



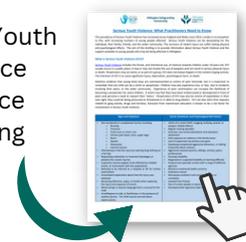
# Serious Youth Violence - Learning from Practice

The Safeguarding Partnership recently undertook a reflective review to explore the circumstances of a group of local children that had been involved in, or affected by, incidents of serious youth violence. We sought to identify themes and commonalities in the children's experience, and that of the practitioners working directly with them.

The review identified a number of factors that may increase the risk of extra-familial harm for children:

- **Unmet health and developmental needs**
- **Exposure to maltreatment in childhood**
- **Exposure to domestic abuse**
- **A close relative with history of criminality**
- **Poor housing, poverty, and social deprivation**

Serious Youth  
Violence  
Practice  
Briefing



- **Early Help:** Identifying additional health and developmental needs early, and meeting need, helps to reduce isolation and prevent crisis. It also reduces the risk of exclusion from school. The [Education Inclusion Toolkit](#) is a useful guide for professionals.
- **Meaningful Interventions:** When a concern is identified, act quickly and focus on meaningful intervention for children. We know that experience of crisis can increase motivation for children and families. and need to act when there are [reachable and teachable moments](#).
- **Be Child-Focused:** Pay attention to language, and think about all aspects of a child's life. Put the child first, and consider their developmental stage, strengths and needs.
- **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion:** Think about the impacts of structural inequality and adversity on children and take steps to promote parity of access to support and protection. Be mindful of [adultification](#) and intersectional disadvantage.
- **Trauma Informed Practice:** Children who have experienced maltreatment and adverse experiences in childhood, including domestic abuse, are at [increased risk of being affected by serious youth violence](#).
- **Think Family:** Having a close relative with a history of criminality increases the risk of a child being impacted by serious youth violence. Find out about the family network when getting to know a child and actively consider the needs of younger siblings. Be curious!
- **Foster a culture of professional curiosity:** Hold the child in mind whilst recognising and responding to any risk they may pose. This approach is supported by effective multiagency working, that recognises the value of expertise across a range of disciplines, and promotes reflection and professional challenge where appropriate.



Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership has launched a Contextual Safeguarding Strategy with a collaborative approach to understanding, and responding to, children's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. The strategy provides a multi-layered and multidisciplinary framework to address extra-familial harm, whilst incorporating views from children, the community and practitioners to deliver meaningful change locally.

The Contextual Safeguarding strategy recognises that the different relationships children form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers can have limited influence over these contexts, and over children's experiences of extra-familial abuse. Children's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.



## Supporting Carers

A carer is anyone who looks after a family member or friend who has a disability, mental or physical illness, or addiction, or who needs extra help as they grow older. Carers can be children, young people or adults.

Identification of carers enables assessment of their ability and willingness to provide care as well as to assess the support they need to maintain their own wellbeing. This is an important step to reduce the risk of harm both to carers and to the people they care for.

To mark Carers Week 2023 the Safeguarding Partnership produced a briefing focusing on the importance of working with carers to safeguard practice with children and adults.

The briefing covers:

- Young Carers - A Safeguarding Response
- Carers for Children with Disabilities
- Identifying and Assessing Adult Carers: Are They Able and Willing to Care?
- Learning from Practice
- Engaging Intimidating or Resistant Carers



## Safeguarding Adults and Children with Mental Health Concerns

Timely and effective responses to adults and children with mental health concerns can improve wellbeing and reduce risks of many forms of harm. This briefing is aimed at all practitioners who encounters adults and/or children with mental health concerns through their work, whether it be housing, policing, healthcare, social care, support work, probation, education, welfare rights, advocacy, or advice services.

To mark Mental Health Awareness Week 2023 the Safeguarding Partnership produced a briefing to support safeguarding practice with children and adults with mental health needs.



This briefing covers:

- Responding to Mental Health Concerns and Suicidal Feelings for Children and Adults
- Think Family: Parental Mental Health and the impact on children's safety and wellbeing
- Mental Health Assessment vs Mental Health Act Assessment - Know the Difference
- Partnership Working Between Social Care and Clinical Services
- Mental Health Awareness Week May 2023
- Safeguarding Adults with Mental Health Needs
- Protecting the Mental Health of Professionals

## Exploring Practice: Voice of the Person

Listening to children and adults at risk is key to effective child- and adult-centred safeguarding practice. Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership sought to understand how well children, and adults are listened to when they are receiving safeguarding support.

You can read the Executive Summary of the report here.



