addressing broader implications of drug laws *and demands*.



7. Learning from Reviews

The Child Safeguarding National Review Panel, 'It was hard to escape: Safeguarding children at risk from criminal exploitation' found that boys from black and racially minoritised backgrounds appeared to be more vulnerable to harm from criminal exploitation and that school exclusion is a major trigger point for risk of serious harm⁷. There is little reliable evidence of what works but building Trusted Relationships – between organisations professionals and young people – is important for effective communication and risk management. Our Home Office funded Barnet Trusted Relationships Project led to various system changes including:

- Reframing emphasis and development on co-production of assessments and planning of interventions with young people affected by exploitation.
- Co-production of a tool for working with young people that helps professionals understand their lived experience.
- Revision to planning forums to support a greater understanding of the young person's voice.

Responding to the 'critical moments' can provide opportunities for engagement i.e.

- the point at which they are excluded from school
- when they are physical injured
- when they are arrested
- After a period of them being missing.

Parental engagement is recognized as a protective factor. Parents and extended family members need effective support in helping them manage risk from outside the home without feeling blamed or alienated.

Moving children away from where they live and go to school is not an effective long-term strategy without a clear and consistent plan for supporting the child and managing risk in the new location.

More priority should be given to disrupting perpetrator activity.

Risk management plans that include control measures such as electronic tags, within the context of a good relationship with the child and with parental support, can be effective in reducing risk.

Learning from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review (Child Benjamin) identified effective interventions also consider a young person's lived experience in the context of their unique personal circumstances, the social GRACES and the impact of culture on family and gender roles.

Firmin's principles of contextual safeguarding⁸. Children who have achieved positive outcomes, the following factors are present:

- Children are engaged, and the risk of extra familial harm was picked up relatively early.
- Children and their immediate family networks were engaged and visited intensively.
- There is evidence of a 'trusted relationship' between a child and adult and how this has supported perceptions, reflection and has influenced positive choices.
- There is collaborative approach to working between the practitioner, family and child which promotes rights and builds autonomy.
- There are strong supportive familial networks around the young person, and carers/parents provide a secure base.

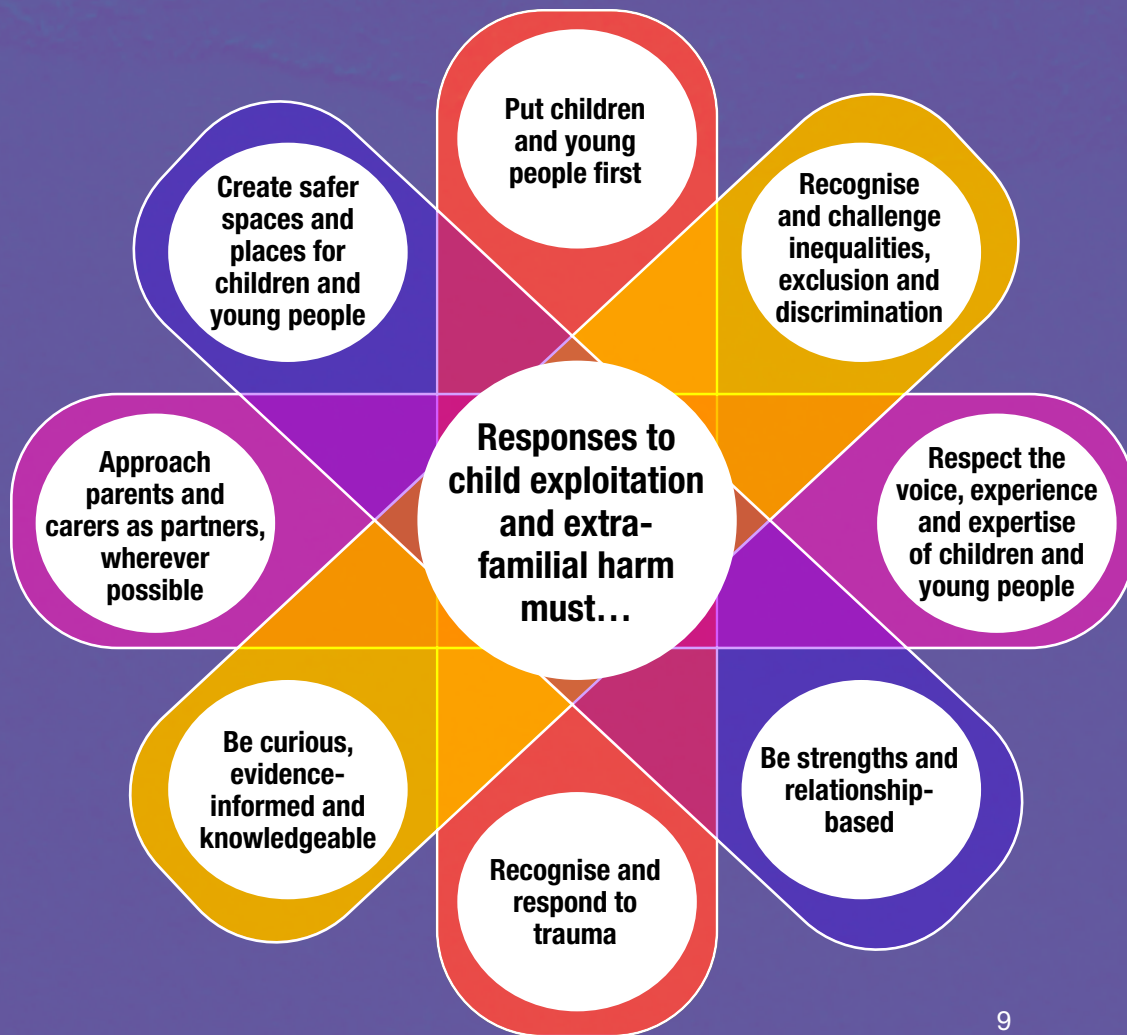
Primary issues identified by professionals with young people who are at risk of exploitation includes:

