

Introduction [NB: we shall insert voice of CYP following June/July workshops]

Every child, young person and young adult in Slough has a right to safeguarding from exploitation, and to receive help and support that prevents the harms caused by this form of abuse. Slough Safeguarding Partnership and all our partners and stakeholders are committed to protecting children, young people, and young adults from all forms of exploitation and harms outside the home.

Collaboration between agencies across all professional sectors, and strong partnerships with families and communities are crucial to tackling and preventing exploitation, as set out in [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#). Trusted relationships with children, young people and vulnerable young adults are at the heart of our approach.

This strategy sets out our coordinated action plan to bring together all professionals to create safety, and promote the welfare and agency of our children, young people, and young adults at risk of exploitation.

The purpose of this strategy is to set out:

- Agreed definitions associated with all forms of exploitation,
- Our vision for children, young people and young adults,
- Our ambition for all professionals to collaborate in preventing exploitation, protecting children, young people and young adults from exploitation, and repairing harms caused by this form of abuse,
- Eight evidence-informed practice principles,
- Four priorities for action on exploitation, interdependent with and supportive of our [Early Help Priorities](#) and [Slough Serious Violence Strategy 2024-2027](#).
- Whole system approach to long-term change.

The development of this strategy has been coordinated by Slough Safeguarding Partnership, including Slough Borough Council, Slough Children First, Thames Valley Police, Frimley NHS Integrated Care Board and an extensive range of partners working together locally to safeguard children, young people, young adults, and those they love. Building on learning from safeguarding practice reviews, this strategy aims to create a step change in our response to protecting children, young people and young adults who are experiencing or may be at risk of exploitation.

The Slough Safeguarding Partnership Board is driving long-term strategic and operational change in our collective response to exploitation of children, young people, and young adults. The Board acts on behalf of the Slough Safeguarding Partnership and Safer Slough Partnership, both of whom hold shared responsibility for tackling exploitation of children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

All partners consulted for developing this strategy are committed to working collectively to tackle and prevent exploitation in Slough.

Definition: what do we mean by exploitation?

Exploitation is a form of abuse characterised by power imbalance and restriction or absence of consent. An individual or group takes advantage of the power imbalance to coerce, control, manipulate and/or deceive the child, young person or adult. The child or adult is exploited through violence or threat of violence and/or for financial or other advantage of the perpetrator and/or for something the victim needs or wants.

Exploitation is a multifaceted and fluid form of abuse, which crosses several different categories, and is defined across different parts of UK legislation.

- **Child sexual exploitation:** an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child, young person or young adult into any kind of sexual activity. The child, young person or young adult is exploited by being offered something that they need or want. It does not always involve physical contact and can also happen through the use of technology, as defined by the [Home Office](#).
- **Child criminal exploitation:** individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, or manipulate a child or adolescent into any criminal activity. It does not always involve physical contact and can happen through the use of technology, as defined in the [Serious Violence Strategy](#).
- **County Lines:** a violent, exploitative form of drug distribution. A feature of county lines is the exploitation of children 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 local areas, as defined by the [Home Office](#).
- **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](#).
- **Debt bondage:** a form of entrapment when a victim owes money to an exploiter or exploiters and is made to repay their debt, either financially or through another means such as transporting drugs, as defined by the [Home Office](#).
- **Home invasion or ‘cuckooing’:** criminals involved in County Lines, or other forms of exploitation take over a property, normally belonging to a vulnerable person, and use it as a location from which to operate criminal activity. This is known as cuckooing, as defined by the [National Crime Agency](#). We recognise all activities that victimise people via home-based exploitation, including crimes that are not drug related. We recognise the wide variety of needs and vulnerabilities that can lead to exploitation including neurodiversity.
- See glossary **[NB detailed list will be inserted as appendix]** for definitions of language linked to exploitation, such as **grooming, debt bondage, constrained choice, and other key terms.**

Scope

Children, young people and young adults: 0-25

This strategy focuses on safeguarding children, young people and young adults from exploitation, associated forms of abuse and harms. Our approach fully recognises that children, young people, and young adults have safeguarding needs that continue at least until the age of 25, where contextual and developmental factors combine. Our approach recognises our role as corporate parents who keep connected with our care experienced children, young people and young adults.

