



# EXPLOITATION PATHWAY GUIDANCE

Walsall Exploitation Team

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**Pathway Guidance – An introduction**

Walsall Safeguarding Partnership has an all age exploitation pathway to detect and disrupt exploitation within our local communities. Our Multi-Agency Operational Group has devised the Exploitation Assessment as a way of communicating risk directly from a referring agency to police, social care teams and voluntary sector agencies.

You should use this pathway and guidance when you have exploitation concerns for a child or adult living within the Walsall local authority area. If a child has been placed into the Walsall area, please follow the guidance of the placing local authority.

Every professional who engages with victims of exploitation has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single practitioner can have the full picture of a victim's needs and circumstances and, if victims and families are to receive the right help at the right time, every professional who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

## Walsall Safeguarding Partnership Exploitation Pathway

Concerns identified that a Child, Young Person or Adult is being exploited or at risk of exploitation.

Professional identifying concern completes Exploitation Assessment. (see the Exploitation Assessment guidance)

Child, young person or adult is being exploited and in need of immediate protection?

No

**Send the completed Exploitation Assessment to Walsall Exploitation Team –**  
[missingexploitedchildren@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:missingexploitedchildren@walsall.gov.uk) (this email address is used for children and adults where there are exploitation concerns)

Yes

Contact the police by calling '999', and notify MASH 0300 555 2866 (Children) or Initial Intake 0300 555 2922 (Adults) and send completed Exploitation Assessment to the Exploitation Team.

**Basic checks** completed by the Exploitation Co-ordinator. If the child or adult is open to Social Care, the allocated worker is notified. If not, Exploitation Assessment sent to MASH or Initial Intake. **Exploitation Co-ordinator sends Exploitation Assessment to Partners (i.e. Police: PPU, Locate, FCID, Partnerships, Health, Street Teams) in preparation for next days daily triage.**

**Strategy discussion/Information sharing** takes place by MASH/Initial Intake where there is a concern of significant harm identified for the victim at point of contact. Immediate safeguarding actions planned and any disruption activity is considered. Assessments completed i.e CFA, S.47, S.42 (see pathway guidance).

**Multi-Agency Daily triage takes place coordinated by the Exploitation Team.** The Exploitation Assessment is reviewed and discussed. Initial checks completed and level of risk agreed (this is sometimes different to the initial level of risk indicated by the referrer). Appropriate course of action agreed (**see below possible outcomes**) based on risk level and information shared and safety planning considered. Key information/intel/themes identified to share at Exploitation Panel. Missing action plans considered where required.

Police referrals can be made at any time during this process via calling 101 or submission of intelligence forms (add link). Social workers should refer to police upon receipt of new or escalating exploitation concerns.

Where common **themes** are identified, **perpetrators** and evidence of **concern** within community is established – these are noted and added to the next Exploitation Panel agenda.

Exploitation Coordinator liaises with allocated worker for the Victim **if medium/high** risk – initiates safety planning in line with existing plans, i.e. Child in need, Child protection Plans, Children in Care, missing intervention meetings, adult safety plans. Mapping and intelligence gathering ongoing.

**Low risk/No risk victims** – appropriate intervention identified at daily triage. This could be Single agency support, voluntary organisations including Street Teams, Early Help, targeted agencies.

**Exploitation Panel** takes place monthly and is a strategic multi-agency panel where information and Intel is shared across the partnership who look at themes and commonalities relating to the most vulnerable victims in the borough to aid disruption of exploitation, manage resources based on key locations of concern and support formal criminal and civil actions taking place to reduce exploration risk in the Borough. Discussion is disruption and location focused informed by themes from high risk/most vulnerable victims of Exploitation. The panel is jointly chaired by police and social care reps.

**Review:** Each victim is reviewed in accordance with their existing plan i.e. CIN, CP, LAC, Adult safety plan, or as new exploitation concerns are identified. Actions are reviewed and amended or ended as required. Exploitation Assessment is updated by allocated worker following any change in exploitation concerns. The Exploitation Team capture detail of Victims reducing in risk but also increase of risk and identify any key themes/locations.

**Exit Plan/Step Down:** This would take place when there are no longer any exploitation risks evident for the victim or the risk has reduced to Low and can be managed via Early Help intervention for children and equivalent for Adults.

