

# Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

## Patterns of help

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This article explores data on patterns of help and support accessed by young people. It is part of a series of articles exploring the development of the [multi-agency intelligence framework](#).

The patterns of help theme explores what data can tell us about how young people are supported in the local area, pathways to accessing help and the quality of those services. Understanding the patterns of young people's requests for help and our responses is a crucial part of informing design and delivery of services. This is not just about how well services are doing, but understanding how young people interact with services, where they go when they need help and when they might not feel able to tell someone what is happening to them.

The patterns of help 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 help data \(xlsx file\)](#)

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

Young people come into contact with a range of services and sources of support in the course of their lives. Most obviously this includes schools and colleges, but also targeted help and specialist support for needs as they arise, such as mental health and sexual health services, and, where necessary, the support of a social worker to reduce risks they might face in or outside of the home. Services aiming to address risks of exploitation are only one source of support.

National inspection data can help give an overview of how well particular settings promote the wellbeing of young people and safeguard them from harm, particularly where specific judgements are made about safety and wellbeing.

### Inspection data on safety and wellbeing

Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall effectiveness</li> <li>• Personal development behaviour and welfare</li> </ul>	<b>Ofsted</b>
Further Education colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall effectiveness</li> <li>• Personal development behaviour and welfare</li> </ul>	<b>Ofsted</b>
Children's social care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children in need of help and protection</li> </ul>	<b>Ofsted</b>

# Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children looked after and care leavers</li> </ul>	
Youth offending teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operational delivery</li> </ul>	<b>Justice inspectorate</b>
Primary care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safe</li> <li>Caring</li> <li>Responsive</li> </ul>	<b>CQC</b>
Hospitals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safe</li> <li>Caring</li> <li>Responsive</li> </ul>	<b>CQC</b>
Police forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectiveness</li> <li>Legitimacy</li> </ul>	<b>HMIC</b>

### Conversation starter:

- What other services work with young people? How does the local partnership understand the quality of provision of those services?
- Are there patterns in the inspection judgements across the local area? Are there some neighbourhoods where services are consistently poor?
- What more can you learn about how services are responding to young people through examining the full inspection reports and wider datasets, such as attendance and exclusion data?

### Types of help

Some questions we might ask of data to understand patterns of help might include asking when and where young people seek help. They might present at A&E departments, or be referred to early help or visit sexual health clinics. Finding out how many young people, and from which groups, are seeking help from different services might help us target outreach and better prepare staff in those settings for disclosures and clarify pathways to support from those settings. Recognising the role of these settings in meeting the needs of young people, and building relationships with these services may then enable access to even richer local data about young people's experiences and patterns of harm.

Here national data is limited in terms of the detail it can give us about who is accessing which types of help. Some data is provided broken down by age group, allowing us to see patterns for adolescents specifically, others do not. At a national level, the data is summarised by local authority, so we can't see geographic patterns within the local area. Local data from providers can be broken down into more detailed cohorts, allowing us to ask better questions.

A&E Attendance for 15-17 years	Young people
A&E Attendance for 15-19 years	Young people
Emergency admissions 15-19 years	Young people
New children and young people aged under 18 receiving treatment in NHS funded community mental health services	All children and young people
Admissions for children and young people aged under 18 in CAMHS tier 4 wards	All children and young people

## Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

Admission episodes for alcohol-specific conditions - under 18s	All children and young people
Young people under the age of 18 in specialist treatment for substance misuse and those who are accessing young people services regardless of age	All children and young people (and some young adults)

There will be lots of services available to young people locally that are not captured in the national data. Early help is particularly poorly captured in national data. Local sources of information might include services commissioned by local partners, or provided by voluntary sector, as well as those delivered directly by public services.

### Conversation starter

- What services are available to support young people in the local area?
- How can you access data about types of help for young people with more detail about age, geography and the time/season that young people access support?

### Negative experiences with services

Young people's attitudes to asking for help are affected by the responses they receive, and how they expect adults and professionals to respond to them. Research and case reviews into exploitation highlight missed opportunities to offer and provide help to young people, sometimes despite evidence of their vulnerability being apparent (Brandon et al, 2020). This is in part due to a lack of understanding about the lived experience of young people, and a misinterpretation of their actions as active and informed choices, rather than the result of exploitation. Young people who seek help but find themselves turned away, or worse, subject to criminal justice processes for actions undertaken under coercion, are less likely to seek help again, or to build the trusting relationships with professionals that they so desperately need.

Understanding when requests for help don't result in support being offered, or when repeated requests for help are made helps us to understand if we are taking the earliest opportunity to provide help. It might also tell us about the attitudes and knowledge of referring professionals about definitions of harm and thresholds for accessing help.

- Reporting referrals with no further action, repeat referrals and repeat child protection plans is part of routine reporting for children's social care, but the breakdown of that data for adolescents is not included in nationally published data.
- In housing, we can see the difference between the number of young people (including young adults upto 25) who present as at risk of homelessness, those who are accepted and those who receive support.
- In youth offending we can see re-entrants into the criminal justice system

### Data on missed opportunities

## Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

Referrals to children's social care leading to No Further Action	All children and young people
Rate of re-referrals to children's social care	All children and young people
Rate of repeat child protection plans	All children and young people
The number of people aged 16-24 recorded as having received housing and/or homelessness support:	Young people and young adults
The number of young people aged 16-24 presenting to the council as at risk of homelessness	Young people and young adults
The number of young people accepted as homeless and owed a housing duty	Young people and young adults

### Conversation starter

How do services other than children's social care report missed opportunities for help?

Are there patterns in the referrals of adolescents that result in no further action or repeat referrals?

### Negative experiences of interacting with public services

Some interactions with public services aren't as a result of young people choosing to ask for help, but are less pleasant experiences in which the young person might feel alienated from sources of support. For some young people, their behaviour triggers an authoritarian response, despite the behaviour potentially being a result of exploitation, or other needs that are not being met. These authoritarian responses might not be evenly distributed across the population of young people, and local areas will want to consider the equity of the use of these approaches. Local data on age, ethnicity and geography might indicate that some groups are more likely to be stopped and searched by the police (for example).

This might include:

- interactions with the police, from stop and search to experience of arrest and conviction
- exclusions from school
- sanctions related to benefits

Number of fixed exclusions from secondary schools	All children and young people
Number of permanent exclusions from secondary schools	All children and young people
Number of young people aged 16-19 subject to Universal Credit Sanctions	Young people
Number of young people aged 19-25 subject to Universal Credit Sanctions	Young people
First time entrants to the youth justice system	All children and young people
Young people 10-15 cautioned or sentenced	Young people
Young people 15-17 cautioned or sentenced	Young people

## Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

Number of young people cautioned or sentenced for drug offences	All children and young people
Number of young people cautioned or sentenced for violence against the person	All children and young people
Detail of young people stopped and searched by the police	All children and young people

### Conversation starter

- Are some groups more likely to receive an authoritarian, rather than helping response?
- Are there geographic patterns in stop and search, or offences by young people that might indicate coercion or exploitation is particularly prevalent?

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)

### References

Brandon M, Sidebotham P, Belderson P, Cleaver H, Dickens J, Garstang J, Harris J, Sorensen P and Wate R (2020) Complexity and challenge: a triennial analysis of SCRs 2014-2017 Final report.

<https://seriouscasereviews.rip.org.uk/>