

# NEWHAM ADOLESCENT EXPLOITATION STRATEGY



**Taking action together to prevent exploitation of children, young people and young adults in Newham.**

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## **Why adolescence? Why exploitation?**

1. Adolescence is an exciting and challenging time for young people, their families and for practitioners who support them. During their transition to adulthood, in peer groups and outside of family and home, young people develop identities, values and agency as they explore their independence. Taking risks is a normal part of development and most young people tackle the transition without serious consequences.
2. However, evidence shows us that young people who experience adversity in childhood, such as abuse, neglect, domestic abuse, poverty and parental substance misuse may be more vulnerable to harm and exploitation within their family and from individuals and groups they come across in their lives. Any young person can become a victim of exploitation and adolescence itself is a risk factor. As children mature, risks may arise from their own behaviours and from that of their peers as well as in schools, neighbourhoods, online and in wider environments.

3. Young people face threats outside of family life, including sexual, physical, and emotional abuse in a range of contexts outside of home. Young people can be exploited by organised criminal groups via trafficking, online abuse, and the influences of extremism that lead to radicalisation.

## **Extra-familial risk**

4. The risks to older children addressed include those which are primarily located outside of the home and largely outside of the control of parents or carers. This generally means that intervention which focusses on the family environment, parenting and sometimes a child coming into care, is less likely to be effective in reducing risk. Practice responses to older children need to be framed and carried out differently to those required for younger children. Children facing such 'contextual' and extra-familial risks will tend to be older and generally (though not exclusively) teenagers. For the purposes of brevity this is described as extra-familial risk.

### **What about young adults and transitional safeguarding?**

5. We define an adolescent broadly as a young person between the ages of ten and eighteen years, but risks and needs do not end when young adults reach eighteen. We will work with vulnerable young adults beyond eighteen, such as those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), care leavers and young adults working with Youth Offending Service, and we will focus on transitional safeguarding for young adults up to the age of twenty-five. Our strategy and work programme include explicit commitment to improving our offer to this age group and preventing vulnerable young adults from harm and exploitation.
6. Therefore, where we refer to 'young people' in this strategy, we include transitional safeguarding and support for young adults up to the age 25.

### **What does our strategy aim to do?**

7. Our strategy is about how we join up efforts across our partnership to prevent and tackle issues like:
  - children missing from home, care or education;
  - child sexual exploitation;
  - children and young people exposed to different forms of criminal exploitation, county lines, serious group violence, trafficking and modern slavery; and
  - extremism and radicalisation.

### **How did we design the strategy?**

8. Partnership and collaboration are fundamental to how we work. Our vision, principles and priorities set out in this strategy were co-designed during Summer 2020 with our partners, young people, and families.
9. Partners came together to design this strategy because we are committed to keeping all young people safe from exploitation and violence through effective prevention and early intervention. We want those young people who are at the greatest risk of exploitation to receive the right support at the right time so they and others are safe, and so that they can get their lives back on track.
10. Young people and families have told us that our support and safeguarding systems are not joined up. We know that parents, families and community organisations experience difficulties in accessing the information and support they need to help young people with the problems they face.
11. Our young people also experience serious discrimination, such as race disparities and unequal access to opportunities. Young people, families and communities have told us that BAME people experience disproportionality and our strategy is committed to analysis to understand the issues and action to improve outcomes for BAME young people.

## **Taking action together...**

12. We are increasingly aware of the complex and evolving nature of these risks. We will face the challenges of tackling the risks head on and make best use of the evidence on what works to improve outcomes. We will focus on relationships, attending to the full variety of human experience and need. At a whole system level, we will continue to develop our prevention and early intervention responses informed by the experience and relationships of young people and families in Newham. We are committed to continuous quality assurance of our collective offer and to scrutinising local practice.
13. Our strategy provides a framework for **taking action together** to create a step change in safeguarding and support for all our young people. We intend to keep evolving together as we collaborate with young people,

families and partners with the aim of building collective capacity and learning from the evidence. We will draw together work across departmental, sectoral and local area boundaries. We are committed to joining up our system of safeguarding and support so that we can prevent harms of exploitation and abuse, and so that all children and young people in Newham can lead safe, happy, healthy lives, and lead brighter futures.

Chair of Safeguarding Children Partnership

Chair of Safeguarding Adults Board

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## OUR VISION

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14. We want Newham to be the best place for children and young people. We are working together so that all children and young people in Newham will:

- a. Grow up happy, health, and safe;
- b. Flourish in our schools;
- c. Benefit from employment, skills and training opportunities;
- d. Play an active role in the community.

15. The vision of our Adolescent Exploitation Strategy is to bring about these outcomes by creating a culture in our organisations and across all our partnership where we all:

- a. Listen to young people and value their diverse experiences.
  - b. Recognise that adolescents are children first.
  - c. Understand young people's varied needs and abilities and respond to risks and influences in their lives including their transitions to adulthood.
  - d. Focus on extra-familial risks and offer a confident, holistic response to these risks, drawing on the right supports and interventions at the right time.
  - e. Create the solutions in collaboration with parents, carers, families and communities.
  - f. Trust our colleagues and partners and collaborate on a whole-system approach to safeguarding and support that keeps all our young people safe and well.
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## OUR VALUES

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16. The following six values were co-designed by partners in Newham, and apply to all aspects of our strategy:



**We put safety, health and wellbeing first: adolescents are children, not adults.**



**We take a whole-system approach to understand and respond to risks that young people face, and we are proactive in analysing and sharing information.**



**We seek to understand young people and we recognise that adolescence is a distinct phase of development with specific needs and risks.**



**We offer evidence-led prevention and interventions that are accessible to our young people, parents, carers and families and build their capacity and resilience.**



**We work with young people, young adults, parents, carers, families and communities with compassion, and provide support by building on strengths.**



**We invest in and support our workforce with up to date information and training so that we can offer the best in adolescent safeguarding and support.**

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## LONDON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

