



**Oldham's Children and Young People's  
Contextual Approach to Complex Safeguarding strategy  
2020 – 2023**

## Our vision

Our vision is that all children, young people and adults who are vulnerable to exploitation, either criminal or sexual, are provided with a clear targeted response which enables and promotes a targeted multi-agency response to need and risk.

We want all our children, young people and adults to live in a Borough where they feel safe and protected from the risk of exploitation in all of its forms. To achieve this, we will provide an integrated response to Complex Safeguarding concerns, sharing information efficiently and in a timely manner and within agreed protocols to protect and safeguard our children, young people and vulnerable adults. The aim is that the three key partners will be joined by a variety of multi-agency partners to ensure a targeted response across need and risk for vulnerable people so they can be supported to live free from exploitation.

### Values and principles

1. Treat Children, Young People and Adults at risk with compassion and understanding, be non-judgemental, and treat people with dignity and respect
2. Actively listen to the voice of the child or adult and their lived experiences
3. Foster a culture where professional challenge is acceptable and encouraged
4. Approach each case with an open mind and make objective and ethical decisions
5. Take a holistic approach to support the child or adult, including giving consideration to wider factors
6. Recognise the diversity across the borough and incorporate this into our approach

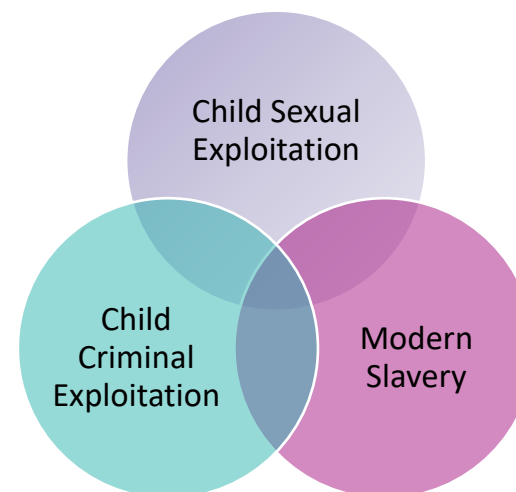
## What is Complex Safeguarding?

In Oldham, we have taken on the agreed Greater Manchester definition of Complex Safeguarding:

“Complex Safeguarding is criminal activity (often organised), or behaviour associated with criminality, involving children and young adults (often vulnerable) where there is exploitation and/or a clear or implied safeguarding concern.”

Complex Safeguarding addresses the direct influences on children and young people outside of the family home, specifically where there is risk of sexual and/or criminal exploitation. Oldham aim to ensure we have a solid understanding and response to different forms of exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

For the purposes of this strategy Oldham have agreed to focus on the following aspects of complex safeguarding:



## A Contextual Safeguarding Approach

**Contextual Safeguarding** is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationship. (Firmin, C)

Contextual Safeguarding is not a model, it is an approach that extends the parameters of traditional child protection systems to extra-familial settings and relationships.



Oldham Safeguarding Partners will work together to implement a Contextual Safeguarding approach to mitigate the risks to children and young people by reducing the incidence of missing episodes and safeguard children and young people and vulnerable adults from child exploitation, trafficking and modern slavery.

**Transitional Safeguarding** is a term that has been used by Research in Practice to highlight the need to improve the safeguarding response to older teenagers and young adults in a way that recognises their developmental needs. (Firmin et al 2019)

A briefing<sup>i</sup> developed by Research in Practice, together with the Contextual Safeguarding team at University of Bedfordshire and Rochdale Council highlights several reasons why a transitional safeguarding approach is needed. These include:

- Adolescents may experience a range of distinct risks and harms, and so may require a distinctive safeguarding response
- Harm, and its effects, do not stop at the age of 18. Support, however, does stop at 18 for many people.
- The transition to adulthood can be a time of heightened vulnerability for some young people, irrespective of whether they are formally recognised as having 'care and support needs'.
- Many of the environmental and structural factors that increase a child's vulnerability persist into adulthood, resulting in unmet needs and costly later interventions.
- The children's and adult safeguarding systems are conceptually and procedurally different, and governed by different statutory frameworks, which can make the transition to adulthood harder for young people facing ongoing risk and arguably harder for the professionals who are trying to navigate an effective approach to helping them.
- Young people entering adulthood can experience a 'cliff-edge' in terms of support, exacerbated by the notable differences between thresholds / eligibility criteria of children's and adults' safeguarding.

