Cwm Taf Morgannwg

Contextual Safeguarding

Exploitation Practice

Guidance

For practitioners working with children and young people

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1. **Introduction**

Child exploitation is complex, takes a variety of forms and doesn’t neatly fit into categories. Child exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of a power imbalance to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into criminal or sexual activity or modern slavery. This can be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, this is most likely to be the result of grooming, where a criminal has identified what a young person may want or need. The power imbalance can be through a range of factors, including age, gender, cognitive ability, status, and access to economic or other resources. A young person may also experience poor mental health, have experienced bereavement or are being bullied which may make them more likely to be vulnerable to exploitation. The victim may have been exploited even if the activity appears consensual, and exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through technology.

There are various ways in which children and young people are groomed for exploitation. Many perpetrators are skilled at identifying and targeting vulnerabilities, infiltrating social networks and isolating young people from protective influences. This can include the following:

* Grooming by criminal gangs – perpetrators spend a lot of time and energy building relationships with their victims, for example showing an interest in their life or buying them things that they want or need. They will be building up a picture on how useful the young person is likely to be and how they might be able to help the criminal network.
* Grooming by technology – perpetrators can use digital technology to target, groom and exploit young people. For example, through social media, or targeting through YouTube, the latter has been used by county lines gangs.
* Grooming by peers – older family members or friends who are already involved in exploitative activity can target younger relatives and friends as a way of enlarging the network. There may also be cases where abused children are forced to bring in other children.
* Grooming by trusted groups– perpetrators can be part of sports clubs, religious organisations and use this as an opportunity to build up trust with young people.

In this document ‘child’ refers to any persons under the age of 18 years old.

**If you suspect anyone is in immediate danger, call the Police on 999. If you suspect a child is at risk of significant harm, including from any form of Exploitation, refer immediately to your Local Authority Children’s Service.**

1. **Forms of Exploitation and Serious Violence**

Provided below are definitions of the different types of exploitation (list is not exhaustive). Please see Wales Safeguarding Procedures for more detailed information and relevant practice guides for more information. [Safeguarding Wales](https://safeguarding.wales/en/)

* **Criminal Exploitation**: Criminal Exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child, young person or an adult into any criminal activity: (a) In exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) For the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator (such as to support serious organised crime and/or terrorism), and/or (c) Through violence or the threat of violence to ensure compliance. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur using technology and/or social media. Because they are more likely to be easily detected, individuals who are exploited are more likely to be arrested and criminalised for criminal behaviour, than those individuals or groups who are exploiting them. Individuals who are being criminally exploited can be involved, linked to or considered to be (by themselves or others) as part of a “gang”. It is important when children or adults identify or are identified as being affected or involved with gang-related activity that involves the use of actual or threatened violence and/or drug dealing that professionals also consider that they may be victims of criminal exploitation. Criminal exploitation is broader than but often part of organised crime and county lines.
* **Organised Crime & County Lines:** Organised Crime is “serious crime planned, coordinated and conducted by people working together on a continuing basis. Their motivation is often, but not always, financial gain.’” Organised crime groups are “organised criminals working together for a particular criminal activity or activities.” County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. They are likely to exploit children and adults to move, [locally supply] and store the drugs and money. They will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.
* **Cuckooing:** This term is named after the nest stealing practices of wild cuckoos. This may sound like a tame term, bit it masks horrific stories of often extremely vulnerable and terrified people becoming prisoners in their own home and it should probably be referred to as home invasions, which far better describes the practice. It describes the situation where a county lines dealer ‘takes over’ accommodation located in the provincial drugs market, using it as a local dealing base.” (Coomber and Moyle: 2017) An individual or group can do this by taking over the homes of local adults and families through an abuse of power or vulnerability by coercion, control and/or force so that they can provide a base for the supply of drugs into the local community. This places the adult and/or families at an increased risk of eviction (if they are in social or privately rented housing) and isolation from their communities due to the anti-social activity it can create. Cuckooing often forms part of wider ‘County Lines’ activity and is also a form of criminal exploitation.
* **Sexual Exploitation:** This is a form of sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18, or adult with care and support needs, into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.
* **Online Grooming**: Online grooming is a term used broadly to describe the tactics abusers deploy through the internet to exploit children. It can happen quickly or over time, but at its core it is a process of exploiting trust to shift expectations of what safe behaviour is and leveraging fear and shame to keep a child silent. It is a difficult but important reality to face so that we can take steps to stop it.

Technology did not create grooming—the process has existed in offline abuse—but the variety of platforms in existence, and the prominence of digital environments in our lives, has increased abusers’ reach and opportunity.

Adults seeking to abuse children will go where kids are. As a result, grooming can theoretically happen just about anywhere online.

Predators can reach children in video game chats, possibly creating fictional personas to develop a sense of kinship with victims or portraying themselves as a trustworthy adult in a place where other adults are largely absent.

With the popularity of live streaming across online platforms, an interaction may start as something that feels harmless to the child, such as encouraging specific dance moves to the latest hit or celebrating a new gymnastics routine. However, this type of action can quickly turn into something more concerning when an innocent moment is captured and shared elsewhere online or the interaction continues on over the course of time, with boundaries being pushed along the way.