In Slough, we aspire to develop an all-age approach and prevention offer for young adults, and this strategy lays the foundations for system change, so that all our vulnerable adults are protected from harms.

Types and contexts of abuse, harms, and risks

As children develop through adolescence, they are more likely to be exposed to risks and harms outside of the home and family context. Our approach to abuse, harms and risks is based in our understanding that children, young people and young adults may have had adverse experiences during childhood, may be affected by different forms of trauma, and may have family links to exploitation and violence.

We recognise the problem of separating harms that happen within the family and home from harms that happen outside and seeks to respond to all opportunities to protect children and young people from abuse and harms.

Our vision, ambition, and commitments

Our vision: ***all children, young people and young adults in Slough are protected from exploitation, and are happy, safe & loved and thriving.***

Our ambition: ***we forge collaboration across all professional sectors in Slough, work in partnership and with our families and communities to create safety together and protect and promote the welfare and agency of our children, young people and young adults.***

We recognise the important role of law enforcement and of disruption of individuals and groups who perpetrate abuse, and of places and spaces where harms happen.

Our key priorities for the next two years involve the following commitments:

- We will strive to prevent the criminalisation of children, young people, and young adults, to put their safety, welfare, and agency first, and raise awareness of the effects of adversity and trauma.
- We will actively seek and celebrate the voice, lived experience and influence of our children, young people and young adults in Slough.
- We will create effective insight, communication and learning opportunities that support us to develop our understanding and take action to tackle exploitation.
- We will seek and promote multi-agency solutions to create safety in places and spaces where harm is happening.

Priorities for 2024-2026 [NB: Proposed by CM, after consultation Feb-Jun 24]

The four priorities above lay the foundations to achieve our vision and ambition. We identified these priorities through local safeguarding practice reviews, consultation with partners, and through reflection on national research and evidence. The priorities will apply to all strategic leaders, managers, and direct practitioners across all partner agencies. Each of these priorities is set out in more detail in our action plan [link] delivered through our whole-system approach [link]

1. **Put the safety and welfare of children, young people and young adults first:**

we commit to developing organisational cultures and services where we everyone puts first the safety and welfare of children, young people and young adults. We will prioritise multi-agency workforce development, learning opportunities, and quality assurance to drive local implementation of this priority.

Measuring success: workforce development and quality assurance plans are implemented across our partnership by 2026.

2. **Seek and centre the voice of children, young people and young adults:** we commit to embedding participatory practice across our strategic, operational and practice responses to exploitation, in single agency settings and across our local partnership. We will create meaningful opportunities for children, young people and young adults to influence change at the level of partnership governance.

Measuring success: voice and participation of children, young people and adults has direct and evidenced influence on our implementation of this strategy.

3. **Improve our insight, communication, and learning:** we commit to using data and intelligence to identify, analyse and communicate the patterns of exploitation, violence and harms in Slough. We will seek to understand how, where and when harm is happening, to which individuals and groups, and its impact. We will develop effective communication of insight and action plans. We will provide professional development opportunities to support multi-agency learning and sustain continuous improvement of our collective response to exploitation.

Measuring success: audit and evaluation of weekly, monthly, and strategic exploitation arrangements, and Team around the School offer demonstrate improved use of insight to strengthen our local response to exploitation.

4. **Collaborative leadership and relational approach to tackling exploitation:** we commit to create a culture of collaboration, with strength-based and relational approaches to multi-agency partnership working. Leaders and senior managers will set and promote clear expectations that exploitation is understood contextually and that all responses focus on actions to make space and places safer for children, young people, and young adults. Leaders across professional sectors will collaborate to raise awareness of exploitation with our communities.

Measuring success: one year review report better coordination of information sharing and multi-agency action to manage harm and risk of exploitation.

Practice principles for tackling exploitation

Our vision, ambition and four priorities have been informed by [eight practice principles](#). Research in Practice, the University of Bedfordshire and The Children's Society developed these practice principles below by drawing on national evidence and research, practice wisdom, and the expertise of those with lived experience.

Slough Safeguarding Partnership has consulted with local partners and stakeholders to test these multi-agency practice principles. We have shared and applied the eight principles during collaborative learning events in support of a recent safeguarding practice review on violence and exploitation affecting our children and young people.

