

Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme

Evidence underpinning the ‘Joining the Dots’ framework

The Joining the Dots framework is a synthesis of the learning generated through Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Support Programme delivery across 2019-2022. Drafting, reviewing and sharing it as a framework has, necessarily, come at the end and not the beginning of the Programme. It is a reflection of what we have seen, heard and learnt from local partnerships working towards achieving strategic change in relation to child exploitation and extra-familial harm.

It is important to note what this means in terms of what Joining the Dots is (or is not) as a resource, and what this means in relation to the evidence base that underpins it.

The TCE Support Programme was funded and designed to support system improvement at a strategic level in relation to child exploitation and extra familial harm. It was not funded to define a delivery approach or in any way create a model of ‘good practice’, and we have not used nor evaluated it as such.

Like all of the TCE approach, Joining the Dots is evidence-informed. This means we have curated and reflected on the aforementioned forms of evidence and research while drafting and refining the framework.

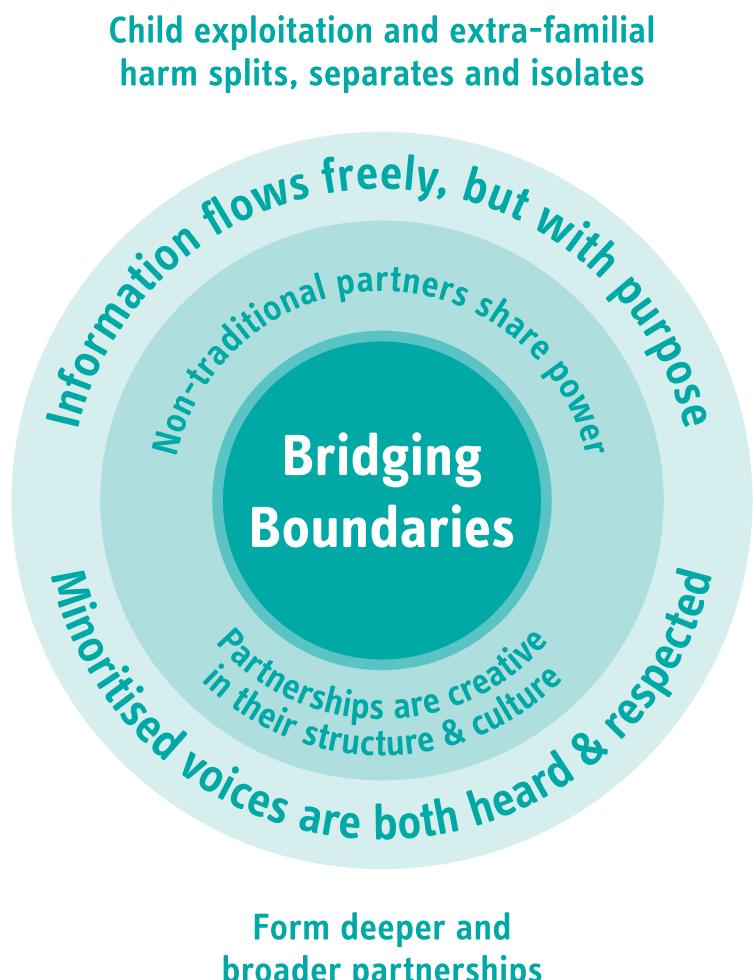
In sharing Joining the Dots, we want to both share the evidence base that underpins it and be transparent about its limitations.

We do not have evidence that ‘proves’ the framework works. That is not what we set out to do and it would be harmful and dangerous to pretend otherwise. There is not an exhaustive systematic literature review behind the framework. Joining the Dots is a tool to help make sense of the complex landscape of child exploitation and extra-familial harm, which includes the evidence base. It is a starting point for strategic leaders and local partnerships to navigate how to apply evidence to their local context.

