

# Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

## Developing an insight and intelligence framework to understand exploitation

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At the TCE programme, we are exploring what it means to use [data for intelligence](#), rather than performance. Exploitation is complex, and system responses to it equally so.

The pilot Bespoke Support projects made it clear that once we start broadening the questions we ask of data, there is a lot of data to be explored.

This think piece starts to explore how we might re-frame and re-examine our existing data to get to grips with understanding exploitation. This piece accompanies the first draft of the Child Exploitation Intelligence Framework.

[Multi-agency Data \(xlsx file\)](#)

The thoughts below and the framework itself are a work in progress and we hope to test it and refine it with you, the sector, as the TCE programme progresses.

### Using the framework

The framework that we've developed is not a "Performance Framework". It is not aiming to answer questions about "how well" local areas or individual agencies are protecting children. They are not targets, or performance indicators, but a source of intelligence and a prompt for curiosity. We don't envisage it being used to hold local areas or individual agencies to account. Instead, we are encouraging local areas to see the data in this framework as descriptive, not evaluative, and **to use it to tell a collective story about "what life is like for young people here?" and "what does exploitation look like here?"**.

We hope local areas will find new and interesting ways of exploring this data. That might include:

- Developing an exploitation profile of the local area
- Mapping data at a neighbourhood or ward level to understand different patterns within the local area.
- Comparing what we know about children known to exploitation services with what we know about the whole population,
- Starting conversations with practitioners, young people and families about what life is like here.

The data and the story-telling activity should prompt more questions, and lead to more detailed local data analysis. In doing so, we hope strategic leaders will have conversations about actions they can take to improve protective structures and remove the context for exploitation, but the aim of those actions should not be to change the numbers in the framework.

There are some suggestions below about the conversations you might have as you develop your local version of the framework.

# Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

## Conversation starter:

- **What data is currently used by the partnership to understand exploitation locally?**
- **What other resources might be relevant to understanding what life is like for young people in your local area?**
- **How recently has the partnership updated a problem profile for exploitation? What might have changed since then?**

## Developing the principles for an intelligence framework

When asked to think about what a multi-agency data profile for exploitation might look like, I turned to the literature and to the principles of the TCE programme for inspiration and guidance.

Some important principles that have guided the development of the draft framework include:

- **This is a multi-agency effort.** Data about the signs and features of exploitation are spread across different local agencies and the corresponding government departments.
- **Our data framework should focus our attention on the sources of risk to young people, not just the young people themselves.** Risk of exploitation isn't just about the victims, it's primarily about the perpetrators, and also about the context in which exploitation occurs.
- **Vulnerability and experience of exploitation doesn't end at 18.** Our data needs to take into account the experiences of young adults as well.
- Some of the vulnerabilities that we identify as being characteristics of individual children are in fact socially-based vulnerabilities with roots in a lack of protective structures around the young person. **What we do with our data, and what we think it means is critical.**

## Conversation starter:

- **How does your current reporting and conversations about exploitation data reflect these principles?**
- **What other principles might the local partnership adopt?**

## What is in the framework

The framework provides links to published datasets from a range of sources that we think might be relevant to answering questions about exploitation and young people's experiences.

The datasets are presented thematically. Each theme is discussed in more detail in individual blog posts, which includes a list of relevant data items.

- [Identifying potential vulnerability](#): which groups of young people might be vulnerable to exploitation
- [Perpetrators](#): who is involved in harming young people?
- [Patterns of harm](#): what types of harm affect young people? For which groups?

# Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

- [Patterns of help](#): how do young people access support?

While the data are divided into the themes, some data items will be relevant to a number of themes, for example low quality housing might be seen as a potential vulnerability, but also a reflection of the patterns of help that young people receive. This reflects the blurred boundaries between individual and social risks and responses.

The framework can be seen as a “long list” of data sources to investigate exploitation locally. There are too many items here to review regularly, and so it is helpful to consider what question you are trying to answer, and then select the data that might provide insights in that aspect of exploitation and extra-familial harm.

For example, your local partnership might be interested in understanding how best to design outreach services and to ensure that professionals who come into contact with young people in a crisis know how to spot the signs of exploitation. In answering this question, you might want to know the different kinds of harm that young people experience in the community. Under the ‘patterns of harm’ theme, you might consider:

- Types of harm to children when missing
- Rate of Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in young people (aged 15-24 years)
- External causes of hospital admissions for young people 15-24: reasons
- Rate of violence against the person offences where the victim is 16-24.

You can review the whole long list here: [LINK TO data index](#)

## Conversation starter:

- **What key questions do you have as a partnership about how to tackle exploitation?**
- **What data in the list might provide some insights?**

## Going further

There are limitations to using publicly available data from multiple sources, and published by different government departments. It is important to understand the frequency, geographic scale and scope of the data available at a national level. For each dataset, the directory entry indicates the geographic level and age groups or demographics covered by the data and a link to the most recent published dataset.

- Some data will be published frequently, such as the monthly data on crime and stop and search available from [data.police.uk](#), while national data on children’s social care are only available annually, and the Indices of Multiple Deprivation only every five years.
- Much of the public data in the framework is only available at a local authority level, though some provide neighbourhood and even street level insights
- Some data only includes children and young people under 18 and without further age breakdowns. This limits the insights that can be derived about patterns of exploitation and the lives of young people (11 – 25).

## Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

Local partnerships can get beyond these limitations by **sourcing more timely and detailed data from local sources**. Most of this data is collected from local agencies and can be accessed through those systems. Strategic leaders might want to explore how they can get breakdowns of some of these measures by age, for children looked after or not, for children known to exploitation services or not and for the different wards or neighbourhoods within the authority boundary.

### Conversation starter:

- **Who owns this data locally?**
- **What more can they tell you about the patterns in the data, based on age, or need or location?**

We are excited to see what you come up with and how you use the framework and what questions it prompts you to ask. Let us know and share your brilliant ideas: [TCEadmin@researchinpractice.org.uk](mailto:TCEadmin@researchinpractice.org.uk)

**If you have any suggestions for other published datasets to be included in the Intelligence Framework, please get in touch. [TCEadmin@researchinpractice.org.uk](mailto:TCEadmin@researchinpractice.org.uk).**