Oldham Safeguarding Partners are committed to improving our knowledge and support for adults at risk of exploitation.

# Context

## Greater Manchester

As of January 2020, there are **543** children and young people open to a complex safeguarding team in Greater Manchester. The majority of cases are open in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation (**57%**). Child Criminal Exploitation accounts for **35%**. **3%** of cases have risks relating to both criminal and sexual exploitation and **3%** relate to criminal exploitation and modern slavery.

### Of these:

**59%** are female and **41%** are male.

The majority of young people are aged between 15-16 years (**48%**), **24%** between 13 and 14 years and **16%** are between 17 and 18 years. **10%** are under 12 years and **1%** & are over 18 years.

**86%** of referrals were either Child in Need, Children on Child Protection Plans, Children Looked After or Care Leavers.

**73%** are White, **7%** Mixed ethnicity, **6%** Asian, **6%** Black and **6%** other.

**78%** are living with family.

**Over a quarter** of children and young people have additional needs inc Special Educational Needs or Learning Disability.

**23%** are attending Alternative Premises or Pupil Referral Units and **23%** deemed not to be attending any education or employment.

**22%** are accessing mental health support.

**53%** have had missing from home or care incidents.

**20%** open to Youth Justice Service.

## Oldham context as of September 2020:

24 young people are currently open high vulnerability cases to the Complex Safeguarding Hub, with 17 young people identified as high risk of Sexual Exploitation, 6 high risk of Criminal Exploitation and 1 young person identified as multiple risk. A significant proportion of the 24 young people are aged between 15 to 16 yrs of age (58%); the youngest person open to the Hub is aged 12yrs, there are 2 young adults aged 18yrs+. 19 young people are identified as White British (79%), with ethnicity for the remaining 21% being described as 'Asian' or 'Mixed'. 11 young people are also identified as having missing episodes (45.8). In the quarter (August 2020 – October 2020), 15 new referrals were received for young people where exploitation concerns were noted. 12 of these referrals relate to young people between the age group of 13yrs to 16yrs (80%); 12 of the 15 were female (80%).

80 young people are currently involved within the Youth Justice Service. These include those at prevention level to those in custody. Involvement in crime is a proven risk factor in criminal and sexual exploitation. It is also linked to over representation of both BAME and CLA young people. In Oldham young people are **seven times more likely** to be within the Youth Justice System if a CLA and there has been a consistent over representation of BAME groups in custody.

Recognition of criminal exploitation is growing within the partnership and workforce. In a similar journey to that of sexual exploitation it is now recognised that children are often subject to exploitation and require support, rather than criminal sanction.

### Missing incidents

During the 6 month period of April 2020 – September 2020; 640 episodes of missing were recorded, this relates to 187 Young people.

### Not accessing education

Data recorded shows that the **61%** of all pupils not in full time education are on part-time timetables. The other **39%** have been accessing alternative provision. Of these: **70** were male and **56** were female

**10** pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) were recorded as having part-time timetables

**9** pupils on part-time timetables were children looked after

# Learning from reviews

**Operation Augusta** is an independent assurance review of the effectiveness of multi-agency responses to child sexual exploitation in Greater Manchester, commissioned by the Mayor of Greater Manchester. Part one of the review focuses on Manchester City and highlights the following learning points:

- Joint police and social services investigation should take place where there is evidence that a child is involved in exploitation, including those circumstances when a child refuses to make a complaint. There should never be an expectation that vulnerable children/young people can provide protection for themselves.
- More disruptive action is necessary, utilising powers under PACE59 (the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984) to arrest, question and search premises.
- Confident challenge and cultural competency are required to support a strong criminal justice response for perpetrators.