The resources included in this framework are suggested publications, briefings and case studies that have informed its development. They are not substantive or representative of the breadth of evidence across the fields. Moreover, the purpose of their presentation is not to function as evidence that the Joining the Dots framework ‘works’, but rather to provide the context and rationale for this emerging way of tackling child exploitation. ● ● ●

As a framework, Joining the Dots is drawn from:

- What we know from academic and published evidence, i.e. through TCE’s initial scoping literature review, our further commissioned research, reviews, articles and think pieces shared on TCE’s open-access microsite.
- What we have learned from working alongside local multi-agency partnerships to understand and help unlock local change goals through Bespoke Support Projects.
- Thematic learning focused on minoritised voices, expertise by experience (including parents and carers), and reconfiguring services and risk.
- What leaders from across the sector have shared and reflected on peer to peer through TCE’s national programme of events.



Bridging Boundaries

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.

Bridging boundaries opens up safeguarding beyond statutory intervention and highlights the value of broad-based support. An approach that ‘bridges boundaries’ will draw heavily on ecological methodologies (such as those used in Contextual Safeguarding) and expertise from non-statutory agencies.

It sees strategic leadership draw on the expertise of those who work closely with children and young people in universal and community settings, and with those not traditionally associated with safeguarding roles or functions.

Bridging Boundaries

Non-traditional partners share power

Brodie, I. Hurst, A. (2022). *Community Awareness Raising: key issues for strategic leaders*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/community-awareness-raising-key-issues-for-strategic-leaders/>

Hill, N. (2021). *Hearing Young People's Voices – Reflective Questions for Strategic Leaders*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/hearing-young-peoples-voices-reflective-questions-for-strategic-leaders/>

Mendez Sayer, E. (2021). *Unseen? Overlooked? Stigmatised? The role faith organisations can play in tackling child exploitation*. TCE Support Programme. https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2757_TCE_Unseen_Overlooked_Stigmatised_12pp_v1.pdf

Pollard, P., Studdert, J., & Tiratelli, L. (2021). *Community Power: The Evidence, New Local*. TCE Support Programme. <https://www.newlocal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Community-Power-The-Evidence-1.pdf>

Yeo, A. (2021). *Community engagement in tackling child exploitation and extra-familial harm – rapid scoping review*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/community-engagement-in-tackling-child-exploitation-and-extra-familial-harm-rapid-scoping-review/>

Partnerships are creative in their structure and culture

Bailey, S & West, M. (2022). *What is compassionate leadership?* The Kings Fund. <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/what-is-compassionate-leadership>

Byrne, B. (2021). *'It's not them, it's us': the making of a child exploitation strategy*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/its-not-them-its-us-the-making-of-a-child-exploitation-strategy/>

Grauberg, J. (2021). *Approaches to Strategy*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/approaches-to-strategy/>

Mendez Sayer, E. (2021). *What do we really mean when we talk about effective partnership working?* TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/what-do-we-really-mean-when-we-talk-about-effective-partnership-working/>

Uhl-Bien, M., & Arena, M. (2017). Complexity leadership: Enabling people and organizations for adaptability. *Organizational Dynamics*, 46(1), 9–20. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0090261616301590?via%3Dihub>

Wood, A. (2021). *Wood Review of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements*. Department for Education. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wood-review-of-multi-agency-safeguarding-arrangements>

Bridging Boundaries

Information flows freely, but with purpose

Godar, R. (2020). *Using data intelligently to understand child exploitation*. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/using-data-intelligently-to-understand-child-exploitation-part-1-of-7/>

Hurst, A., & Fairgrieves, E. (2021). *Place and space data gathering and intelligence sharing to support Contextual Safeguarding of young people in their communities*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/place-and-space-data-gathering-and-intelligence-sharing-to-support-contextual-safeguarding-of-young-people-in-their-communities/>

Lowe, T., Jennions, B.N., Plimmer, D., Hawkins, M., Hesselgreaves, H., Terry, V., Brogan, A., Eichsteller, G., & Williams, G. (2021). *Human Learning Systems: Public Service for the Real World Summary Report*. <https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/assets/documents/hls-real-world-summary.pdf>