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#) sets expectations for multi-agency working to protect and promote the welfare of children. The guidance expectations apply to police, local authorities, health services, probation, youth justice, education settings, and voluntary and community sector organisations. The expectations are structured for direct practice, senior management, and strategic leadership.

“Each of the eight principles is interdependent with the others. No one principle is more important than any other, and none can be considered in isolation from the others. None are the domain of any one person or any particular role.” [Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme](#)

The practice principles below support all partners in Slough to fulfil the expectations of Working Together 2023 and will inform our shared approach to exploitation. All partners in Slough will work together to adopt the eight practice principles across our work to safeguard children, young people and young adults from exploitation. The principles are consistent with [Slough Early Help Partnership Strategy 2023-2025](#).



Putting children and young people first.

- Responding to the needs of individuals and groups of children, young people and young adults, and to the realities of their lives.
- Keeping the child at the centre when making decisions about their lives, and promoting their agency and control over help and support they receive.
- Working in partnership with families and communities.
- Prioritising the best interests of children and young people.
- Recognising and promoting the rights of children, young people and young adults, and their strengths, hopes, and potential.

Recognising and challenging inequalities, exclusion, and discrimination.

- Understanding inequalities faced by children, young people and young adults, their families at individual and structural levels.
- Challenging the forms of discrimination, disparities and disproportionality faced by different cohorts of children, young people and young adults.
- Creating inclusive cultures for professionals and for everyone they work with, where everyone is respected, regardless of characteristics.

Respecting voice, experience, and expertise of children and young people.

- Collaborating with children, young people, and young adults rather than watching over them or *doing to* them.
- Hearing children, young people, and young adults from marginalised groups, and seeking the voices of those who are sometimes overlooked or ignored.
- Involving children, young people and young adults in decisions that affect their lives and creating opportunities for open conversation about decisions.
- Using participation to challenge manipulation associated with exploitation

Being strengths-based and relationship-based.

- Understanding children, young people and young adults by identifying strengths and positives in their lives rather defining them by risks and harms.
- Developing and sustaining trusted relationships with children, young people and young adults, striving for collaboration and power-sharing.
- Using relational skills to support growth in confidence, agency and self-efficacy of children, young people and young adults.
- Applying strengths-based and relational practice between professionals in multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working.

Recognising and responding to trauma.

- Working together to understand how trauma can affect development, relationships and responses to different settings and situations.
- Recognising how decisions, use of language and processes can reinforce trauma, and affect the ability to develop trusting relationships.
- Developing services that support children, young people and young adults to use their voice, influence decisions and have control in their lives.

Being curious, evidence-informed, and knowledgeable.

- Gathering and making use of all appropriate sources of information and intelligence to support holistic understanding of exploitation and related harms
- Inviting diverse views and expertise from professionals, children, young people, young adults, and their families, being open to creativity and new perspectives
- Using reflective practice, critical thinking, learning and evidence at all levels
- Challenging assumptions, stereotypes and ways of working that do not deliver positive outcomes, questioning gaps and attending to what is not known.

Approaching parents and carers as partners, wherever possible.