- Young Peoples recognition of potentially exploitative relationships.
- Young people's friendships and relationships with person of concern.
- The erosion of pre-existing trusted and safe relationships.

7 The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel - It was hard to escape - report (publishing.service.gov.uk)

8 The Principles of Contextual Safeguarding | Contextual Safeguarding

8. Regional and National Practice



9

All children and young people are entitled to child centered response and safeguarding from exploitation. March 2023 saw Research in Practice’s introduction of high-level practice principles to support professionals, partnerships, and organisations to help navigate the complex landscape of exploitation and provide a standardized approach. In congruence to the Adolescent Safeguarding Handbook¹⁰ the Practice principles are grounded in rights-based approaches to support improving the behaviour and culture of organisations and are designed to exist across the full spectrum of services for young people.

9 Tackling child exploitation and extra-familial harm | Research in Practice

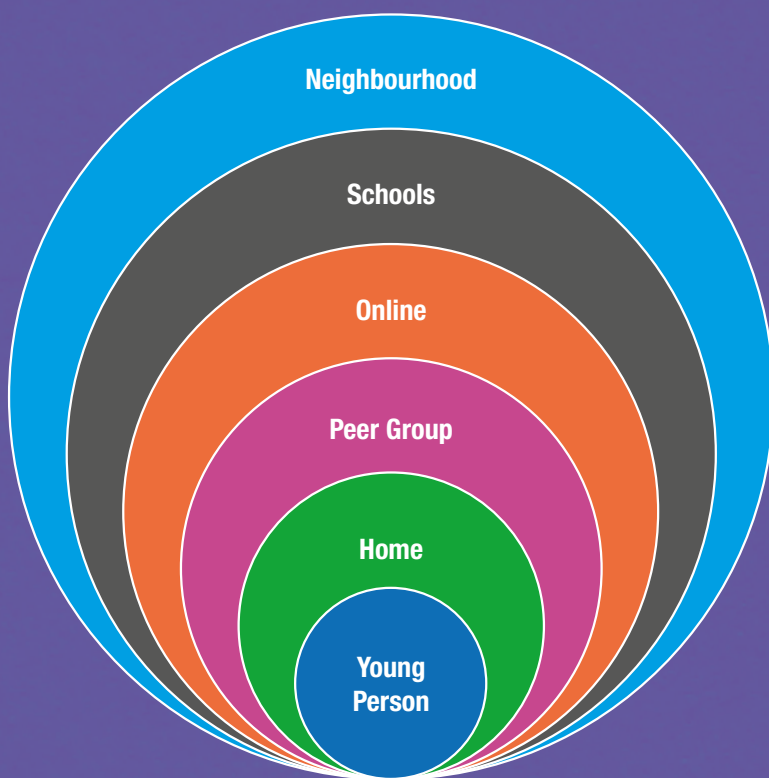
10 Adolescent safeguarding in London (adobe.com)

Our approach to; Safeguarding, Assessing and Supporting young people and families experiencing exploitation is grounded in a contextual approach which seeks to fully understand the complex relationships and dynamics that a young person has in the variety of spaces and environments that they occupy.

Our strategic and operational partnership will continue to work in understanding the themes and issues that exist in each contextual area. We will continue to seek ways to help address emerging needs to help; prevent, divert and disrupt exploitation that occurs in our Borough and also support restorative approaches understanding community impact and to support healing. Examples of our current projects and responses can be found below:

CONTEXTUAL AREA

OUR RESPONSE



**Detached Engagement
Community Capacity Coordination
Engagement and occupying open spaces**

**Restorative Justice coordination
Turnaround Project
MOPAC Schools Project
Team Around the School**

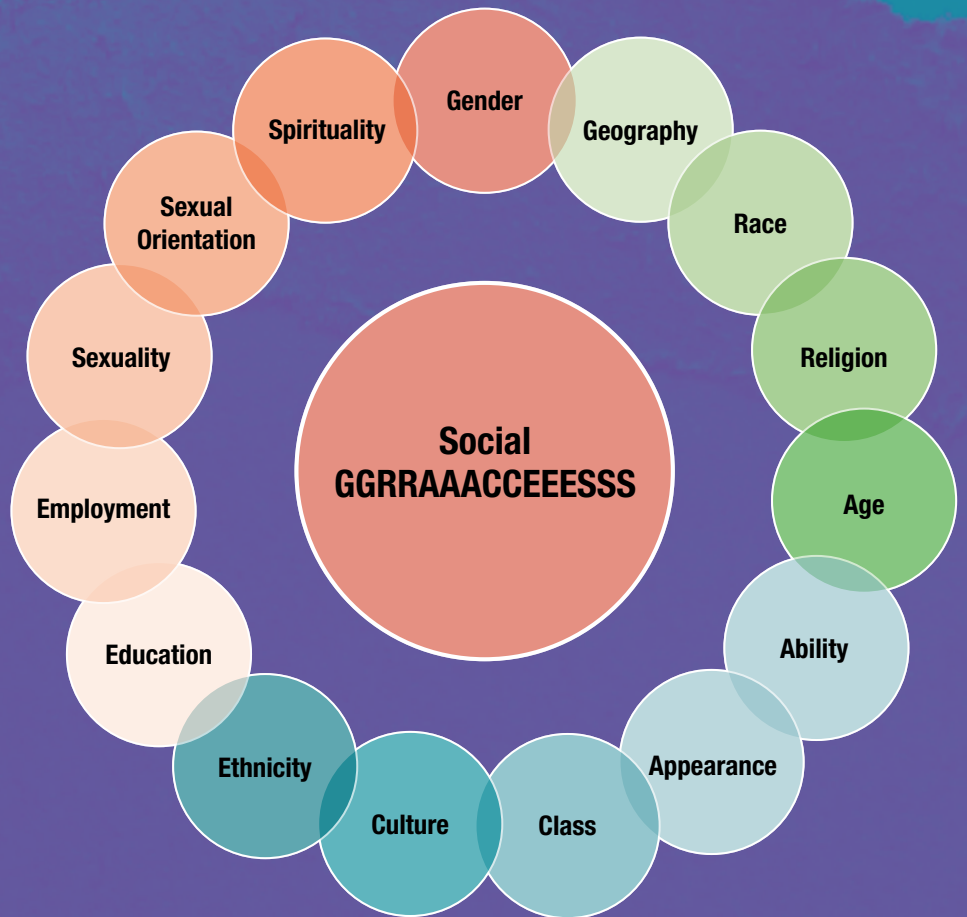
**Awareness sessions for Parents
Parent Champions Network
Girls and Boys Groups**

**Youth Work Mentoring
Group Work and VCS safe spaces
Positive activities**

**Early Help Family Support Practitioner
Parent Champions
Parenting Skills Programmes**

**Social Worker / Early Help Practitioner
Specialist and Universal support
Victims' Rights coordination**

Further to this we understand that there are many factors that form essential views, attitudes and beliefs for young people and their family. These are known as 'Social GRRRAACCEESSS' (GRACES), and will vary between individuals and families to different parts of our community. Our approach will seek to understand both individually and collectively held GRACES to ensure that we are able to offer agile, relevant and sensitive services support and help.



9. Our Local Approach

Utilising and embedding the Practice Principles from both Research in Practice and from the Adolescent Safeguarding Handbook our multi-agency partnership will:

- Put children and young people first and build a multi-agency holistic and balanced understanding of children's lived experiences in a range of contexts and environments that they occupy including their experiences in the online world.
 - Understand themes and drivers that shape narratives about relationships, offending, patterns of violence, gangs, local drug distribution, tensions, trauma and being a victim of exploitation, and wider messages through influencers and peer groups.
 - Young people who go missing should always be considered as requiring safeguarding.
 - Understand how Social GRACES and a young person's lived experiences can be used and targeted to by perpetrators of exploitation, for example; unaccompanied children seeking asylum, Young people with additional neurodiversity needs, children from specific faith groups for example; from Jewish or Muslim backgrounds.
 - To provide young people who go missing independent return home 'check - ins'.
 - To understand the contextual 'Push and Pull' factors that influence why young people go missing
- Always maintain a position of professional curiosity, and as new information is presented from; return home 'check - ins', direct work and engagement, information sharing. We will update and amend our assessments, plans and interventions.
- Understand the views, impact, and collective harm of exploitation on our local communities and residents and co-produce responses and plans with them.
- Understand the online spaces that young people occupy and work to identify and address themes of potential harm.
 - Strengthen children's understanding and awareness of exploitative relationship patterns and grooming.
 - Co-produce with parents and carers strategies to enable them to respond to indicators of exploitation and create a secure base for the children they care for.
 - Enable systems that key agencies, alongside trusted safe adults and older peers can co-produce and develop 'one plan' for a child that provides support and reduces risk.
 - Proactively challenge harmful narratives about 'adultification', racism and victim blaming,
 - Ensure children's plans support the development of opportunity rather than a list of things they must not do.
 - Relentless focus on individuals and groups of concern and those that exploit young people to disrupt, stop, prosecute, and support perpetrators with sustained change.
 - Use "what works" to reduce exploitation.
 - Continue to coordinate support for young adults from 18-25 who are deemed to be at continued risk of exploitation.¹¹