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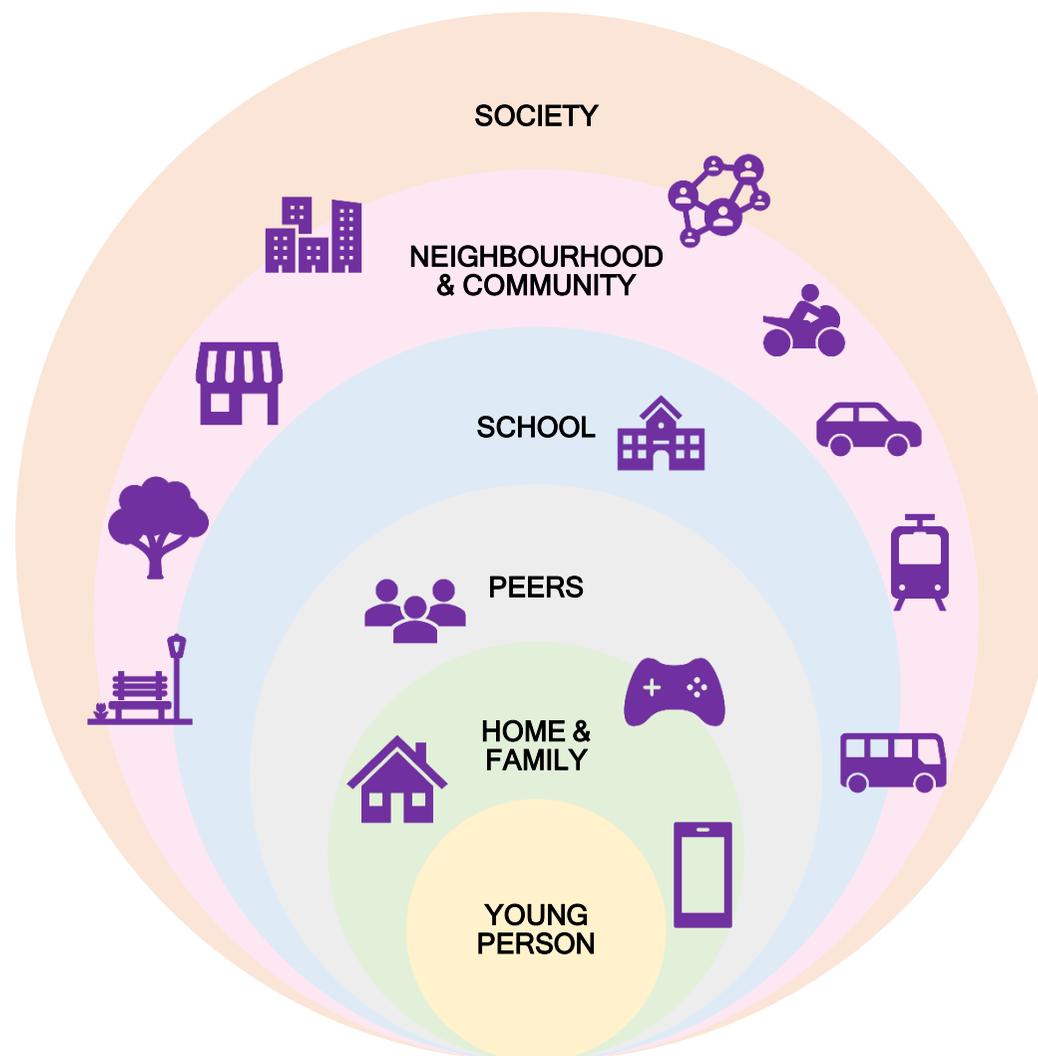
17. The following nine core principles proposed by the pan-London Safeguarding Children Partnership provide an overarching framework for safeguarding work with adolescents. These principles explicitly underpin our strategy:

- I. As children get older, their increasing autonomy should be recognised, inform our response and shape how they are involved in decision making. Their wishes and opinions should also inform strategic decision making, including the allocation of resources and the design of services.
  - II. The risks facing some adolescents, and the protective factors that help keep them safe, are located not only in families but also in their peer groups and wider communities. Services must therefore work in close partnership with families, peer groups and communities.
  - III. We must never give up on children and young people because they seem reluctant to engage with services or face complex issues. We must always 'go the extra mile'.
  - IV. Responses must address the context of children and young people's lives, including the impact of different forms of social prejudice, inequality and racism. Such factors can mean that many young people find it difficult to trust professionals.
  - V. Policy and practice should address the need for older young people (i.e. those over 18 years) to be able to access appropriate support and protection.
  - VI. A joined up multi-agency response must be provided by professionals who have expertise and capability in working with older children and young people.
  - VII. When a child is believed to be involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour, assessments should seek to understand safeguarding concerns.
  - VIII. Children need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe and live healthy, happy and productive lives. For older children this means high quality sex and relationship education.
  - IX. Strategic and operational practice must be based on sound evidence, good and shared intelligence and effective data analysis.
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## CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING

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18. We seek to understand and respond to young people's experiences beyond their families. We recognise the different relationships that young people form in neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature risks of violence, abuse and other harms. The concentric diagram illustrates contextual factors that can have an impact in the lives of young people.
19. We know that there is interplay between contexts and relationships. As such, our approach to contextual safeguarding must be dynamic, particularly as criminal organisations adapt their operations to avoid detection and enforcement.
20. There are inter-dependencies between drugs markets, gang activities, exploitation of young people and vulnerable adults and as such, a multi-tiered response is needed involving integrated working and co-ordination amongst all our agencies. We will take every context into account as we act together.



## OUR PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

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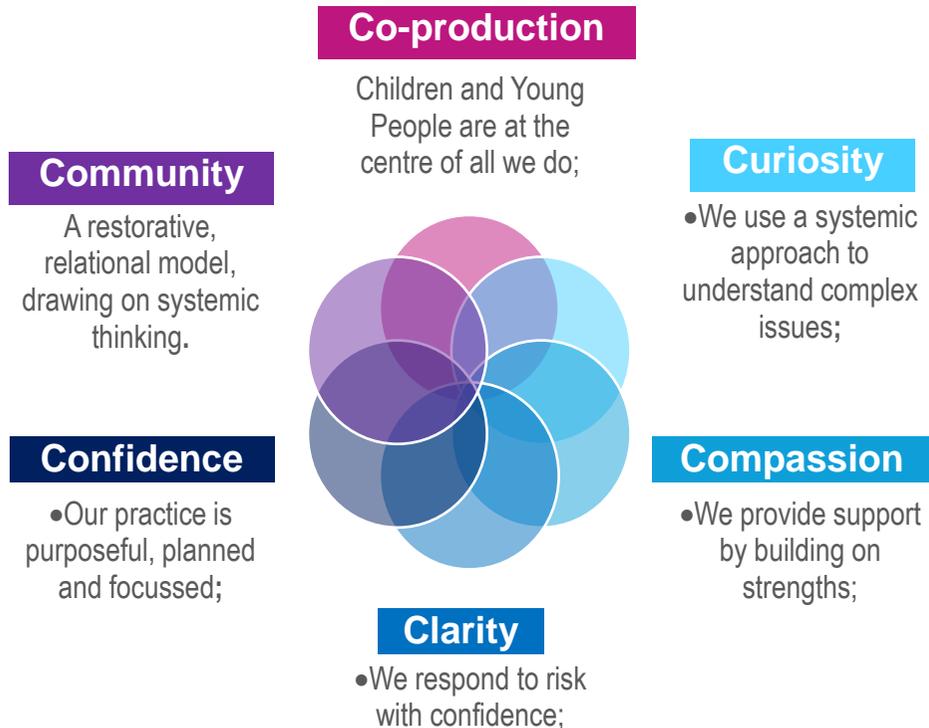
21. Our strategy is informed by our commitment to relational, restorative, systemic and trauma-informed to work with young people and families.

### YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO

22. We will take a young person-centred approach to safeguard and promote the welfare of every young person regardless of their background and circumstances. This means we will keep young people in focus when making decisions about their lives, in partnership with them and their families.
23. We will provide early help and prevention by building on a young person's strengths and putting their views about what makes them feel safe and well at the centre of our work. We will ask young people what they think we could do better together to build strengths and resilience and to address concerns about safety and wellbeing.

### SYSTEMIC

24. We know that young people experience relationship difficulties in extra-familial contexts. Our commitment to systemic practice supports practitioners to work with the interconnectedness of relationships and life experiences, including the full range of differences, identities and other cultural variations in our communities. A systemic approach provides opportunities for quality conversations that help us to build professional relationships and contribute to developing a skilled multi-agency workforce that works together to reduce risks and keep young people, young adults, and families safe.



## RESTORATIVE

25. Restorative practice allows young people to focus on harmful incidents, and empowers them to be accountable for their actions, shifting from punishment and shame toward learning and taking responsibility to resolve conflicts. The approach seeks to address behaviour through emotional and social development that builds a young person's capacity to reflect and make safer choices in the future.

## UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

26. Unconscious bias leads to social stereotypes and stigma about groups of people that we form outside of our conscious awareness. They are common to everyone, and recognising our biases is crucial so that they do not have negative impact on professional decision making. Addressing unconscious bias is critical to tackling issues of race and gender disproportionality, and other forms of discrimination.

## TRAUMA-INFORMED

27. Young people benefit from consistent, meaningful contact and trusting relationships with professionals. Trauma informed practice helps us to hear the voices of young people and young adults, removing bias, stigma, labelling and revictimization. Practitioners use intensive and consistent practice to process trauma, respond to behaviours, reduce fears, stress and anxiety, and promote wellbeing.
28. We recognise that vicarious trauma can be experienced by professionals resulting from empathetic engagement with young people who have been the victims and perpetrators of harm, exploitation, violence and other traumatic incidents.



## OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

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29. Together, we will use this strategy to improve our whole-system arrangements for support and intervention that prevents exploitation of young people in Newham. We will refresh and join up strategic and operational arrangements across council directorates, agencies, and work programmes to strengthen the partnership response.
30. We will ensure that everyone is working together to better respond to adolescent risk and need. We will work jointly and innovatively to develop our collective understanding of how risks and vulnerabilities are inter-connected. We recognise that we have less information about exploitation than we need to prevent all our young people from harm. This includes the criminal exploitation of young people to traffic drugs to other areas outside of the borough (county lines) and the ways that social media can be used as a tool for exploitation. We know that we have work to do on improving how we gather and analyse data on exploitation and risk factors.
31. To adopt a holistic and effective approach, our partnership work will be underpinned by a firm commitment to improve how we share information and get the most from our collective resources. Our success will depend upon better understanding exploitation, violence and risk factors in Newham, and knowing what works to safeguard and support our young people. We will improve the accessibility of information and services for young people and their families, including accessing support within the local community. We will build on progress that has been made using digital communication technologies during the Covid-19 pandemic, while also recognising limitations of digital communication.
32. We have drawn on evidence about risk, vulnerability and effective practices, using local, regional and national data and research. We have developed our strategic approach using evidence gathered from wider consultation with our young people and families over the last year.
33. The following seven priorities were codesigned with young people, families, community organisations and practitioners from across our partnership, during summer 2020:
  - a. Youth voice & experience
  - b. Information sharing & data analysis
  - c. Early help and prevention
  - d. Intervention
  - e. Disruption
  - f. Our youth workforce
  - g. Partnerships & collaboration
34. The Newham Adolescent Exploitation Strategy Group (NAESG, terms of reference **Appendix 3**) will be responsible for monitoring the delivery of the strategic work programme, and reporting progress against the priorities, goals and actions outlined below to the All Age Exploitation group.

### Our goals for this priority

- Listen to young people at every stage of our work to identify and understand the multi-faceted issues of development and transitions in young people's lives;
- Engage and listen to the widest range of young people's voices that represent the borough, proactively engaging young people who experience labelling and stigma;
- Recognise the significant impact of adverse childhood experiences and trauma on adolescent development and understand constrained choice;
- Act to reduce biases, identify and address disproportionality and inequalities in Newham, across gender, ethnicity, sexuality, varied abilities, beliefs and identities.

### What will we do to achieve our goals?

- Seek youth voice at every stage of our contact with young people and embed youth voice in design, delivery and evaluation of services;
- Work with young people to join up our early help and prevention offer across the partnership in response to adolescent development and risk;
- Co-design with young people a partnership response to adolescent risks and issues – including our response to increased vulnerabilities during the Covid-19 pandemic;
- use trauma-informed practice in support, prevention, intervention, disruption and recovery.



### **Our goals for this priority**

- Improve the collection of data from our partnership to create a step change in our understanding of the data story for adolescent exploitation issues;
- Enhance information-sharing arrangements, at strategic and operational levels to build together predictive capacity to identify and assess risks, and design effective prevention, intervention, disruption and treatment;
- Ensure information sharing across the whole partnership – including all non-statutory and community agencies working with young people – and develop safe information sharing and referral pathways;
- Implement learning about information sharing gained from Covid-19 including improvements in use of data to safeguard young people.

### **What will we do to achieve our goals?**

- Develop a unified data approach that enables a joined-up view of adolescent risk factors and the local narrative;
- Develop a single information-sharing framework joining existing agreements and protocols between key partners for exploitation and serious group violence;
- Develop collective analysis of data sets - including data gathering beyond statutory - to support effective prediction, prevention, intervention and disruption that respond to adolescent risk factors;
- Join up risk mapping (GIS for peer groups and places), analysis and dashboard reporting – including place-based intelligence - within and outside of Newham to understand and track exploitation and inform joint assessment, early help, intervention, disruption and treatment.

