

# Young People and Adults Complex Safeguarding Strategy

2022 – 2023

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## Vision

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- An approach to safeguarding young people and adults fluidly across developmental stages which builds on the best available evidence, learns from both children's and adult safeguarding practice and which prepares young people for their adult lives.
- Extends far beyond statutory duties - highlights the holistic nature of effective safeguarding. This involves engaging with voluntary and commissioned services in a way that allows them to work creatively and flexibly.
- Not a prescribed model. A principles-led approach to policy and practice, being developed in different ways according to local circumstances

## Introduction

This Complex Safeguarding Strategy has been developed as a joint initiative between members of NW ADASS Partnership to focus the diverse safeguarding issues emerging across communities.

The Northwest definition of Adult Complex Safeguarding features an element of criminal exploitation along with other safeguarding factors which may include substance misuse, domestic abuse, previous trauma, homelessness, learning disability, mental health, transition from children's services, sensory impairment, acquired brain injury. NW ADDAS recognises that wider structural and economic inequalities -and other variables- will mean that risks and harms will change over time, and new

safeguarding issues will present, and so no exhaustive definition is appropriate or desirable.

At the national and regional level Complex Safeguarding has focused on tackling the exploitation of young people and adults without a defined definition. This strategy recognises that those who seek to abuse and exploit, young people and adults do so by targeting their vulnerability, regardless of age.

**Guidance:** <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng216>

Tackling Complex Safeguarding can be challenging. It involves multiple agencies working across geographical boundaries, often supporting adults who, due to their situation, struggle to engage with support and may be suffering from trauma.



We also recognise that the social and environmental factors that enable the exploitation of young people continue into adulthood. Forms of exploitation also expand to include those who have been exploited moving on to exploit other vulnerable people, blurring the boundary between trauma victim and abuser.

## Purpose

This Complex Safeguarding strategy provides a framework for tackling the exploitation of young people and adults aged 16 and over.

Drawing on learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs), DHR, Coroners and LeDeR, we aim to improve our understanding of the complex factors facing adults at risk. The strategy also provides guidance for communities and professionals working to reduce exploitation across the north west.

To ensure success, partners are committed to working beyond traditional geographical, age and statutory boundaries to protect those at risk and disrupt the escalation of some of the most physically and psychologically harmful forms of abuse. Partners also recognise that success depends on the sharing of data and intelligence as part of a whole system response to exploitation.

This strategy should be read alongside the NICE Guidelines which can be found <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng216>

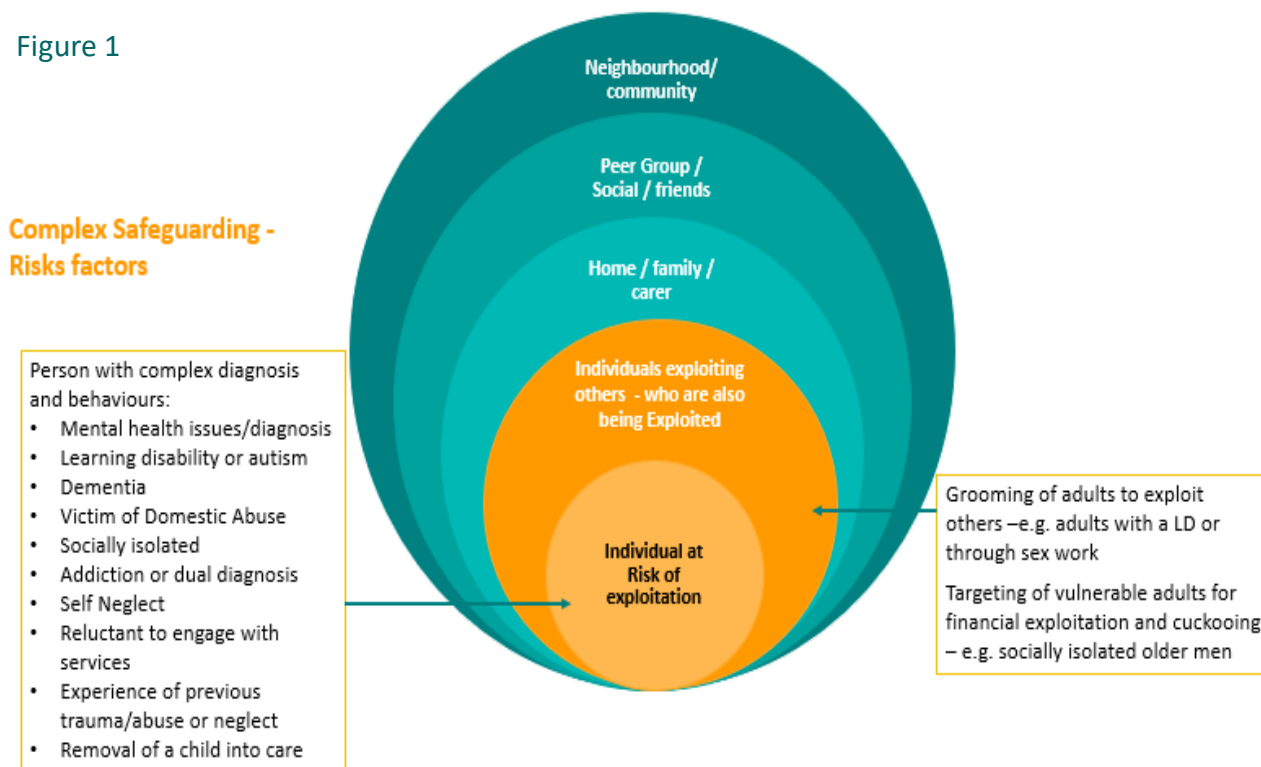
Cases are considered complex because perpetrators often take advantage and actively target adults who because of their situation are vulnerable in some way. Figure 1 highlights some of the most common risk factors for adults experiencing exploitation.