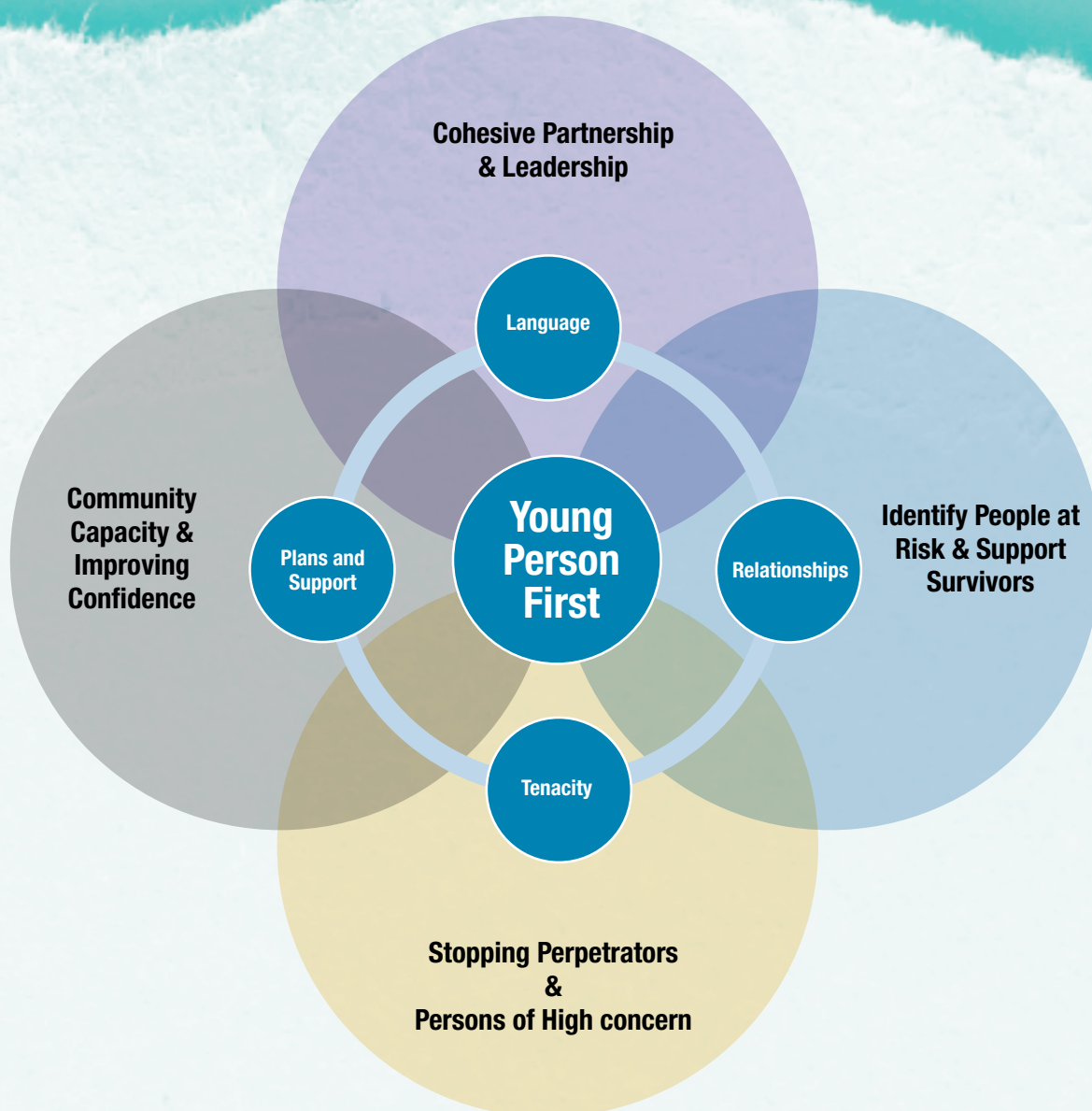
By building of trusted relationships with young people and their families, our partnership seeks to support rights-based and contextual approach that co-produces a shared understanding of the dynamics, lived experiences and relationships and the Social GRACES¹² that a young person has in a variety of environments that they occupy, in addition to Firmin's Contextual Framework, in Barnet we will also consider a young person's relationships with the online world.

11 Approaches to safeguarding and exploitation | Research in Practice

12 Social Graces: A practical tool to address inequality | BASW

10. How We will See Principles and Our Approach in Action

Learning from our collective experience, our Home Office funded Trusted Relationships Project, and Barnet's Children and Young People's Plan 2023 – 2027. The principles that we will apply when working with young people who are at risk or experiencing child exploitation are designed to be embedded with all partners, organisations, leaders, and professionals and will be adopted both strategically and operationally. We believe our principles will support a right and strengths-based approach which will make an impactful difference to safeguarding.



10.1. Young Person First

Irrespective of context of the contact that a young person has with any statutory or non-statutory professional or organisation. **A young person is a young person first**, irrespective of what they have done and the nature of contact with professionals. A young person can never be complicit in the exploitation or abuse they are experiencing, they are therefore not:

- Placing themselves at risk, or in risky situations,
- choosing criminality, being promiscuous or choosing inappropriate relationships,
- are disengaged,
- presenting older than their age,
- are more resilient due to their; gender, ethnicity, age or lived experiences.

