

# Blackpool Joint Contextual Safeguarding Strategy 2026 – 2029



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## Introduction

The Blackpool Multi Agency Contextual Safeguarding Strategy has been developed as a joint initiative between Blackpool Children's Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA), Blackpool Safeguarding Adults Board (BSAB) and Blackpool Community Safety Partnership (BSafe) in collaboration with the Local Authority, Police, Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) and a wide range of specialist partners who work together to safeguard children, young people, their families and adults who are vulnerable to abuse. This strategy outlines our collective approach in Blackpool to safeguarding children, young people, and adults from exploitation through a contextual safeguarding lens, acknowledging the importance of understanding transitional safeguarding, and raising awareness of the gap in responses to young adults at risk of harm and exploitation. It recognises that exploitation is complex, often rooted in wider social and environmental factors, and requires a coordinated, multi-agency trauma-informed, and community-based response.

## Our Vision

We want all children, young people and adults in Blackpool to be free from exploitation. By tackling exploitation through prevention, early action and strong partnerships, we will build safer communities that promote wellbeing and empower people to thrive. We will relentlessly pursue individuals who engage in exploitative behaviour.

## Scope of this Strategy

This Strategy focuses on safeguarding children, young people and adults against exploitation and extra familial harm. This all-age strategy recognises that those who seek to abuse and exploit children, young people and adults do so by targeting their vulnerability, regardless of age. Social and environmental factors that enable the exploitation of children and young people continue into adulthood.

Work to safeguard children, adults and families is complex and requires skilled professional judgement informed by evidence, compassion, and an understanding of trauma.

## Principles For Trauma Informed Practice

In the course of our work, the terms victim, survivor, perpetrator may be used where necessary to remain consistent with organisational and legal terminology. We acknowledge that these labels may not reflect how individuals understand or identify themselves. This guidance therefore uses these terms only for clarity and consistency, while maintaining a trauma informed approach in practice.

### A trauma informed approach means:

- Prioritising safety, choice, and empowerment.
- Demonstrating trustworthiness and transparency.
- Recognising the impact of trauma on memory, behaviour, relationships and decision making.
- Avoiding blame, shame, or coercion.
- Understanding that trauma may affect engagement or how a person presents not as resistance, but as a coping mechanism.

Using a strengths based approach supports earlier identification of needs, enabling timely intervention and reducing the escalation of harm or crisis.

## Key Definitions

### For the purpose of this strategy, the term exploitation is used to cover:

Exploitation is a form of abuse that can affect children, young people, and adults. It occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate, or deceive a person into sexual activity and/or criminal activity

Sexual exploitation - a form of sexual abuse that can affect children, young people, and adults. It occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate, or deceive a person into sexual activity

- A. in exchange for something the person needs or wants (such as money, accommodation, food, protection, affection, substances, or status), and/or
- B. for the financial gain, sexual gratification, or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

[The Hydrant Programme](#) defines group-based child sexual exploitation as a network of two or more individuals known to be involved in or to facilitate the sexual exploitation of children and young people. This includes actions such as introducing children to other individuals for the purpose of exploitation, trafficking a child for sexual exploitation, taking payment for sexual activities with a child or young person, or allowing their property to be used for sexual activities with a child or young person. The definition is based on data from 2023 and aims to improve the understanding and response to group-based child sexual exploitation in the UK.

A person may be sexually exploited even where sexual activity appears consensual. Exploitation does not always involve physical contact and can also occur through the use of technology, including online grooming, coercion, and the sharing or threat of sharing sexual images.

## The Voice of Blackpool's Children, Young People and Adults

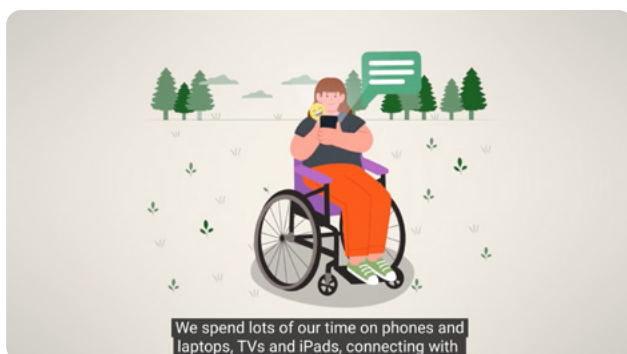
***“We will listen to and engage with children, young people and adults to ensure that we understand what matters to them. We want will use this information to inform our services and will feed back to give assurance.”***

The voice and lived experience of children, young people and adults, and their families must be central to informing the work that we do and approaches we take in preventing exploitation. Safeguarding practice should be co-produced where possible, empowering those impacted to shape the support they receive.