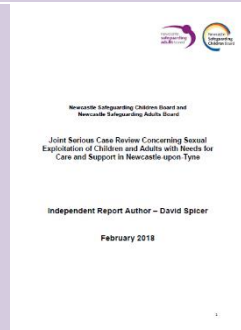


Oldham took part in the **Greater Manchester Complex Safeguarding peer review** in September 2019. The review identified areas of **good practice** including:

- Good investment from wider partners in prevention and disruption of complex safeguarding themes.
- Investment in training for trauma informed practice.
- Piloting of a contextual safeguarding response through Positive Steps.
- Complex safeguarding nurse embedded within the team.
- Established Youth Detachment offer.

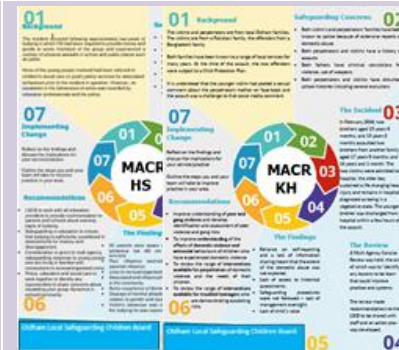
**Recommendations** for improvement included:

- Scope demand across partners to truly understand the extent of exploitation and resources required.
- Review of the services and pathways to ensure they are coordinated .
- Continuous training for wider workforce on exploitation.
- Review of assessments and planning to ensure they are child focussed and SMART.



**Newcastle Serious Case Review** was a thematic review to consider and learn from sexual exploitation involving children and young adults in Newcastle. Learning points include:

