

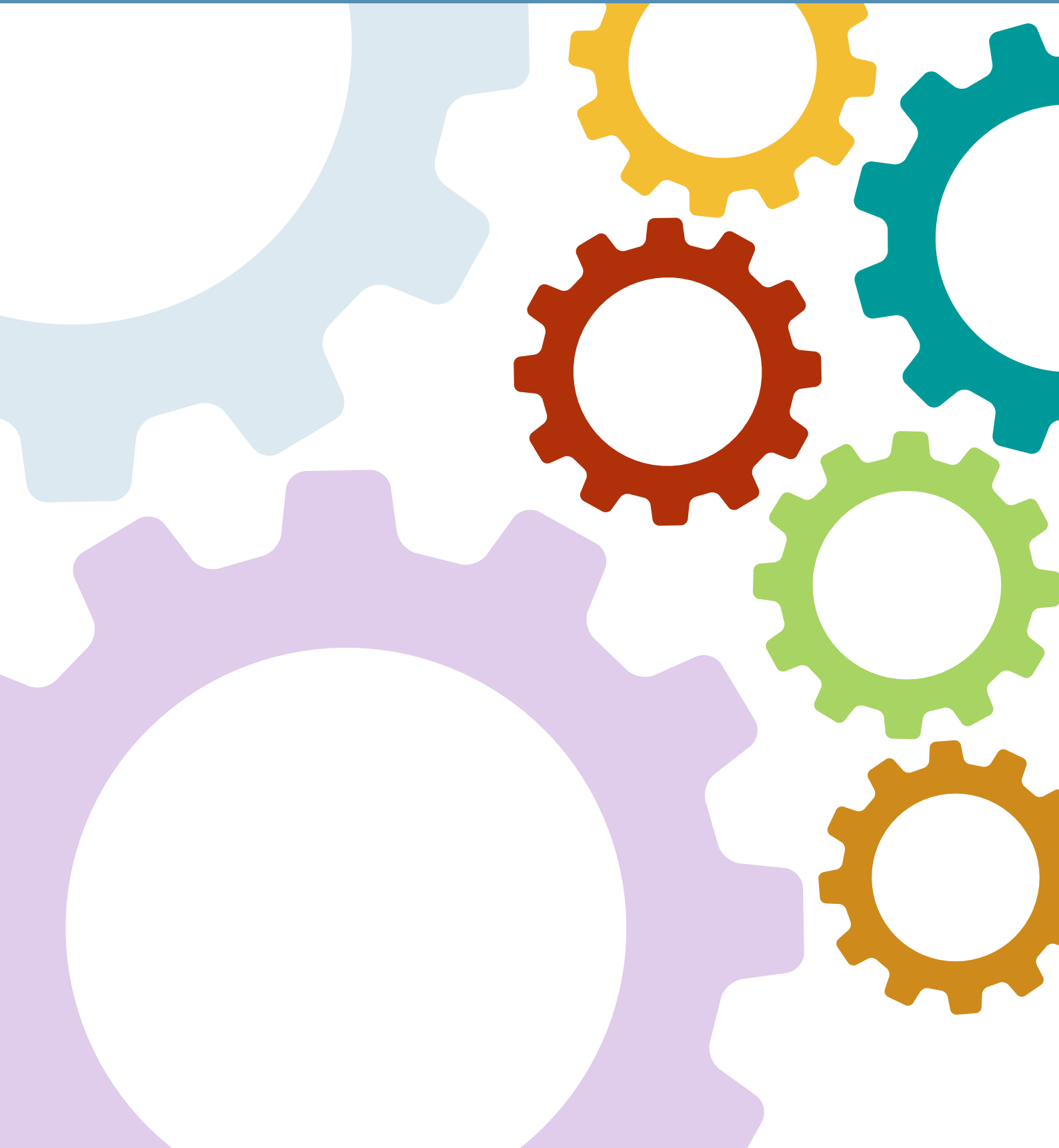


University of  
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# Shifting Mindsets: starting premises when approaching parents and carers



# Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme



in partnership with

**Pace** Parents against  
child exploitation

## Shifting Mindsets; starting premises when approaching parents and carers

This particular resource focuses on the Practice Principle of ‘approaching parents and carers as partners, wherever possible.’