## **What is Exploitation?**

Exploitation is not a new concern; children and adults have been exploited in many forms for years. Professionals now have a much better understanding of what exploitation is and how it is a form of abuse. As our understanding of exploitation grows, so too does our ability to identify those most at risk within our communities.

In a broader sense, exploitation has, over the last few years, been categorised as sexual exploitation or criminal exploitation, predominantly of children. However, we recognise that exploitation is not an issue that stops impacting victims at the age of 18. As we grow our collective understanding, we can see that adults are also victims of exploitation.

The other important issue to understand is how exploitation impacts upon families and communities, which is why the Walsall Exploitation Assessment asks a wide range of questions to understand the bigger picture around victims, perpetrators, and locations of concerns. This enables the Exploitation Team to have a better understanding in order to tackle this issue at a grass roots level.

## **Definition of Exploitation**

Exploitation is not defined in law. Exploitation is a form of abuse. It occurs when individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a person into sexual or criminal activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Exploitation does not always involve physical contact, it can also occur through the use of technology.

The criminal exploitation of victims is not confined to county lines but can also include other forms of criminal activity such as theft, acquisitive crime, knife crimes and other forms of criminality.

For more information about what exploitation is and how Walsall responds to it, please read through the **Exploitation Assessment Guidance**.

## **Referral via Exploitation Assessment**

Walsall's Exploitation Team has its own referral process and exploitation pathway. It is an all age pathway allowing practitioners to refer concerns linked to children and adults as victims of exploitation. This could be sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation or concerns around victims being trafficked or going missing.

The Exploitation Assessment has been developed by multi-agency practitioners to capture and evidence how the victim is being exploited. It follows the three themes of victims, perpetrators and locations. The Exploitation Assessment has been built to consider contextual safeguarding aspects and looks at being part of an evidence-based approach. If you have any queries relating to the tool, please download the **Exploitation Assessment guidance document**.

The Exploitation Assessment can be found at the end of this document as APPENDIX A

### **Who can refer?**

Anyone can refer using the Exploitation Assessment – you do not have to be an allocated worker or social worker to make the referral. Please complete the Exploitation Assessment for the child or adult you are concerned about and send directly to the Exploitation Team via our email address [missingandexploitedchildren@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:missingandexploitedchildren@walsall.gov.uk) (Please use this email address for both adults and children).

If the person is not known to the team, we may contact you directly for more information. Please ensure you include your own details for contact.

Practitioners should consider the information about the victim, including their lived experiences, to determine what action to take.

If you wish to share information anonymously, we suggest you contact Crime Stoppers directly on 0800 555 111 or visiting their website: [www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org).

**Please be advised that if you are aware of a crime that has taken place or is due to take place, you should contact West Midlands Police directly on their 101 telephone line to report it. If this is an emergency, please call 999 and complete the referral afterwards.**

### **What happens when we receive your referral?**

When an Exploitation Assessment is received by the Exploitation Team via email, basic checks will be completed by the Exploitation Coordinator who works for Walsall Council. The coordinator will review your information and take the initial steps to action the referral. If the person you have referred already has an allocated social worker, contact will be made with them to share that a referral has been received. If the person is not open to Social Care and the Exploitation Assessment evidences medium or high-risk exploitation, the Exploitation Coordinator will notify the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) where there are concerns for children under 18 years old, or Walsall Initial Intake (Adult Social Care) where the concerns relate to adults over 18 years old, in order for a referral to Social Care to be created by the appropriate department. The Exploitation Team will liaise closely with MASH or Initial Intake and share a copy of the Exploitation Assessment with them. A request that a strategy meeting/discussion may be considered with a police officer and other partner agencies where there is an immediate safeguarding concern for the victim. You will be informed of this and may be asked to participate in any required strategy meeting or discussion.

### **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)**

Walsall's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), is designed to share information and make multi-agency decisions to protect and safeguard children. If there are concerns that a child is being neglected or abused, a discussion should also take place within the MASH team to explore if there is any safeguarding concerns for a child and if any statutory invention is required from Social Care to safeguard the child from harm. MASH may ask you to complete a Multi-Agency referral form alongside the Exploitation Assessment where there is evidence of harm to a child.