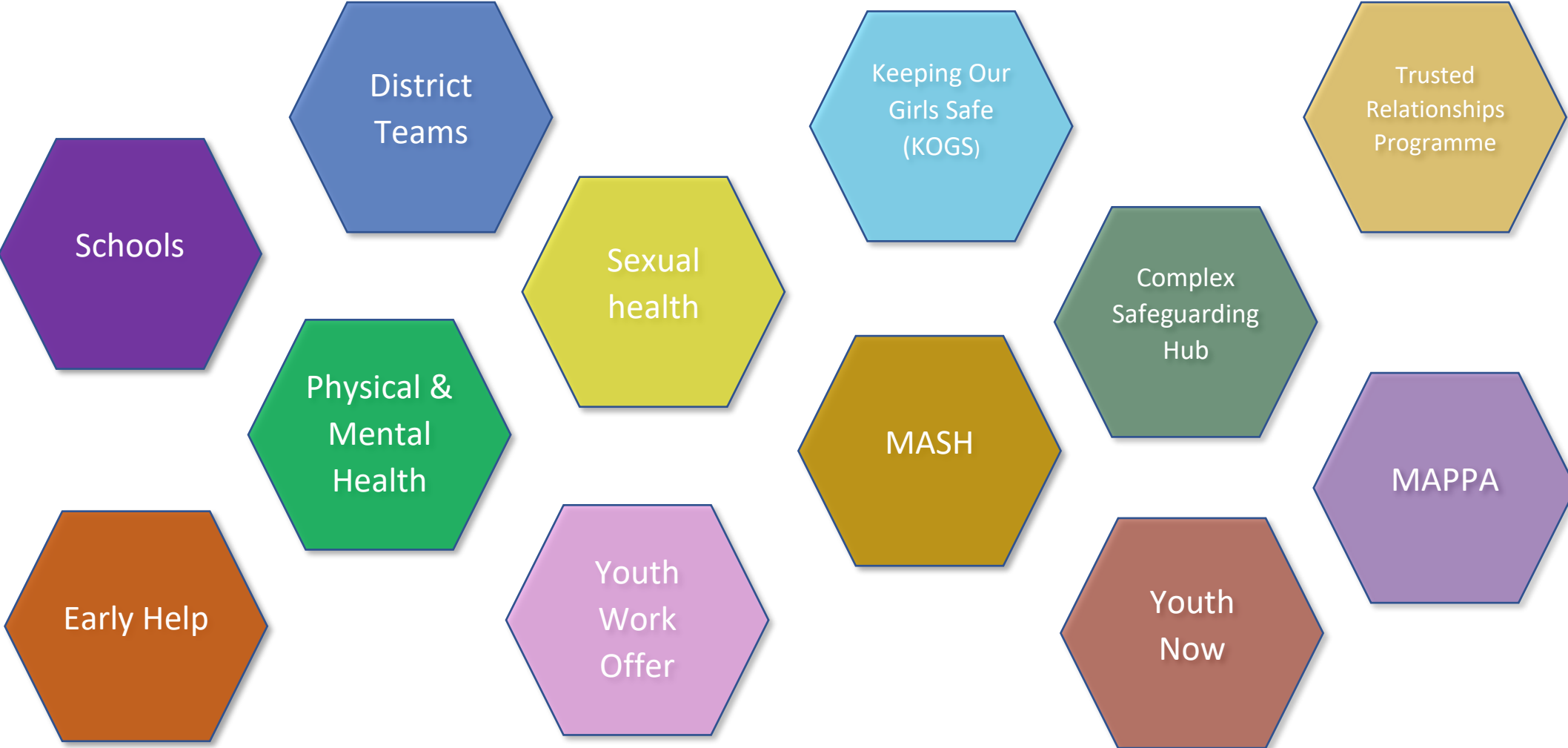
- Sexual exploitation is not restricted to child victims; vulnerability is not determined by age and it is likely that extensive abuse of vulnerable adults is taking place across the country unrecognised.
- Information available about likely profiles of perpetrators and what drives their activities, including the extent to which cultural values and attitudes are relevant is very limited. There is an urgent need for guidance to robustly address these issues.
- Sexual exploitation of boys and men is complex and hidden with different models to those identified with female victims.
- The early identification of victims or potential victims or activities of perpetrators depends on alert universal services, in particular education, health and community services.



**Local Case Reviews** completed on incidents of peer on peer abuse highlighted the following learning points:

- Peer influence seemed to over-ride parental influence.
- Wider link to serious and organised crime was evident.
- There is a need to understand the impact of domestic abuse on emergent anti-social behaviour.
- Displays of harmful attitudes in relation to gender and race were a feature.
- Parent were aware of their children’s deteriorating behaviour but did not engage with services.
- Bullying was a key feature as was harmful sexual behaviours linked to the perpetrators.
- Disrupted education in the form of exclusions and truancy was evident.

# Oldham's Partnership response



← Strengths based approach that utilises a Trusted Relationship and relies upon professional judgement →

# What is working well in Oldham?

## Complex Safeguarding Hub

In April 2020 Oldham launched its Complex Safeguarding Hub Phase 1 approach to bring together key partner agencies in supporting children and young people open to statutory social work services where exploitation is a significant concern.

For Oldham, the Complex Safeguarding Hub has functions for Phoenix (Child Sexual Exploitation), Child Criminal Exploitation, Organised Crime and Gangs, Modern Slavery and Trafficking within one service. The Complex Safeguarding Hub combines the three key partners for safeguarding as an integrated service for response, consultation and intervention.

Our vision is that all children, young people and adults who are highly vulnerable to exploitation, either criminal or sexual, are provided with a clear targeted response which enables and promotes a targeted multi-agency response to need and risk.

