



GREENWICH  
**Safeguarding  
Children**  
PARTNERSHIP

# ADOLESCENT STRATEGY

2019-2023



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# INTRODUCTION

The Greenwich Safeguarding Children Partnership recognises that adolescence can be a confusing and challenging time for many young people, their parents and the professionals working with them. The increased importance of their peers is a natural part of the transition to independence. By identifying with peers, adolescents start to develop moral judgement and values and to explore how they differ from their parents. Their ability to act independently – their agency – develops over time.



Risk taking is a normal part of development and most young people are able to negotiate this period of transition from childhood to adulthood without serious consequences. However, research tells us that for young people whose lives have exposed them to adverse childhood experiences such as neglect, maltreatment, domestic violence and parental substance misuse there is an increased likelihood that their own risk taking may raise safeguarding concerns.

Many of the existing safeguarding services and structures were designed to address familial risk, while young people's needs and experiences may be very different.

As children mature, risk may also come from their own behaviours and that of their peers as well as schools, neighbourhoods and the wider environment. We also know that the transition to adulthood is a particularly challenging and vulnerable time and that needs do not end when a young person turns eighteen.

An awareness and response from a wide range of partners addressing these different contexts and issues is required when working to safeguard adolescents. We need to ensure that we promote resilience and young people's ability to respond to changing challenges. Our role is not only to protect, but also

to prepare young people for adulthood.

In 2017 we conducted a review of our approach to adolescent risk as well as all operational and strategic meetings and processes in Royal Greenwich where concerns about adolescent risk were discussed, shared and managed.

Although partnership working was strong, it was felt that this way of working sometimes resulted in a fragmented approach as the risk posed by and to children was compartmentalised in terms of the remit of the forum that was reviewing them. There were sometimes delays in information

reaching front line practitioners regarding networks and contextual risk.

At the same time, there was increasing awareness both locally and nationally of the complex and evolving nature of risk to adolescents. The challenge of dealing with those risks well as a growing body of evidence to help us to understand what works and with whom in dealing with emerging and evolving risk resulted in us reviewing some of our meeting structures, remits and approaches.

We have given consideration to how traditional safeguarding responses can overlook, and even

exacerbate, vulnerability. We will consciously seek to learn from other services and parts of the wider system and consider how we can respond to transitions. We acknowledge that this is a complex area and that in order to bring about positive outcomes, we must accept and respond to the complexity of people, issues and systems. On a relational level, this means recognising the variety of human

need and experience and focusing on responses that are person centred and relationship based.

At a whole system level, we seek to be both evidence informed and participative, bringing together the contextual, transitional and relational, aiming to understand and respond to the interacting factors.

This strategy reflects our learning to date. It is in many ways aspirational. It is not meant to be a definitive and static document but will evolve as we work more closely with partners both within and outside of children's services, attempt to build capacity and learn from evidence and promising practice both locally and more widely.

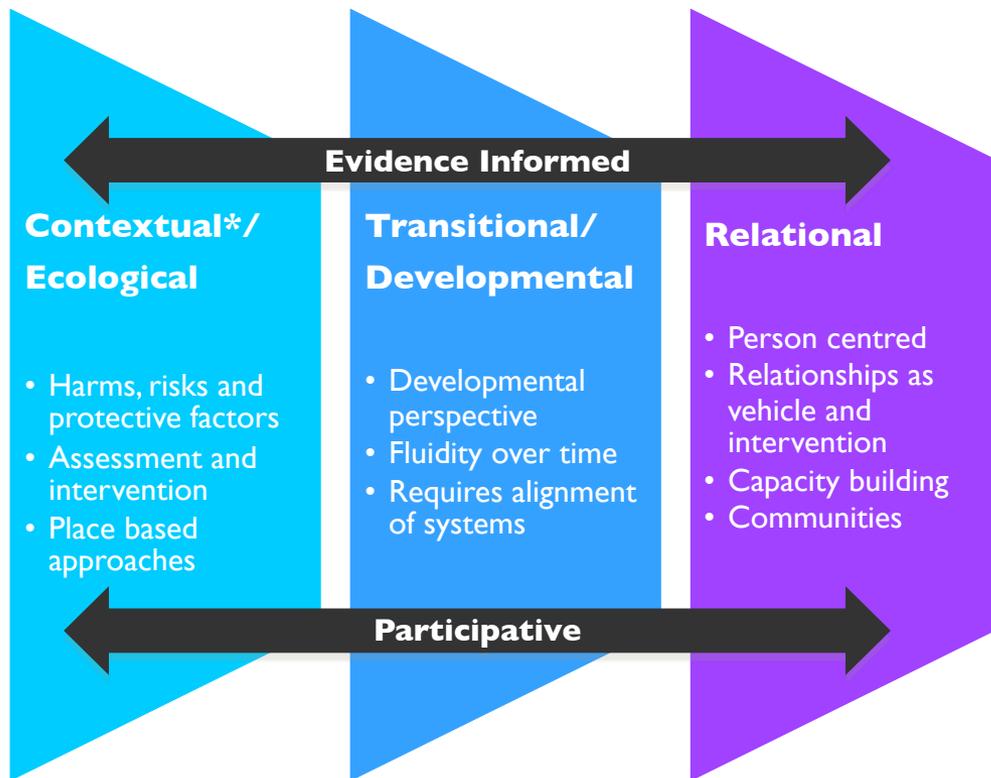


Diagram and concept taken from "Research informed practice with adolescents",  
Dez Holmes, Research in Practice 2019.