10.2. Language

Our workforce, partnerships and services will be:

Culturally competent and challenge disproportionality and adultification for all young people we will support those most vulnerable. All young people and their families will be supported to access services free from discrimination, stigma, or micro aggressions and in their preferred language.

Understand that language both individually and collectively is enormously powerful, as well as reflecting our values, views, and attitudes. By the way we define and describe; situations, young people their families and groups within our community we can;

- Provide harmful labels for young people, locations and groups
- empower or disempower,
- build, or destroy trust,
- encourage or oppress,
- it can help expose or keep perpetrators of abuse and exploitation hidden.

Challenge Language which is deemed to blame victims or promote adultification of young people.



10.3. Relationships

Our workforce, partnerships and services will focus on:

The relationships we build with young people, acknowledging every interaction we have with a child, young person and their family offers a paramount opportunity to challenge internal coercive and controlling narratives that may have been developed from their; lived experiences, contextual environments, and the very people who are exploiting them.

Support and developing trust acknowledging that many young people lack trust in professionals, they feel trapped and believe that professionals are unable to keep them or their family safe. Young People who are being exploited often live in a constant state of fear, shame from individuals and groups. Young people who find themselves in exploitative relationship carrying enormous amounts of trauma and feel they are unable to escape.

Supporting parents and families who often feel they have reached a position where they no longer know how to respond to keep their child and young person safe, and they feel helpless, shame and an overwhelming fear regarding their young person.

The power of a rights based and balanced trusted relationship, which can open possibilities for a young person and their family, to share and reflect on their experiences. Like any relationship, we will drive to ensure that our workforce and partnership model relationships that are based on transparency, respect and based on equality and empathy, and that we remain open to challenge.

Be inclusive of the young person and their parent's carers and trusted family members. We believe that firstly and foremost parents/carers and wider family members are an essential source that can safeguard and protect their young person.

Ensure that we always seek permission from the young person and their family in our interactions engagement and interventions.

Young people who go Missing are meaningfully engaged in their return home 'check - in'.

10.4. Tenacity

Our workforce, partnerships and services will acknowledge that:

Exploitation is a crime in which perpetrators and groups go to great lengths to ensure that they are not identified. People who exploit young people and adults utilise methods of grooming that creates, fear, trauma bonding and narratives for the young person that the exploitation they are experiencing is normal, and that they have no choice. Across local organisations, professional and within our communities we will remain tenacious to identify exploiters and bring them to justice and support them in behaviour change.

We will always be curious and avoid taking things at face value, we will scratch beneath the surface and look beyond the incident or the missing episode.

Incidents rarely occur in isolation. Missing episodes, drug or knife possession, or involved in an incident of violence can be part of a bigger picture. Our partners and workforce will always seek to understand a young person's journey.

Always consider that the **young person or adults' actions are a result of coercion and control** and are not being conducted within their own volition.

We will not give up, and recognise it takes time, we will continue to **support building trusted relationship with a young person and their family**, even though we may face rejection of services, support, and engagement.

Exploitation will never be accepted as 'normal' and we will continue to encourage our community and organisations to report issues of community safety and exploitation, to the council, police or other professionals.

The approach to tackle exploitation and reduce missing episodes will always be developed and led by the young person and their family. Supported through best practice and research our workforce will use a range of creative and person led and innovative approaches to support engagement.

Our Workforce will always consider new information, for example from Return Home Check-ins and how it can be used to support safeguarding young people and help reduce missing episodes.

10.5. Assessment and Plans

Exploitation places young people and their families into situations where they feel they have no choice, we have learnt that occasionally professionals and partners can also inadvertently mirror a similar situation where they can disempower young people and families and that they have no choice but to 'follow the experts' and that care and safeguarding plans are undertaken 'to' rather than 'with' young people. The experience of exploitation is different for each young person and family member that it affects, no journey or lived experience are the same or shared.

Our Workforce, Partnership and services will ensure that:

- The approach to tackle exploitation is develop and led by the young person and their family.
- Plans reflect Social GRACES and understands the unique experiences of young people and their family.
- Although there will be times where we are unable to share specific information that could inhibit a Police investigation, young people and their families will be aware of what we are worried about.
- Young people and families will be able to actively participate in formulating our contextual risk assessment and will co-produce our support plans, which becomes the central plan for the young person (CIN, CP, and LAC).
- We will seize opportunities in which we reach "critical moments" where intervention and support can have a meaningful impact.
- Engagement and 'direct work' are not a ringfenced or isolated professional activity but takes place with every contact across the partnership.
- We will challenge situations, which can perpetuate a young person further to the trajectory of exploitation and to seek to reframe solutions to a positive and supportive rather than restrictive position.
- We will seek to strengthen young people's secure base.
- We will not jump to positions of certainty and our plans will not adopt a 'refer until it sticks' approach with young people or their families.