The Oldham Complex Safeguarding Hub will work with any child up to the age of 18 years (or up to the age of 25 years for any young adult currently open to the After Care Service for Oldham) who are open for assessment, intervention or planning to Children's Social Care, where there is an identified high risk of, or current experience of exploitation. The team also work with a number of partner agencies and third sector services, in particular to ensure appropriate information sharing and timely signposting to key services inclusive of Probation, Housing, TOG MIND and KOGS (Keeping Our Girls Safe).

The Hub proposes a Phase 2 development by summer 2021 which incorporates advice and guidance in relation to professionals working with young people and adults where there is increasing concern regarding exploitation.

## Youth Justice Service – A Child First Approach

Youth justice Services have been trained in Contextual Safeguarding, in addition to Trauma Informed Responses and Adverse Childhood Experiences. Responses to crime are driven by an assessment and understanding of the child's circumstance and context, rather than the offences committed.

This approach has been embedded for a number of years and is producing good results; reoffending rates are down significantly in recent periods and compare favourably to national comparators, despite levels of deprivation in the town. The service has led on the dissemination of contextual safeguarding training and updates through the safeguarding partnership.

## Youth Now

**Youth Now, delivered by Positive Steps, in partnership with Oldham Council, The University of Bedfordshire and Greater Manchester Police is aimed at young people and families identified as at risk of involvement in youth violence.**

This project explores the use of family, peer, school and community interventions as part of Oldham's response to serious youth violence. Through embedded research, the University of Bedfordshire team will work alongside practitioners in Oldham to understand how their interventions engage with contextual dynamics of harm, capture and disseminate this learning, and support the service to identify its impact on the lives of young people and the contexts in which they spend their time. The research team will also support Oldham to understand how the interventions being developed could inform the application of a Contextual Safeguarding approach within children's social care, as part of their wider approach to complex safeguarding issues.

After the first eighteen months of the project there has been a significant amount of progress made against the outcome measures, in particularly when focusing on community interventions, which are already yielding positive results linked to positive attachment to neighbourhoods. Key to this has been the introduction of the Friday Night Youth Provision in Failsworth.

In addition to constructive pursuits such as attending cadets, MAHDLO and local gyms, young people and their families are supported by the Youth Now Team with targeted support depending upon need. A significant amount of time is spent ensuring young people are attending and engaging in school.

The programme is due to close in March 2021, although work will continue through Positive steps within the pilot site areas. This will include sharing of specific resources available for the partnership to use to improve responses to Contextual and Complex Safeguarding.

## Levels of strength and vulnerability

In Oldham we have sought to develop levels of need relating to strength and vulnerability in relation to Complex Safeguarding, seeking to reflect lived experience that considers contextual circumstances.

