

# **Vulnerable Adolescents Strategy 2017-19**

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## **Contents**

|           |  |             |
|-----------|--|-------------|
| <b>1.</b> | <b>Introduction</b>  | <b>2-3</b>  |
| <b>2.</b> | <b>Purpose and Scope</b>   | <b>3-5</b>  |
| <b>3.</b> | <b>Vision for Bromley</b>  | <b>5-6</b>  |
| <b>4.</b> | <b>Strategic Priorities</b>  | <b>6-11</b> |
|           | <b>Priority 1: Knowing our problem, knowing our response</b>       |             |
|           | <b>Priority 2: Strong leadership</b>                               |             |
|           | <b>Priority 3: Prevention and early intervention</b>               |             |
|           | <b>Priority 4: Protection and support</b>                          |             |
|           | <b>Priority 5: Disruption and prosecution</b>                      |             |
| <b>5.</b> | <b>Appendix 1- Definitions</b>                                     | <b>12</b>   |
|           | <b>Appendix 2 - London Safeguarding Adolescents Steering Group</b> | <b>20</b>   |

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Understanding the context in which children and young people live their lives is an essential feature of effective multi-agency intervention. For the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB), this issue remains central to our overall approach, therefore developing our understanding of the context of children's lives and the vulnerabilities that can create pathways to greater harm will be central to everything we do.

1.2 To do this effectively, children and young people need to be seen, heard and helped:

- **Seen- in the context of their lives at home, friendship circles, health, education and public spaces (including social media).**
- **Heard- to effectively protect children and young people, professionals need to take time to hear what children are saying and put themselves in the child or young person's shoes and think about what their life might truly be like.**
- **Helped- by remaining professionally curious and by implementing effective and imaginative solutions that help children and young people.**

1.3 This document provides the strategic foundation upon which our local safeguarding framework will be further developed and defines our roadmap to strengthen the identification, assessment and intervention with vulnerable adolescents.

1.4 The BSCB Vulnerable Adolescents Strategy focuses on the following priorities:

- **Knowing our problem, knowing our response**
- **Strong leadership**
- **Prevention and early intervention**
- **Protection and support**
- **Disruption and prosecution**

## 2. Purpose and Scope

2.1 The strategy's primary purpose is to ensure that the multi-agency work involving vulnerable adolescents is focussed on the reduction of vulnerability. The BSCB will ensure coordination of partnership activity and scrutinise developments in respect of the difference that they make to the lives of young people.

2.2 **The strategy's overall scope is focussed on safeguarding young people from exploitation.** It recognises that to do this effectively, a range of other vulnerabilities need to be better understood and interventions need to adapt, with partners, peers, families and communities being better placed to respond.

2.3 This strategy should therefore be read in conjunction with [BSCB protocols](#) dealing with:

- **Child Sexual Exploitation**
- **Children missing from home, care and education**
- **Gang involvement and association.**

2.4 Alongside these protocols, the BSCB will further develop integrated arrangements that actively consider and effectively respond to a wider range of associated vulnerabilities that either exacerbate risk or arise as a result of exploitation. Other factors in scope include:

- **Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA)**
- **Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG)**
- **Adolescent Neglect**
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing including Self-harm and Suicide**
- **Substance Misuse**
- **Radicalisation**
- **Trafficking and modern day slavery**

2.3 Widening the strategic scope reflects the fact that young people often face multiple risks. Dealing with the response to certain threats in isolation can potentially hinder the understanding of vulnerabilities that frequently overlap and hence limit the effectiveness of intervention. We are committed to seeing the child in the context of their lives not simply in the context of the current vulnerability or harm they have suffered or are exposed to.

- **DVA / VAWG** - Young people who are at risk from CSE may be more susceptible due to their limited and/or limiting experiences of growing up in a household where domestic violence has skewed their understanding of healthy relationships.
- **Adolescent Neglect** - Young people who go missing could be missing due to adolescent neglect arising from parental substance misuse, mental health or learning difficulties. Such environments can provide limited experience of positive parental care, with the incentive to remain at home, care or in education reducing as a consequence.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing including Self-harm and Suicide** - Young people who are sexually exploited could be at increased risk of self-harming and suicidal behaviour as a result of their experiences. Young people with existing mental health difficulties could also be more susceptible to gang involvement – either in terms of sexual exploitation or criminal exploitation.
- **Substance Misuse** - Young people who misuse substances could have reduced resilience to exploitation by gangs.
- **Radicalisation** – Extremist messages can have a powerful impact on someone who's young and vulnerable; possibly unsure of their path in life, and who may lack confidence.

