Westmorland and Furness
Safeguarding Children
Partnership

Westmorland and Furness Strategic Delivery Plan

This document should be read in conjunction with the pan-Cumbria Contextual Safeguarding Strategy. The information contained in this document references how the overarching Contextual Safeguarding Strategy will be implemented in Westmorland and Furness.

Our Delivery Plan covers the following forms of Contextual Safeguarding risk / Extra-Familial Harm

- **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**
- **Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE),** including coercion into criminal activity and serious youth violence
- **County Lines activity** and associated coercion, grooming, intimidation or violence
- **Online exploitation** and abuse, including grooming, manipulation, coercion and abuse in digital spaces
- **Group-based exploitation and organised abuse** involving networks of individuals who groom, coerce, exploit or facilitate harm to children and young people
- **Child Trafficking and modern slavery**
- **Missing from home, care or education**
- **Contextual risks such as home invasion** (formerly known as cuckooing) linked to exploitation and extra familial control

To achieve our vision of making Westmorland and Furness a safe place for all children and young people, partners will work collaboratively to translate these principles into everyday practice by:

- Putting children's safety, wellbeing and rights at the centre of all practice.
- Listening to and acting on the voices of children, young people and families.
- Promoting shared responsibility for safeguarding through effective multi-agency working.
- Prioritising prevention, early help and the disruption of harm.
- Responding to children's experiences in the context of their lives, including online.
- Embedding trauma-informed, strengths-based and child-centred practice.
- Challenging assumptions, avoiding victim-blaming and responding to emerging risks.
- Reviewing impact and learning continuously to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Local Context

Westmorland and Furness is the third largest Local Authority area in England and Wales by land area; the area's large geographical footprint and sparse population create unique contextual safeguarding challenges. Young people often travel significant distances for education, work and social activities, which can increase exposure to exploitation and other extra-familial harms. Limited access to services and reduced natural oversight in some rural communities can also make risks harder to identify, while online environments present additional safeguarding concerns, enabling harmful contact, exploitation and abuse beyond geographical boundaries.

Strengthening Transitional Pathways

We recognise that there is strong evidence that children and young people, including young adults, have distinct safeguarding needs. Adolescence and early adulthood are periods of significant biological, emotional and social development. During this time, contextual factors such as peer relationships, education settings, neighbourhoods and online environments can compound vulnerabilities and impact emotional regulation, social relationships, decision making and executive functioning.

To strengthen continuity and prevent young adults from reaching a "cliff edge" at 18, Westmorland and Furness Children's Services are working collaboratively with Adult Services to develop an all age contextual safeguarding pathway that supports those young adults up to the age of 25 who may be experiencing, or are vulnerable to, extra familial harm. This approach recognises that risks can persist, fluctuate, or escalate during the transition to adulthood and that responses need to be coordinated, consistent and multi agency.

A joint referral pathway between Children's and Adults' Services is being developed to support clear information sharing and consistent decision making. MACE processes will also incorporate transition arrangements, ensuring that relevant information is shared and that oversight continues beyond 18 where risks remain.

Developing a Contextual Safeguarding Young Adult Panel will be fundamental to identifying and supporting Young Adults where Contextual Safeguarding concerns exists. The panel will provide the opportunity to support those who may find it difficult to engage consistently with services.

The Panel will:

- Provide structured multi agency oversight and shared ownership of risk
- Develop and review coordinated safety plans
- Support early transition planning for those known to services before age 18
- Ensure continued monitoring and support where statutory thresholds are not met
- Reduce crisis led responses by promoting early, preventative action

The SPACE Team (Support and Protect Against Child Exploitation)

The SPACE Team (Support and Protect Against Child Exploitation) is Westmorland and Furness's specialist service for responding to child exploitation and extra familial harm within a contextual safeguarding framework. The team provides expert advice, assessment and direct support to practitioners, children and families where exploitation is suspected or identified as the primary concern.

Formerly known as the Complex Safeguarding Team, the service has been renamed to SPACE following consultation with children, young people and the wider children's services workforce. Feedback highlighted that the previous name could feel impersonal and stigmatising. The name SPACE was chosen to reflect safety, trust and the importance of creating space for children and young people to be heard, understood and supported. Practitioner titles have also been changed to reduce barriers to engagement and support relationship based work from the outset.

The SPACE Team works on the basis that risks of harm often arise beyond the family home. Practice is grounded in contextual safeguarding principles, recognising the influence of peer relationships, locations, online spaces and wider community environments on children's safety. The team works relationally and trauma informed, prioritising consistent, trusting relationships that centre children's voices, experiences and strengths. The focus is not only on reducing immediate risk, but on creating safety, stability and a sense of belonging, while working to disrupt the contexts, individuals, groups and networks that place children at risk.