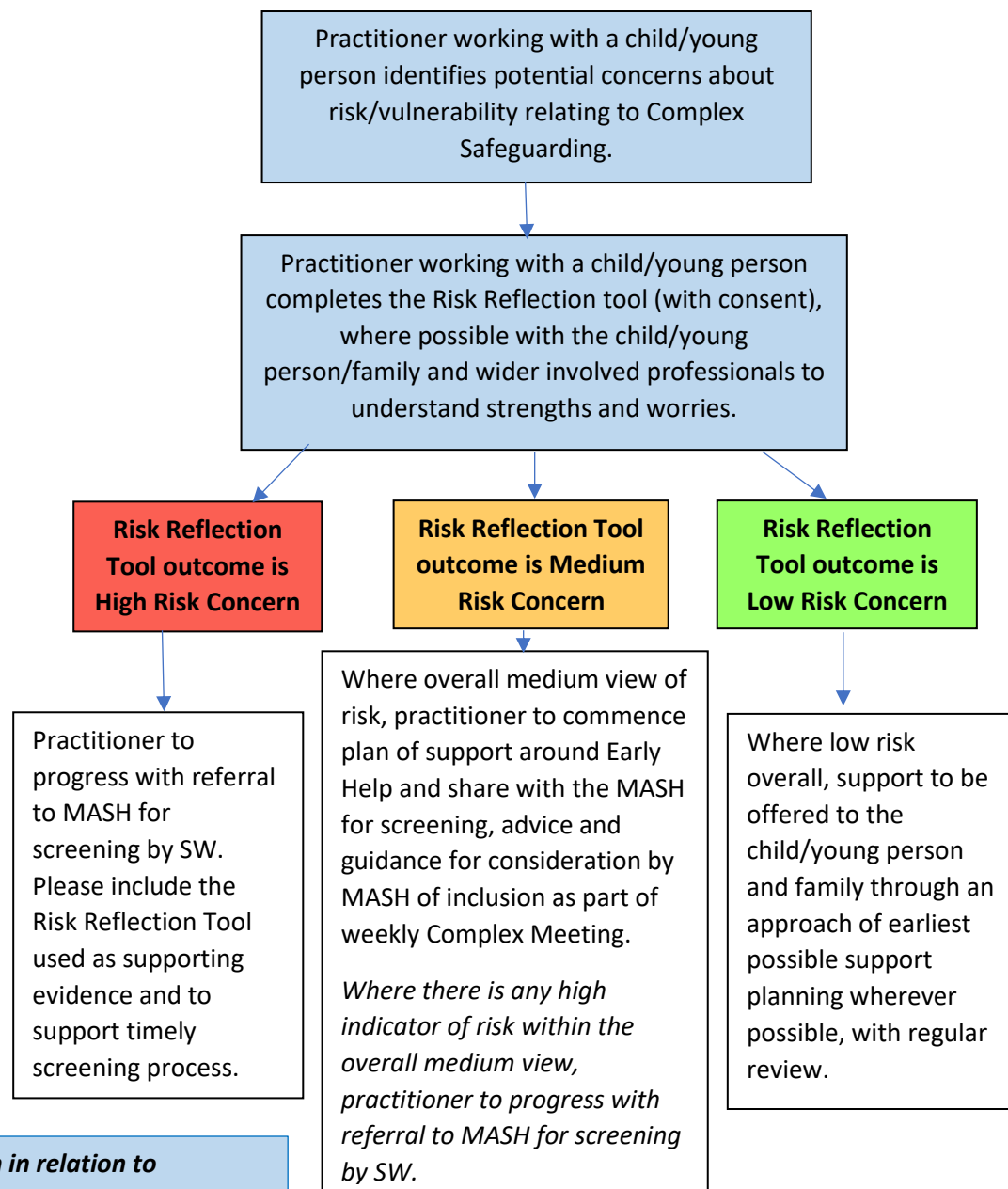
We have developed the following Risk and Vulnerability Management Categories in seeking to support practitioners working with children, young people and families in determining holistic overall view – these seek to take into account strengths, worries, evidence of any exploitation and vulnerabilities in understanding how we can best work together.

These levels are supported with a practitioner led reflective tool developed by the partnership.

Risk & Vulnerability Management Categories to determine holistic overall view:	
Presenting some vulnerability factors in the checklist but appear to relate to 'normal teenage' behaviour. No statutory intervention required but may benefit from low level ongoing monitoring, awareness raising or support. There are no indicators of active exploitation.	<b>LOW - Vulnerable</b> but no evidence active exploitation, we are worried.
Presenting numerous vulnerability factors but not at immediate risk. Some protective factors present. Would benefit from professional support or intervention, assessment, awareness and prevention work.	<b>MEDIUM – Our</b> worries are increased, risk of exploitation growing.
Child is presenting high number of vulnerability factors and high risk factors, is known to have been exploited and/or groomed. Regularly goes missing and concerns in relation to drugs/alcohol and inappropriate adult associates. Child has disclosed exploitation. Requires statutory intervention to protect. A referral through to the MASH should take place.	<b>HIGH – We</b> are very worried this young has been or is being exploited.