It is designed to be used by professionals both individually and within teams to support reflection on their approach to working with parents and carers.

The resource sets out eight ‘new starting premises’ and explores what this mindset could allow professionals to do in their work with parents and carers as safeguarding partners.

### Why is this resource needed?

Approaching parents and carers as safeguarding partners can be a powerful way to shape more effective safeguarding actions.

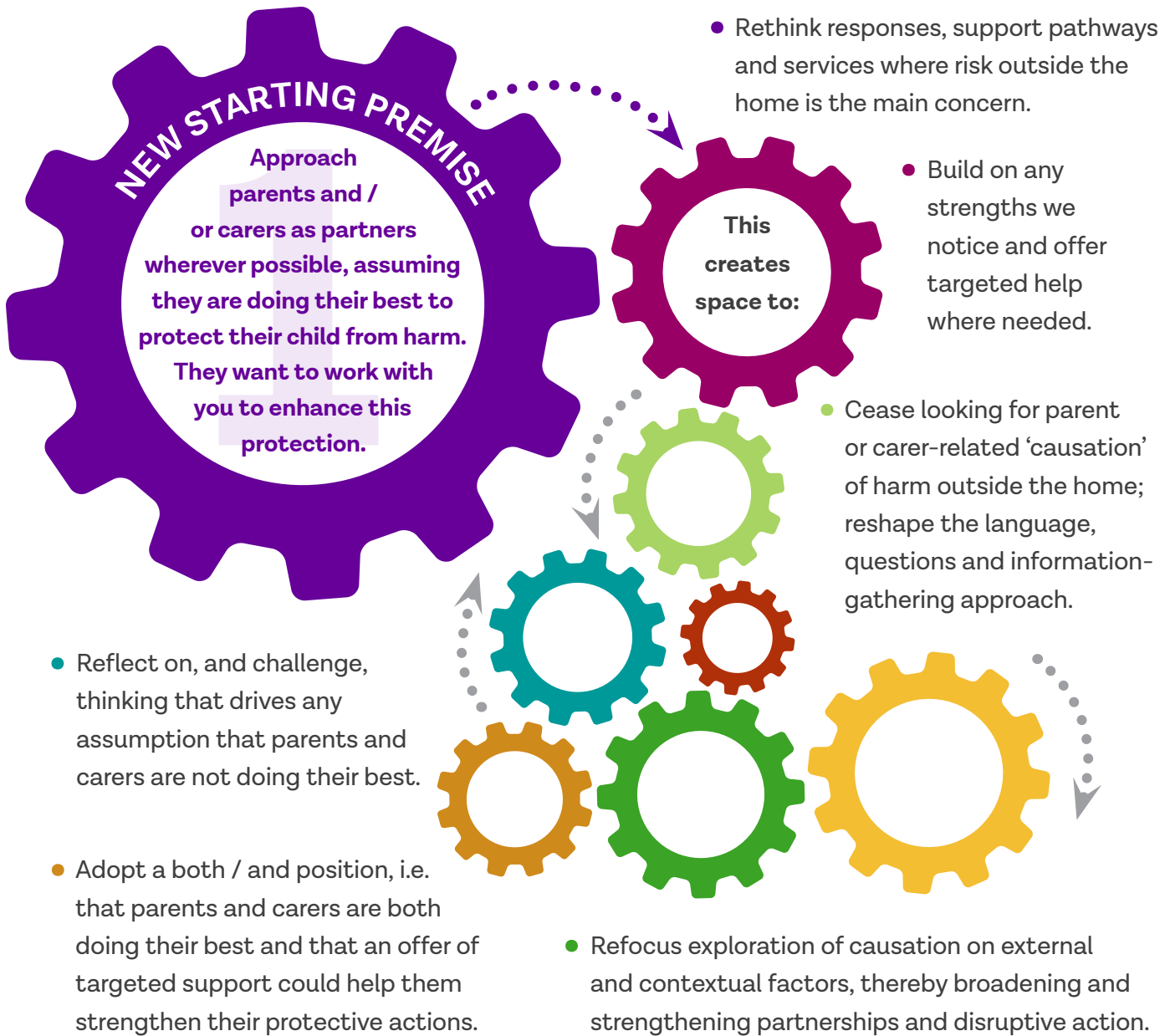
Recognising the expertise of parents and carers offers valuable potential gains for safeguarding partnerships, enhancing agencies’ abilities to support and protect individual children, young people and whole communities.