Ofsted et al. (2016). *Time to Listen – a joined up response to child sexual exploitation and missing children*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/676421/Time_to_listen_a_joined_up_response_to_child_sexual_exploitation_and_missing_children.pdf

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (2020). *It was hard to escape: safeguarding children at risk from criminal exploitation*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/870035/Safeguarding_children_at_risk_from_criminal_exploitation_review.pdf

Minoritised voices are heard and respected

Davis, J., & March, N. (2020). *The hyper-visible and invisible children*. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/the-hyper-visible-and-invisible-children/>

Lammy, D., et al. (2017). *The Lammy Review: An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf

Peace, D. (2019). *Meaningfully involving young people in advocacy on sexual violence*. University of Bedfordshire. <https://www.our-voices.org.uk/news/2019/some-considerations-for-meaningfully-involving-young-people-in-advocacy-on-sexual-violence>

Warrington, C., Ackerley, E., Beckett, H., Walker, M., & Allnock, D. (2016). *Making Noise: Children's voices for positive change after sexual abuse*. University of Bedfordshire / Children's Commissioner. <https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/86813/makingnoise-20042017.pdf> (See also this [webpage](#) and the associated [video](#).)

Young Researchers' Advisory Panel (2021). *Participation is Protective*. <https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/xm5bvzgp/participation-as-protective-poster-print-4961-300dpi.jpg>

Child exploitation and extra-familial harm involves control, manipulation and coercion



Focus on strengths, relationships and restorative approaches

Leading with Care

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 and relational, and put restorative principles at the core of partnership working.

Leading with care supports partnerships to hold the needs of young people, and their families and carers, at the heart of strategic approaches to tackling child exploitation and extra-familial harm.

An approach that ‘leads with care’ will draw on the principles of restorative practice and strengths-based ways of working.

Leading with care also sees strategic partnerships challenge over-reliance on process and risk-management in favour of building a common language and confidence in professional judgement. It is an approach that focuses on the harms children and young people face, placing an emphasis on the protective factors that help to keep them safe.

Leading with Care

The needs of young people (and their families) are central

- Allnock, D., & Miller, P. (2013). *No one noticed: no one heard: A study of disclosure of abuse in childhood*. NSPCC. <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2013/no-one-noticed-no-one-heard>
- Allnock, D., Beckett, H., Soares, C., & Warrington, C., Hagell, A., & Starbuck, L. (2021). *Learning from the Experts: Young people's views on their mental health and emotional wellbeing needs following sexual abuse in adolescence*. University of Bedfordshire. <https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/ironep4k/aw-6799-aph-6pp-experts-march2021.pdf>
- Bovarnick, S., & Cody, C. (2020). 'They need to see the people they are affecting by their decision-making': Developing participatory advocacy with young people on sexual violence in Albania, Moldova and Serbia. University of Bedfordshire. <https://www.our-voices.org.uk/assets/documents/ME-Report-OV-Too-Youth-Advocacy-Project-1.pdf>
- Scott, S., & McNeish, D. (2017). *Supporting parents of sexually exploited young people: An evidence review*. Centre for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse. <https://www.csacentre.org.uk/documents/evidence-review-by-sara-scott-and-diana-mcneish-dmss-research/>
- Walker, K., Fairgrieve, E. & Brodie, I. (2022). *Delivery Team Reflection – Part 5 – Children and Young People's Voice thematic project*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/delivery-team-reflection-part-5-children-and-young-peoples-voice-thematic-project>
- Warrington, C., Ackerley, E., Beckett, H., Walker, M., & Allnock, D. (2016). *Making Noise: Children's voices for positive change after sexual abuse*. University of Bedfordshire / Children's Commissioner. <https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/86813/makingnoise-20042017.pdf> (See also this [webpage](#) and the associated [video](#).)