2.5 Furthermore, as young people get older their experiences of abuse are often associated with public environments in which they spend their time. As such, a critical focus of this strategy will be on how young people can be better protected and supported by a wider range of individuals and bodies in a wider variety of contexts. This will include ensuring we enable adolescents to engage with these services when they need them.

2.6 Such public environments also include those in the virtual world too. In this respect, how young people are safeguarded in the context of their 'access to technology and their use of social media' is an underpinning concept to this strategy. Practitioners should make themselves familiar with the [BSCB Social Media policy documents](#).

2.7 If practitioners don't have a clear understanding about context and the root causes of vulnerabilities (and where these arise), the effectiveness of interventions will be limited.

2.8 Practitioners need to know what the problems are and who can be engaged to help and support the young people to enabling them to have positive outcomes in their lives.

### 3. Vision for Bromley

3.1 Our multi-agency work in responding to vulnerable adolescents will create the following conditions within the London Borough of Bromley.

- **Strong leadership and partnerships** between key stakeholders are maintained and ensure an effective response to adolescent vulnerability.
- Children and young people are **educated and empowered**. They better understand the range of risks that they can face as they grow up and are supported to develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- Children and young people recognise when they or others are at risk and are **confident to seek support**.
- Adolescents who are vulnerable are **identified, safeguarded and supported** for as long as they need. Professionals, local businesses, families, parents / carers, friends and local people can identify the signs of vulnerability in a variety of contexts.
- Comprehensive multi-agency **assessments** identify risks within families, schools, peer groups and public spaces. Specifically, **extra-familial relationships and environments** that impact upon adolescent's safety are better understood.
- Families/carers, professionals, and communities support vulnerable adolescents to **build resilience** against harm.
- **New and radical partnership approaches** are implemented alongside peer group informed assessment models and interventions. **Relevant interventions** are developed that address risk and harness the strength of peer relationships.
- The **nature of public spaces** change and those responsible for these spaces are empowered to initiate and participate in child protection processes.
- **Whole-school responses** are developed that promote safe and supportive interactions and relationships. Community members are engaged to enable them to support adolescents through applying this approach.

- **A safeguarding adolescents system** is in place that focuses upon changing public and social environments (including schools) where adolescents may encounter significant harm, rather than relocating them to remove them from harmful contexts.
- Those who seek to harm or exploit children are **identified, disrupted and convicted**. **Robust offender management** post-conviction and/or effective intervention strategies reduce the risk presented by identified abusers.

#### **4 Strategic Priorities**

- 4.1 The BSCB understands the need to place this document in the context of other strategies, policies and plans that influence the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. As such, it is essential that this strategy to identify and divert the young and vulnerable from harm is directly linked with the protocols for [CSE](#), [Missing](#) and [Gang involvement and association](#).
- 4.2 The following strategic priorities, informed by local issues and self-assessment, provide the focus for further developing our safeguarding arrangements and responses to vulnerable adolescents. Action plans have been developed against these areas.

##### **Priority 1: KNOWING OUR PROBLEM, KNOWING OUR RESPONSE**

**The focus of this strategic priority is to ensure that all professionals and volunteers working in the BSCB partnership, along with parents/carers, local businesses, residents, and young people themselves, know about the problems facing adolescents in the context of exploitation.**

**They understand the signs and symptoms of exploitation and the factors that increase the risk to young people. Individuals know what to do if they are worried about a young person. Leaders and managers understand the local problem profile and contemporary intelligence picture and use this to target interventions to make young people safer.**

Outcomes sought:

- Our problem profile is continually developing and understood in the context of young people, perpetrators and the spaces and places they frequent online and offline.