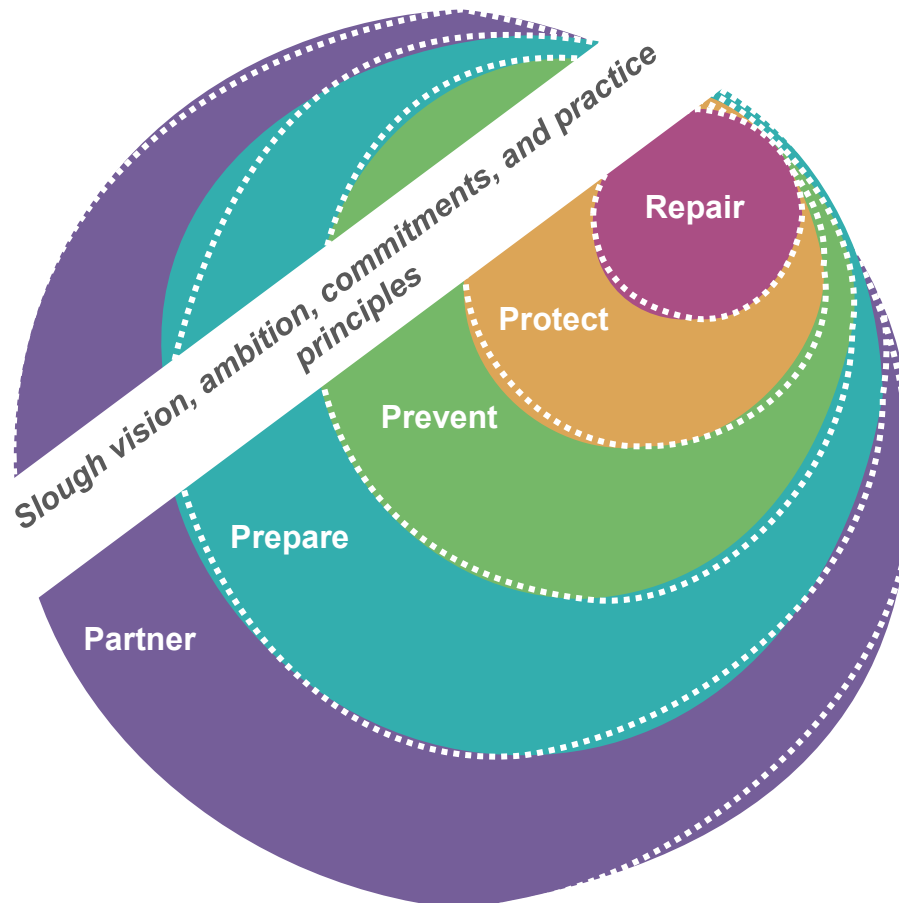
- Seeking to work in partnership with parents, carers, family members and networks to create safety with children, young people and young adults,
- Seeing parents, carers and family members as sources of protection, support and love unless there is evidence to suggest otherwise,
- Respecting parents, carers and family members, valuing their contributions, and being sensitive to distress they may be experiencing.

Creating safer spaces and places for children and young people.

- Understanding the different spaces, places and contexts in the lives of children, young people and young adults, including the risks and harms
- Move beyond responses that focus only the behaviour of the individual to consider the contexts and patterns of risks and harms
- Move beyond responses that focus only on physical safety, and use relational practice to create safety in relationships, spaces and places

Whole-system approach to tackling exploitation

Our whole system approach to tackling exploitation is focused on how strategic leaders, operational managers and direct practitioners can keep welfare, safety and agency of children, young people and young adults at the centre of their work. The approach features five interconnected layers, which are complementary with our [Slough Serious Violence Strategy 2024-2027](#).



[NB: to insert views of CYPF and practitioners alongside each later – CM]

- **Partnership and collective leadership:** taking a whole place approach to means actively involving partners and stakeholders from voluntary, community and faith sector, wider public and private sectors. Our work on exploitation and related harms will be in partnership with and for our communities. Our approach is not constrained by organisational boundaries or professional sector.
- **Preparation and insight:** responding to the complexity of exploitation and related social harms by applying critical thinking and analysis, committing to reflection and learning from insight. Applying evidence synthesis and data analysis, making use of multiple sources of information and intelligence to build an accurate picture of exploitation in our local area, and to understand what is happening in the lives of children, young people and young adults. We will use insight gained to better identify and act on pressures facing our communities, including inequalities and structural harms, such as poverty and housing issues.

- **Prevention and early intervention:** creating opportunities in all direct practice for developing trusted relationships with children, young people and young adults, and working in partnership with their families. Developing the knowledge, skills and confidence across all partner agencies for prevention approaches to exploitation and violence with children, young people, families and communities (consistent with the [Slough Serious Violence Strategy 2024-2027](#)).
- **Protection and intervention:** integrated support and protection services with evidence-based and trauma-attuned responses to children, young people and young adults who are exploited and to those who are at risk of harming others. Prioritising safety, and promoting welfare and agency, we will commit to shifting away from criminalisation of children, young people and vulnerable young adults, toward addressing needs, including SEND, mental health, and social harms.
- **Repair, disruption and recovery:** improving our multi-agency response to disrupt exploitation and provide evidence-informed support and trauma-attuned treatment for repair and recovery. We will continue to develop our contextual and cross-border working arrangements to stop those who harm others and who exploit children, young people and young adults for their own gain.