***“You can learn as much from us as we can learn from you”***

The Voice of Blackpool Children

[Listen to Blackpool children's views on staying safe online](#)



## What We Will Do

- Seek to drive an evidence-based response to exploitation and extra familial harm. We recognise the importance of on-going engagement with those vulnerable to or impacted by exploitation, and we will seek to work alongside them as this strategy is implemented. We listen and respond to peoples lived experiences.
- Actively explore and coproduce the methods we use to capture feedback and understand the lived experiences of both people who have experienced harm and individuals who engage in exploitative behaviour, ensuring these insights meaningfully inform our approach to tackling exploitation
- Ensure these approaches are trauma informed to prevent young people and adults having to repeat their stories.
- Be culturally aware and hold each other to account to make sure that feedback and ideas from young people and adults are taken forward to improve how we deliver services in Blackpool.
- Ensure that our work is based on up-to-date evidence-based data and research.

## Blackpool Partnerships Tackling Exploitation

These are the organisations and sectors that play a role in identifying, preventing, responding to, and disrupting exploitation:

### Statutory Safeguarding Partners

- Blackpool Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA)
- Blackpool Safeguarding Adults Board (BSAB)
- Blackpool Community Safety Partnership (BSafe)
- Local Authority – Children's Services & Adult Social Care
- Lancashire & South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Police (including Awaken Team, YJS links, CSP links)

### Multi-Agency Operational Partners

- Awaken Team (co-located children's social care, health & police)
- Youth Justice Service (YJS)
- Community Safety Partnership Teams
- Education providers (schools, early years and childcare settings, colleges, alternative provision)
- Health providers (acute, community, mental health services)
- Adult social care teams & safeguarding teams

## Community & Specialist Partners

Third sector / VCFS organisations supporting:

- Exploitation
- Missing children
- Domestic abuse
- Substance misuse
- Mental health & wellbeing
- Housing & homelessness

## Community groups and grassroots organisations

### Advocacy services

### Faith and cultural organisations

### National Partners & Frameworks

- Home Office
- National Crime Agency
- Vulnerability & Policing Research Centre
- Research in Practice – Transitional Safeguarding work
- Contextual Safeguarding Network (University of Bedfordshire/Durham)

## Blackpool's Approach to Tackling Exploitation

In Blackpool, we recognise that protecting children, young people, and adults from exploitation demands a coordinated, multi-agency approach. No single organisation can tackle this issue in isolation. Effective safeguarding relies on strong partnerships across services, particularly when supporting individuals who, due to the impact of trauma or exploitation, may face barriers to engaging with support.

Exploitation is complex and evolving. It can involve people who have experienced harm being coerced into exploiting others, sometimes creating a blurred line between those who have suffered harm and those who may cause it. This cycle of harm highlights the need for a compassionate, whole-system response.

This strategy outlines Blackpool's commitment to addressing all forms of exploitation through a unified approach. It sets out the key challenges and strategic priorities that will guide our long-term efforts to strengthen prevention, intervention, and support for children, young people and adults who are vulnerable or have experienced exploitation.

Exploitation remains a critical focus for Blackpool's statutory safeguarding boards and partnerships, reflecting our shared responsibility to protect the most vulnerable in our community.

The Joint Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Delivery Group (SDG) will be responsible for delivering the strategy and work plan and measuring impact, and will report to MASA, BSAB and BSafe Boards.

The Contextual SDG will work in partnership with other MASA, BSAB and BSafe subgroups and strategic delivery groups including Workforce Development, Effectiveness SDG, Women's Safety, and Making Safeguarding Personal groups (see Figure 1).

We will actively apply learning from all statutory reviews to drive improvement, embedding recommendations into frontline practice to enhance safeguarding outcomes for children and adults at risk of exploitation. Through rigorous quality assurance and scrutiny across the MASA, BSAB, and BSafe partnership boards, we aim to improve outcomes for children, young people, and adults.

The purpose of the Blackpool Joint Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Delivery Group (SDG) is to provide assurance to MASA, BSAB and BSafe that matters of exploitation in Blackpool are being appropriately dealt with, in line with our vision to improve outcomes for children, young people and adults, whilst disrupting and supporting accountability of those who cause harm, including through prosecution where appropriate.

The group aims to recognise emerging exploitation matters and proactively safeguard children, young people and adults. It will have a shared and collective understanding of issues and experiences of those at risk, with a commitment to sharing what we know about exploitation across the partnership.

The SDG will co-ordinate a multi-agency and integrated response to exploitation for both children and adults at risk in the areas of

- Child and Adult Criminal Exploitation
- Child and Adult Sexual Exploitation
- Modern Slavery/Human Trafficking
- Missing