Instead we will slow things down and focus our planning on:

- Understanding the contextual lived experiences of the young person and maintaining a position of curiosity.
- Seek opportunities and develop a plan to build meaningful relationships with the young person and their family.
- Acting swiftly to safeguard on when we reach a critical moment or are aware of new information that offers an opportunity to safeguard the young person and disrupt persons of concern or location.
- For Missing young people we will always offer a return check ins and any information emerging from the check in will be incorporated into plans and our assessment.

11. Priority Partnership Commitments

In congruence to Barnet's Family Friendly Ambition and corporate plan¹³ we want to ensure that if our community, young people, families, and professionals identify anything of concern that they are confident in knowing how to raise and issue and that all partners can wrap around and develop local solutions with local people. To achieve our vision, we have four key strategic objectives. Placing our principles at the heart of all that we do we will collectively drive and respond to each area which will be support by an overarching multi agency and community delivery plan that will support our strategic aims.

Cohesive Partnerships and Leadership

- Intelligence is shared to develop a clear understanding of our borough; emerging themes will be routinely understood by all leaders and partners to set and agree priorities that will tackle exploitation.
- Our strategies and organisational polices will align to ensure a coordinated approach to tackling exploitation.
- We are committed to ensuring our workforce is skilled to; recognise, report and navigate services for victims and perpetrators of exploitation.
- Our workforce and services will adopt our principles and approach to supporting victims and their families who are affected by exploitation.
- We are all held accountable for supporting a safer borough for young people and young adults.
- Our services are accessible, they will challenge disproportionality and adultification of young people and young adults.
- We will remain committed to supporting new emerging practice, learning reviews, and research we will reflect on our local approaches and practice and continually improve.
- Leaders and organisations will recognise the devastating impact of exploitation on our young people, community, local area and our staff. Leaders will ensure that our staff are supported to safeguard young people.

Identify Young People at Risk and Support Survivors

- All partners and professionals will adopt our “Child First” approach.
- All partners, organisations and our community knows how to identify various forms of exploitation, and how to navigate systems to access support.
- We are regularly sharing a range of information and intelligence indicating emerging themes of exploitation.
- Workforce development, training, workshops and briefings are accessed by all including professionals, parents carers, residential workers.
- Strengthen the offer and support for parents/carers and family members whose children may be victims of exploitation we will plan to understand the experiences of a young person, their family and the local community.
- The support we will provide to young people and their families will be based on trauma and psychologically informed approaches that will be inclusive of their unique experiences.
- We will prioritise curative support for all young people and adults over actions which are punitive or increase isolation, exclusion, restrictions on liberty or choice.
- Through universal and targeted messages, we will promote greater awareness for young people to reflect on their friendships, relationships and to understand patterns which are coercive controlling and exploitative.

Stopping Perpetrators and Persons of High Concern

- Through a range of daily, monthly meetings, data and reports Information is routinely shared throughout the partnership to identify high harm offenders, locations and themes associated with exploitation.
- Our partnerships will seek to support meaningful change of harmful behaviour, through education, awareness raising employment, housing, alcohol and drug services.
- We will further develop our services and support for 18–25-year-old, providing a range of universal and targeted support to enable effective change.
- Those who do not accept support are brought to justice for the impact to victims and their local community.
- Our partnership will understand and utilise a range of disruption measures to prevent and tackle exploitation in our borough. Measures will include; civil and criminal orders, injunctions, and prosecutions as well as hard and soft tactics to improve safety.
- Young siblings of high harm offenders will be engaged, and we will offer diversionary support to them to help break repeating cycles.
- We will continue to learn from case reviews, best practice, and research to ensure we remain effective in how we engage and disrupt exploitation.

Community Capacity & Improving Confidence

- We are all committed to ensuring that we come together to provide a coordinated multi agency presence in our community and working in partnership with residents and businesses to be consistently present in our spaces.
- We are focused on building individual and collective community trust in our services.
- We will promote greater awareness of exploitation and empower our communities to report concerns.
- We will regularly consult with our residents, parents/carers, young people, local groups and businesses and to develop our services with them.
- We maintain an “Open Door” for challenge and listen when things are not going right or our approach could be improved.
- For all community groups we will drive engagement by coming to their shared spaces, groups, and hubs.
- Our engagement or presence will not be a one-off process or just when things go wrong.
- We will develop local responses with local people to local challenges, and the approach to tackling exploitation is led by the community.
- We will support our local community to build confidence and maintain ownership of their open spaces through disrupting high harm and antisocial offenders.
- We will ensure our community knows how to access positive activities and open spaces.
- We will ensure focus on preventative strategies over curative measures, focusing on marginalized and at-risk communities.



12. What Difference Will It Make?

12.1. Cohesive Partnerships & Leadership

A cohesive joined partnership is one that shares an understanding of themes and emerging areas of need in our Borough. Utilising each other's strengths, we can work cohesively to identify early themes of exploitation and work together to tackle it, improving the safety for young people, adults, and the community.

We know that exploitation can occur across all parts of the borough and can impact on young people and families from a range of backgrounds. Exploitation remains transient, ever-changing and a hidden harm. Through cohesive leadership and partnership we will understand the capacity of our services and can ensure that all organisations and professionals feel confident, curious, and hold the skills to have conversations with young people and families about the environments and relationships that they have.