* **Serious Youth Violence:** There are several definitions that describe ‘Serious Youth Violence’ but the one element that they all have in common is that they all focus on the **age** of the person involved in the incident and the **gravity** of the offence:

Serious Youth Violence is defined as *‘any offence of most serious violence or weapon enabled crime, where the victim is aged 1-19’* i.e. murder, manslaughter, rape, wounding with intent and causing grievous bodily harm. ‘Youth violence’ is defined in the same way, but also includes assault with injury offences.

Young people associated with gangs are highly vulnerable.  Sexual violence amongst peers is commonplace and it is used as a means of power and control over others, most commonly young women.  Young people affected by or associated with gangs are at high risk of sexual exploitation and violence and will require safeguarding.  Sexual exploitation is used in gangs to exert power and control over members / Initiate young people into the gang / exchange sexual activity for status or protection / entrap rival gang members by exploiting girls and young women and inflict sexual assault as a weapon in conflict.

A gang is defined as 'a relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who:

1. See themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group.

2. Engage in criminal activity and violence.

3. Lay claim over territory (not necessarily geographical but can include an illegal economy territory).

4. Have some form of identifying structural feature; and

5. Are in conflict with other, similar, gangs.

* **Missing people:** The definition of missing:
* “Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered missing until located and their well-being confirmed.” (College of Policing, APP)
* There are several immediate risks associated with going missing, which could include:
* Involvement in criminal activities.
* Victim of abuse.
* Victim of crime, for example through sexual assault and/or other forms of exploitation.
* Alcohol/substance misuse.
* Deterioration of physical and mental health.
* Missing out on education.

South Wales Police are the lead agency responsible for the initial risk assessment and management of missing person enquiries and the ensuing investigation to locate the person. The College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) places all missing persons within a continuum of risk ranging from ‘no apparent risk’ (previously referred to as ‘absent’), through to ‘high risk’ cases requiring immediate, intensive collaborative action. The risk assessment for missing persons is a guide to the appropriate level of response based on initial and ongoing risk assessment in a case. Actively reviewing risk levels on an ongoing basis remains important for all agencies involved to enable them to assess changing circumstances and respond accordingly. While adults can be deemed to be ‘no apparent risk’ South Wales Police and partners do not deem a child to be ‘No apparent risk’ or ‘Low risk’. Given their age and associated vulnerability they will be classified as either ‘Medium’ or ‘High’.

* **Modern Slavery**: Modern slavery is the illegal exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain. It covers a wide range of abuse and exploitation including sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, forced labour, criminal exploitation and organ harvesting. Victims of modern slavery can be any age, gender, nationality and ethnicity. They are tricked or threatened into work and may feel unable to leave or report the crime through fear or intimidation. They may not recognise themselves as a victim.
* **Human Trafficking**: Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol (2000) defines trafficking as follows: “Trafficking of persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

**Harmful practices related to tradition, culture, religion, or superstition**

* **So called ‘Honour’ Based Abuse**: The concept of ‘honour’ is a deeply held belief within many families and communities and those who are perceived to dishonour their family or community by their behaviour can be subject to abuse, emotional abuse and death. ‘Honour’ crime involves abuse and/or violence, including murder, committed by people who want to defend the reputation of their family or community. It can also take the forms of intimidation, coercive control or blackmail. Honour killing is the murder of a person accused of "bringing shame" upon their family.
* **Forced Marriage:** Forced marriage is an unacceptable cultural practice; it is child abuse and a form of violence against women and girls. Forced marriage is illegal in the UK. For the purpose of the criminal law in England and Wales, forced marriage is one which occurs without the full and free consent of one or both parties. Forced Marriage can involve both males and females.
* **Female Genital Mutilation:** Female Genital Mutilation is also known as Female Circumcision or Female Genital Cutting (FGC) and is a traditional cultural practice. The procedure causes severe short and long term health consequences, including difficulties with childbirth, causing danger to the mother and child and mental health problems. FGM has no health benefits, and it causes significant harm. It involves removing and damaging healthy and normal female genital tissue and interferes with the natural functions of girls' and women's bodies. Generally speaking, the health risks increase with increasing severity of the procedure, although the psychological effects may be similar whether or not the procedure is physically severe.
* **Prevent/Extremism**: ‘Extremism’ is defined in the 2011 Prevent Strategy as vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas. ‘Violent Extremism’ is defined by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) as:

“The demonstration of unacceptable behaviour by using any means or medium to express views, which:

* “Encourage, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs;
* Seek to provoke others to terrorist acts;
* Encourage other serious criminal activity or seek to provoke others to serious
* criminal acts:
* Foster hatred which might lead to inter-community violence in the UK.”

There are a number of offences that can be considered when dealing with violent extremism. They include offences arising through spoken words, creation of tapes and videos of speeches, internet entries, chanting, banners and written notes and publications. The main offences employed to date have been soliciting murder and inciting racial hatred.

‘Radicalisation’ refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups. Radicalisation is usually a process not an event.

For further information on PREVENT Referrals click here: [All Wales Partners Prevent Referral Form](https://digitalservices.south-wales.police.uk/en/all-wales-partners-prevent-referral-form/)

Whilst not a form of exploitation, practitioners must be cognisant of Hate Crime and the intersectionality between this and forms of Exploitation, Serious Violence and Radicalisation.