Parents and carers can hold invaluable information about their child and the contexts of their lives, and they can also hold important information about exploiters, safe and unsafe places, and community strengths and challenges.

This approach does not mean applying a ‘one size fits all’ solution; it requires a nuanced understanding and recognition that circumstances will differ between families, including acknowledging that exploitation and harm can occur within the family context. This requires professionals to respond to parents and carers sensitively and respectfully, recognising that there are circumstances which may make it difficult for some parents and carers to act protectively.



What if we were to adjust our starting premise when approaching parents and carers? What would this free us up to do, right now?

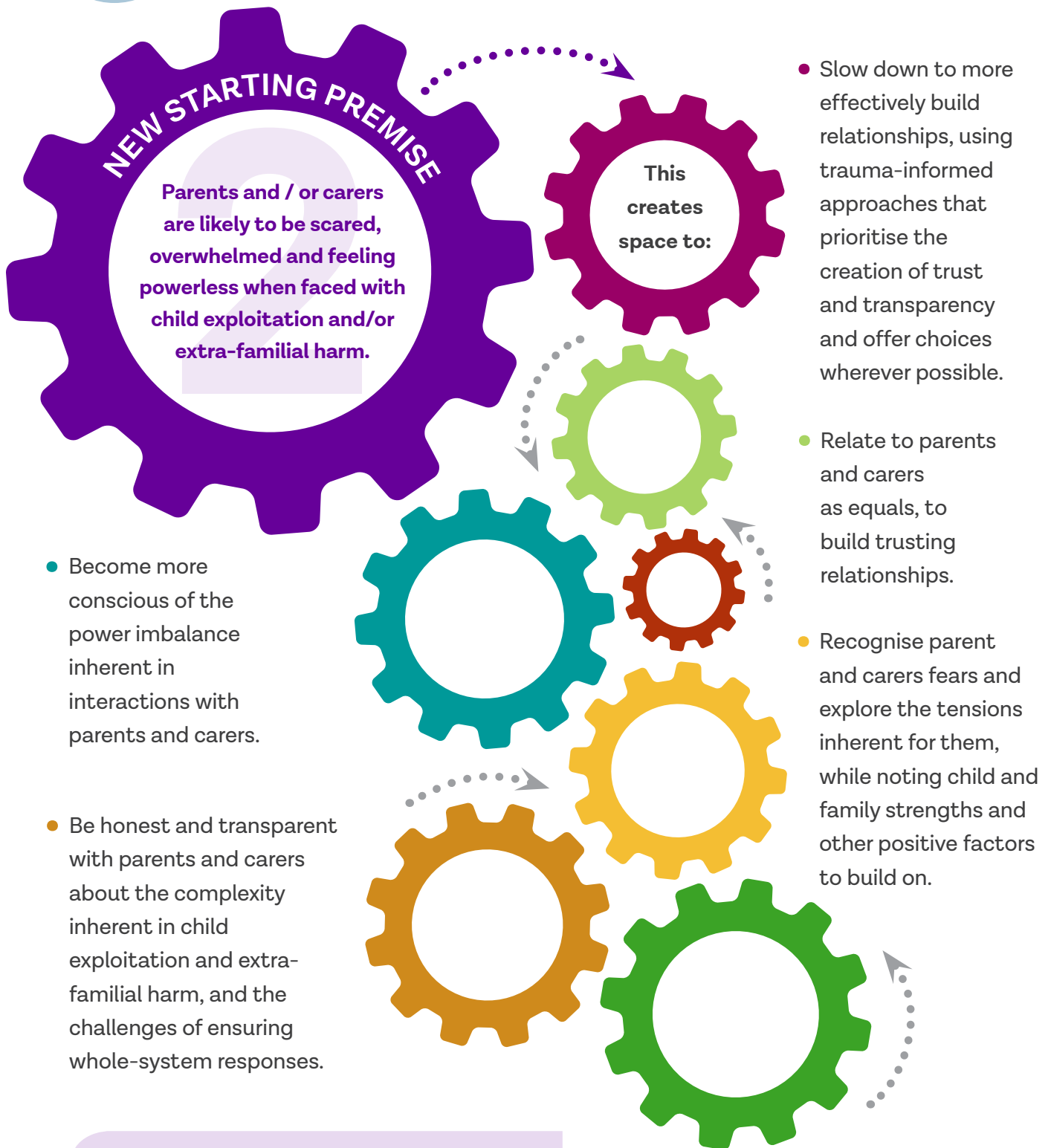


**“ My other children were under child protection as well, because my son was being groomed, and it went on for two and a half years. I had the neglect label even though they agreed that it was extra-familial abuse. The first time I heard it, I just thought, ‘That’s unbelievable!’ I never, never once neglected my children. I was just spot-on with everything. I went to every meeting, I did the whole police thing, I went to all the support groups they asked me to do. They just said that they didn’t have a category. <sup>1</sup> ”**

<sup>1</sup> The quotes throughout this document are composite, drawn from many interviews the TCE Programme team completed with parents and carers across England. Composite quotes enable the presentation of complex ideas in an accessible form, while preserving the anonymity of interviewees. We have preserved the ideas and intent of all interviewees in the process of composing the quotes.



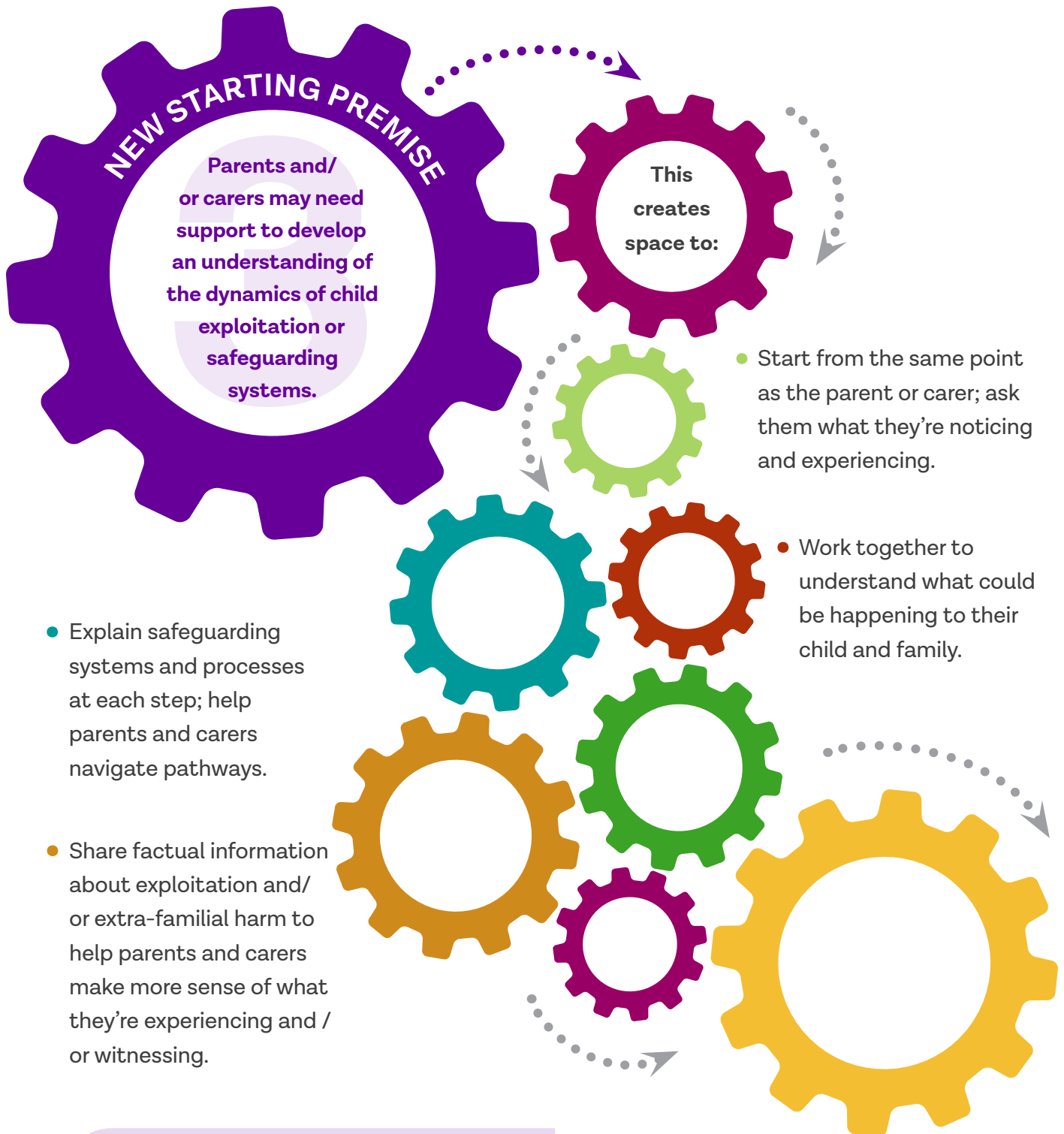
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*“ I didn’t know it was happening. It wasn’t until the police and social care knocked at my door. But there’s nobody on this earth more worried about my child than me. ”*