### **Our goals for this priority**

- All young people can access support they need, including services for young people with varied abilities, SEND, those who are Looked After and placed out of borough, from BAME backgrounds and those going through transitions, including vulnerable young adults;
- Families can access the information and support they need to promote the safety and wellbeing of young people and to respond to and prevent risks of violence and exploitation;
- Respond to peer networks, pull factors, places, and influence of individuals and groups that harm adolescents and lead to situations where they are exposed to risks, serious group violence, and exploitation;
- Join up pathways for earlier help and prevention for young people who are not known to statutory services or those who are outside of mainstream services including NEET young people and young adults;
- Respond directly to risks with negative impact on young people's outcomes including transitions, mental health, substance misuse, social media, radicalisation.

### **What will we do to achieve our goals?**

- Provide clear, accessible information on relevant services for young people, families and professionals;
- Work with families to identify strengths and relationships and maximise these to build capacity of young people, parents and carers to reduce harm and exposure to risk;
- Review integrated working across our non-statutory offer to young people and young adults and identify opportunities for place-based early help and prevention including work with parents;
- Work with community, voluntary and faith sector to enable agencies and communities to provide effective responses to young people and adults in relation to prevention;
- Review the application of systemic, trauma-informed, restorative, relationship-based, and strength-based approaches to prevent the harm and exploitation of adolescents.

### **Our goals for this priority**

- Build on our multi-disciplinary offer and integrated working in support, intervention, disruption and recovery that responds to the changing adolescent needs and risks;
- Update our frameworks for identification, mapping, assessment, planning, intervention and review to respond to peer groups, online spaces and locations of serious youth violence and other risk factors;

### **What will we do to achieve our goals?**

- Update our local procedures for referral, assessment and intervention to make sure that extra-familial risks are treated in the same way as risks within family and home
- Identify, assess and mitigate vulnerabilities that reduce the chances of adolescents exiting cultures of group violence or involvement in youth crime;
- Design and implement an integrated multi-agency response for all young people under 25 that identifies and responds to risk factors and concerns regarding serious group violence, county lines, modern slavery and exploitation;
- Join up all pathways to referral, intervention, safety planning, disruption, treatment and recovery including facilitating appropriate involvement of agencies outside of statutory partnerships such as voluntary, community and faith sector, and businesses;
- Improve our response to children with social, emotional and mental health concerns including those who are self-harming or suicidal, which may be indicative of exploitation;
- Improve risk assessment and placement allocation for Day 6 AP and children in PRU or other AP settings.

### **Our goals for this priority**

- Share information about needs, risks and responses, and routinely utilise intelligence-led disruption in relation to local businesses, individuals or groups associated with abuse and exploitation;
- Build on current techniques to develop place-based approaches to disruption that reduce future adolescent involvement in exploitation, violence, and crime and respond directly to exploited young people and young adults;
- Intervene and disrupt when young people are involved in exploitation and provide effective responses to dual victim/abuser roles of young people;
- Apply disruption tactics flexibly through both criminal and civil routes to protect children, young people and adults from harm, including powers available in relation to licensing, health and safety, fraud, housing provision and any related legislation;

### **What will we do to achieve our goals?**

- Develop partnership an action plan on place-based intervention and disruption that improve our response to children who are both victims and perpetrators of exploitation;
- Practitioners who have immediate contact with exploited young people and with people who are victims of perpetrators of criminal exploitation have trauma-informed knowledge and skills;
- Join up information sharing and referral pathways between custody and children's social care to assess and intervene where children who are arrested may require a specialist intervention;
- Update referral pathways from A&E to specialist provision for young victims of violent crime, so that children receive an age-appropriate service and safeguarding response.

## OUR YOUTH WORKFORCE

Clarity

### Our goals for this priority

- Create a culture shift across all our partnership organisations, building on the latest findings in adolescent and contextual safeguarding;
- Enable creative, dynamic methods of engagement, building and maintaining trusted relationships that build young people's resilience to deal with challenging experiences and transitions;
- Support all practitioners to be brave and innovative, understand, hold and manage risks, and eliminate language that blames and stigmatises adolescents.
- Support practitioners to work with young people who they have concerns about in the absence of parental consent.

### What will we do to achieve our goals?

- Collaborate with partners to implement our practice framework across all agencies;
- Conduct appreciative enquiry and gap analysis of policy and practice in offer for young people and young adults across our partnership;
- Develop local practice guidance, based on regional and national learning and local best practice in adolescent safeguarding;
- Create a training and development offer that is based in building and maintaining trusted relationships, systemic, trauma-informed and restorative practice approaches;
- Embed self-care and staff wellbeing approaches in policy and organisational cultures, so that our youth workforce can access flexible and responsive trauma-informed support
- Develop approaches to effective scrutiny of performance data and build capacity in data analysis across the partnership.

## PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

*Community*

### Our goals for this priority

- Provide strong and collaborative leadership at all levels of our organisations and involve families and communities in the development of our response to prevent harm and exploitation and violence;
- Enhance leadership and coordination so that all partners have a clear understanding of the themes and trends around missing, exploitation, and the specific needs adolescents in Newham, such that these needs can be met in a joined-up holistic way to prevent exploitation;
- Create opportunities for professional collaboration and multi-agency learning around issues relating to adolescents and safeguarding such that practitioners feel confident in their knowledge and are implementing this into practice.

### What will we do to achieve our goals?

- Create strategic partnership governance and meeting structures that reframe adolescent risk, exploitation and serious group violence creating joined up decision-making and collective action;
  - Design and implement strategic performance framework for adolescent exploitation, scrutinise progress and practice across this work programme, and evaluate local arrangements against the adolescent safeguarding principles from regional Safeguarding Children Partnership;
  - Communicate effectively with our people, community organisations and businesses to involve them in our strategy and keep young people safe and well - raise awareness of wider exploitation factors including county lines and modern slavery trends and Covid-19 impact;
  - Work with practitioners, young people, families and communities to develop and apply common, relevant, accessible language for work with young people and young adults;
  - Join Contextual Safeguarding Network 'Local Area of Interest' working group, as an active member of the CSN, make use of CSN best practice.
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## WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE AND PARENTS HAVE TOLD US ABOUT SAFETY AND WELLBEING IN NEWHAM

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35. We create regular opportunities for young people to share their views and attitudes on their safety and wellbeing, and their experience of support and services in Newham.

We get excluded from school over small things, and they pretend to care about us.

We carry weapons and roll in numbers to feel safe

More police won't help, they make it worse and people act up.

More youth activities and more ways of making money would make us feel safe

We feel discriminated against by stop and search

You need to put power with the younger generation. I want to hear from somebody from my area, who's gone through what I've gone through.

There are parts of the borough where we can't go as we are not secure there.