* **Hate Crime**: The term ‘hate crime’ can be used to describe a range of criminal behaviour where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility or demonstrates hostility towards the victim’s disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity. These aspects of a person’s identity are known as ‘protected characteristics’. A hate crime can include verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment, assault and bullying, as well as damage to property. The perpetrator can also be a friend, carer or acquaintance who exploits their relationship with the victim for financial gain or some other criminal purpose.

The majority of risk or abuse in relation to these issues takes place outside the child’s home. However, exploitation can, and does, take place in families. The fact that the majority of exploitation is extra-familial does not mean that it cannot take place within families or be facilitated by a family member.

It is imperative practitioners use their professional lens across the vast field of exploitation to identify the inter-related connection between varying forms of exploitation when working with children and young people who are vulnerable to or at risk of exploitation. For example, within the Modern Slavery Act 2015 there are 5 recognised categories of modern slavery including criminal, sexual, forced labour and domestic servitude and organ harvesting.

**Example:** Children who are criminally exploited may be trafficked out of and within the UK to carry, conceal or distribute drugs, they could also be coerced into performing sexual acts on or offline as a means of paying debt bondage, maybe for themselves or another person who they may think they have a safe relationship with. There are varying forms of exploitation taking place.

Practitioners should always adhere the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](https://safeguarding.wales/en/chi-i/). The Wales Safeguarding Procedures support individuals and agencies across Wales to understand their roles and responsibilities in keeping children and adults safe. They advance and support a consistent approach to safeguarding practice and procedures across Wales. They include [All Wales Practice Guides](https://safeguarding.wales/en/chi-i/chi-i-c6/) that include information on different forms of exploitation.

1. **Contextual and Complex Safeguarding**

**Contextual Safeguarding** recognises that during adolescence children spend increasing amounts of time in places outside of the home. These social settings (referred to as contexts) such as peer groups, schools and neighbourhoods, social media, are sometimes locations where young people encounter exploitation.

[http://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk](https://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/)

Here is a short video explaining contextual safeguarding:

[What is contextual safeguarding? - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0lE-XENewM)

**Complex Safeguarding** describes both the challenges presented by extra-familial forms of abuse (including exploitation) and an approach to address those challenges. It is defined as an emerging response to: ‘Criminal activity (often organised), or behaviour associated to criminality, involving vulnerable children/people, where there is exploitation and/or a clear or implied safeguarding concern.

1. **Practice Approaches when responding to concerns related to Exploitation**

Practitioners should ensure their safeguarding practice approach is child-centred and trauma informed.

[Taking a child-centred approach](https://safeguarding.wales/chi/cp/c1p.p1.html)

[Trauma-Informed Wales (traumaframeworkcymru.com)](https://traumaframeworkcymru.com/)

**Professional Curiosity**: The practice tools are not a replacement for professional curiosity, which is a combination of looking, listening, asking direct questions, checking out and reflecting on information received. It means:

* testing out your professional hypothesis and not making assumptions.
* triangulating information from different sources to gain a better understanding of individuals and family functioning.
* getting an understanding of individuals’ and families’ past history which in turn, may help you think about what may happen in the future.
* obtaining multiple sources of information and not accepting a single set of details you are given at face value.
* having an awareness of your own personal bias and how that affects how you see those you are working with.
* exploring what your professional knowledge and experience tells you

A lack of professional curiosity can lead to missed opportunities to identify less obvious indicators of risk. It can also lead to assumptions made in assessments for care and support and enquiries into those who may be at risk which are incorrect and lead to the wrong interventions for individuals and families. A perceived lack of ‘evidence’ should not be a barrier to safeguarding and professional curiosity may lead to identifying indicators of exploitation.

[Joint Policies and Procedures | Safeguarding, Cwm Taf Morgannwg (cwmtafmorgannwgsafeguardingboard.co.uk)](https://www.cwmtafmorgannwgsafeguardingboard.co.uk/En/Professionals/JointPoliciesandProcedures/JointPoliciesandProcedures.aspx)

**Gender, Ethnicity, Sexuality and Disability**: There is evidence of additional barriers to disclosure and identification for some children including Black, Asian, minority ethnic children; disabled children and LGBTQIA+ children. Common perceptions of CSE are that victims are female and common perceptions of CCE are that victims are male. It is important to remember that boys and young men can be sexually exploited, and girls and young women can be criminally exploited. A poor understanding of LGBTQIA+ issues and perceptions about the ways in which children explore their sexuality can lead to poor decisions in recognising risk and keeping children safe. Children with learning disabilities or who are neuro-divergent are vulnerable to exploitation due to factors that include overprotection, social isolation and society refusing to view them as sexual beings. Practitioners must consider conscious and unconscious bias and be open in considering how this may impact on their professional judgement.