# Blackpool Safeguarding Partnerships Governance Structure – August 2026

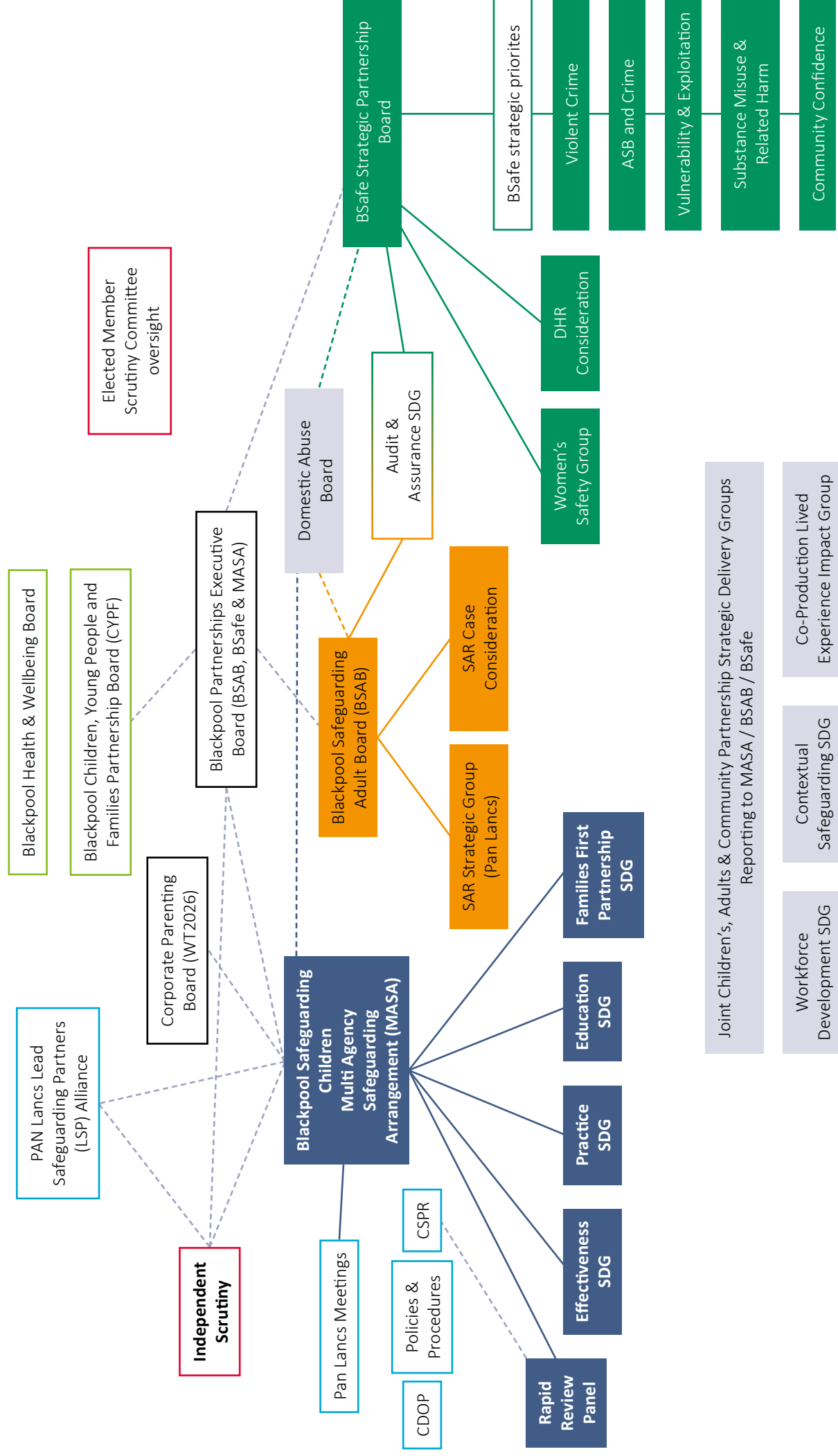


Figure 1 MASA, BSAB and BSafe Governance Structure

## Awaken – Contextual Safeguarding Team

The Awaken Team is a co located multi agency team including children social care, health and police. We provide an intensive, trauma informed and strengths-based support service to children and young people up until the age of 25 experiencing exploitation or at risk of being exploited.

Transitional safeguarding recognises that harm, trauma and development do not stop at 18. The team support those affected by all types of exploitation, including criminal and sexual exploitation, modern day slavery and cuckooing. The intersection between contextual safeguarding and young people who go missing from home is recognised and reflected in co-located working arrangements. The team delivers training to the wider partnership and works closely with Youth Justice Service and Community Safety partnership and offers an out-of-hour outreach service. To ensure success, interventions capitalise on trusted relationships, allow for professional creativity and autonomy and are not limited in time.

## Adults Safeguarding

When contextual safeguarding concerns arise for an adult, practitioners should make a safeguarding adults concern to the Adult Social Care team in a way that supports the person to be fully involved, respects their wishes, and focuses on what matters to them, ensuring they remain in control of decisions wherever possible.