Youth violence feels like a never-ending circle. Deaths seem inevitable.

In summer, kids have nothing to do. Everyone has something they want to do. They don't want to be on the road.

We need weapons amnesty and youth workers to help young people keep themselves safe

You need to go to primary schools to prevent them getting involved

## ADOLESCENT SAFEGUARDING AND COVID-19

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36. The Covid-19 pandemic has presented urgent challenges in every aspect of society. In response to the crisis, The Children's Society has highlighted the need to:
- a. **Protect children and families facing financial insecurity;**
  - b. **Respond to every child;**
  - c. **Keep children and young people safe**, particularly those at risk of abuse or neglect and those with SEND;
  - d. **Support the mental health and wellbeing of all children.**
37. Every young person in Newham is affected. Children with vulnerabilities, such as those open to children's social care or the youth offending service and those on-roll at special and alternative education provisions will need further attention so that risks of harm and exploitation are not overlooked.
38. The pandemic has resulted in opportunities for digital communication as more young people use technology to access education, to communicate with each other and with professionals. However, digital communication can be a barrier to effective interventions and relationship building. Young people's situations are not static, and we should work to remove barriers to young people disclosing exploitation.
39. There are significant concerns about the additional pressures that lockdown has placed on children, young people, families and communities, with reports of increased family conflict, domestic abuse and substance misuse. These concerns include unmet needs and hidden risks that have arisen within the home or when young people have been neither at home nor school. Risks may include increased partner abuse as a result of families isolating together.
40. In addition, emotional health needs of parents, children and young people may not have been met during lockdown, including sense of hopelessness, boredom, reduction in leisure and social interaction. These factors may have led to discord and may also lead young people to engaging in risk-taking behaviours, such as periods of increased use of social media and potential exposure to exploitation.
41. Unstable economic consequences of the pandemic, such as loss of work in the family, may influence some young people to support family income, which may tempt some to engage in criminal activity for the first time. This may include vulnerable groups such as young carers. This dynamic can be hidden for fear of agency involvement.
42. We must make best use of available data from across our partnership, for instance on the number and profile of vulnerable young people attending settings and in contact with services. These and other impacts of Covid-19 will need consideration in the further development and implementation of our holistic strategy to prevent exploitation.

## NATIONAL CONTEXT

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43. National and regional trends in adolescent safeguarding include changes to [government guidance](#) and the development of arrangements in local areas that respond to adolescent vulnerabilities and extra-familial risks. Contextual Safeguarding Network (CSN) reports concern about serious risks faced by young people including homelessness, self-harm, substance misuse, and gang-involvement ([Peace and Atkinson, 2019](#)). This research emphasises the complexity of risks faced by young people and that those going missing [...] or involved with organised criminal groups are more likely to experience forms of physical violence and/or sexual violence (Ibid).
44. CSN highlights the influence of peer groups and relationships in the development of social norms and decision-making during adolescence and identifies schools and public spaces as settings where abuse and exploitation can occur. Risks outside of family include young people's use of digital technology and social media.
45. Contextual safeguarding enhances our understanding and response to extra-familial risks and must lead to building on and strengthening our response to families and supporting them to sustain relationships, safety and resilience. These trends have led to critical thinking about the child protection and youth justice systems.
46. Emerging evidence suggests that adolescent development requires us to *both include and extend* family-oriented support and adult-oriented enforcement. Local areas across London and England have experimented with different approaches to joining up strategic and operational arrangements for safeguarding young people. Promising findings suggest the effectiveness of:
- Working toward a clear strategic vision and working within a shared and explicit set of principles.
  - Reframing adolescent risk to consider all forms of exploitation together;
  - Joining up adolescent risk operational panels to create coherence in decision-making processes for assessing, managing and responding to risk;
  - Conducting multi-agency risk and incident mapping and analysis;
  - Developing specialist adolescent risk and support services.
47. Research also points to the effectiveness of systemic practice ([Stratton 2016](#)), trauma-informed ([Bunting et al 2019](#)) and restorative approaches ([Scottish Government 2019](#)) to work with children, young people and families, and to the importance of maintaining a sharp focus on systems and practice that build relationships and resilience in families. Increasingly, local areas are applying a combination of these approaches to work with young people and families.
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## NEWHAM CONTEXT

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### Our young people

48. 43,100 young people ages 10 to 19 live in Newham, making up 11.9% of our population, just above the London average of 11.3%. 80% of our young people are from black and minority ethnic groups, with the largest proportions of BAME young people from Bangladeshi and Black African backgrounds.
49. In 2019, 22% of Newham's children and young people are living in low income families, higher than the London average of 19%, and England average of 17%. 38% of children and young people are eligible for free school meals, significantly higher than the London average of 38% and England average of 23%. The index of multiple deprivation 2019 places Newham in the top 10% of most deprived authorities in England, although this trend has improved since 2015.
50. These factors inevitably have an impact on the safety and wellbeing of our young people. Adolescents are vulnerable to different forms of exploitation and serious violence in a variety of contexts beyond their families. This includes in peer groups, at school, in shops, take away restaurants, public transport, shopping centres, car parks and neighbourhoods.
51. Many young people thrive with the support of their families, schools, youth services and community activities. However, some young people need targeted or specialist support to achieve good outcomes.

### Young people who need support and protection

52. In 2020, 245 young people in our secondary schools have Education Health and Care Plans. We know from the evidence that young people with SEND are at risk of exploitation including by criminal groups. We also know young adults are vulnerable during transition between child and adult systems.
53. Between April 2019 and March 2020, 4976 children were referred to statutory social care, around 7% of the 0-19 population. In March 2020, there were 1942 young people open to social care in the child in need category in the age group 10-25. The Children's Society suggests that older adolescents who are referred to children's social care due to concerns about their health, safety and welfare, too often receive little support following the referral. The research suggests that this group's experience of risk, vulnerability and disadvantage puts them at higher risk of homelessness, being NEET, and of exploitation.
54. In 2019, there were 403 children in care. Between 2012/12 and 2017/18 the proportion of children in out-of-borough residential placements increased from 45% to 59%. We know that being placed out of the local area often leads children and young people to feel isolated and may contribute to them going missing or to being vulnerable to risks.

## **Young people who are missing**

55. Going missing from home, care or education puts young people at risk of various forms of exploitation. There is a recognised correlation between children going missing and an increased risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE), being involved in county lines and substance misuse. Apart from being a vulnerability factor, missing episodes are also an indicator that a child is already being exploited and abused.
56. School reporting of children missing from education (CME) has improved. There were 1075 referrals for CME in 2018/19. As of May 2020, there are 310 open CME cases.
57. 155 children and young people went missing from care. 239 went missing from home for more than 24 hours. There were 1353 missing episodes from care and 458 from home. 58 children had more than 5 episodes missing from care, and 17 from home. This includes those formally reported but does not necessarily include those with unreported missing episodes, so the total number of children and young people going missing is likely to be higher.