- Professionals who come into contact with children and young people have relevant and proportionate knowledge of the broader profile of adolescent vulnerability. This includes the factors that exacerbate risk and the consequential vulnerabilities arising from exploitation.
- Professionals, parents/carers, young people, local businesses and residents, can identify adolescent vulnerability, know who to contact, and know what will be done in response. This is supported through robust awareness raising and regular training provided by the BSCB, to partner agencies and communities.
- Engaging, educating and empowering the broader community forms a critical element and this work will be directly supported and informed by the BSCB Community Engagement Sub Group. We will encourage communities to be vocal about exploitation and the unacceptability of abuse. Communities participate in being part of the solution.
- Analytical support is coordinated across a range of agencies to identify themes, patterns and trends relating to adolescent vulnerability. Stronger intelligence gathering and sharing across the partnership on individuals, peer groups and geographic hotspots engages a tactical response from the partnership to make young people safer. This intelligence should include information gathered from young people, their families and the wider community.

## **Priority 2: STRONG LEADERSHIP**

**The focus of this strategic priority is on the need for strong leadership to successfully tackle the range of risks facing adolescents in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

Leadership is required at all levels, but particularly from those at the top. Political leaders, Chief Executives and senior leaders in all organisations, together with leaders in the local community, have a responsibility to set the culture within which abuse and exploitation is not tolerated. Continuing to promote a culture that encourages professional curiosity, challenge and appropriate escalation of concerns is fundamental.

Governance arrangements that include regular meetings between the Independent Chair of the BSCB with the Chief Executive of the London Borough of Bromley, Lead member for Children and chairs of partnership boards will ensure ongoing connectivity between policy areas impacting the welfare of adolescents.

The BSCB will ensure this Strategy remains responsive to any work arising from the London Safeguarding Adolescents Steering Group (LSASG) (*Appendix 2*).

Outcomes sought:

- The safety and wellbeing of vulnerable young people at risk of exploitation continues to be prioritised across all relevant organisations and community settings and this is evidenced in respective strategic planning.
- The culture of organisations set by senior leaders and active engagement with young people wins their trust. They are confident that their concerns are taken seriously and help is provided when needed. This culture helps drive a stronger response by peer groups in helping protect their friends and associates.
- Partnership activity in Bromley engages a broader range of organisations and individuals in the protection of vulnerable adolescents in extra-familial settings (i.e. schools, neighbourhoods, public, transport hubs, community centres or in areas where young people congregate). Leaders fully commit to engaging their staff in this work.

### **Priority 3: PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION**

**The focus of this priority is to ensure an unswerving focus on early intervention to prevent vulnerability escalating. In the context of exploitation, this priority relates to risk being effectively mitigated by partners both before a young person reaches adolescence and when they are in the adolescence stage itself.**

**Strong early help systems, robust responses to domestic violence and the effective identification and tackling of neglect are key. Equally applicable is the work undertaken directly with children and young people, educating and empowering them to support their friends, build resilience to exploitation and better understand the risks that they might face (both offline and online).**

Outcomes sought:

- The performance of early help systems across Bromley reduces the need for statutory interventions – effectively dealing with need and vulnerability. Early help is subject to ongoing scrutiny by the BSCB, testing the difference it is making to children and young people's lives.
- Young people who are particularly vulnerable to exploitation (i.e. looked after children, missing children) are identified early and supported by their families/carers, professionals, and their community to prevent and build resilience against exploitation.

- Schools deliver high quality Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) and take a whole-school approach to gender equality, safeguarding, and preventing exploitation.
- Professionals engaged in providing universal and targeted services to young people, empowering them to identify harmful behaviours and supporting young people to build positive and healthy attitudes towards relationships and friendships, gender identity, and sexuality.
- The following strategies and approaches across the London Borough of Bromley are effective in reducing vulnerability and subject to ongoing scrutiny and challenge by the BSCB:
  - Community Safety in respect of gang activity / youth crime
  - DVA / VAWG
  - Working with neglectful families
  - Think Family – Parental Substance Misuse & Mental Health
  - Prevent
  - Suicide Prevention
  - Young People's Substance Misuse
  - Safeguarding Children in the Context of their Access to Technology and use of Social Media

#### **Priority 4: PROTECTION AND SUPPORT**

**This priority focuses on two key aspects - the basics and innovation. Whilst acknowledging the need to create new approaches to safeguarding, this cannot be done at the expense of basic practice.**

**The focus on 'the basics' across the London Borough of Bromley includes reassurance that information is being shared appropriately, risks are being assessed comprehensively, the focus of work remains on the child or young person, escalation is understood and engaged as appropriate and case recording is contemporaneous and accurate.**