[Adultification](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2022/06/Academic-Insights-Adultification-bias-within-child-protection-and-safeguarding.pdf) is a form of bias. David and Marsh (2020) define adultification as:

*‘The concept of adultification is when notions of innocence and vulnerability are not afforded to certain children. This is determined by people and institutions who hold power over them. When adultification occurs outside of the home it is always founded with discrimination and bias.*

*There are various definitions of adultification, all relate to the child’s personal characteristics, social-economic influences and/or lived experiences. Regardless of the context in which adultification take place, the impact results in children’s rights being diminished or not upheld’.*

An example of this may be that Black, Asian and minoritised ethic communities are perceived as being more ‘streetwise’, more ‘grown up’, less innocent and less vulnerable than other children. These conscious/unconscious biases can result in victim blaming language such as ‘streetwise’ ‘resilient’, ‘mature’ and a result professionals may assume children have more agency and capacity to safeguard themselves and/or dismiss certain behaviours or practices as being part of a community culture and as a result does not take the necessary protective action.

[Safeguarding children from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities | NSPCC Learning](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/children-from-black-asian-minoritised-ethnic-communities#skip-to-content)

[Anti-racist practice in children’s safeguarding – Check Your Thinking](https://www.checkyourthinking.org/anti-racism/)

**Talking and listening to children** should be a central to safeguarding practice. Serious Case Reviews have highlighted the importance of seeing, observing and hearing the child, gaining their views wishes and feelings and understanding the child’s lived experience. This will enable practitioners working and supporting families to understand what it is like ‘to be their shoes’ for a typical day. If we are able to understand what life is actually like through their eyes, professionals will have a clearer picture of the needs that are or are not being met for the child as well as the impact of professional concern for the child. This in turn will support us to develop effective and SMART care and support/safety plans to ensure the family and professionals can work together to improve the child’s lived experience.

NSPCC – Let children know your listening shares helpful tips and advice on helping adults respond to children disclosing abuse.

[Let children know you’re listening | NSPCC Learning](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2019/let-children-know-you-re-listening)

[Responding to a Child's Disclosure of Abuse | NSPCC Learning - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvJ5uBlGYgE&t=91s)

[Ymateb i ddatgeliad plentyn am gam-drin | NSPCC Learning - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2QTe-2pYHA)

**Language**: Practitioners should think about the language they use to talk about and record information about children. Victim blaming language is terminology that implies that the child is complicit or responsible for their abuse. Appropriate language must always be used to ensure the child is referred to in a way which does not place blame on them for the crimes that have happened to them. When victim blaming language is used amongst practitioners there’s a risk of normalising and minimising the child’s experiences resulting in as lack of appropriate response. Additionally, in criminal proceedings police have a duty to disclose any material that might assist the defence. Victim blaming language could therefore undermine a police investigation.

[Child Exploitation Appropriate Language Guide 2022.pdf (childrenssociety.org.uk)](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-04/Child%20Exploitation%20Appropriate%20Language%20Guide%202022.pdf)

[Challenging victim blaming language and behaviours when dealing with the online experiences of children and young people (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1104000/Victim_blaming_and_the_online_experiences_of_children_and_young_people_v3.pdf)

[Mindful Language - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueRfyIzzb-k&t=263s)

**Information Sharing and Consent**: The exploitation of children cannot be addressed by a single agency working alone. Effective collaboration between partners, particularly around information sharing, is essential to the protection of children and stopping offenders. There is a wide range of behaviours and scenarios that may not initially appear related to child sexual or criminal exploitation, but pieced together and put into context, form a bigger picture. Agencies hold different pieces of information and will possess different legislative powers that together help to identify the most appropriate tool for keeping children safe.

The interests of the child at risk of harm must be the overriding consideration when making decisions as to whether to seek child and/or parental consent before sharing information.

[Sharing information to safeguard children | GOV.WALES](https://gov.wales/sharing-information-safeguard-children)

**Missing Children: The reasons why children go missing are varied, complex and unique to individual children.** They may be reacting to an event or change in their lives such as a change in family circumstances or a bereavement. We know that children who go missing from home or care often report problems at home or at the home where they have been placed because they are looked after. They may be unhappy about decisions being made about them by their parents or carers and they may not feel listened to. They may go missing to areas where they have family or connections. They may be experiencing neglect or abuse at home. They may also be encouraged or coerced to go missing by dangerous adults or by other children.

[Safeguarding young people who are running away and 'going missing' - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCA2Uf8QfQc)

A Child Information Form is available for children who are looked after and which should be completed for individual children, be kept up to date and include an up to date photograph. Social Services should provide the form to the foster carer or placement provider for the child and ask that they amend the form following any changes in information. [Download Child Information Form](https://safeguarding.wales/downloads/child_information_form.pdf)

The Child Information Form should be shared with the Police when the child is reported missing. This will assist the Police in risk assessing the missing episode so that they can respond in an informed and timely way. Social Services should have a conversation with the child about the information recorded in the Child Information Form and should explain the circumstances under which the Child Information Form will be shared with the Police and others.

Practitioners should try and seek consent from parent/carers unless doing so would place them at risk of harm. The reasons for this are that involving families and carers is more likely to lead to engagement and child-centred outcomes. Children, if competent should also be consulted and their consent obtained. It is important to engage children in the process as early as possible to ensure their wishes and feelings are considered and to avoid them becoming ‘objects of concern’.

**Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children:** Professionals must consider any safeguarding concerns and consider whether the child may have been trafficked or vulnerable to trafficking and/or other forms of exploitation that can often be inter-related.Some children may not be aware that they have been trafficked/exploited, and some may have been threatened so they will be unwilling to explain what has happened to them. The below guidance aims to support practitioners working with children who are claiming asylum.

[Unaccompanied asylum seeking children: guidance for professionals | GOV.WALES](https://www.gov.wales/unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children-guidance-professionals)

[Missing-unaccompanied-children-good-practice-guidance-1.pdf (missingpeople.org.uk)](https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Missing-unaccompanied-children-good-practice-guidance-1.pdf)

**Disruption:** All agencies should consider ways in which to disrupt children and young people from being exploited. The child exploitation disruption toolkit helps all practitioners who engage with children and young people, not just those with statutory powers to recognise and advocate for the use of available statutory powers, even where it may only be police or local authorities who can put them in place.

[Child exploitation disruption toolkit (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63106669e90e076ebfb7f419/Child_Exploitation_Disruption_Toolkit_082022.pdf)

[Child exploitation disruption toolkit (accessible) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-exploitation-disruption-toolkit/child-exploitation-disruption-toolkit-accessible)

1. **Exploitation Practice Toolkit and Safety Planning Guidance**

The Exploitation Toolkits and Harm and Vulnerability Indicators are intended to ***assist*** in your decision making. They do not provide an exhaustive list and nor do they, or could they, cover every eventuality. Those using the tools are reminded of the complexity, unpredictability and uncertainty at play in decision-making. Clear analysis should be made, drawn upon evidence in the context of which harm has or may occur, with differentiation between fact and professional opinion.

* The screening toolkit is designed to assist all practitioners to make an initial judgement regarding the risk of child exploitation. If concerns are identified the screening toolkit should be submitted with a C1. It may also be used and updated by IAA Teams when making a determination and/or for example, during a ‘What Matters’ discussion to further inform decision making on determinations or when a possible new concern has been identified on an open case.
* The assessment toolkit is designed to assist the multi-agency network explore the protective factors, risks and vulnerabilities where exploitation has been identified a concern. This can be utilised within preventative and/or statutory services. It is an aide to inform assessments and outcomes for children and young people. The assessment toolkit is separated into two sections:

1. **Section 1** helps practitioners to think about all the circumstances in a child’s life that will be useful in making decisions about early help and prevention and in planning care support and protection if the child is at risk.
2. **Section 2** helps practitioners to consider, identify and clearly record signs which may indicate that a child is at risk or being abused. This section helps practitioners to discuss, record and share concerns about exploitation. Practitioners should always consider the inter-sectional relationship between varying forms of exploitation as they are not always exclusive, and a victim can be subject of multiple forms of abuse and exploitation at any given time.

* The Harm and Vulnerability Indicators is designed to assist practitioners in their judgement on the level of risk that may be identified. Whilst this contains a RAG rated system, professionals **must** always exercise their professional judgement and not rely solely on this tool to inform their analysis and decision making.

The Practice Tools are intended to support the exercise of professional judgment by assisting professionals to consider the risk of harm to a child. Professionals are encouraged to go beyond the child’s presenting behaviour e.g. missing episodes and to explore what else might be going on for this child/young person. It allows you to explore some of the vulnerabilities and indicators present in a child that might be at risk of or experiencing exploitation. It is intended to help practitioners think about what the risks might be to the child and about what to do with the information known.

Assessment or screening for child exploitation should not be seen as a one-off event. Children and young people can move very quickly between the risk categories, therefore regular assessment should be undertaken using the Exploitation Tools. Any escalation of risk should be dealt with in accordance with **Wales Safeguarding Procedures**.

Disruption and prosecution of perpetrator/s is also of significant importance therefore, any information which comes to light about the victim/s or perpetrator/s (however insignificant this may seem) should be passed on to the Police. This can be done by using the South Wales Police, Intelligence Submission Form.

Child Exploitation Safety Planning Guidance and supplementary templates are intended to support children, parents/carers and practitioners to consider SMART actions and targets, focussing on achieving positive change including exit planning and disruption.

To view the Practice Toolkits and Safety Planning Guidance and templates click [**here**](https://www.cwmtafmorgannwgsafeguardingboard.co.uk/En/Professionals/CTMExploitationStrategyandToolkit/CwmTafMorgannwgExploitationStrategyAndToolkit.aspx)**.**

**If you suspect anyone is in immediate danger, call the Police on 999.**

1. **Exploitation Pathway**

The Exploitation Pathway will consist of the following (see below chart):

