

# Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

## Patterns of harm

Rebecca Godar

This article considers how we might use data about the patterns of harm that young people experience to inform strategic decision-making by local partnerships. This is part of a series of articles discussing the content of and rationale for the multi-agency intelligence framework. The framework seeks to answer the questions

- What is life like for young people here?
- What does exploitation look like here?

Understanding the patterns of harm that young people face, from exploitation but also other forms of harm in the community, can help us understand what life is like for young people, what risks they face and how we might intervene to protect them.

By patterns of harm, we mean the type of harm children and young people experience, where and when they experience it and if that pattern is different for different groups. The patterns of harm spreadsheet provides descriptions and links to nationally published datasets which we have identified as useful in exploring questions about patterns of harm. This is a work in progress that we hope to develop with the sector.

[Patterns of harm \(xlsx file\)](#)

If you have any **comments or suggestions about additions** to the list, please email:

[TCEadmin@researchinpractice.org.uk](mailto:TCEadmin@researchinpractice.org.uk)

## Types of harm

Most of the data we have about harm to young people stems from when young people access services to manage the consequences of that harm. This might be attending a hospital or being found by the police when missing. The data therefore only captures the most serious harm. This data reports on individual incidents and the individual agency responses to those incidents. It does not provide a full picture of the multiple forms of harm that individual young people might experience.

## Examples of types of harm

Missing incidents resulting in harm to a child	All children and young people
Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in young people	Young people and young adults
Death by external causes in young people	All children and young people
Attendances at A&E	All children and young people
Violence against the person offences where the victim is 16-24	Young people and young adults
Factors identified in assessment (social care)	Children and young people known to social care

# Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

## Conversation starter:

- What other forms of harm might be recorded by the local partnership?

## Understanding the patterns for different age groups

Some nationally available data is provided broken down for different age groups. This is helpful as it allows us to ask whether we need an age-differentiated response to young people and the harm they experience.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales provides an overview of the incidents of crime experiences by 10-15 year olds. While only available nationally, it might prompt some curious conversations about harm affecting young people.

Number of missing incidents involving 12-14 year olds	Young people (age group)
Number of missing incidents involving 15-17 year olds	Young people (age group)
Number of missing incidents involving 18-21 year olds	Young adults
Age of children looked after at start of missing incident <sup>5</sup>	All children looked after
A&E attendance by age	All children and young people
Deaths of young people aged 10-14, by external causes	Young people
Deaths of young people aged 15-19, by external causes	Young people
Deaths of young people aged 20-24, by external causes	Young adults

## Digging deeper

Some of our datasets give more detail about what happens to young people and the types of harm that they experience. This offers a fruitful line of inquiry into the richer detail of young people's lived experience and how different types of harm might interact. This is inevitably limited by the categories available for recording and the skill of the responder in asking the right questions and promoting disclosure (so for instance domestic abuse might be reported in A&E statistics as a fall, if that is what the patient reports).

However, there are some challenges in understanding patterns of harm from national data as it does not contain a lot of detail who is experiencing that harm, for example we know how many children came to harm while missing, but not if that is different for different genders. The categorisation and recording of types of harm recorded by hospitals are layered, and only the top-level categories published.

External causes of hospital admissions for young people 15-24: reasons	Young people
------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------

## Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

Types of harm to children resulting from missing incidents	All children and young people
Placements from which children looked after went missing <sup>5</sup>	Children looked after

Local data will have much more richness. The Hospital Episode Statistics in particular appear to offer important detail on locations of harm (through Ambulance call-outs), and information about the young person's context (such as the level of deprivation in their local area) and may provide useful insights about timing of harm, allowing us to ask questions like:

- Do more young people attend A&E in the school holidays? At night?
- Where do young people come to harm?

### Conversation starter:

- **Which agencies hold information on types and patterns of harm experienced by young people?**
- **Look at the very long list of reasons why young people might be admitted to hospital – discuss as a partnership which might be relevant to exploitation.**

Some local datasets are not collated into national publications, and so we cannot include them in the framework. Youth Justice Teams and substance abuse services collect rich data about the young people they work with, their peer groups and networks and their behaviours. This includes harm that the young people have experienced, for example drug-related harm, or being a victim of crime. Digging deeper into these datasets locally provides richer insights into the patterns of harm experienced by young people.