## Adult Practice Principles

At every stage of supporting an adult with a safeguarding concern, practitioners must adhere to the **Care Act principles**, ensuring that responses promote empowerment, prevention, proportionality, protection, partnership, and accountability.

| Principle       | Definition                                                                                                                                                               | Person-Centred Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Empowerment     | People are supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.                                                                                    | I am asked what I want as the outcomes from the safeguarding process and this directly informs what happens.                                                                                                              |
| Prevention      | It is better to take action before harm occurs.                                                                                                                          | I receive clear and simple information about what abuse is. I know how to recognise the signs and I know what I can do to seek help.                                                                                      |
| Proportionality | The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.                                                                                                          | I am sure that the professionals will work in my interest and they will only get involved as much as necessary.                                                                                                           |
| Protection      | Support and representation for those in greatest need.                                                                                                                   | I get help and support to report abuse and neglect. I get help so that I am able to take part in the safeguarding process to the extent to which I want.                                                                  |
| Partnership     | Services offer local solutions through working closely with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse. | I know that staff treat any personal and sensitive information in confidence, only sharing what is helpful and necessary. I am confident that professionals will work together and with me to get the best result for me. |
| Accountability  | Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.                                                                                                              | I understand the role of everyone involved in my life and so do they.                                                                                                                                                     |

### The legal framework of Section 42 of the Care Act will be used to determine if:

- The adults have care & support and as a result of those needs, are unable to protect themselves from harm or abuse.
- If there is a reasonable belief that they are experiencing or at risk.
- if they are unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect.

Where a safeguarding concern meets the criteria for a Section 42 Care Act enquiry, proportionate enquiries will be undertaken and appropriate action agreed. This may include multi-agency planning to safeguard the adult, while also considering the wider impact of any exploitation, including risks to children within the family or household.

If a concern does not progress to a safeguarding enquiry, practitioners should work with the adult to agree next steps. In line with Making Safeguarding Personal, a Multi-Disciplinary Team meeting should be convened with the person's involvement and consent wherever possible to assess risk, explore options, and identify how best to support them.

Inter-agency escalation procedures should be used if raising a concern does not result in the adult or child being adequately safeguarded

## Practice Principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm

In 2022, Research in Practice, the University of Bedfordshire and The Children's Society co-devised a set of [practice principles](#) that draws on research, practitioners' best practice, and the expertise of those with lived experience.

Blackpool's vision for Contextual Safeguarding is directly shaped by these eight evidence-informed principles

### Principle 1 - Putting children, young people and adults who are at risk of exploitation first.

#### Key aspects of being person-centred include:

- tailoring to each individual person and the context of their lives.
- keeping the person in focus when making decisions about their lives.
- working in partnership with them and families.
- prioritising their best interests and recognising their needs, rights, strengths, and potential.
- ensuring that work is developmentally informed and cognisant of structural barriers and legal responsibilities.

### Principle 2 - Recognising and challenging inequalities, exclusion, and discrimination.

#### Key aspects of this principle include:

- attending to both the interpersonal discrimination and inequalities facing children and young people and adults at risk or experiencing exploitation, as well as their families/communities.
- creating an inclusive culture for professionals and those they support, in which everyone is respected regardless of any characteristics.
- making sure marginalised voices are heard.

### Principle 3 - Respecting the voice, experience, and expertise of children and young people and adults who are at risk of or experiencing exploitation.

#### Key aspects of this principle include:

- working with children, young people and adults at risk or experiencing exploitation rather than doing to them
- involving them in decision-making at all levels and having transparent conversations about decision-making.
- looking at participatory practices as a way to invert manipulation and the coercion associated with exploitation.
- paying particular attention to children and young people and adults at risk or experiencing exploitation whose voices are sometimes overlooked.

### Principle 4 - Being strengths and relationship-based.

#### Key aspects of this principle include:

- seeing a child or young person and adults at risk or experiencing exploitation holistically, identifying their strengths and assets and the positive factors in their lives rather than overfocusing on risk and harm.
- using the positive power of relationships to support growth and change.
- modelling strengths-based and relationship-based approach in multiagency settings .
- Using a solution focussed approach – Goal setting and aspiration

### Principle 5 - Recognising and responding to trauma.

#### Key aspects of being trauma-informed include:

- understanding collectively how trauma impacts on development and behaviour (including “not currently able or ready to engage” and “negative” coping strategies).
- recognising how individual/organisational decisions, language and processes may compound traumatic experiences and affect the ability to develop trusting relationships.
- enabling children, young people and adults at risk of or experiencing exploitation to exercise voice, choice, and control.

## Principle 6 - Being curious, evidence-informed, and knowledgeable.

### Key aspects of this principle include:

- committing to reflection, learning, and thoughtful use of evidence at all levels.
- considering multiple sources of information and intelligence to build an accurate picture of child exploitation and of an individual's life.
- actively challenging assumptions and considering what is not known.
- inviting expertise from others and being open to creativity/innovation.

## Principle 7 - Approaching parents, carers and families as partners, wherever appropriate and possible.

### Key aspects of this principle include:

- recognising the expertise of family to enhance agencies' abilities to support individuals.
- modelling a mindset that sees families first and foremost as sources of protection, support and love unless there is evidence to indicate otherwise.
- respecting their contributions and being sensitive to the distress they are likely experiencing.
- Children/YP and adults and families who have a limited support network need support to develop relationships/ support networks to promote long term safety/safeguarding.