Most of the adults and children we spoke to felt listened to by professionals supporting them:

*There was a physiotherapist who was very caring and sat down with me and [the adult] and asked a lot of questions, proactively seeking information about how comfortable he is, really going into details, asking follow up questions to clarify. This really felt like she was listening.*

*They gave me time to properly express what I was thinking.*

*Community nurse from GP came over and really listened and then called back to check in - a real sense of care and concern, that she had heard.*

*They sat down and played a game with me. They asked me questions that helped me to speak about my family and home.*

*My SW is great! She fights for me, she listens to me.... quite refreshing really. She's a really great SW.*



When people felt that professionals genuinely cared about their situation, often at times of crisis in their lives, they felt more heard.



# The Core Components of Listening

## Making dedicated time and space

**Named contact:** Ensure service users know who their named contact is and what their role is.

**Prioritise time** to engage with children and adults at risk, as well as their families and other key people in their lives. Creating opportunities to listen increases the chance of people trusting you and sharing important information with you.

**Provide privacy**, and think about how comfortable individuals might be speaking in front of others. For example, children, parents or carers might find it hard to be open and honest in front of the person they need to talk about.

**If someone has legal status as a Lasting Power of Attorney of Deputy** make sure you understand what their role entails and remember you must share relevant information and consult them.

*Asking me questions about my mum when mum wasn't listening would have been so much better.*

*A structured conversation rather than just ad hoc chat. A dedicated place and time to do it... having key players in the room (or video call) at the same time in order to be able to make decisions together and build trust.*

*More follow up - hearing how difficult it is, and not leaving me to deal with it alone.*

*Coming to the house and seeing mum was really positive, and doing so repeatedly, not just getting one off snapshots.*

*They sat down and played a game with me. They asked me questions that helped me to speak about my family and home.*

## Relationship and rapport building

**Multiple visits/conversations** rather than one off contacts, wherever possible, are valuable to build relationships.

**Demonstrate interest and concern for someone's experience.** It is highly likely if you are undertaking a safeguarding intervention, there is a great deal of emotion involved for them.

**Be respectful and patient** and remember that sometimes people can be agitated, aroused and angry when they are experiencing a stressful situation.

## Acting on what people say and communicating what is being done

**Explain what you intend to do** with information provided.

**Provide clear updates about what you are doing** in response to the information you have received, from them or other people, wherever this is safe to do so.

**Explain your reasoning for your actions** in clear simple language. Be prepared to answer questions and disputes about your actions.

**Be clear with people if there are barriers to helping them** in the way they would like. Be honest about any limitations.

*The problems got stuck in the 'safeguarding investigation machine', and just stayed there. Nothing seemed to happen. Hard to find someone who would actually talk to me*

*They told me they would 'look into it' but didn't actually explain what they were doing about the concerns. Feedback about was being done... would have been helpful.*

*More joined up discussions between professionals rather than sending me from pillar to post. I was constantly being told I was calling the wrong person, the wrong service, and directed elsewhere.*

## Tailoring communication to individuals and families

**Use an interpreter** if the person concerned is not fluent in English. Do not use friends or family.

**Use plain English** and avoid jargon. Use words and phrases that you expect the person will be able to understand.

**Check the person understands** what you have said, ask them to explain what they have heard from you, and what they think about it.

**Check you understand** what a person has said to you by summarising and paraphrasing what you have heard and asking whether you have it right.

*Speak slowly, don't hurry. Make sure that there is a shared understanding before moving on in the conversation. Really delve into the discussion to make sure that the service user has understood your questions and the information you have given, rather than just assuming they understand the question.*

*Being patient when someone cannot hear them.*

*Remember that you are talking to people at times of really high emotion. I felt like they didn't realise how hard it was for me... When people are really emotional it is even harder to process information*

*I could not always follow what was going on and being said. So for me more time could have been taken... But because of my language and English I did not understand everything.*

**Think about the time of day and location** that is best to speak to someone. Things like dementia, substance abuse and certain physical conditions can impact how able people are to communicate at different times of the day.

**Remember that heightened emotions and stress** can reduce people's ability to process information. Speak slowly, in small chunks of information, and repeat important points if you are not confident you have been understood.

**Take account of sensory impairment or speech impediment** ask what helps them, consider specialist advice, and ask people who know them what will help.

## Useful communication resources for working with children and adults



Useful information to support children impacted by child sexual abuse



Communication tips for speaking to people with hearing impairment, from the RNID



Guide to support communication with a person with dementia



Guide to support communication with a person with learning disability



"Let children know you're listening" A guide to help adults respond to children's disclosures of abuse

## The Parenting Apart Programme

The Parenting Apart Programme exists to support parents in Hillingdon going through conflict, separation or divorce - and most importantly - supporting the emotional wellbeing of children throughout. It is a free service that consenting parents can be referred into by professionals, courts or by self referral.