The MASH will complete multi-agency screening to support appropriate decision-making in line with the 'Right Help, Right Time' guidance and inform the next actions for a child or young person, in consultation with the Exploitation team. These actions may include signposting to universal services, single agency or multi-agency early help referral, or allocation to a social worker for child and family assessment or child protection investigation. Aside from any screening that may take place within MASH, the Exploitation Team will discuss the Exploitation Assessment at the Multi-agency Daily Triage to consider appropriate safety planning for the child or young person in relation to Exploitation.

You can contact Walsall MASH directly by emailing [mash@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:mash@walsall.gov.uk) or by calling 0300 555 2866.

### **Adult Services**

If the person you are referring is 18 years old or older, the referral will be sent to our colleagues within the Adult Social Care team where appropriate.

Walsall Intake (Adult Services) can be contacted directly via the following email address: [initialintake@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:initialintake@walsall.gov.uk)

For further information about this team to make contact over the telephone, please call 0300 555 2922.

### **Daily Triage**

Each morning, the Exploitation Coordinator on duty meets with multi-agency partners – police teams from LOCATE, PPU, Partnerships and Force CID. The Return Home Officer from the Exploitation Team is also present along with colleagues from Walsall Street Teams and the Early Help Hub.

Triage participants review Exploitation Assessments that have been received in the last 24 hours and consider the assessment outcome (low, medium, high) and rationale provided by the professional who completed the Assessment. Triage participants agree what further action is required, considering the information shared within the Exploitation Assessment and



make a judgement as to whether the victim or any person of interest within the assessment proceeds for additional safety planning or disruption work. Following this discussion, the Exploitation Coordinator from the team will contact you with the outcome of your referral.

If you are a social worker or Early Help Worker allocated to the victim, you will be contacted by the Exploitation Coordinator and supported through the next steps following triage. If the Victim is allocated an Early Help worker or Social Worker following receipt of the Exploitation Assessment, the allocated worker will contact you directly to discuss next steps in relation to safety planning and/or investigation.

The daily triage allows for timely and important information to be shared. We may call you to gather further information to support decision making and safety planning; please ensure you have completed your correct contact details.

### **Daily Triage Outcomes**

#### **1. Safety planning & assessment (where victim is risk assessed as being medium or high risk)**

Following initial triage discussion, the Exploitation Coordinator will contact the allocated worker to initiate safety planning discussions.

Safety planning can include measures such as drawing together a missing action plan or looking to gather evidence to support an NRM application (National Referral Mechanism – Home Office) or MS1 for adults where consent cannot be gained, for those people who are being trafficked. A wide range of options is looked at based on each individual victim and, potentially, their family.

Each safety plan should include:

- A clear plan that includes diversion tactics to disrupt the perpetrators/locations and identify which professional is taking what action and by when.
- Intervention and support that focuses on addressing wider environmental factors.
- Implementation of any safeguarding measures.

The safety planning that takes place at this stage is reviewed regularly within existing meetings that the victim may have, such as a Child In Need meeting, Child Protection Plan, Looked After Child review or Pathway Plans. For adults, plans are reviewed by lead practitioners with support from Exploitation Coordinators. Each plan is built *with* the victim present to ensure their view and understanding of the plan is in place from an early stage. If a victim does not wish to participate or cannot participate at this stage, parents or carers should be consulted. If a victim lives within local authority care or within supported accommodation, care providers should also be part of the safety planning, so too should any other professionals that can take measures to support and protect a victim of exploitation. Exploitation Coordinators will suggest professionals that should be involved and consulted in safety planning for victims.

Planning around a victim's safety allows safeguarding measures to be put into place to protect victims whilst gathering evidence and information around potential perpetrators or people of concern. If any new information is received whilst safety planning in respect of the victim, a police strategy discussion may need to take place. Investigation updates from police officers should be shared directly with allocated workers and the victim on a regular basis. A list of live investigations will be reviewed monthly at Exploitation Panel.

Key themes and links made to people of concern should be reported to Exploitation Coordinators directly and via police contacts. Intelligence can be shared at any point via police telephone service on 101.

For examples of safety planning for victims of exploitation and tools freely available to use, please see the Contextual Safeguarding Network <https://www.csnetwork.org.uk>.

'Contextual Safeguarding' is a theory developed by Dr Carlene Firmin of the University of Bedfordshire which supports an approach to understanding and responding to children's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It is recognised that the different relationships children form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers can have little influence over these contexts and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships and parent/carer capacity to keep a child safe.