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- Explain safeguarding systems and processes at each step; help parents and carers navigate pathways.
- Share factual information about exploitation and/or extra-familial harm to help parents and carers make more sense of what they're experiencing and/or witnessing.

- Start from the same point as the parent or carer; ask them what they're noticing and experiencing.
- Work together to understand what could be happening to their child and family.

*“The exploitation information helped me understand what was happening to my daughter better and it helped our relationship. I hadn't really seen her as a victim before.”*

- Connect with parents and carers with humility; be mindful of the power imbalance inherent in the interaction (for example, due to professional knowledge and experience).



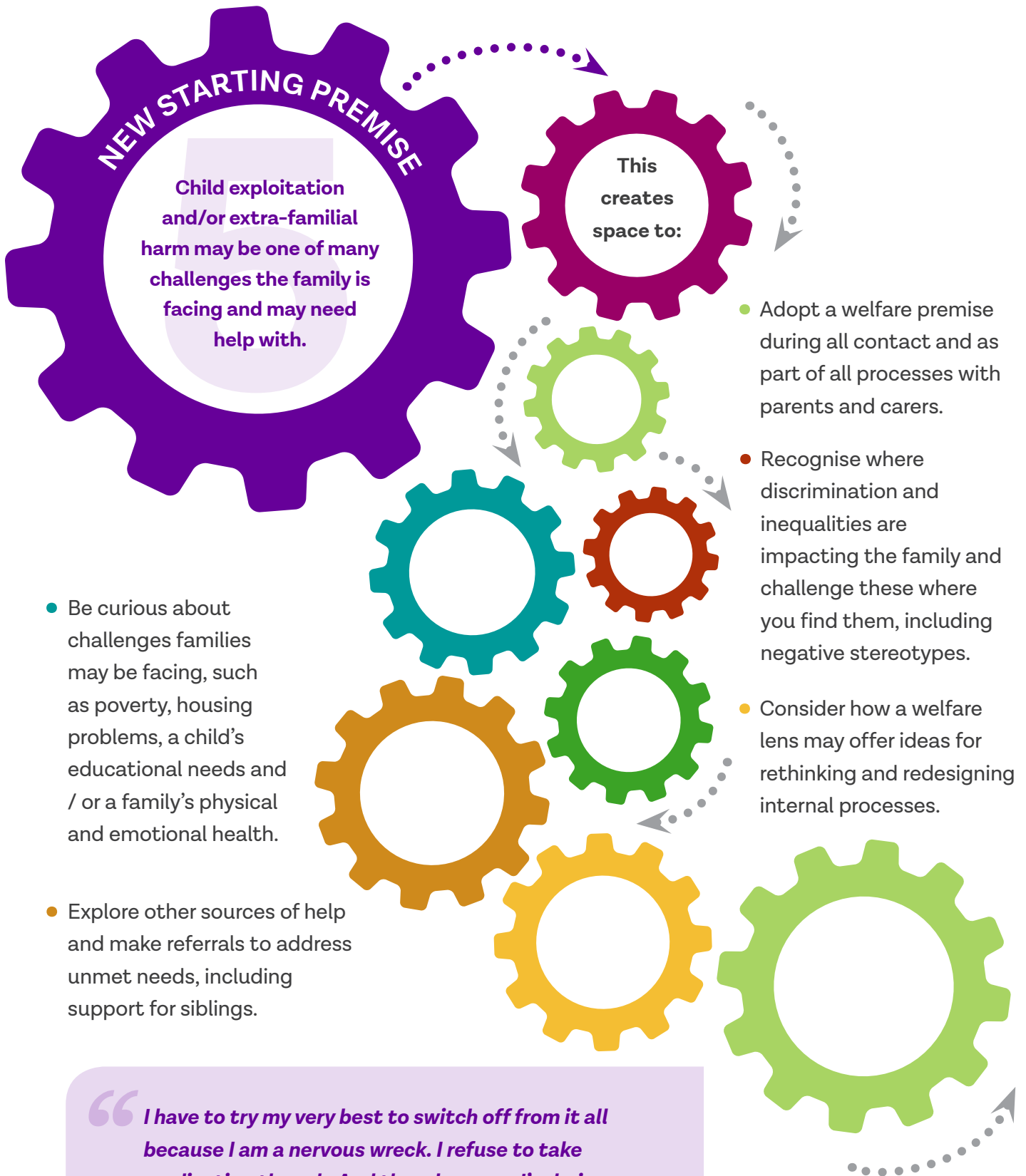
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*“ I have no family unit now; my mother won't speak to me. I have no one apart from my partner and his mum, and I just feel we got destroyed because of this... and it wasn't our fault. ”*



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- Be curious about challenges families may be facing, such as poverty, housing problems, a child's educational needs and / or a family's physical and emotional health.
- Explore other sources of help and make referrals to address unmet needs, including support for siblings.

**“ I have to try my very best to switch off from it all because I am a nervous wreck. I refuse to take medication though. And then, because I'm being threatened by adults exploiting my child, they're asking me, 'Would you like to move?' Why should I? ”**



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*“ I was raped as a teenager by someone I trusted and it made it really hard to trust professionals when I found out my son was being exploited. The feeling of being responsible... of being blamed, was the same as back then. ”*





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“Parents have lots of the information that professionals need, but they don't always listen to us. So, for them to listen to parents - it's so important from day one.”



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**“ Support must be bespoke. Not all children with extra needs are the same and their families certainly aren't. I was referred to a parenting course; they refer everyone. I felt like I was wasting my time. Some families clearly needed a lot more help than I did, and I didn't get the practical help I needed. ”**

We would like to thank staff at [Parents Against Child Exploitation \(PACE\)](#), [The Children's Society \(TCS\)](#), [Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder \(FASD\)](#) network and [National Working Group \(NWG\)](#) for their generous feedback and contributions to this resource. Huge gratitude to the thirty-nine parents and carers we spoke to through our consultation sessions for sharing their experiences and ideas on what needs to change.

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