**In terms of innovation the BSCB will seek out and engage in contemporary initiatives that enhance our opportunity to engage children and young people and empower them and the community that cares for them. This will include the use of cutting edge technology and closer alignment and partnership working with local children, parents, carers and community representatives.**

Outcomes sought:

- Quality assurance processes by the BSCB and partners provide reassurance that basic practice across all agencies is effectively safeguarding young people.
- Enduring support to children and young people who have been exploited is delivered, ensuring that what is offered is appropriate for each individual child or young person based on their gender, age, ethnicity, disability, and the nature of the exploitation that they have experienced.
- The BSCB develop their individual and collective expertise through joint learning exercises and strong partnership.

### **Priority 5: DISRUPTION AND PROSECUTION**

**The focus of this priority is on ensuring a clear focus on the use of a range of disruption techniques to build the trust and confidence of victims. Through the implementation of such strategies, public confidence will increase; with individuals and communities empowered to report the signs of CSE and other forms of exploitation – knowing that robust and effective action will follow.**

**It is not always clear cut as to who is a victim and who is an offender, in some cases such as county lines, the offender may also be a vulnerable adolescent and potential victim of trafficking. This priority will seek to identify strategies for dealing with this dichotomy.**

**This priority will focus on the targeting and pursuit of adult offenders and bring them to justice.**

Outcomes sought:

- Professionals identify, assess and mitigate any vulnerabilities that might reduce the chances of young people exiting gang culture or involvement in youth crime and violence.
- Robust policing responses to perpetrators are in place: agreeing and monitoring investigation plans to run alongside support plans developed in response to a child sexual exploitation referral.
- All agencies effectively share information and routinely utilise intelligence-led disruption in relation to any local businesses, individuals or groups associated with exploitation.

- Agencies flexibly applying the full range of disruption tactics available through both criminal and civil routes to protect children and young people, including powers available in relation to licensing, health and safety, fraud, housing provision and other related legislation.
- Young people demonstrating harmful sexual behaviours are identified and support put in place to address their behaviours, with their own vulnerabilities and developmental stage being considered within any response.
- Robust offender management strategies post-conviction and/or effective intervention strategies that reduce the risk presented by identified abusers.

## Appendix 1- Definitions

### 1 Adolescence

1.2 Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development that generally occurs during the period from puberty to legal adulthood (11-17) and is often referred to as the teenage years. In terms of child development the period of adolescence is recognised as being one of major change – physical, cognitive, social and psychodynamic, when a key goal for an individual is ‘discovery of self’ (Scannapieco and Connell- Carrick, 2005).

1.3 A powerful combination of biological, psychological and social changes make adolescents more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours than children or adults, and these changes contribute both to opportunities for healthy growth and the risk of negative outcomes (Calkins, 2010). Experimentation and impulsive behaviour are part of normal teenage experience. With support, most young people navigate these challenges and emerge as healthily functioning adults. However, the interaction of individual, family and environmental factors can greatly increase a young person’s vulnerability to risk and the potentially adverse consequences of risk-taking.

### 1.4 Child Sexual Exploitation

1.5 Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). The definition of child sexual exploitation is as follows:

*Child sexual exploitation is a form of child 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 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. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. Department for Education February 2017*

1.6 A common feature of CSE is that the child or young person does not recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and does not see himself or herself as a victim of exploitation. Perpetrators of CSE can be from within or from outside a child or young person's family.

### 1.7 Harmful Sexual Behaviour

1.8 Harmful sexual behaviour includes:

- *using sexually explicit words and phrases*
- *inappropriate touching*
- *using sexual violence or threats*
- *full penetrative sex with other children or adults.*

1.9 Children and young people who develop harmful sexual behaviour have usually experienced abuse and neglect themselves (Hackett et al, 2013; Hawkes 2009; McCartan et al, 2011). A study by Hackett et al (2013) of children and young people with harmful sexual behaviour suggests that two-thirds had experienced some kind of abuse or trauma. Reflecting the context of the wider vulnerabilities set out within this strategy, such abuse and trauma includes physical abuse / emotional abuse / sexual abuse / severe neglect / parental rejection / family breakdown / domestic violence / parental drug and alcohol abuse. Around half of them had experienced sexual abuse. Family histories and backgrounds can have an impact on the sexual behaviour of children:

### 1.10 [Missing Children](#)

1.11 Children may run away from a problem, such as abuse or neglect at home, or to somewhere they want to be. They may have been coerced to run away by someone else. Whatever the reason, it is thought that approximately 25 per cent of children and young people that go missing are at risk of serious harm. There are particular concerns about the links between children running away and the risks of sexual exploitation. Missing children may also be vulnerable to other forms of exploitation, to violent crime, gang exploitation, or to drug and alcohol misuse.