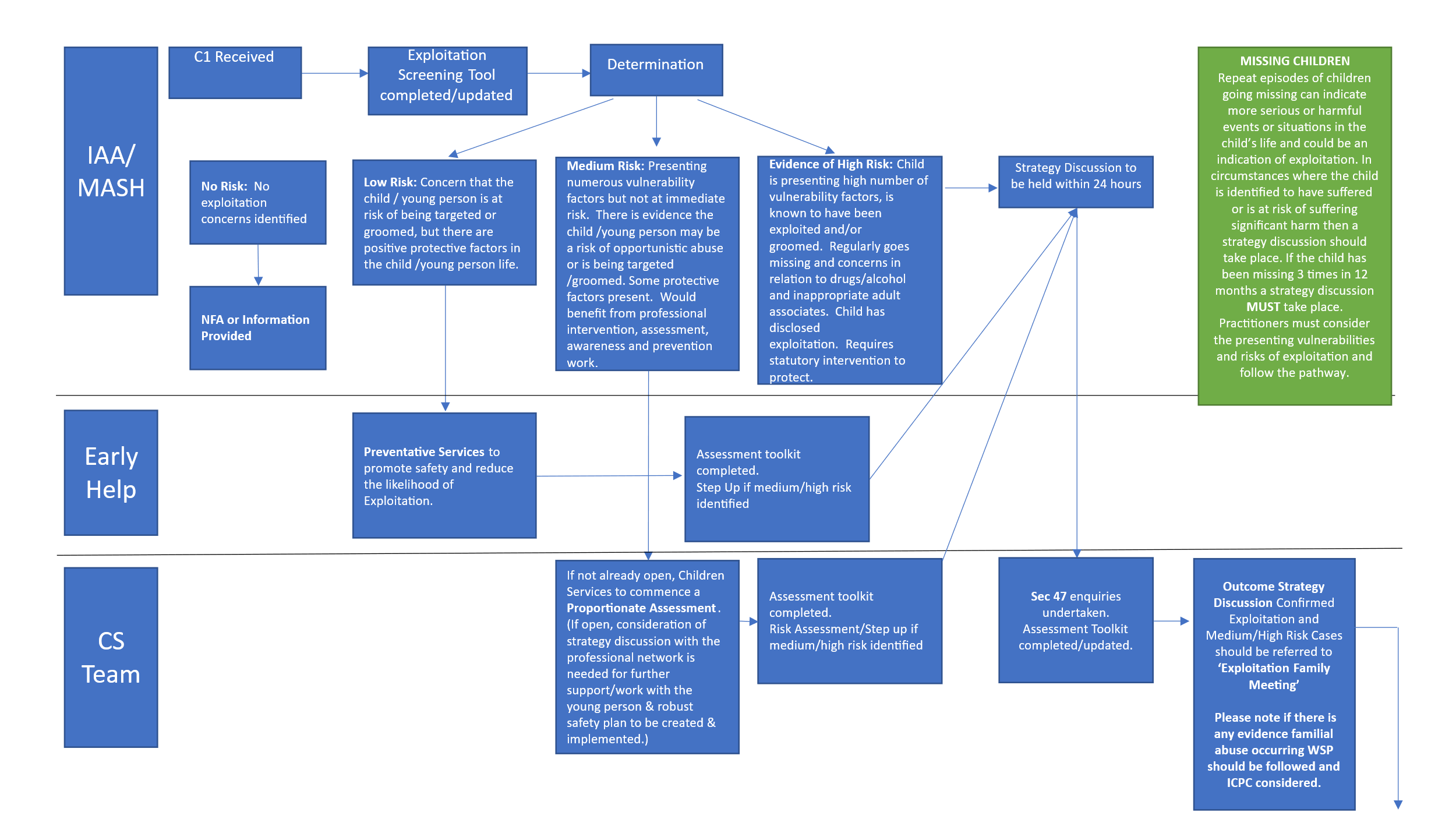
1. Referral made to Children Services (in line with current operating model) this includes step up-step down processes.
2. Determinations as prescribed by Wales Safeguarding Procedures will be made by Children Services.
3. Where an assessment is required, the Exploitation Assessment Tool and Harm and Vulnerability Indicators will be utilised to aide professional judgement, analysis and decision making.
4. In cases where, there is medium and/or high risk of exploitation, the lead practitioner will make a referral to initiate the Exploitation Family Meeting – commonly referred to as the exploitation ‘protocol’ meeting.
5. Exploitation Family Meeting will be held in 15 working days and reviewed every four weeks or more frequently if required. The initial meeting will develop the child’s community safety plan.
6. Cases requiring escalation will be discussed at the Exploitation Prevention Panel who will report to the Exploitation Strategic Panel.