There is significant youth services, projects, support, and positive activities that are delivered from across the partnership, we want to ensure that the children's workforce is confident in navigating what is on offer for families. We believe that identification and early intervention offers the best chance of diverting from further exploitation.

Establishing a strong strategic partnership, enables us to continue to understand themes, hot spots and reflect on the services and approaches we provide. We will continue to analyse the impact and effectiveness of the services and support we provide.

We will be able to reflect, review, learn and implement improvement through national and local research, best practice and learning case reviews.

We recognise the impact of exploitation to not just, young people, families, and the community. But also, to our staff, who work tirelessly to support and drive change for young people and families. Our organisations, leaders and managers will create and maintain; reflective, caring and holding spaces for our workers, to address the anxiety, trauma, and unsettling nature that working with exploitation can cause.

12.2. Identify Young People at Risk and Support Survivors

Our workforce and organisations will be able to recognise indicators and victims of exploitation earlier which will offer the best opportunity to intervene and access support. In understanding the unique lived experiences of young people and their families, our services will be able to curate individual and impactful plans which will support greater engagement. Our workforce will remain up to date with the themed issues around crime, drug dealing and trafficking across the borough.

By enabling professionals to identify the early stages of exploitation we are equipped to support and help parents and carers to safeguard their young person and understand extra familial harm. We will be able to strengthen the young person secure basis and help reduce push factors in the home that can further increase risk for young people.

It will be harder for offenders to cause harm in our local community, and we will be able to support enforcement activity.

Through developing cultural competence and approaches that support permission seeking and strength-based practice. Young people and their families will feel they are being heard, develop greater trust and engagement will be improved.

12.3. Stopping Perpetrators & Persons of High Concern

By establishing trusted relationships with young people and their families we will be able to support greater confidence for young people to feel safe and protected to report perpetrators of exploitation and bringing them to justice.

In concurrence to the Criminal Justice System, we can ensure that high harm offenders are supported in behavioural change therefore reducing future risks to other young people and adults.

The line between victims and perpetrators can be blurred through coercive control, manipulation and fear. Through the provision of non-blaming and holistic support we will listen to children and support them to break free from their exploiters.¹⁵

Once perpetrators are identified, we seek to collaborate with their younger siblings or children in their home to prevent reoccurring themes, narratives, and normalisation of exploitative behaviour patterns.

15 Victims and perpetrators of child sexual abuse - Social Care Online (scie-socialcareonline.org.uk)

12.4. Community Capacity & Improving Confidence

Child criminal and sexual exploitation has devastating impact on its victims and the wider community. Without challenge and support, exploitation risks becoming tolerated and normalised. This Strategy cannot succeed in its aims without engaging the voices of our local and richly diverse communities and the expertise of our community groups and multi-agency partnerships. It is only by harnessing these voices and amplifying the voices of victims that we can understand local issues and find solutions together.

It is our aim to raise awareness, provide effective diversionary activities and individualised support to build esteem and address experiences of trauma. We will seek to do this in ways that enable children and young people to access support quickly and easily, through their schools and local community based provisions.

We will work with communities and our partners to create safer spaces for children, listen, co-design and share information to ensure residents know how to access support and services, particularly those communities whose voices are lesser heard. We will work to build trust so that crime is reported, we proactively seek to bring perpetrators of exploitation to justice.