1.12 The Metropolitan police service, as the lead agency for investigating and finding missing children, will respond to children and young people going missing or being absent based on on-going risk assessments in line with current guidance.

The police will prioritise all incidents of missing children as medium or high risk. The police definitions of 'missing' and 'absent' are:

**Missing** - *Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.*

**Absent** - *A person is not at a place where they are expected or required to be.*

### 1.13 **Gangs Activity and Serious Youth Violence**

1.14 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
- Inflict sexual assault as a weapon in conflict.

**Gangs** are defined as *mainly comprising men and boys aged 13-25 years old, who take part in many forms of criminal activity (e.g. knife crime or robbery) who can engage in violence against other gangs, and who have identifiable markers, for example a territory, a name, or sometimes clothing.*

**Groups** are defined *involves people who come together in person or online for the purpose of setting up, co-ordinating and/or taking part in the sexual exploitation of children in either an organised or opportunistic way.*

**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.*

1.15 One factor which influences a child's propensity to imitate violence is parenting which is permissive and neglectful, resulting in a lack of guidance and creating

ineffectiveness and poor self-control for a child. The child is then not equipped to resist an environment or group which instigates violence.

- 1.16 [County Lines](#) is a further risk that young people can be exposed to in the context of gang involvement. This typically involves an inner city criminal gang exploiting young people to travel to smaller locations to sell drugs. These situations will often become apparent to professionals when young people are located after missing episodes outside of the London area and where there is no apparent reason for them being there and having no apparent means to get there. Learning from a recent London based case review reflects the need to ensure that a young person's vulnerability is accurately assessed, particularly when the primary response is a criminal justice intervention.
- 1.17 [Organised/networked sexual exploitation or trafficking](#) of young people (often connected) can involve them being passed through networks, possibly over geographical distances, between towns and cities where they may be forced/coerced into sexual activity with multiple men.
- 1.18 Often this occurs at 'parties' and young people who are involved may recruit others into the network. Some of this activity is described as serious organised crime and can involve the organised 'buying and selling' of young people by offenders. Organised exploitation varies from spontaneous networking between groups of offenders, to more serious organised crime where young people are effectively 'sold'. Children are known to be trafficked for sexual exploitation and this can occur across local authority boundaries and regions and across international borders.
- 1.19 [Domestic Violence and Abuse](#)
- 1.20 Adolescent vulnerability needs to be placed firmly in the context of abusive relationships and the impact that domestic violence can have on how a child or young person development. For a child or young person growing up in such an environment or a victim of domestic violence, the impact of their experiences can create limited and limiting expectations with regards to what constitutes a healthy relationship; thus increasing their susceptibility to exploitation in the future.

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is: *any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family*

*members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological / physical / sexual / financial / emotional / controlling behavior.*

*Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behavior.*

*Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. This is not a legal definition.*

**1.21 [Adolescent Neglect](#)**

1.22 Neglect is characterised by the absence of a relationship of care between the parent/carer and the child and the failure of the parent/carer to prioritise the needs of their child. It can occur at any stage of childhood, including the teenage years.

1.23 Adolescents are often viewed as being more resilient than younger children but, as referenced by the Children Society in their report "[Understanding Adolescent Neglect – Troubled Teens](#)", they still need dedicated care to meet their physical and emotional needs and to support their education and to keep them safe. A lack of attention to any, or all, types of care can be neglectful to adolescents and create a catalyst for poor well-being and risky behaviour that can jeopardise a young person's health and future prospects.

Neglect is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 as "*the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. When the child is born, neglect may involve the parents or carers failing to:*

*Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);*

*Protect the child from physical and emotional harm or danger;*

*Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or*

*Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.*

*It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.*

**1.24 Self Harm and Suicide**

1.25 Definitions from the Mental Health Foundation (2003) are:

- Deliberate self-harm is self-harm without suicidal intent, resulting in non-fatal injury;
- Attempted suicide is self-harm with intent to take life, resulting in non-fatal injury;
- Suicide is self-harm, resulting in death.