Another tool available to practitioners when supporting victims is the Home Office disruption tool kit. This kit outlines a number of civil and police measures that can be added to the safety plan to support victims and ensure perpetrators are given oversight by police colleagues. The tool has a range of information and can be found following the link below. Please note this tool kit is aimed at practitioners working with children and some of the legislation contained within it is aimed at children only, although some elements of the kit can be applied towards any adults as a perpetrator of grooming and extra-familial abuse within the context of exploitation.

### **Home Office Disruption Toolkit**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/794554/6.5120\\_Child\\_exploitation\\_disruption\\_toolkit.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/794554/6.5120_Child_exploitation_disruption_toolkit.pdf)

### **PACE – Parents Against Child Exploitation**

Working with a victim's family is an important part of safety planning; we recognise that parents and carers are partners in protecting victims. There are a number of resources and supporting materials for parents and carers that can be found on the PACE website. PACE also offers direct support via parent mentors and online forums that parents have found useful when understanding exploitation and how it impacts upon a victim. [www.paceuk.info](http://www.paceuk.info)

Walsall Street Teams offer support to parents and families on a face to face basis. For more information about this project and others please access their website. [www.street-teams.org](http://www.street-teams.org)

## **2. Safety planning for those victims deemed to be low risk**

If a victim is considered to be 'low risk' at the point of daily triage, this does not mean that their risk level will not change in the future. Exploitation prevention should still be considered in any future work that takes place with the victim. This can include working with parents and carers to ensure that the victim is safeguarded in an effective way. There are a number of agencies that can support 'low risk' victims following a triage discussion. This could be Walsall Street Teams or the Walsall Early Help services.

If you require any support around safety planning, or working with lower risk victims, please contact the Exploitation Team directly. They can offer you support and guidance that is tailored to individual circumstances.

### **3. Multi-agency strategy discussions**

An outcome of triage could be that a strategy discussion is needed. This is when a police investigation is initiated, and the victim could be opened up to a social care team for assessment or joint investigation with police. Initial enquiries or assessments are often completed by both police and social care where exploitation is concerned, and the strategy meeting is an arena to share information with partners and plan any ongoing investigation required. There are a number of different police teams that work within the exploitation arena including PPU (Public Protection Unit), LOCATE (Missing People), Force CID (Criminal Exploitation) Partnerships (Local Officers to Walsall) and Neighbourhood Officers (within local community).

For a better understanding of police teams and how to connect with them, please take a look at their website: <https://west-midlands.police.uk>.

### **Daily Triage Outcome – Missing People**

**Not all missing people are exploited, but those who are exploited are often missing.**

#### **1. Return Home Interview**

If a victim is reported missing to police or the local authority, they will be discussed within the Daily Triage. Any child (Under the age of 18 years old) who is missing or found within the 24 hours prior to the meeting will be added to the agenda by LOCATE police or the Exploitation Coordinator. The discussion is attended by the Return Home Officer, who following the Daily Triage will contact the victim independently. Every Walsall child that has been missing and reported to police is offered an independent return home interview – an opportunity to speak openly about what happened during that missing episode and to identify any support they may need.

Return home interviews are expected to be completed within 72 hours of the young person returning home, although it is recognised that the interview needs to take place when a young person is ready to speak and in a safe space. If a young person does not want to meet on a one to one basis, an interview can take place over the telephone, although it is always preferable to meet the young person directly.

If the young person lives outside of a 10 mile radius of Walsall, we would engage their allocated worker or social worker to take the lead in completing a return home interview.

If an adult victim is reported to police as missing, allocated professionals should engage in safe and well discussions. If an adult victim is missing and does not have an allocated worker, the Return Home Officer will initiate contact over the telephone to offer support and potential signposting to police and adult social care if required.

## **2. Missing Trigger Plans**

If a person is regularly 'missing', consideration needs to take place in forming a Missing Trigger Plan. Trigger plans outline what actions should be taken when a child or adult goes missing. The plan should include addresses the person has been known to frequent on previous missing episodes and any key contacts they may have. It is also useful to have their current address and telephone number listed so this can be quickly shared with police, key workers of family members if needed.

If a child or adult lives in supported or care accommodation, it is important for the key workers within their property to have access to the trigger plan so that this can be shared in times of crisis. It also supports those professionals who are looking for the missing person. It is important that this type of missing planning is picked up within initial stages of safety planning.

