

# Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

## Joining the Dots

The overarching purpose of the Joining the Dots framework is to support local areas to improve strategic responses to child exploitation and extra familial harm.

Joining the Dots was developed by the Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme after three years of working alongside local partnerships to achieve evidence-informed change, drawing on academic research, practice learning and expertise from experience.

The framework has three interdependent principles:

- **Bridging Boundaries**
- **Leading with Care**
- **Working with Complexity, Curiosity and Uncertainty**

These three themes speak to strategic behaviours and approaches across a partnership that are capable of unlocking the complexity in tackling child exploitation and extra-familial harm.

Underpinning the framework is the simple but effective parallel of disrupting exploitation by anchoring strategic behaviour in an approach that explicitly inverts the dynamics of child exploitation and extra-familial harm.

Where child exploitation **splits and separates** its victims from protective institutions and relationships, 'bridging boundaries' looks to wrap **deeper and broader partnerships** around children and young people and their families. It seeks to support communities and to bring different agencies and organisations together.

Where child exploitation involves **control, manipulation** and the **coercion** of children and young people, 'leading with care' asks those with power to use it gently. The programme's ways of working are specifically **strengths-based, relational**, and put **restorative principles** at the core of partnership working.

Where forms of child exploitation **constantly move, shift and are adapted**, 'working with complexity, curiosity and uncertainty' offers the space needed to **stand back, slow down and reflect** so we can challenge 'quick fixes' and act with purpose. Different areas will necessarily have a different approach based on their own needs.

These three ways of working are interdependent. They cannot be taken in isolation: change in relation to one will impact the others. But taken together, they are mutually reinforcing and work in sync to support and enable sustainable improvement. ● ● ●

**Bridging  
Boundaries**

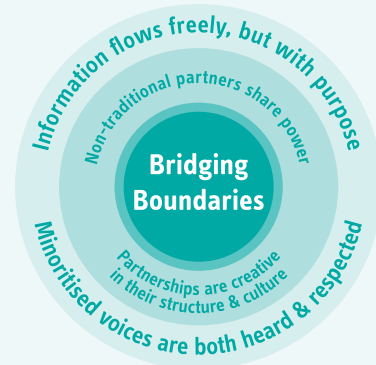
**Leading  
with Care**

**Working with  
complexity,  
curiosity and  
uncertainty**

## Joining the Dots is a model about connectivity

### Putting it into practice for bridging boundaries means:

- Non-traditional partners share power.
- Partnerships are creative in their structure and culture.
- Information flows freely, but with purpose.
- Minoritised voices are both heard and respected.



### When leading with care:

- The needs of young people and their families are central.
- Responses are valued from all partners, including parents and carers.
- Young people are not labelled or judged.
- Language is clear, shared and respectful.



### When working with complexity, curiosity and uncertainty:


- Pace is balanced with purpose
- Local approaches respond to locally evidenced context.
- Data is used to invite questions and conversation.
- Responses focus on safety and protection.



The Joining the Dots framework is not presented here as rocket science. Rather it is shared as a synthesis of what we have learned across the Programme. It is a reminder that none of us in isolation hold all the information and expertise needed to effectively tackle child exploitation and extra-familial harm: it is a framework to both support and challenge us all to join the dots in between. ●●●

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