*Key is recognising the strengths in the young person and worries we may have for them in relation to vulnerability or experience of exploitation. It is important to work with the young person in seeking to understand who their trusted person would be and how to build trust in understanding their honest lived experience.*

## Pathway





# Priorities for 2020-2023

**Priority 1:** Raise awareness, confidence and skills to ensure the earliest identification of complex safeguarding, by professionals, carers and the wider community

**We will:**

- Develop an Oldham risk reflection tool to support professionals in their identification of potential risk and vulnerability factors associated with exploitation
- Develop a training needs framework to support the delivery of training across the Partnership workforce, including promoting best practice
- Upskill professionals across the Partnership to support a low and medium risk response
- Develop a communications campaign for professionals, parents and communities
- Work with Children, Young People and Adults at Risk to learn from their lived experiences

**Priority 2:** To ensure victims and their families receive good quality support

**We will:**

- Review referral pathways in relation to community and gang related activity and earliest possible help.
- Develop a contextual safety plan approach
- Review of resources to ensure the Partnership can provide a meaningful response to all Complex Safeguarding concerns
- Develop a robust response to transitional safeguarding
- Take part in Children's Society Benchmarking pilot to assess and improve our local response to children who go missing from home and/or care

**Priority 3:** Hold perpetrators to account through improved disruption and prosecution, and build our knowledge by understanding from perpetrators how they exploit children and adults at risk

**We will:**

- Take robust and early action to challenge the operations of perpetrators of exploitation ensuring we maximise the use of all agencies and the legal powers available to us to disrupt the behaviours
- Work with the National Probation Service, Community Rehabilitation Company and Youth Justice Service to understand and change perpetrator behaviour

# Governance Arrangements

Oldham's Children and Adult's Complex Safeguarding group will oversee the strategy and work plan and report to Oldham Safeguarding Children's Partnership and Oldham Safeguarding Adult's Board on a quarterly basis.

## Operational governance

**Daily Governance meetings:** Daily Governance is a process that will be delivered daily at 10am at Oldham Police station, with collaborative working between Oldham CSE, CCE and Challenger colleagues as one Oldham Safeguarding Hub, regarding any new agreed referrals through to the Complex Safeguarding Hub or any significant incidents regarding individuals known to the service. Any required attendance at strategy discussions that day will be agreed, and any urgent interventions will be actioned accordingly and not be delayed in anticipation of the daily briefing. (See Section 9).

**Weekly multi agency Complex Safeguarding Planning Meeting (CSPM):** this will be for all new contacts into the MASH that do not meet threshold for the Complex Safeguarding Hub but where Complex Safeguarding is deemed at low to medium risk. This will also be a key weekly meeting for consideration of place-based hotspot issues in Oldham. This will be held each Tuesday at MASH at Civic Centre

**Monthly operational meetings** will be multi-agency and reflectively consider children, young people and adults open to intervention from the Complex Safeguarding Hub, with input from the psychotherapeutic offer from GM Trusted Relationships Programme. Monthly multi agency meetings will be held to review the operational practice for Complex Safeguarding, both at the low/medium level and at medium/high level. This will enable multi-agency discussions around what is working well and what we need to develop to ensure Oldham offer a clear and consistent response to Complex Safeguarding issues. On a planned basis, this meeting will also review any high risk cases or 'hot spots' across Oldham to explore alternative ways of working and/or agree a disruption plan from a multi-agency perspective.

**Monthly vulnerability meetings with a place based approach:** are being built in collaboration between the Complex Safeguarding Hub, MASH, Local Policing Units and Community Safety teams in order to connect across a multi-agency partnership in relation to place based issues and worries in order to target prevention and intervention, particularly considering how we can connect a Universal Plus "Earliest Possible Help" opportunity to working with vulnerable young people.

## Appendices

1. Complex safeguarding hub operating procedures



Complex  
Safeguarding Hub C

2. Draft Complex Safeguarding Risk Reflection Tool



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## References

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<sup>i</sup> Safeguarding during adolescence – the relationship between Contextual Safeguarding, Complex Safeguarding and Transitional Safeguarding