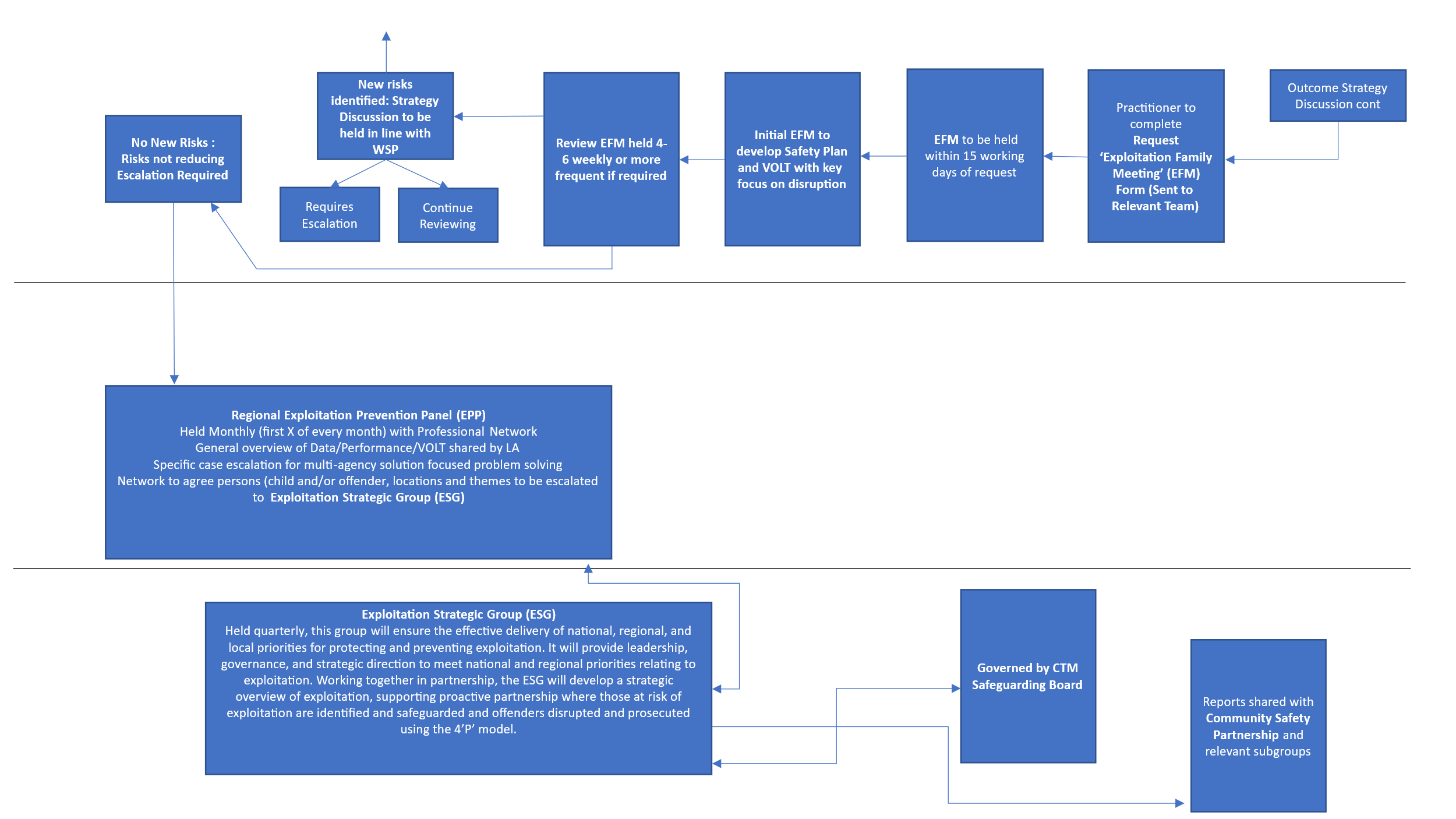
Throughout the process, where there is consideration of a NRM (National Referral Mechanism), a strategy discussion should be considered/requested to facilitate robust information sharing to support joint decision making. Exploitation leads should be invited to contribute to the decision making.

Please see appendices for associated templates.