Deliberate self-harm is a common precursor to suicide and children and young people who deliberately self-harm may kill themselves by accident. Self-harm can be described as wide range of behaviours that someone does to themselves in a deliberate and usually hidden way. In the vast majority of cases self-harm remains a secretive behaviour that can go on for a long time without being discovered. Many children and young people may struggle to express their feelings and will need a supportive response to assist them to explore their feelings and behaviour and the possible outcomes for them. The following risk factors – particularly in combination – may make a young person vulnerable to self-harm.

| <b>Individual Factors:</b>   | <b>Family Factors:</b>   | <b>Social Factors:</b>  |
|--|--|---|
| Depression / anxiety / low mood;<br>Poor communication skills;<br>Low self-esteem;<br>Poor problem-solving skills;<br>Hopelessness;<br>Impulsivity;<br>Drug or alcohol misuse. | Unreasonable expectations;<br>Neglect or abuse (physical, sexual or emotional);<br>Child being Looked After;<br>Poor parental relationships and arguments;<br>Depression, deliberate self-harm or suicide in the family. | Difficulty in making relationships / loneliness;<br>Persistent bullying or peer rejection;<br>Easy availability of drugs, medication or other methods of self-harm;<br>Living in the borough's more deprived areas. |

**1.26 Substance Misuse**

1.27 Adolescents who use drugs or alcohol problematically are likely to be vulnerable and experiencing a range of problems, of which substance misuse is one. The majority

of young people who seek help for substance misuse have emotional or social problems, such as self-harming, offending and family issues. They are also less likely to be in education, employment or training. Studies have shown that young people from more than one vulnerable group are more at risk of drug or alcohol misuse (DfES: 2005; The NHS Information Centre, 2011). The groups at risk are:

- Young offenders
- Looked after children
- Care leavers
- Children affected by parental substance misuse
- Children affected by domestic violence
- Homeless young people
- Young people at risk from sexual exploitation
- Young people in gangs or at risk of gang recruitment
- Excludes and persistent truants

### 1.28 [Radicalisation](#)

1.29 The Government has defined extremism 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”.*

1.30 Children and young people can be radicalised in different ways:

- They can be groomed either online or in person by people seeking to draw them into extremist activity. Older children or young people might be radicalised over the internet or through the influence of their peer network – in this instance their parents might not know about this or feel powerless to stop their child's radicalisation;
- They can be groomed by family members who hold harmful, extreme beliefs, including parents/carers and siblings who live with the child and/or person(s) who live outside the family home but have an influence over the child's life;
- They can be exposed to violent, anti-social, extremist imagery, rhetoric and writings which can lead to the development of a distorted world view in which

extremist ideology seems reasonable. In this way they are not being individually targeted but are the victims of propaganda which seeks to radicalise.

- 1.31 A common feature of radicalisation is that the child or young person does not recognise the exploitative nature of what is happening and does not see themselves as a victim of grooming or exploitation. Extremists can target and groom impressionable young people through social media and the internet in order to influence their minds in much the same way that sexual predators operate online. Their message can have a powerful impact on someone who's young and vulnerable; possibly unsure of their path in life, and who may lack confidence.

2.1 The London Safeguarding Adolescents Steering Group (LSASG) was established in June 2016 to develop shared principles and enhance policy frameworks for safeguarding young people amongst London's key strategic bodies. The group will work together until May 2018, supported by the contextual safeguarding team at the University of Bedfordshire, and in consultation with London's practitioners and young people to:

- Develop a supplementary chapter on safeguarding adolescents in the London Child Protection Procedures
- Build greater consistency across their policies, strategies and work programmes concerned with safeguarding adolescents
- Enhance their understanding of the experiences and needs of adolescents through engagement in research and practice evidence
- Build greater connectivity between siloed policy areas impacting the welfare of adolescents – such as work on child sexual exploitation, children missing from home, school and care, serious youth violence, trafficking, harmful sexual behaviours and domestic abuse
- For further information about the LSASG please view our terms of reference and project plan (available on the [LSASG page](#) of the London Safeguarding Children Board website)