## Principle 8 - Creating safer spaces and places for children, young people and adults

### Key aspects of this principle include:

- paying attention to the context of children and young people's lives, the potential for harm and the actions that can be taken.
- moving beyond individualised interventions to consider wider patterns of harm and risk; moving beyond the physical safety of the child to also support their relational and psychological sense of safety.

## Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA)

Between May 2022 and April 2024 Blackpool partners worked alongside the [Vulnerability and Policing Research Centre](#) co-designing community resilience to online child sexual exploitation and abuse victimisation. The aim of this two-year project was to take a place-based and problem-oriented approach to understand and improve offline responses to OCSEA. It engaged over 50 stakeholders, such as young people, parents, police officers, and social care professionals, to explore the scale, nature, and responses to Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) in the local context.

### Key findings included

- Community practitioners struggle to respond to online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA) victimisation due to its volume, complexity and the lack of relevant evidence-informed guidance and training.
- Police reactions to peer-on-peer abuse can influence the extent to which enforcement, social care or educational approaches dominate local responses. Holistic and multi-agency informed practices are needed to combat the problem
- There needs to be meaningful engagement with children and parents when delivering community-based responses to OCSEA.
- Empowering communities to tackle OCSEA requires collaboration to agree local priorities and co-produce quality response standards.

The following 11 co-produced priorities identified by stakeholders to guide local multi-agency responses to Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) that underpin our work in Blackpool: are

1. Improve education and awareness for children, parents, and professionals about OCSEA risks and responses.
2. Strengthen multi-agency collaboration to ensure consistent and coordinated responses.
3. Ensure children's voices are central in shaping policies and practices.
4. Develop clear referral pathways for suspected OCSEA cases, including peer-on-peer abuse.
5. Provide training and resources for practitioners to build confidence and competence.
6. Create safe spaces for children to disclose abuse and seek support.
7. Address platform risks by engaging with tech companies and promoting safer digital environments.

8. Support parents and carers with guidance on digital parenting and safeguarding.
9. Recognize and respond to vulnerabilities, including neurodiversity, adverse childhood experiences, and environmental factors.
10. Balance children's rights to privacy with safeguarding responsibilities.
11. Embed OCSEA prevention into broader community resilience and safeguarding strategies.

#### **Our work will be informed and underpinned by**

**Insight Led Action** - MASA, BSAB, and BSafe will use data and lived experience to identify and address exploitation risks across Blackpool.

**Real Life Impact** - We are focused on improving access to support and creating safer spaces for children, young people, and adults.

**Joined Up Reporting** - Regular updates will be shared with partnership boards to demonstrate progress against shared safeguarding priorities.

**Annual Accountability** - Transparent reporting will be delivered through MASA, BSAB, and BSafe Annual Reports.

**Lived Experience** - the voices of children, families, and practitioners will be central to shaping our work and driving improvement.

**Beyond the Numbers** - we will explore lived experience and outcomes - not just data - to understand and measure real change.

**Reflective Practice** - We will conduct reviews and audit to find out what's working, what's not, and where we go next.

**Continuous Improvement** Our approach will evolve continuously to reflect meaningful change across Blackpool's safeguarding landscape.

**Workforce Development** Learning, development, and training will be designed and delivered collaboratively, ensuring all partners across Blackpool are equipped to respond effectively to exploitation.

**Evidence-based approaches** - Ensure our work is supported evidence-based practice and that our work with children is underpinned by the Multi Agency Practice Principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm.

**Trauma-Informed Practice** – We will embed trauma-informed principles across all safeguarding activity, ensuring responses are sensitive to the impact of trauma and promote healing, trust, and empowerment.

## **Our Priorities**

### **Priority 1 - Prevention and Early Intervention**

**We are committed to a future where exploitation is prevented before it begins.**

Through early identification, proactive support, and strong strategic and community partnerships, we will work together to protect vulnerable children and adults from harm - online, offline, and in every space, they live, learn, work, and connect. By embedding prevention into every layer of our system, we will build a culture of safety, resilience, and hope for the future.

#### **We will**

- Ensure that our workforce and partners continually build their knowledge and confidence to identify and respond to exploitation. This will be achieved through a robust training needs analysis, followed by targeted action to address gaps and strengthen practice across all agencies.
- Support children, young people, adults, and the communities they live in to build awareness of exploitation - what it is, how to recognise it, what to do if they have concerns, and how to overcome barriers to reporting.
- Work alongside communities to build resilience through meaningful engagement programmes. By listening, empowering, and supporting local voices, we aim to strengthen understanding of exploitation and foster collective understanding and action to prevent harm.
- Create spaces that actively deter harm and exploitation, while promoting safety, inclusion, and resilience within our communities.
- Carry out targeted risk assessments and mapping exercises to identify vulnerabilities in high-risk areas - enabling proactive, place-based responses to exploitation.
- Collaborate with statutory authorities and third sector organisations to deepen our understanding of the motivations and contextual factors influencing those who perpetrate exploitation. This insight will help us evaluate the impact of interventions and inform more effective, preventative approaches.
- Ensure that our workforce and partners are equipped with the right resources and tools to respond effectively to exploitation. These will be drawn from a range of trusted sources, including the safeguarding partnership website, to support consistent, informed practice across Blackpool.