13. Governance Framework

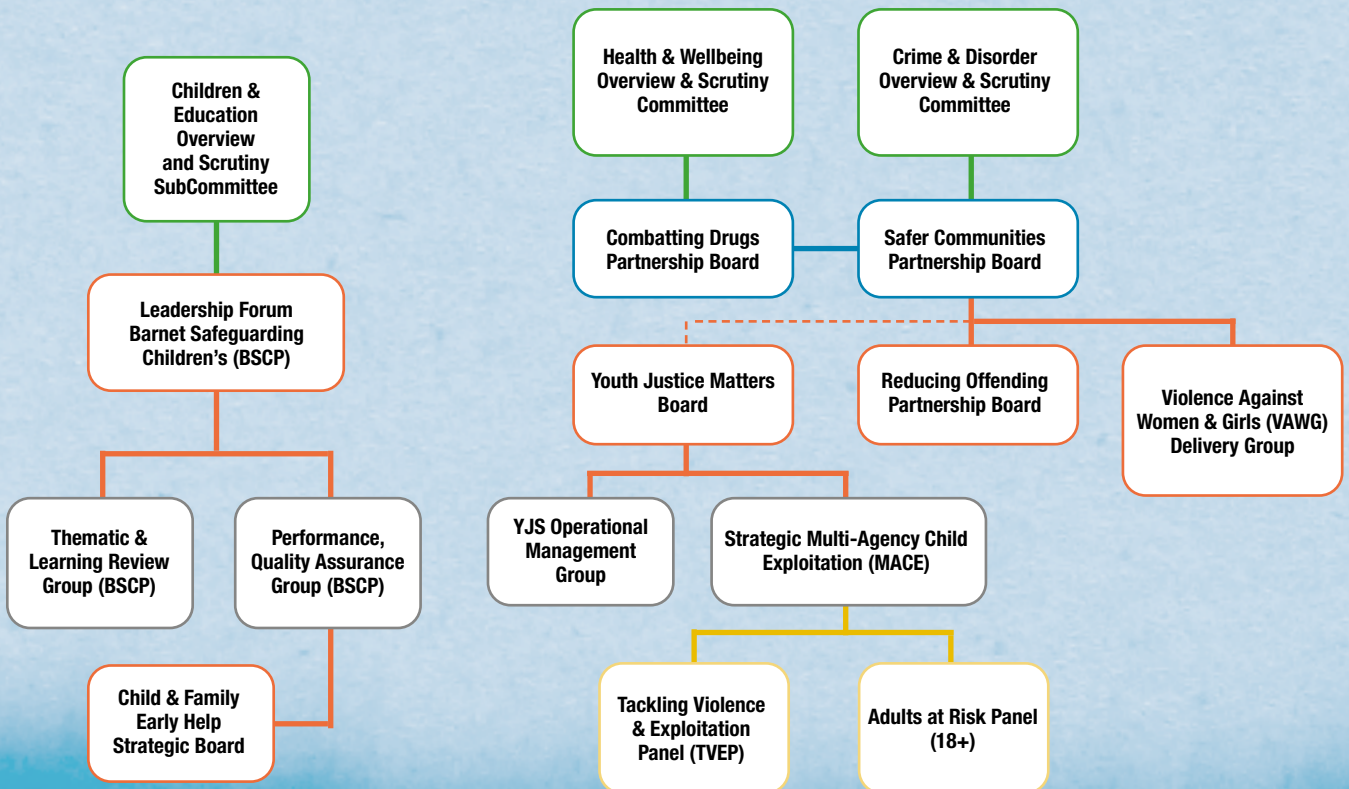
This Strategy is aligned to priority 5 of the Youth Justice Plan: Recognising and responding to child exploitation and serious youth violence. Operational leadership is provided through the Strategic Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) panel which reports to the Youth Justice Matters Board.

Child Exploitation is a safeguarding priority as such is overseen by the Safeguarding Children Leadership Forum and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Children and Education. Progress against the Youth Justice Plan is reported to the Safer Communities Partnership Board and Overview and Scrutiny for Crime and Disorder, as such some reporting cross-over will occur. Youth Justice Plans are produced annually and cleared by Full Council.

This strategy is focused on children and young people, it is aligned to wider partnership strategies and plans, including:

- Serious Violence Strategy 2024-27
- Community Safety Strategy 2022 – 2027¹⁶
- Children and Young People’s Plan 2023 – 2027¹⁷
- Youth Justice Plan 2023 – 2025¹⁸
- Child & Family Early Help Strategy 2023 – 2027¹⁹
- Domestic Abuse & Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2022 - 2025²⁰
- SEND Strategy 2021 -2025²¹
- Combatting Drugs Partnership Delivery Plan²²

Governance & Board Interface Framework





14. Conclusion

Reducing harm caused by exploitation is a priority for Barnet, its partners and the community. We know from best practice, learning and research that success is determined on engagement and a shared join up of; approaches plans and measures of success. No one Organisation can effectively tackle exploitation.

This means our approach must have a foundation of co-production, co-delivery, and capacity building which needs to be seen at all levels and within all organisations. Our strategy endeavours to build and maintain a collective community insight to understanding the very environments, lived experiences and narratives that young people and their families have.

Through focusing on both preventative and reactive measures our strategy and work plan seek to divert, bring to justice, and support sustained changes to both victims and perpetrators of exploitation.



15. Appendix 1 – Links to National and Local protocol, Research and Evaluation

Adolescent safeguarding handbook **Adolescent Safeguarding Handbook – LIIA**

TR Report **Building trusted relationships for vulnerable children and young people with public services** | **Early Intervention Foundation** (eif.org.uk)

Child Exploitation – Safeguarding Network

It was hard to escape **The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel - It was hard to escape - report** (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Research in Practice - **Tackling child exploitation and extra-familial harm** | **Research in Practice**

Disruption Toolkit - **Child exploitation disruption toolkit** (publishing.service.gov.uk)

National Youth Association - **Tackling Child Exploitation – the Practice Principles and what they mean for youth work – NYA**

Barnardo's BeWise - **Resources to help identify and engage young people at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation** | **Barnardo's** (barnardos.org.uk)

Missing Children - **Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care** (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Joint Targeted Area Inspection - **Protecting children from criminal exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery: addendum** (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Secure Base Model **Secure Base Model • Therapeutic Care • Family Care Group** (family-care.co.uk)

Cycles of Abuse Victims and perpetrators **Victims and perpetrators of child sexual abuse - Social Care Online** (scie-socialcareonline.org.uk)

Public Health Approaches to Violence reduction **A public health approach to violence reduction: Strategic Briefing (2021)** | **Research in Practice**



Keeping Young People Safe Strategy 2025-2028