Young people are not labelled or judged

- Beckett, H., Brodie, I., Factor, F., Melrose, M., Pearce, J., Pitts, J., Shuker, L., & Warrington, C. (2013). "It's wrong... but you get used to it": A qualitative study of gang-associated sexual violence towards, and exploitation of, young people in England. University of Bedfordshire / Children's Commissioner. <https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/243971/gangs-report-final.pdf>
- Densley, J., & Pyrooz, D. (2020). *The Matrix in Context: Taking Stock of Police Gang Databases in London and Beyond*. Youth Justice, 20(1-2), 11-30. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1473225419883706>
- Godar, R. (2018). *Leading strengths-based practice frameworks*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tceresearchinpractice.org.uk/leading-strengths-based-practice-frameworks/>
- Kiff, J. (2021). *Strengths-based approaches to working with strategic leaders*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/strengths-based-approach-briefing-paper/>
- Lefevre, M., Hickle, K., & Luckock, B. (2019). "Both/And" Not "Either/Or": Reconciling Rights to Protection and Participation in Working with Child Sexual Exploitation. The British Journal of Social Work, 49(7), 1837-1855.
- Warrington, C., Ackerley, E., Beckett, H., Walker, M., & Allnock, D. (2016). *Making Noise: Children's voices for positive change after sexual abuse*. University of Bedfordshire / Children's Commissioner. <https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/86813/makingnoise-20042017.pdf> (See also this [webpage](#) and the associated [video](#).)
- Wroe, L. (2021). 'County lines', inequalities and young people's rights: a moment of pause and reflection. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/county-lines-inequalities-and-young-peoples-rights-a-moment-of-pause-and-reflection/>

Leading with Care

Responses are valued from all partners, including parents and carers

Bovarnick, S. (2021). *'Investing in young people, not just in their voices: Reflections from the Small Steps project in Albania'*. University of Bedfordshire. <https://www.our-voices.org.uk/news/2021/investing-in-young-people-not-just-in-their-voices-reflections-from-the-small-steps-project-in-albania>

Brodie, I., D'Arcy, K., Harris, J.P., Roker, D., Shuker, L., & Pearce, J.J. (2016). *The participation of young people in child sexual exploitation services: A scoping review of the literature*. University of Bedfordshire. <https://www.alexiproject.org.uk/assets/documents/Alexi-Project-Participation-Scoping-Review.pdf>

Firmin, C. (2017). *Child Abuse Review: Contextualised risk, individualised responses: An assessment of safeguarding responses to nine cases of peer-on-peer abuse*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Child-Abuse-Review-Contextualised-risk-individualised-responses-An-assessment-of-safeguarding-responses-to-nine-cases-of-peer-on-peer-abuse.pdf>

Howard, K. (2021). *Inspiring young people to participate and make a difference*. Safer Young Lives Research Centre. <https://uniofbedsylrc.com/2021/02/25/inspiring-young-people-to-participate-and-make-a-difference/>

Mendez Sayer, E. (2022). *Child exploitation and youth participation: expert interviews*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/child-exploitation-and-youth-participation-expert-interviews/>

Warrington, C., Benchekroun, R., & Howard, K. (2021). *Participatory group work with young people affected by sexual violence: risks, challenges, benefits*. University of Bedfordshire. <https://www.beds.ac.uk/sylrc/young-researchers-advisory-panel/yrap-resources/>

Language is clear, shared and respectful

Beckett, H., Holmes, D., & Walker, J. (2017). *Child sexual exploitation: Definition and guide for professionals: Extended text*. Department for Education. <https://uobrep.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10547/623178/UOB-RIP-CSE-GuidanceFeb2017.pdf?sequence=3>

Brodie, I. (2021). *Child exploitation: Definition and language strategic briefing*. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/child-exploitation-definition-and-language-strategic-briefing/>

Fairgrieve, E. (2021). *Creating a reflective space: putting Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Support Programme principles into action*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/creating-a-reflective-space-putting-tackling-child-exploitation-tce-support-programme-principles-into-action/>

The Children's Society (2022). *Appropriate language: child exploitation*. https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-01/Child_Exploritation%20Appropriate_Language_Guide%202022.pdf

Child exploitation and extra-familial harm moves, shifts and constantly adapts



Stand back,
slow down and reflect

Working with Complexity, Curiosity and Uncertainty

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 different approaches based on their own needs.