## Priority 2 - Protecting Children, Young People and Adults from Exploitation

**We are committed to working together across Blackpool to protect children, young people, and adults from the risk of exploitation.**

The MASA and BSAFE, BSAB Boards will strive to ensure that all professionals are equipped with the knowledge and skills to recognise and respond effectively to all forms of exploitation. Together, we will continue to build a safeguarding system in Blackpool that is responsive, collaborative, with a particular focus on improving outcomes for our most vulnerable residents.

### We will

- Utilise data and intelligence from across the partnership to support and underpin our work. This approach will reflect the distinct challenges faced by coastal towns like Blackpool, enabling targeted, evidence-based responses to exploitation.
- We will ensure that high quality, trauma informed support is accessible to individuals affected by, or at risk of, exploitation - as well as their families. This support will be robust, responsive, and fit for purpose, meeting the diverse needs of those impacted.
- Ensure that partnership agencies work together to share intelligence and coordinate a robust, unified response to exploitation
- Ensure that clear protocols for timely sharing of safeguarding concerns are used effectively regularly reviewed and consistently maintained.
- Explore opportunities for practitioners, children, young people and adults with lived experience to co design/ co produce service pathways for those at risk of exploitation.
- Review and update Local Pathway guidance for children, young people and adults and publish on the partnership website.
- We will align strategic and operational plans to deliver Blackpool's all age approach to tackling exploitation, ensuring consistency and impact across services.
- As a partnership, we will remain proactive and responsive to the evolving landscape of exploitation - regionally and nationally - adapting our approach to emerging risks and trends.

## Priority 3 - Being Informed and Engaged

**Together, we can build a safer Blackpool where everyone feels informed, supported, and strong.**

We are committed to equipping parents, carers, and the wider public with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to recognise exploitation, take protective action, and support others in doing the same. By strengthening the quality and accessibility of the information we share, we aim to empower communities with the tools to recognise signs of exploitation, take informed action, and contribute to meaningful change.

### We will

- Work closely with community groups and organisations to raise awareness of exploitation - what it is, how to recognise it, and how to report concerns safely and confidently.
- Support our workforce and key stakeholders to recognise their role not only as professionals, but as active members of their own communities - empowering them to respond to and help tackle exploitation with confidence, compassion, and shared responsibility.
- The Contextual Strategic Delivery Group will ensure that all communications are aligned with the principles of Blackpool Families Rock, War on Words, and the MASA/BSAB and BSAFE Communication and Engagement strategy. This includes avoiding jargon, ensuring accessibility, maintaining honesty and respect, using user friendly language, and offering documents in alternative formats to meet diverse needs.
- Work in collaboration with the partnership communications teams to ensure key messages and events linked to exploitation are shared with the public.
- Develop communication networks utilising digital platforms and other innovative approaches to sharing partnership information
- Draw on local expertise to ensure education settings are well-informed about exploitation, equipped to recognise the signs, and confident in taking appropriate action to safeguard children, young people and adults..
- Ensure the co designed Vulnerability and Policing Research Practice Standards<sup>1</sup> underpin and inform our practice in respect of online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
- Maintain a repository of learning accessible to partners and the community

<sup>1</sup> <https://vulnerabilitypolicing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/133/2024/12/co-designing-community-resilience-to-online-child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-victimisation-report.pdf>

## Priority 4 - Relentlessly Pursuing Justice

### Blackpool partnerships will not tolerate exploitation.

We are committed to relentlessly pursuing those who target and harm vulnerable children, young people, and adults. Through strong multi agency partnerships and intelligence led action, we will identify, disrupt, and bring perpetrators to justice. Our safeguarding system is built on determination, collaboration, and a clear message - 'Blackpool is a hostile environment for exploitation'. Protecting adult and child victims of exploitation requires a person centred, trauma informed approach that recognises the importance of meaningful relationships, aligns with the [National Referral Mechanism](#) (NRM), and promotes capacity building and empowerment - enabling individuals to build resilience, exercise positive control in their lives, and be supported through inclusive, culturally informed, respectful language that avoids victim blaming.

### We will

- Ensure that our workforce is informed and empowered to identify and respond to criminality
- Prioritise the needs and safety of victims throughout an investigation, ensuring they are listened to by adopting a trauma informed approach
- Adopt a victim led, suspect driven model to exploitation, treating those who are being exploited with respect, care and compassion
- Work together as a partnership to gather the data and intelligence required to identify, challenge and ensure successful prosecution
- Focus our resources on identifying perpetrators and organised exploitation groups to disrupt their activities and deliver justice to victims
- Work closely as a partnership to share intelligence and co-ordinate interventions to protect those at risk of or being exploited
- Ensure legal processes protect victims and prevent further exploitation using Civil Orders to restrict harmful activity
- Build relationships within the community to improve trust and confidence to tackle exploitation together
- Collaborating with the Community Safety Partnership is essential to contextual safeguarding and will remain central to shaping our response to exploitation.