## **3. Strategy discussions around Missing Children**

If a child is missing for a period of 72 hours or longer, a strategy discussion with social care and police is needed. If a child returns, they will be discussed within Daily Triage. The triage

discussion will share any timely information which will be relayed to the lead professional by the council's Exploitation Coordinator. It is the responsibility of the social worker or lead professional to initiate the strategy discussion with the LOCATE team within the police.

Having three missing episodes in 30 days or a missing episode where a person has returned and disclosed any crime or circumstance that could be linked to exploitation would also trigger a strategy discussion.

If you are unsure if a strategy discussion is required – please contact the team for additional support.

### **Trafficking Notices and NRM status**

If practitioners have concerns that a child may be a potential victim of modern slavery or human trafficking then a referral should be made to the National Referral Mechanism, as soon as possible. Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child to be a victim of trafficking:

- This should be reported to the police (phone 101 or in an emergency 999) in order for them to investigate the offences committed (i.e. modern slavery and trafficking offences)
- A referral should be made to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) directly via Police and Children's Services First Responders. Social workers can apply directly via this link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-trafficking-victims-referral-and-assessment-forms>

### Useful helplines

Modern Slavery Helpline 0800 555 111

Barnardo's 24/7 professionals support line 0800 043 4303 (deals with modern slavery and human trafficking).

### **Exit Planning and Step Down**

Following agreement that a victim has been reviewed through their safety planning journey, and there is no longer any exploitation risk or there is low risk, the Exploitation Coordinator

should be notified, and a safety plan closed or stepped down to a Single Agency. A victim still may wish to work with professionals and any new work can continue without the need of the Exploitation Team's oversight.

The worker could be an Early Help professional, Social Worker or Street Teams Exploitation Worker. A month after their step down, the coordinator will remove the victim from our monitoring spreadsheet. If professionals have new or additional concerns at this point, a new referral should be submitted through completion of a new Exploitation Assessment outlining the current exploitation concerns and level of risk to the Victim.

Please note that step downs and exit planning can take place when victims and professionals feel it is the right time to do so. Criminal investigations can still continue even though safety planning has now finished. The Exploitation Panel will continue to have oversight of ongoing investigations.

### **The Exploitation Panel**

The Exploitation Panel meets monthly and is chaired by a social care Head of Service. This panel replaces the previous CMOG and MARVP meetings practitioners may have attended in the past. The panel is multi-agency and designed to identify perpetrators, local themes and areas within local community that may need support or additional resources to target disruption of exploitation.

Any locations noted through safety planning that need strategic planning or recourse to disrupt exploitation activity are reviewed within panel or after referral from Daily Triage. There is also an opportunity to focus local resources and support any civil action that may need to take place to protect victims.

Information and intelligence gathered by Exploitation Coordinators is shared through the panel with partners so that action can be taken in partnership to reduce exploitation across the borough.

The panel has oversight of themes and commonalities linked to Walsall's most vulnerable victims, although safety planning doesn't take place in this meeting.

### **Ongoing support from an Exploitation Coordinator**

Exploitation Coordinators are always available should you require any additional information or support. Please call directly on 01922 650395, or email

[missingexploitedchildren@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:missingexploitedchildren@walsall.gov.uk).

### **Strategic Oversight**

All exploitation processes and pathways are agreed and are overseen by Walsall Safeguarding Partnership. These processes are open to scrutiny: if you have any idea you would like to share, or for more information, please do contact us. We are always open to new ways to improve our partnership working.

Documents do change and get updated regularly; please ensure you are using the most up-to-date Exploitation Assessment prior to submitting.

All documents can be found [here](#)

### **Useful Links:-**

The Home Office – Disruption Tool Kit

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/794554/6.5120\\_Child\\_exploitation\\_disruption\\_toolkit.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/794554/6.5120_Child_exploitation_disruption_toolkit.pdf)

The Contextual Safeguarding Network - <https://www.csnetwork.org.uk>.

PACE – [www.paceuk.info](http://www.paceuk.info)

Walsall Street Teams – [www.street-teams.org](http://www.street-teams.org)

The National Working Group – [www.nwgnetwork.org](http://www.nwgnetwork.org)

Barnardo's Trafficking Services - <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/protecting-children/trafficked-children>

Appendix A – Walsall All Age Exploitation Assessment.