## **Children who are excluded from school**

58. Young people who are excluded from school may be at increased risk of child sexual exploitation, and exploitation from those involved in crime and gangs. There is a clear link between school exclusions and vulnerability to youth violence, and between exclusions and other vulnerabilities such as mental health disorder. There is some evidence that male

pupils and pupils from Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds are overrepresented in exclusion cohorts. Children with some level of special education needs and disabilities are also overrepresented.

59. In recent years, there has been a significant upward trend in physical and verbal assault against pupils and against adults as the reason for fixed period and permanent exclusions from secondary and special schools. Boys are overrepresented in permanent exclusion from secondary schools. Disproportionality is a major concern, with male pupils, black pupils and pupils with SEN more vulnerable to risks of exploitation and poor life chances in the future.

## **Youth Justice**

60. Young people who offend may be at increased risk of sexual and criminal exploitation. Research suggests that much greater attention should be paid to the links between exploitation and offending behaviour.
61. In 2018/19, first-time offending rate was 315 per 100,000 of the Newham population, compared with London rate of 271 and England rate of 220. This rate was down 4.8% from 2017/18, and Newham ranked 7 of 31 London boroughs. This rate has fallen from 646 per 100,000 of the population since 2014 and follows a broad downward five-year trend in the region and nation. 14 young people or 0.42 per 100,000, were sentenced to custody in 2018/19, compared with a London average or 0.41 and England average of 0.19. Reoffending

rates were at 41.5% of youth offending cohort, compared with London average of 41.9% and England average of 38.2%.

62. Using the Youth Justice Board Disproportionality Toolkit, young people from BAME heritage have been identified as over-represented. This group of young people are linked to criminal exploitation including county lines and trafficking, to weapons offenses and violence against the person.

### **Child sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation**

63. Child sexual and criminal exploitation are major concerns in Newham. Our experience shows us that those involved in serious group violence and other offending are exposed to exploitative environments where they find it difficult to access support. Some young people are both the perpetrators and victims of abuse. Criminal individuals and groups operating in Newham target and take advantage of vulnerable young people and coerce them into crime such as drug trafficking.
64. Young people involved in serious group violence are at increased risk of CSE and perpetrators of CSE include members of criminal groups. County lines is a major concern in relation to preventing and tackling exploitation. Local and regional data on county lines. We have seen increasing numbers of young people who are harmed when facing youth violence, who have had previous adverse childhood experiences but are not known to statutory services.

65. In 2019/20, 150 children were at risk of exploitation. In 2019, 47 children were referred to National Referral Mechanism as potential victims of trafficking or exploitation. In the first quarter of 2020, ten young people and one adult were referred through NRM. In the same period, 130 young people and adults aged 12-15 were exploited through county lines of whom 68 were under 18. Of this cohort, 51% were listed as unknown, not open to Children's Social Care or YOS.

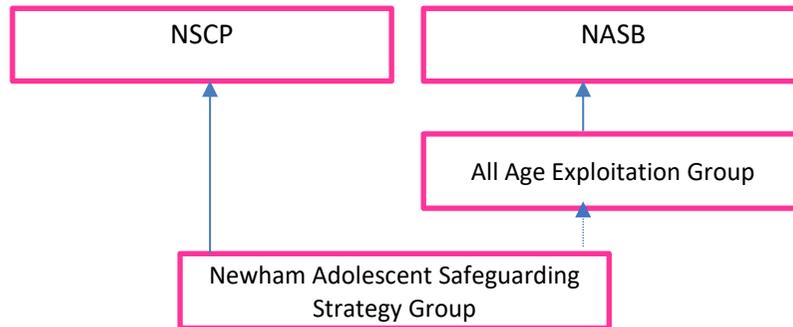
### **Extremism and radicalisation**

66. There have been several occasions in Newham, regionally and nationally in which extremist groups have attempted to radicalise vulnerable children and young people. The purpose for them is to manipulate young people to hold extreme views justifying political, religious, sexist or racist violence, or to steer them into a rigid and narrow ideology that is intolerant of diversity. This will leave them vulnerable to future radicalisation.
  67. There is evidence of increasing numbers of young people, who are 'self-informing' or influenced via social media. We consider these cases as serious safeguarding concerns that need to be prevented, and in scope of this strategy. In 17/18, 10 children were referred due to radicalisation concerns, 3 were referred in 2018/19 and 7 in 2019/20.
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## GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

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68. NAESG reports to Newham Safeguarding Children Partnership, and also to the Adults Safeguarding Board, via the All Age Exploitation Group. Terms of reference are at **Appendix 3**.



### STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

69. While working to prevent and tackle exploitation of adolescents, there are often interrelated issues which need to be considered and addressed. The following local strategies, policies and protocols set out our approach to tackling these wider and connected issues in Newham:

- a. [London Child Protection Procedures](#);
- b. [Newham Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)
- c. [Newham Pathways to Help and Support](#);
- d. [Newham Corporate Plan](#);
- e. [Mayor's Youth Safety Board Report and Recommendations](#);
- f. [Newham Community Safety Partnership Plan 2019](#);
- g. [Newham Missing Protocol](#);

- h. [Newham Best for All SEND strategy](#);
- i. [Newham CAMHS transformation plan](#);
- j. [London Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy](#).

70. Our young people-centred approach is supported by:

- a. **Children Act 1989** requires all local authorities to give due regard to children's wishes when determining what services to provide for them to enhance their welfare.
  - b. **Equality Act 2010** puts responsibility on public authorities to consider the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. It states that no child or group of children must be treated any less favourably than others in their access to services.
  - c. **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**: international agreement, ratified by the Government in 1991, protects the rights of children and provides a child-centred approach for the development of services for children.
  - d. **Crime and Disorder Act 1998** that introduced the Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, Sex Offender Orders, Parenting Order; granted local authorities more responsibilities with regards to strategies for reducing crime and disorder; introduced law specific to 'racially aggravated' offences.
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## APPENDIX 2: GLOSSARY

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### SAFEGUARDING

71. The 2018 Working Together to Safeguard Children guideline
- protecting children from maltreatment;
  - preventing impairment of children's health or development;
  - ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;
  - and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

### RISK

72. Refers specifically to the experience of a significant adversity or abuse that would seriously threaten an adolescent's life or health. Risk also refers to the likelihood of experiencing such adversity, or the experience of a wider range of adversities including poor education and poverty, involvement in minor crime, and mental health problems. We recognise that 'risk-taking' can often serve positive functions in the life of adolescents (Hanson and Holmes, 2014)

### ABUSE

73. The 2018 Working Together to Safeguard Children guideline defines abuse as a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or

technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

### SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

74. A child or adolescent has a special educational need if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. Click this link for further definitions

### MISSING

75. Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another (ACPO, 2013)

### CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

76. CSE is a form of child sexual abuse that 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 and can occur using technology.

### CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION (CCE)

77. CCE occurs when children are exploited, forced or coerced into crimes. County lines (see below) is one subset of CCE which encompasses other types of exploitation, including forced labour,

forced theft, benefit fraud, acquisitive crime, drug cultivation/production etc. As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy published by the Home Office, 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 using technology.

## **COUNTY LINES**

78. County lines is where groups use young people or vulnerable adults to carry and sell drugs from borough to borough, and across county boundaries. It is used by criminal groups to sell drugs in an area outside where they live, reducing their risk of detection. County line enterprises almost always involve exploitation of vulnerable people: this could involve both children and adults and is always a safeguarding issue.
79. The group establishes a network often between an urban hub and county location, into which drugs are supplied. A mobile phone line is established in the market, to which orders are placed by introduced customers. The line will commonly (but not exclusively) be controlled by a third party, remote from the market. The group involved in County Lines exploits young or vulnerable persons, to achieve the storage and/or supply of drugs, movement of cash proceeds and to secure the use of dwellings (commonly referred to as cuckooing). The group or individuals exploited by them regularly travel within and between the urban hub and the county market, to

replenish stock and deliver cash. The group is inclined to use intimidation, violence and weapons, including knives, corrosives and firearms. (National crime agency, 2017)

80. N.B For the purposes of this strategy, 'County lines' is referred to as Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) when discussing children who have been groomed into this activity. County Lines is a form of exploitation and trafficking that can happen in any local area (is not restricted to either rural or urban locations) and as such, children who have been groomed into this will not be treated as perpetrators of this crime.

## **MODERN SLAVERY**

81. Modern Slavery is the term used in the UK defined within the Modern Slavery Act 2015. These crimes include holding a person in a position of slavery, servitude forced or compulsory labour, or facilitating their travel with the intention of exploiting them soon after. Although human trafficking often involves an international cross-border element, it is also possible to be involved with modern slavery within your own country. It is possible to be harmed by modern slavery even if consent has been given to be moved. Children and adolescents cannot give consent to being exploited therefore the element of coercion or deception does not need to be present to prove an offence (National Crime Agency, 2017)

## **CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING**

82. Understanding and responding to adolescents' experiences of significant harm beyond their families, and recognising that the relationships adolescents form in neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Adolescents' experiences of extra familiar abuse can undermine child-parent relationships.

Practitioners must engage with individuals and sectors that have influence within extra-familial contexts and recognise that working within these spaces is a critical part of safeguarding practice. Contextual safeguarding expands child protection systems in recognition that adolescents are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts. (Adapted from Firmin, 2017).

### **EXTRA FAMILIAL RISK**

83. The risks to older children addressed include those which are primarily located outside of the home and largely outside of the control of parents or carers. Crucially, this generally means that intervention which focusses on the family environment, parenting and sometimes a child coming into care, is less likely to be effective in reducing risk. Hence practice responses need to be framed and executed very differently to those required for younger children. Children facing such 'contextual' and extra-familial risks

will tend to be older and generally (though not exclusively) teenagers. For the purposes of brevity this is described as extra-familial risk. 'Older children' refers to teenagers up to the age of 18.

84. Extra-familial risks are generally linked to issues of criminal and sexual exploitation and going missing from home and education; they may also include risks of radicalization. As is now recognized, children subject to these types of risks will often not see and experience what is happening to them as exploitation and abuse. Moreover, whilst for some children, the risks they face outside of the home are largely outside of the control of parents and carers, experiences in their families might be significant push factors for some children and sometimes, though rarely, families may be directly implicated in children's exploitation and abuse.

## APPENDIX 3:

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### NEWHAM SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP (NSCP) ADOLESCENT EXPLOITATION STRATEGY GROUP (NAESG) TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### BACKGROUND

1. Our partnership strategy has been developed for adolescent safeguarding in Newham. An integrated approach is required to tackle serious issues concerning adolescent risk, including child sexual and criminal exploitation, county lines, modern slavery, serious group violence, extremism and radicalisation. The strategy encompasses a data-led and systemic approach to that reduces risks so that young people in Newham can lead happy, healthy lives.
2. National and regional trends in safeguarding include changes to government guidance and the development of new arrangements in local areas to respond to risks posed to adolescents outside of family and home (extra-familial risks). Adolescent risk includes not only physical places outside of home, but also those in the virtual realm, so the developing approaches must attend to those spaces including adolescent use of digital technology and social media.
3. These trends lead to critical thinking about the underpinning premises of the child protection and criminal justice systems. Emerging theory and practice propose that adolescent development requires a response that *both includes and extends* family-oriented support models and adult-oriented enforcement. Research points to the effectiveness of trauma-informed and restorative approaches to work with children, young people and families, and to the importance of maintaining our focus on systems and practice that build relationships and resilience in families. 'Contextual safeguarding' enhances our understanding and response to extra-familial risks, but its insight must not lead to weakening the collective response to prevention, early help and safeguarding with families.
4. Local partners are committed to improve the consistency and effectiveness of systems and practice in safeguarding adolescents. This will draw on the work of the pan-London Safeguarding Children Partnership and on national research around the risks that young people are exposed to outside of the contexts of family, home and school. While progress has been made locally in tackling child sexual exploitation, serious group violence, and children missing from home, care or education, partners recognise more improvement is needed to prevent young people from harm and from poor outcomes.
5. The scope of the strategy will therefore include all partners with responsibility for safeguarding and support for adolescents and will extend beyond statutory services to include voluntary and community sector, universal services and businesses.
6. To support this, NAESG was convened in February 2020 to oversee the design of a work programme that joins up existing work, avoids duplication of effort, drives collective responsibility, sustains coproduction with young people and families, and works to ensure maximum impact on outcomes.