Action plan: responding effectively to harm from exploitation

To deliver our vision and ambition, we need to evidence that the practice principles are being adopted, and that we know the difference we are making in the lives of our children, young people and young adults.

We will use a range of sources of data and evidence about the delivery of our priorities, to understand how the practice principles and being put into practice.

[NB population level analysis of key data sets will be inserted at next draft]

We will use insight from this data and evidence to show how our action plan is making a difference for children, young people, young adults, and their families.

We will draw together data, the output from audit and quality assurance activities, and our voice and participation work, to understand our practice. We will continue to develop new sources of evidence to demonstrate the impact of our action plan.

Priority	Data	Audit	Feedback
1. Put the safety and welfare of children, young people, and young adults first	Needs and adverse experiences of young people known to services	Trauma-informed language in meetings and files	Feelings of safety
<i>Sample areas for action (not exhaustive)</i>			
→ Multi-agency training for practitioners, managers and leaders to develop new skills for responding to needs and risks, and put safety and welfare first			
→ Test and learn from Team around the School model to identify and respond with education settings to identify needs and risks at earliest point			

- Give permission for practitioners to use flexible and creative approaches to promoting safety, welfare and agency with children, young people and young adults
- Provide management support for responding to risks and harms from exploitation

Priority	Data	Audit	Feedback
2. Seek and centre the voice of children, young people and young adults	Young people achieve goals they set themselves	Young people's views, wishes and influence recorded	Young people's involvement in decisions and influencing services

Areas for action

- Dedicate time at key partnership meetings for young people to engage with leaders in key decision points including strategy and service design around tackling exploitation
- Connect with experts to support participation, including how to support young people with communication needs and neurodiversity
- Create and embed pathways for young people to influence decision-making
- Create choices about levels of participation including consulting with as many as possible about exploitation, while giving others the opportunity for in-depth influencing

Priority	Data	Audit	Feedback
3. Improve our insight, communication, and learning	Characteristics (ethnicity /gender /disability) of young people known to services Profile of those responsible for harm and abuse Reach of communication campaign	Identity and cultural needs recorded in safety plans	Connections with worker and quality of support Community feedback about action on exploitation and related harms

Areas for action

- Use findings from audit of MACE processes to improve understanding and responses to children, young people and young adults facing harms and risks from exploitation
- Create opportunities for peer support opportunities and community of practice
- Deliver multi-agency communication campaign to raise awareness across local and regional media with key messages about exploitation, and how communities and partners can respond
- Explore reflective practice for practitioners, managers and leaders

4. Collaborative leadership and relational approach	Attendance at multi-agency meetings	Agency contributions to MACE actions and Team around the School	Experience of support
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Areas for action

- Feed learning from MACE processes (contextual safeguarding meetings, operational MACE and strategic MACE), including output of audit and QA reports, into multi-agency improvement plans
- Develop thematic reports for analysis at strategic MACE to shape local responses, including to multi-agency referral and assessment methods, and Front Door approach
- Implement Team around the School in 'hotspot' areas to respond to risks and harms
- Develop annual report to provide information on quality of response and impact of actions, and MACE processes, to include analysis of perpetrators, patterns of harm, risk and vulnerability, and the help and support offer.

Structure - [NB intentionally incomplete in this draft – indicative headings]

Description and diagram of our collective response:

- Youth Justice and Exploitation
- Targeted Early Intervention including parent and family support
- Community Youth Detached Team
- Team around the School model
- Missing and Return Interviews
- Child in need and child protection
- Health offer and functions
- Police offer and functions

A description and diagram of our wider offer:

- Offer from voluntary services.
- Offer in wider public sector.
- Contribution of private sector partners

Other functions enabling action:

- Workforce development activities
- Quality assurance activities
- Performance insight, and impact evaluation
- Dissemination of local, regional and national best practice

Governance structure

Links to other strategies and plans

Safeguarding children, young people and young adults from exploitation is part of a complex set of arrangements, including local and national strategies. This strategy complements and is interdependent with a range of local strategies and plans:

[Slough Serious Violence Strategy 2024-2027](#)

[Slough Early Help Partnership Strategy 2023-2025](#)

[Thames Valley Police and Criminal Justice Plan 2021-2025](#)