## Success Measures

The success of this strategy will be measured through analysis of partnership datasets alongside the lived experiences of children, adults, and communities, ensuring both the data and their voices shape our understanding of impact.



## Appendix 1 Definitions

**Coercion and Control:** Some individuals such as those with learning difficulties, chronic substance misuse, socially isolated, those with chronic illness may be more vulnerable to exploitation.

**County Lines:** a violent and exploitative form of drug distribution. A common feature of county lines is the exploitation of children, adolescents and adults who are instructed to deliver and/or store drugs, and associated money or weapons, to dealers or drug users, locally or in other counties (as defined by the Home Office).

**Criminal Exploitation:** occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or adolescent into any criminal activity. It does not always involve physical contact and can also occur through the use of technology (as defined in the Serious Youth Violence strategy).

**Cuckooing or Forced Home Invasion** in some cases, criminals involved in County Lines will take over a local property, normally belonging to a person who may be at increased risk due to contextual factors, and use it to operate their criminal activity from. This is known as cuckooing (as defined by the National Crime Agency).

**Debt bondage:** a form of entrapment when a person who has experienced harm owes money to their exploiters and is made to repay their debt, either financially or through another means such as transporting drugs (as defined by the Home Office).

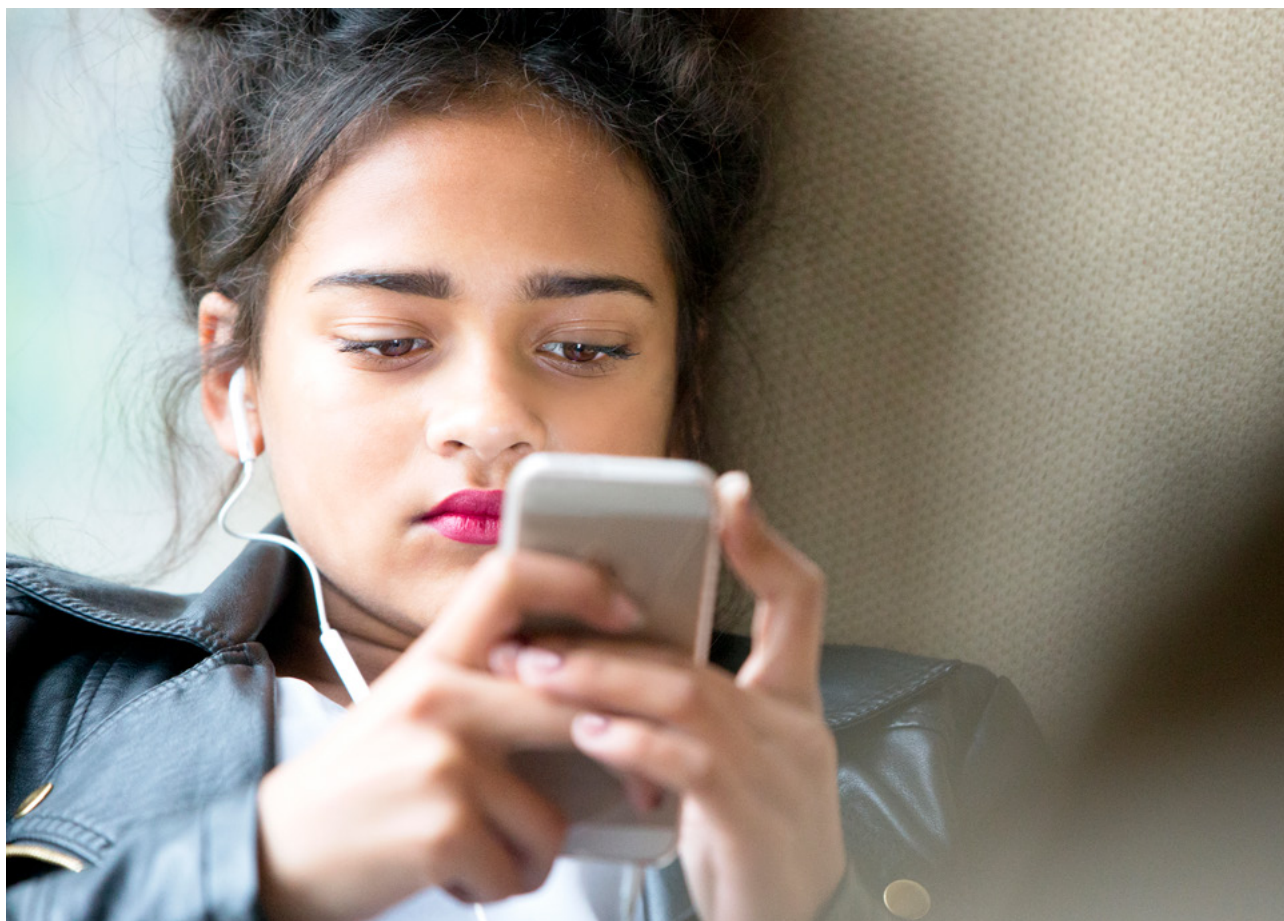
**Domestic Servitude:** This involves someone being forced to work in someone else's home, perhaps cooking, cleaning and looking after children, with little freedom or pay. Domestic servitude is a form of trafficking in human beings which is extremely difficult to detect because the work is performed in private residences as seemingly normal practice, that is used as cover for the exploitation and control of someone for example, nannies or other domestic help, but the moment their employment arrangement transitions into a situation whereby they cannot leave on their own free will, it becomes a case of enslavement.