The team is made up of a Team Manager, Social Workers and Intervention Workers who hold specialist training in responding to child exploitation and extra familial harm. Depending on the level of risk and the nature of concerns, the SPACE Team undertakes specialist exploitation focused assessment and planning, provides sustained direct work with children and young people, and offers advice and consultation to other professionals working with families.

Within the wider safeguarding system, the SPACE Team plays a central role in strengthening early identification and proportionate response. The team contributes specialist oversight through the Multi Agency Children's Hub (MACH), supports Family Help and Early Help services where exploitation is emerging, and works alongside Social Care teams where risks escalate. Where exploitation is the primary concern and risks reduce, SPACE supports clear step down planning to ensure children continue to feel supported and safe without unnecessary statutory intervention.

The SPACE Team also contributes to partnership understanding of contextual risk through information sharing, analysis of peer and community contexts, and participation in multi agency meetings focused on exploitation and missing. Across all activity, the team ensures that the lived experiences of children, young people and young adults shape assessment, planning and review.

Through its specialist, relational and contextual approach, the SPACE Team is a key enabler of this strategy. It supports the partnership to identify exploitation earlier, respond consistently and proportionately, and improve outcomes for children, young people and young adults by creating safer contexts beyond the family home.

Accountability and Governance

Contextual Safeguarding sub-group

The Contextual Safeguarding Subgroup (formerly the Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET) Children Subgroup) provides strategic multi-agency oversight of safeguarding risks that children face outside the home, including child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, missing episodes and trafficking. The subgroup brings together partner agencies to monitor local trends and performance, promote effective information sharing, identify learning and improvement opportunities, learning from local and national reviews, inspections and investigations relating to child exploitation, organised abuse and group-based offending. It also supports workforce development through training and awareness raising, oversees multi-agency auditing activity, and provides assurance to the Safeguarding Accountability Board on the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements, while maintaining a child-centred approach that prioritises the voice and lived experience of children and young people.

The Contextual Safeguarding sub-group is one of the WFSCP's six main sub-groups. Quarterly progress updates are provided to the Delegated Safeguarding Partners via the Partnership Managers report. Wider Safeguarding partners also receive regular updates from the sub-group chair.

Contextual Safeguarding Operational Group

The **Contextual Safeguarding Operational Group** (formerly the Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET) Operational Group) leads and coordinates the delivery of Westmorland and Furness' multi-agency response to child exploitation and wider contextual safeguarding risks. The group oversees the implementation of the Child Exploitation Strategy Action Plan, ensuring that partner agencies work collaboratively to safeguard children and young people affected by issues such as child sexual and criminal exploitation, missing episodes, harmful sexual behaviour, modern slavery, trafficking and online exploitation. The group monitors performance and emerging issues, supports the implementation of multi-agency policies and procedures, and provides operational assurance and progress updates to the Contextual Safeguarding Subgroup. Throughout its work, the group maintains a child-centred approach, ensuring that the voice and lived experiences of children and young people inform safeguarding practice and service development.

MACE meetings

The Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Meeting provides operational oversight of child exploitation and wider contextual safeguarding concerns across Westmorland and Furness. MACE meetings are multi-agency safeguarding forums that bring together professionals from Children's Social Care, Police, Education, Health, Youth Justice, and other relevant agencies to identify, assess, and respond to risks of child exploitation and extra-familial harm. This includes child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), county lines activity, trafficking, missing episodes, and other contextual safeguarding concerns.

The key purposes are to:

- Share information about children and young people who may be at risk of exploitation.
- Identify patterns, themes, locations, peer groups, perpetrators and networks involved in exploitation, including links that may indicate organised or group-based exploitation.
- Disrupt exploitation and those responsible for causing harm, including individual offenders, groups and organised networks, through targeted multi-agency actions.
- Provide a contextual safeguarding response, recognising that harm may occur outside the family home, such as in communities, schools, peer groups, or online environments.

Contextual Safeguarding Young Adult Panel

Once established, the Contextual Safeguarding Young Adult Panel will report in to the Contextual Safeguarding sub-group.

Key contact information and resources

- Contextual Safeguarding section of the WFSCP – **wfscp.org.uk/resources-and-guidance/local-resources/contextual-safeguarding**
- Website
- Include information that directs people to the CE procedure and where to go to report a concern
- Information about contacting SPACE team
- WFSCP Policies and Procedures - https://westmorlandfurnessscp.trixonline.co.uk/chapter/child-exploitation-including-child-sexual-exploitation-and-child-criminal-exploitation
- WFSCP website links
  - Contextual Safeguarding including how to contact the SPACE Team- **Contextual safeguarding | Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership**
  - How to Report a Concern - **How to report a concern | Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership**
  - Online Safety - **Online safety | Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership**
  - Modern Slavery - **Modern Slavery | Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership**
  - Violent Extremism - **Violent Extremism and Radicalisation (Prevent) | Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership**
- WAF SPACE Duty email contact – **Space-WAF@cumbria.gov.uk**