Appendix One: Exploitation Family Meeting Agenda

Appendix Two: Exploitation Family meeting Record of Discussion Template





**Appendix One – Family Meeting**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Contextual Safeguarding**  **Exploitation Family Meeting (EFM)**  **Agenda**  All relevant paperwork including the child’s most recent assessment/sec 47 enquiry and the completed exploitation screening/assessment tools should be sent with the request to coordinate the Exploitation Family Meeting. | |
| **Pre-Meeting Consultation** | Pre meeting consultation with Family facilitated by the EFM Chair (to be completed 24 hours in advance of the meeting taking place). |
| **Introduction and Confidentiality Statement** | **Chairperson Statement**  The meeting has been convened in accordance with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board and Wales Safeguarding Procedures.  The purpose of this meeting is to work in partnership with the child/ren, their parents/carers and professionals to consider any extra familial contextual safeguarding concerns in relation to the child/ren in this family. The meeting will consider the context in which the risk is occurring and facilitate discussion and recommendations including safety planning, disruption and exit strategies to safeguard and promote the child’s welfare.  The content of this meeting and the records are confidential and should not be shared outside of this meeting without the permission of the Chair. The use of AI is strictly prohibited and **must** not be used to record the meeting.  Where required, parties may be asked to leave the meeting for a ‘closed’ session to ensure the integrity of any criminal investigations or tactical responses to possible criminal offences are not compromised and Data Protection.  The Record of the Meeting may be subject to requests for disclosure under The Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Each request will be considered on its merits. The Chair will consider any request for a full record of the meeting and ensure that in the event of disclosure, an appropriately redacted version of the Record is disclosed.  All agencies should ensure that the minutes are retained in a confidential and appropriately restricted manner.  The Record of the Meeting will reflect that all individuals who are discussed are treated fairly, with respect and without improper discrimination.  The meeting may make recommendations to agencies who are expected to carry out the actions or notify the Chair of any decision to change or not carry out an action.  All practitioners are reminded of their duties to report any concerns with regards to a decision that they feel may be unsafe using the appropriate escalation processes and safeguarding leads within a timely manner. |
| **Stage One (Closed Session):** | **Statement:**  Closed practitioner sessions are held to consider the sharing of information that may breach GDPR and/or by doing so would;   * compromise the safety of the child/ren or other persons. * compromise the integrity of any criminal investigations/operations (covert/overt)   The chair must facilitate a discussion with practitioner attendees as to the circumstances when information can be disclosed, what is necessary, fair and proportionate in order to protect the child from harm.  [Safeguarding Wales](https://safeguarding.wales/en/chi-i/chi-i-c3pt2/c3pt2-p8/)  [DfE non statutory information sharing advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services for children, young people,parents and carers (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66320b06c084007696fca731/Info_sharing_advice_content_May_2024.pdf)  **Welcomes and Introductions**  **Basic Information**  **Reasons for the Exploitation Meeting**  **Chair shares CYP/Families comments from consultation**  **Professional Information sharing using the contextualised safeguarding proforma template**  **Consider whether information needs omitting in line with above statement**  **(Records of meetings and safety plans will be suitably redacted where required)** |
| **Stage 2 (Family Session)** | **Child/Family welcomed to meeting and introductions made**  **Chair Statement:**  The purpose of this meeting is to share information and consider strengths, and the risk of harm in the context it is occurring, and as a result of this consider how CYP, families and practitioners can work together to consider a robust safety plan and disruption of extra familial harm.  We have a duty to put in place a plan of support that will reduce any risks to children.  The meeting and the record is confidential. The meeting is being carried out in accordance with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.  Everybody present is asked to express their views in a respectful manner, avoiding jargon and for the benefit of the meeting, one person will speak at a time.  I (the Chair) have met with the family and talked to them about the importance of their contribution to the meeting and the plan arising from the meeting. I have also made them aware of how to go about making a complaint about any aspect of the meeting.  A note taker is present today to ensure that there will be a record of the meeting which will highlight the various reports shared and family views. It is not a verbatim record of the meeting.  **Chair provides a summary of agency information**  **Child’s comments on current situation**  **Families’ comments on current situation**  (Chair to aid families to think about the contextual safeguarding proforma and to consider whether the child and/or parent require a confidential space to share their own views) |
| **Stage 3 (Safety Planning)** | Chair will facilitate discussion on actions and safety planning. |
| **Stage 4 (Family debrief)** | In the event that family are not in attendance the chair, or another appropriate person will be actioned to feedback any relevant information and actions to the child and family. |

**Appendix Two \_ Exploitation Family Meeting Template**

**Contextual Safeguarding Exploitation Family Meeting Template (with guidance)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of Young Person:** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Practitioners present** |  |
| **Professional involvement** | * Who forms part of the professional network? What knowledge or information do they hold/share relevant to extra-familial risk? |

**CTMSB Exploitation Data Collection Sheet must be completed for each child subject to the Exploitation Family Meetings.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Child’s Individual History/Family Background** | * How long have they been known to children’s services or [relevant agency]? * Previous referrals and who made the initial referral? * What are the main concerns? (What is known about this – perpetrator?) * What is the child’s understanding of the exploitation? * Does the child have any known vulnerabilities that would increase the likelihood of harm? |
| **Home:** | * Who does the Young Person currently live with? * Has some work been done with the family around extra-familial risk? * Are the parents in agreement [with you] on what the risks are? * Has a referral been made in relation to other vulnerabilities within the family? E.g. DV, mental health, substance misuse etc. * What is the nature of the relationship between the YP and their carers? * Does the young person have siblings? Is there any transferable risk that requires consideration? |
| **Peer Groups:** | * How aware are professionals of the individual’s peer networks and their role within their peer group? * Do the unit have a good sense of activities the Young Person is involved with? * Are they a leader or follower? * How aware are the parents of the YP’s peer network – do they know the parents of their YP’s friends? Are they in contact with them? * Are professional aware of any named perpetrators or offenders? Does this require immediate action? |
| **School:** | * Who is the most important person to the Young Person in the school? What contact do professionals have with this person? * What does the practitioner know about the school i.e. peer groups, school culture etc.? * Does the YP feel safe at school? |
| **Neighbourhood:** | * Do any professionals have contact with any key people in the community that are important to the Young Person? This could be wider friends/network or organisations. * Are the unit aware of any patterns/trends emerging about the area where they live i.e. gang activity, recent crime and hot spots? |
| **Social Media:** | * Does the unit have a good understanding of the young person’s use of Social Media? * Is this safe or is there a need to offer more training to the professionals/family/YP in this area? |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Chairs Summary of Discussion** |  | |
| **Childs Comments on current situation** |  | |
| **Families Comments on current situation** |  | |
| **Agreed Actions:**  **Safety Plan must be included**  **(see guidance and proforma)** | * What support are you able to offer? * Peer group mapping/peer group interventions/training * What support does the child need? * What support doe the parents need? * Do the actions link to the contextual issues discussed? * Are there any actions required to disrupt exploitation? | |
| **Individual** |  |
| **Home** |  |
| **Peer group** |  |
| **School** |  |
| **Neighbourhood** |  |

Drawing on the information shared please record any identified information.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Victims** | **Offenders** | **Locations** | **Themes** |
|  |  |  |  |