**Financial Exploitation:** Refers to illegal or improper use of a person's funds, property, or assets by a trusted person or entity. This frequently occurs without the explicit knowledge or consent. Assets are commonly taken via forms of deception, coercion, harassment, duress and threats.

**Forced or Sham Marriages:** A forced marriage is where one or both people do not, or cannot, consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used. A sham marriage is where the marriage or civil partnership is contracted for immigration advantage by a couple who are not in a genuine relationship. People who have experienced harm may be subject to one or more of these at the same time.

**Fraud and Scams:** Predominantly involves money or transactions that involve financial loss to the person who has experienced harm performed by a dishonest individual, group, or company. These are sometimes linked to 'romance' crime/ fraud, rogue traders and bogus callers. Older adults who may be at increased risk due to contextual factors are often targeted.





**Labour Exploitation:** All work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily.

**Missing:** Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established is considered as missing until located, and their wellbeing or otherwise confirmed

**Modern:** Slavery and Human Trafficking - Modern slavery relates to the exploitation of children and adults in slavery, servitude, or forced or compulsory labour. Human trafficking is the recruitment, movement, harbouring or receiving of children and adults through force, coercion, or deception for the purposes of exploitation (as defined by the National Crime Agency). This can include practice linked to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), organ harvesting, forced marriage, and honour-based violence.

**Online Child Sexual Exploitation:** Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of a power imbalance to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person into sexual activity. This may involve exchange for something the child needs, wants or values, or may benefit those engaging in exploitative behaviour. A child may experience sexual exploitation even when sexual activity appears consensual. Exploitation can occur online or offline and does not always involve physical contact. (as defined by the Home Office).

**Online Exploitation:** An individual or group using online platforms to take advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a person into sexual and/or criminal activity that can occur both online and offline. Online platforms, such as online gaming, social media, messaging and live streaming, can be used to do this.

**Organised Forced Criminality:** People who have experienced harm may be forced into criminal activities by gangs such as drug cultivation, organised begging or benefit fraud e.g. extra tax credits, housing benefit, cannabis farms.

**People in Positions of Trust (PIPOT)** Professionals working with adults who may be at increased risk due to contextual factors may abuse their position of trust and exploit individuals they are meant to provide support

**Predatory Marriage:** Predatory Marriage is the practice of intentionally targeting and marrying a person who may be at increased risk due to contextual factors in order to gain access to their estate and assets upon their death. It relies on grooming and coercion to exert control over another person.

**Radicalisation:** The 'grooming' or 'recruitment' process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism. This forms part of the Prevent agenda and referenced for information.

## Appendix 2 Resources

### Tackling Exploitation across All Ages

[Blackpool Safeguarding Partnerships website](#) – Access resources and links and report concerns.

[Care Act 2014](#) – Provides the legal framework for adult safeguarding in England. Includes duties to prevent, reduce, and respond to exploitation and abuse.

Durham University [Contextual Safeguarding Network](#) – Offers tools, training, and research to help professionals safeguard children and young people in extra-familial contexts such as peer groups, schools, and neighbourhoods.

[Home Office Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit](#) – Practical guidance for frontline professionals to disrupt exploitation and protect victims. Includes civil orders, partnership working, and intelligence sharing.

[Home Office Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines](#) – This guidance is primarily aimed at frontline staff in England and Wales who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

[It Was Hard to Escape](#) – Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel - a powerful report capturing the lived experiences of children who have faced exploitation. Highlights systemic gaps and the importance of listening to victims.

Research in Practice – [Practice Principles for Responding to Exploitation](#) a framework to support professionals working with children and young people affected by exploitation. Focuses on relationship-based practice, contextual safeguarding, and trauma-informed approaches.

[Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2023\)](#) – Sets out how organisations should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Emphasises multi-agency collaboration and contextual safeguarding.

## Appendix 3 Practice Principles for responding to child exploitation and extrafamilial harm

Research in Practice – Practice [Principles for Responding to Exploitation](#) a framework to support professionals working with children and young people affected by exploitation. Focuses on relationship-based practice, contextual safeguarding, and trauma-informed approaches. [A resource document published in March 2026 can be accessed here](#)