\* See <https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk>

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# LOCAL CONTEXT

There are approximately 26,700 young people in Greenwich. Their numbers are expected to grow by 15% over the next five years, so that by 2023 there will be 30,600 children aged 11 – 18.

They are a diverse group with over 65% from black and minority ethnic groups. The vast majority of them are able to grow, thrive and achieve with the support of their families and universal provision such as schools, youth clubs and community activities.

However, a small cohort require more targeted, intensive or specialist support.

971 young people aged 11 – 19 In Royal Greenwich have Education Health and Care Plans.

In 2018/19, 163 children and young people went missing from home or care for more than 24 hours. More than half of the children (58%) only went missing once, but 36 (22%) went missing more than four times.

Over 200 children were discussed at the Greenwich Risk Adolescent Safeguarding and Prevention panel during 2018 – 2019 because of concerns about child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation or serious youth violence.



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# PRINCIPLES

We will always work from the premise that the response to risk in adolescence is underpinned by the belief that **these are first and foremost safeguarding and child protection concerns.** Children who display risky, harmful, criminal and/or abusive behaviour are vulnerable and cannot consent to their own abuse even if these initially present as ‘choices’

We will aim to have a positive impact for the child or young person – **we will be child centred** taking into account the wishes and feelings of children and young people but will focus on safeguarding and promoting their welfare

We will **work with parents, carers and other concerned adults in the child or young person’s life to build their capacity and resilience** in helping children and young people to change how they think, feel and behave



We will be **proactive in sharing and analysing information** so we identify and have a profile of children and young people at risk before they are drawn into crime, exploited or abused

We will reduce vulnerability and the risk of exploitation through providing **innovative and evidence based early help, targeted support and education** to children, young people and their parents

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# FOUR AREAS OF ACTIVITY

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1

**Seek to prevent, identify, assess and intervene with the social conditions of adolescent risk**

We have a comprehensive early help offer that recognises the role played by all partners in universal and targeted services in developing resilience in children and young people. We know that there is a connection between adverse childhood experiences and adolescent risk taking so have robust responses to domestic violence (including our innovative SafeCORE project) and neglect in the early years. Our focus is always on early identification and response in terms of both onset and intensity.

We have recognised that earlier identification will allow us to intervene more effectively with the social conditions of adolescent risk and have introduced the CURB programme as pilot. This allows school nurses to identify risk using the Year 5 Health Review and intervene at the most appropriate level.

Where the threshold for Children's Social Care has not been met, but there is a requirement for intensive whole family work this is provided by the Greenwich Early Help Service using systemic practice and trauma informed approaches.

With all children, and in all services and agencies, there is an emphasis on developing the protective factors that help to minimise negative risk-taking behaviour by children and young people. The three parenting

2

**Draw extrafamilial contexts into our child protection and safeguarding processes that have traditionally focused on families**

programmes delivered by Children's Services in Royal Greenwich focus on helping to develop authoritative parenting to build a healthy bond and loving relationship.

Providing the conditions and climate to encourage participation in education and training is a cross cutting theme across all services, with a particular emphasis on meeting the needs of children with special educational needs, learning difficulties and disabilities.

All services recognise that building a relationship of trust is the most important factor in disclosure, protection and intervention. In line with this, the system for return home interviews for children who have gone missing has been revised to ensure that children have the opportunity to speak to someone they know and trust.

Royal Greenwich has developed a single Front Door model to receive all notifications of concern related to children, young people and families where there are indications of risk that cannot be met by universal and targeted services working alone or together. The Greenwich model of using deliberation and professional judgement in assessing and responding to risk emphasises the importance of considering the widest range of historical and contextual information and this can be supplied through the MASH process.

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Workers in the Children's Services Front Door will use a bespoke analytical database that captures and reports on extra familial risk and will work closely with partners to analyse and share information and data to ensure that young people are safeguarded.

RBG Children's Services has recently adopted an adolescent practice framework that builds upon its existing Practice for Change model. This helps workers to tailor their approach to the specific needs of adolescents and provide a consistent and seamless practice model across the Early Help Service, Youth Offending Service, Children's Social Care and the multi disciplinary ReSET team which works with Community Safety and the police.

**3**

**Develop partnerships with sectors/individuals who are responsible for the extrafamilial settings**

The Partnership is working closely with schools, health, youth and community settings, housing, licensing and transport to create a borough where creating safe spaces for children and young people is everyone's business.