7. NAESG will report to the NSCP. Reports will be taken to NSAB via the joint All Age Exploitation group.

### **Adolescent safeguarding and Covid-19**

8. The Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic has presented urgent challenges in every aspect of society. In response to the crisis, The Children's Society has highlighted the need to:
  - a. **Protect children and families facing financial insecurity**
  - b. **Respond to every child**
  - c. **Keep children and young people safe,**
  - d. **Support the mental health and wellbeing of all children**
9. Every child and young person in Newham are affected and vulnerable children will need special attention. Among other aspects of the response, information sharing arrangements have been updated to improve the identification of children in the Covid-19 shielded category, such as those with health conditions. Children with known vulnerabilities, such as those open to children's social care or the youth offending service and those on-roll at special and alternative education provisions will need attention such that the risks of harm and exploitation are not overlooked. These arrangements, and the many other factors in play during the pandemic will need to be considered in the development and implementation of a holistic strategy and work programme for adolescent safeguarding in the time of Covid-19.

### **Vision and principles of our Adolescent Exploitation strategy**

10. NAESG has been set up as a partnership endeavour. The vision of our Adolescent Exploitation Strategy is aligned to Newham Together Vision for children and young people. We aim to create a culture in our organisations and across all our partnership where we all:
  - a. Listen to young people and value their diverse experiences.
  - b. Recognise that adolescents are children first.
  - c. Understand young people's varied needs and abilities and respond to risks and influences in their lives including their transitions to adulthood.
  - d. Focus on extra-familial risks and offer a confident, holistic response to these risks, drawing on the right supports and interventions at the right time.
  - e. Create solutions in collaboration with parents, carers, families and communities.
  - f. Trust our colleagues and partners and collaborate on a whole-system approach to safeguarding and support that keeps all our young people safe and well.

### **Priorities areas for the strategic framework for adolescent exploitation are:**

11. The following strategic priorities are proposed for the work programme:

- a. **Youth voice and experience:** listen to young people at every stage of our work to understand the multi-faceted issues of development and transitions in their lives;
- b. **Information sharing and data analysis:** join up arrangements across all agencies who work with young people to develop collective analysis of key data sets that support effective prediction, prevention, intervention and disruption that respond to adolescent risk factors;
- c. **Early help and prevention:** conduct appreciative enquiry and gap analysis of policy and practice in work with adolescents across the partnership including application of trauma-informed, systemic, relationship-based, restorative and strength-based practices to prevent harm of adolescents;
- d. **Intervention:** join up our operational governance arrangements, and build a multi-disciplinary joint planning offer and integrated working methods in that respond to the changing needs and risks of adolescents;
- e. **Disruption:** apply a balance of support, intervention and enforcement, as appropriate so that adolescent can exit serious group violence and criminal exploitation and improve outcomes;
- f. **Our youth workforce:** create a communication and workforce development plan that meets the needs of professionals and builds on existing work;
- g. **Our partnerships and collaboration:** Provide strong, collaborative leadership at all levels of our organisations and involve families and communities in the development of our response to prevent harm and exploitation and violence.

12. NAESG is set up with the following objectives:

- a. Oversee the design and delivery of the strategic framework and work programme that will achieve the agreed priorities of the safeguarding adolescents' strategy;
- b. Identify requirements of partners in Newham for engagement, knowledge and skills development, and safeguarding practice to build capacity to deliver this strategy;
- c. Set and agree scope, timeline, milestones and outcomes for a work programme, ensuring alignment with wider stakeholder requirements;
- d. Ensure the work programme delivers its priorities within agreed resources and quality standards;
- e. Review progress, monitor and mitigate risks and issues, including cross-cutting themes; report exceptions, and provide insight so the strategic work programme is fit for purpose;
- f. Learn from best practice across the partnership, investigate, apply and critique the evidence base, seeking best practice from other local areas for innovation and to inform actions;
- g. Consider and resolve strategic directional and operational issues to ensure progress of the work programme.

## **MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

13. The membership of the NAESG will be:

**Chair: Tim Aldridge, Director of Children's Services, LBN**

14. Responsibilities:

- a. Accountable for collective leadership and success of strategy, ensuring aims and objectives are met and outputs are delivered in line with timescale and standards.
- b. Communicate the vision of the programme, providing leadership and direction;
- c. Maintain the interface with key senior stakeholders, keeping them engaged and informed;
- d. Maintain alignment with LBN corporate priorities and with local, regional & national strategies;
- e. Chair and facilitate priority setting and hold members to account;
- f. Feedback on progress to relevant Boards;
- g. Problem-solve to mitigate risks and issues arising from group activity.

**Strategy lead: Michelle Edwards, Head of Youth Offending Service**

15. Responsibilities:

- a. Oversee development of the strategy and work programme ensuring that all stakeholders – including adolescents and families - can inform design;
- b. Ensure that the strategy is designed in accordance with findings from consultation, the evidence base, and national legislation/guidance;
- c. Be responsible for coordinating the input of all partners, collating any information necessary for the successful and timely delivery of work between NAESG meetings;
- d. Report any variation in scope of work and any risks and issues emerging from data and the delivery programme to Chair and NAESG;

## **NAESG members**

16. Responsibilities

- a. Provide leadership and accountability in relation the strategy and work programme;
- b. Facilitate engagement of relevant partners in the project, act as representative for partner work areas and bring reports or comments to strategy group;
- c. Secure implementation of strategy and work programme; ensure this is understood by partners and that other work streams are developed in synergy;
- d. Ensure effective communications with service areas and agencies that they represent;

- e. Contribute and actively engage in work programme and support development and delivery;
17. Other officers may also be invited to attend the Strategy Group meetings as required, for example to present and discuss items on specific relevant topics.

## **MEETINGS**

- 18. Meetings will be quorate with half members present.
- 19. Meetings will be held every month from May 2020 until further notice. Chair and members may exceptionally convene a meeting earlier in accordance with priorities.
- 20. Meetings will usually two hours in duration, depending on items to be discussed.
- 21. Meetings will be chaired by the Chair or the nominated deputy.
- 22. Agendas will be set by the Chair. Agenda may involve standing items agreed by Chair.

## **PROTOCOL & COMMUNICATIONS**

- 23. Agenda and papers will be circulated 3 days before the meeting.
- 24. Apologies should be notified to the Chair before agenda and papers are circulated, if possible. Suitable representatives should attend in place of a standing member.
- 25. Agreed actions will be taken at each meeting and sent within five working days.
- 26. Members of group should come to each meeting prepared to discuss items on the agenda, particularly those that are most relevant to their role/work stream/service area.
- 27. Members should disseminate information back to their respective projects or areas of work as appropriate, and feedback to the group as needed.
- 28. Discussions of sensitive nature may take place. Members ensure confidential and sensitive information is not shared outside of the meeting, unless it is appropriate and agreed to do so.

## **REVIEW**

- 29. These Terms of Reference should be reviewed in May 2021 and annually, if continuing.