

Priority Two Harm Outside the Home

“Are partners, children and their families aware of the early warning signs of exploitation and softer indicators to ensure that any concerns are raised as soon as possible so appropriate support and intervention can be offered?”

1 Overview

This 7-point briefing has been developed following the DSCP completing work under Priority Two, Harm Outside the Home (HOTH), of the 2023-2026 DSCP Business Plan. This briefing aims to support you to understand, identify and respond to children and their families where it is suspected or known that children are at risk of Harm Outside the Home. The work under this priority has been completed within the Improvement Delivery Group (IDG).

Definition: During the period of adolescent development (10 – 18 years of age) children are increasingly exposed to potential Harm Outside of the Home. This is also referred to as Contextual Safeguarding or Risk Outside the Home (ROTH). This includes harms caused through sexual and criminal exploitation, county lines, trafficking, and radicalisation. Such risks are all largely instigated by, or occur in, relationships with people beyond a child’s parents or carers.

Why: Traditional approaches to protecting children and young people from harm have focussed on the risk of violence and abuse from inside the home, and don’t always address the time that children/young people spend outside the home. As children move from early childhood and into adolescence, they spend increasing amounts of time socialising independently of their families. The nature of the relationships they form in these settings, informs the extent to which they encounter protection or abuse.

Scope: “Are Partners within County Durham aware of the early warning signs of exploitation and softer indicators to ensure that any concerns are raised as soon as possible so appropriate support and intervention can be offered?”

How? To understand what partners, children and their families understand about early warning indicators a survey was sent out across the partnership to each of these groups. Focus groups were also carried out with a group of young people to find out what they understood about Harm Outside of the Home. This briefing has been developed based on the responses of the survey and focus group.

2 Childrens Voices

Strengths: Children and Young People told us that if they were concerned about a friend / peer they would contact someone / do something about it (although they wouldn’t necessarily know who to contact)

Learning: Children did not recognise the risks to themselves or their peers, they did not recognise early warning indicators as a potential area of harm

Resources: Not in Our Community have produced an [interactive online quiz: “Healthy Relationship?”](#).

3 Parents Voices

Strengths: Parents identified a high number of the early warning indicators for HOTH. They also showed an awareness around gender bias and that all children, no matter what gender they identify within, are at risk.

Learning: Parents stated they are not sure who to share information with when they are concerned

Resources: The Ivison Trust have shared an article about parents living and coping with child exploitation which can be accessed <https://ivisontrust.org.uk/infoadvice/living-and-coping-with-child-sexual-exploitation/>

4 Practitioners Voices

Strengths: Practitioners survey showed they had a good understanding around what the early warning indicators of HOTH are

Learning: Many practitioners continue to have gender bias around which children are at risk of the different categories of exploitation.

Resources [Multi-agency Practice Principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm \(researchinpractice.org.uk\)](#)

7 Tools

1. [Contextual Safeguarding Research Durham University](#)
2. [Training \(durham-scp.org.uk\)](https://durham-scp.org.uk) Understanding Gangs and Exploitation from a Child’s Perspective.
3. [Child exploitation disruption toolkit](#).
4. The national crime agency’s education team provide [resources for parents, children and professionals](#) around online abuse.
5. [The Children’s Society](#).

5 What can I do? Spot the Early Warning Indicators

These signs are not definitive or exhaustive, but being aware of these indicators can support identification of harm at the earliest opportunity.

- Unsuitable or inappropriate accommodation.
- Isolated or reduced contact with their normal network of friends or peers.
- Association with new or unknown peers
- Poor School attendance/ missing from education.
- Concerns raising about their use of internet including:
 - Poor privacy setting on social media
 - Interacting with high number of unknown social media friends
- Poor understanding of how to stay safe online.
- Engaging in offending or antisocial behaviour
- Siblings involved in sexual exploitation.
- Poor engagement with support services

6 Referrals Who to speak to when worried?

Durham Police and Children and Young People Services relies on intelligence from communities, partners, and other agencies to inform them of what they see. The sharing of intelligence is a key tool in the disruption of child exploitation in County Durham. [Partnership Information Sharing Form](#)

If you are worried about a specific child initially consult your designated safeguarding lead, there may be a need to discuss your concerns with Durham Children Services [Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Information Form](#) or contact an [Early Help Advisors: Support for Professionals](#) . If you are worried about a risk of significant harm to a child it is essential that you share your concerns by contacting First Contact on 03000 267 979 [Safeguarding Referral Form](#). If a young person is involved with Children Services, please contact their worker.

Dial 999 if a child is at immediate risk.

Priority Work