Developing relationships with schools and working with them to develop safe cultures is particularly critical since their work overlaps so many of the contexts in which young people operate. Schools are often the first point of contact for parental concerns and can play a key role in supporting and educating parents about risk and how to deal with it. Monitoring

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attendance and engagement often puts schools in a position to identify concerns early. The school environment is one where young people develop peer groups and have the opportunity to exercise agency. Schools support young people to develop healthy relationships, attitudes and behaviours. Schools are part of the neighbourhood and consequently have an awareness of the wider local environment and the impact it may be having on students.

Greenwich has introduced a range of processes to establish the contexts that young people operate in outside of school and home in order to understand where there is potential risk. Once physical spaces, including parks, transport hubs, fast food outlets and other locations are identified a full risk assessment is conducted to understand who is at risk and the nature of that risk. A problem solving approach is adopted to decide what physical disruption or enforcement measures are required to increase safety and what agencies will deliver them.

Strong working relationships and effective communication with the wider community, voluntary sector and local businesses are viewed as essential as they have regular contact with young people and observe their activities and the people with whom they interact. We share key messages around safeguarding to support issues of concern to be raised early and action taken quickly.

4

**Monitor outcomes of success in relation to contextual, as well as individual change**

It is important that we treat online and virtual spaces in the same way as we treat the physical spaces that young people frequent.

The Greenwich Safeguarding Children Partnership has identified opportunities for cross borough collaboration with the Bexley and Lewisham Partnerships in relation to safeguarding vulnerable adolescents. The three boroughs are part of a single Metropolitan Police Basic Command Unit and have agreed that all will have adolescent risk as a shared priority.

We will work closely with the Safeguarding Adults Board, the Health and Wellbeing Board and Safer Greenwich Partnership to ensure that our systems of support are integrated.

As an evidence minded organisation, we will seek to capture a range of data that shows change and improvement at both the individual and contextual level.

We have commissioned an analytical system to support monitoring and tracking and will measure success not only by change in individuals but also whether safety is increasing in contexts where young people encounter harm.

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# **ARRANGEMENTS FOR WORKING TOGETHER**



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There is a strong strategic commitment across the Greenwich Safeguarding Children Partnership to work closely together and alongside families to support young people, increase their wellbeing and reduce risk.

Middle leaders and front-line managers across all services work together with and for children and young people when providing help and interventions and in disrupting and bringing perpetrators to justice.

We have many dedicated practitioners who provide strong professional leadership around learning and improving practice in what can be a challenging area of practice.

The Greenwich Safeguarding Children Partnership has chosen Adolescent Risk as one of its three practice priorities and provides coordination, scrutiny and challenge to the effectiveness of local arrangements. The Partnership works in conjunction with Safer Greenwich Partnership and Health and Well Being Board to coordinate strategies and plan, implement and review actions taken together and as single agencies.

The Royal Greenwich Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel will provide scrutiny to Children's Services and partners.



Across the Partnership we have effective information sharing, analysis, action and review processes in place. These arrangements are designed to deepen our understanding of the local picture, what we need to know more about and how we can get a fuller understanding of the challenges we face in safeguarding and protecting children and young people.

### ***Operational Arrangements***

The Greenwich Risk Adolescent Safeguarding and Prevention Panel (GRASP) is weekly multi agency meeting that aims to improve more timely information sharing and to ensure that any issues of concern regarding children and locations are incorporated appropriately into existing multi agency or single agency plans.

GRASP reviews all incidents that occurred in the previous seven days where children have been involved in violence (including incidents with knives) harmful sexual behaviour, peer networks involved in offending behaviour (including drug supply, county lines, cuckooing), high risk individuals who have moved into Royal Greenwich, children at risk of CSE, high risk missing children and children on statutory orders to the Youth Offending Service who are deemed to be at high risk of re-offending. At the meeting, the multiple contexts within which children

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exist are reviewed to support a comprehensive risk analysis and to agree actions that are most likely to reduce risks in these contexts.

These include sharing intelligence and information about:

- A child's friendship group and wider peer network
- Other associations and relationships when this may be a contributing factor to risk
- Geographical areas of risk including gang 'territories, congregation points, anti-social behaviour and crime hot spots and physically unsafe areas
- Premises/venues of concern
- Virtual places including YouTube postings, sites created by young people and social network links

Where concerns arise about the wider community GRASP will ensure that these are progressed by other existing structures or partners.

GRASP is also the gateway to services provided by the Reduction in Serious Youth Violence and Exploitation Team (ReSET). This is a co-located multi-agency, multi-disciplinary analysis and intervention team that comprises workers from youth offending, probation, community safety, the voluntary and community sector (including education and employment advice) and a family therapist.

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ReSET recognises the complex nature of the transition from childhood to adulthood, particularly in individuals where there have been adverse childhood experiences and therefore works with young people up to the age of 25.

### ***Strategic Arrangements***

GRASP reports into the Strategic Multi Agency Child Exploitation (SMACE) sub group of the Greenwich Safeguarding Children Partnership. The SMACE shares and analyses information from partner agencies in order to identify trends and emerging issues and agrees coordinated actions by partner agencies.

The SMACE will take the lead in developing a Problem Profile for the borough which will be used to inform strategic planning and commissioning of services.