Working with complexity, curiosity and uncertainty focuses on supporting local partnerships to work at a pace that allows the time required to critically assess and apply evidence, and to reflect on how this best relates to strategic decision-making. An approach that holds complexity, curiosity and uncertainty at its core makes it clear that, although we don’t always know enough to feel comfortable and confident in a constantly-moving strategic context, curiosity about what local data is (or is not) showing is a helpful place to start.

Working with Complexity, Curiosity and Uncertainty

Pace is balanced with purpose

Hudson, A. (2021). *Slowing down for stronger momentum in tackling child exploitation*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/slowing-down-for-stronger-momentum-in-tackling-child-exploitation/>

Saggers, T. (2021). *Guide to strategy design, implementation and delivery*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/guide-to-strategy-design-implementation-and-delivery/>

Warrington, C. (2020). *Creating a safe space Ideas for the development of participatory group work to address sexual violence with young people*. University of Bedfordshire et al. https://www.our-voices.org.uk/assets/documents/FINAL_UoB_OVToo_CreatingSafeSpaces_TOOLKIT_PAGES.pdf

University of Bedfordshire (2013). *Four films made by young people for their peers, professionals and policy makers*. <https://www.beds.ac.uk/iasr/gasev/>

Local approaches for locally evidenced context

Fraser, A., Irwin-Rogers, K. (2021). *A public health approach to violence reduction: Strategic Briefing*. TCE Support Programme. <https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/all/publications/2021/july/a-public-health-approach-to-violence-reduction-strategic-briefing-2021>

Hurst, A., & Fairgrieves, E. (2021). *Place and space data gathering and intelligence sharing; to support Contextual Safeguarding of young people in their communities*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/place-and-space-data-gathering-and-intelligence-sharing-to-support-contextual-safeguarding-of-young-people-in-their-communities/>

Wroe, L. (2021). *Young people and 'county lines': a contextual and social account*. Journal of Children's Services, 16(1), 39-55. <https://uobrep.openrepository.com/handle/10547/624725>

Working with Complexity, Curiosity and Uncertainty

Data is used to invite questions and conversation

Franklin, A., Brown, S., & Brady, G. (2018). *The use of tools and checklists to assess the risk of child sexual exploitation: lessons from UK practice*. Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 27(8), 978-997.

Godar, R. (2021). *Using data to explore equalities, diversity and inclusion*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/using-data-to-explore-equalities-diversity-and-inclusion/>

Godar, R. (2021). *The power in data and how to share it*. TCE Support Programme. <https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/the-power-in-data-and-how-to-share-it/>

Responses focus on protective and safety factors

Beckett, H., Warrington, C., Ackerley, E., & Allnock, D. (2015). *Children's Voices Research Report: Children and young people's perspectives on the police's role in safeguarding: a report for Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary*. <https://www.justiceinspectories.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/childrens-voices-research-report.pdf>

University of Bedfordshire (2015). *Children's Voices: How the police respond to worries about children and young people's safety*. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/86541/childrens_voices_report_web.pdf

Graham, J. (2021). *Excluded or missing from education and child exploitation: literature review and stakeholder views on safeguarding practice - strategic briefing*. TCE Support Programme. https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2757_TCE_Education_Exploration_briefing_v2.pdf

Lloyd, J., Walker, J., & Bradbury, V. (2020). *Harmful sexual behaviour in schools: a briefing on the findings, implications and resources for schools and multi-agency partners*. The International Centre. <https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Final-Briefing-final-Beyond-Referrals.pdf>

Marsden, H. (2017). *Journey to Justice: Prioritising the wellbeing of children involved in criminal justice processes relating to sexual exploitation and abuse*. Barnardo's. https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/journey-to-justice-full_0.pdf

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