The Parenting Apart Programme offers a supportive environment for both parents, so they can work towards an agreed co-parenting relationship and to compile a Parent Working Agreement, with the support provided by a PAP practitioner.

It is designed as an early help offer, where no safeguarding concerns have been identified and it is safe for children to have contact with either parent.

The programme lasts 4 weeks and sessions can be face-to-face or virtual. The initial session takes place with each parent and then there are 3 joint sessions with both parents. Both parents must give consent to participate in the programme.

### Benefits:

- Reduces the time and expenses of court proceedings and solicitors' fees.
- Improves communication skills between parents.
- Reduces parental stress and anxiety.
- Children are able to continue to have relationships with both parents.
- Improves the emotional and mental wellbeing of children.
- Creates a more stable environment for children between homes.
- Builds a better co-parenting relationship.
- Gives parents a better understanding about what is best for their children.
- Improves relationships between parents and children when a significant change has taken place.



If you are a professional wishing to refer a family for the Parenting Apart Programme, please complete an Early Help Assessment using the [Stronger Families Hub portal](#).



## Dog Safety with Children

The Child Accident Prevention Trust is the UK's leading charity working to reduce the number of children and young people killed, disabled or seriously injured in accidents. They have produced simple accessible resources for practitioners to share with parents about how to manage dogs safely around children to prevent dog related injuries to children.

The bond between children and dogs can bring fun and happiness to family life. But any dog can bite. Children are most likely to be bitten at home, by a familiar dog. In 2022, over 1,700 children were admitted to hospital with dog bites. Most accidents like this are preventable.



**YOUR OPINION  
MATTERS**



## Working Together to Safeguarding Children Government Consultation and Review

Working Together to Safeguard Children is the multi-agency statutory guidance that sets out expectations for the system that provides help, support and protection for children and their families. It tells practitioners what is required of them individually and how they need to work in partnership with each other to deliver effective services.

**Updating Working Together is part of the Government's plans to transform Children's Social Care.**

By contributing to the consultation yourself, you can help make sure the updated guidance does what children and their families need it to do.

You have until **6th September 2023** to contribute your expertise and experience to the consultation.

The consultation document is  
Stable Homes, Built on Love.

**Click here to contribute**



The Department of Education is running a series of free online events to support your engagement with the consultation process. The events are open to anyone with a responsibility for or interest in child protection and safeguarding.

Click here to book

**eventbrite**



Believe in  
children  
Barnardo's

**SEEN.**



SEEN is a Barnardo's initiative working to improve outcomes for children and young people of African, Asian and Caribbean heritage.

SEEN seeks to create systemic change by challenging structural inequalities that impede opportunities for a fair and equitable future for children and young people of African, Asian and Caribbean heritage to fulfil their full potential.

**Goals:**  
Stronger families  
Safer childhoods  
Positive futures



Visit [www.weareseen.org.uk](http://www.weareseen.org.uk) to learn more.



## Partnership News

### Suicide Awareness Training - FREE Book Now!

This Suicide Awareness training has been co-produced with lived experience experts. Rethink Mental Illness have been commissioned by North West London Integrated Care System to deliver Suicide Awareness training to people who live, work, study or volunteer within the North West London. Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership have arranged for them to deliver in person training to professionals and volunteers in Hillingdon. The focus is on awareness of suicide affecting adults.

It will cover:

- How to look after yourself
- The stigma associated with suicide and how we can challenge this
- Warning signs of suicide
- How to hold a safe conversation with someone who is having thoughts of suicide

Book onto this training via  
Learning Zone



Need a Learning Zone account? [Complete this form](#)

### Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership are hosting a free lunch and learn webinar delivered by the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse.



Understanding the Causes, Scope, Scale and Impact of Child Sexual Abuse.

Monday 10th July at 12.30 – 1.30pm

The learning outcomes are:

- Understanding the scale and nature of child sexual abuse
- Identifying the signs and indicators of abuse
- Sharing information regarding resources for practice

Click here to register for  
the webinar



This webinar is open to professionals and volunteers that work with children, young people and their families.

### New: Female Genital Mutilation E-Learning



The Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) eLearning Course is a free, quick and easy platform consisting of 5 modules that explore the key components of FGM within the context of harmful practices.

The course was designed in collaboration with professionals, victims/survivors and young people to support risk assessment of FGM, and safeguarding practice with girls and families. It is suitable for any professional, in any role, working with children, adults, and their families.

Content:

- An introduction to Harmful Practices
- What is FGM?
- The impacts of FGM
- The law and FGM
- Cultural literacy and FGM

Access the eLearning here: <https://nationalfgmcentre.org.uk/fgm-e-learning-course/>