Situations can also involve the exploitation of an adult at risk by another vulnerable adult who is being coerced into carrying out criminal exploitation.

*“Complex Safeguarding involves criminal activity (often organised), or behaviour associated with criminality involving adults aged 16 and over who are at particular risk to exploitation. Adult safeguarding cases are considered complex where exploitation is combined with risk factors which include, but are not limited to, previous trauma, drug & alcohol misuse, mental health issues, learning disabilities, dementia, domestic abuse, and homelessness; There must also be a clear or implied safeguarding concern. This can be perpetrated by persons who are intrafamilial and extra familial”*

This definition reflects the types of cases currently being managed through multi-agency safeguarding processes.

Figure 1



## Complex Safeguarding

This strategy focuses on young people and adults experiencing the highest levels of risk. Cases where the adult's situation involves **both** complex and contextual safeguarding factors and where criminal exploitation is a key feature. Typical characteristics include exploitation where the activity appears consensual and where the adult is deemed to have capacity, or fluctuating capacity, to make decisions that can put them at risk of harm.

Ours is an evolving approach based on the cases the North West is currently experiencing and will be refined as we expand our multi-agency data and intelligence.

Person maybe at risk due to trauma

Issues of capacity balanced with addiction and 'unwise decisions'

Controlled into criminal activity

Unsafe – exploited by others in family or community

## National and Regional Context

This strategy is for North West ADASS partners and Adult Safeguarding Boards to adopt as a regional standard of best practice in Complex Safeguarding to align and be used in conjunction with local multiagency Policies and Procedures.

The vision is for the principles of Strategy to be embedded across the North West as evidence of best practice in relation to CQC Assurance processes.

## Safeguarding and Population Health

National and local data highlights the correlation between levels of adult complex safeguarding and areas of high socio-economic deprivation.

As part of its response NW ADASS has adopted a Population Health approach. This recognises that factors such as poverty, health conditions and health care, behaviour, worldwide asylum and humanitarian issues can shape an individual's experiences and life chances.



# Safeguarding and Adult Exploitation

## Our Approach



## Transitional Safeguarding Processes

Transitional Safeguarding is an approach to safeguarding adolescents and young adults fluidly across developmental stages which builds on the best available evidence, learns from both children’s and adult safeguarding practice and which prepares young people for their adult lives’ (Holmes & Smale, 2018)

Transitional Safeguarding is not simply transition planning for people moving from Children’s social care to Adult Social Care. It refers to activity that has often fallen outside of the traditional notions of both ‘transitions’ and ‘safeguarding’, often interpreted through a lens of eligibility, rather than in the wider sense of human experiences and needs.

Transitional Safeguarding extends far beyond statutory duties - highlights the holistic nature of effective safeguarding. This involves engaging commissioned services in a way that allows them to work creatively and flexibly. It is not a prescribed model, it is a principles-led approach according to local circumstances (Holmes and Dept of Health &

Social Care, 2021).

## Trauma Informed - Strengths Base Working

Trauma-Informed Care is a strengths-based framework. The framework is grounded in an understanding of, and responsiveness to, the impact

of trauma. This emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. (Hopper et al, 2005)

Abuse, neglect, and trauma in childhood have profound, long-lasting and far-reaching effects, that often present into Adulthood. It is the role of practitioners across social care to help people manage the impact and try to recover their lives. There is hope for these young people and adults, particularly if we identify the trauma early and work collaboratively in a trauma-informed way.

Harm and its effects do not abruptly end at 18; the brain may continue developing until mid 20s... (Sawyer et al, 2018); Prior et al, 2011)

## Governance Arrangements

The Adult Complex Safeguarding Strategy is one of three approaches that will enable local authorities to deliver an **All-Age Complex and Contextual Safeguarding Offer**

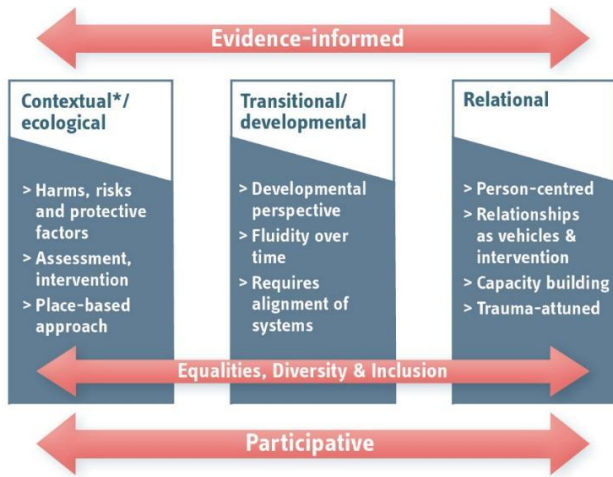
The other delivery plans are:

NW ADASS Adult’s Complex Safeguarding Group will oversee delivery of the Young People and Adult Complex Safeguarding Strategy. Progress will also be reviewed on an annual basis by NW ADASS Safeguarding Adult’s Board.

The Adults Complex Safeguarding Strategy will be delivered through local partnerships, procedures, and governance arrangements.

Both strategies should align locally with the Children’s complex and contextual Strategy.

## Evidence Informed

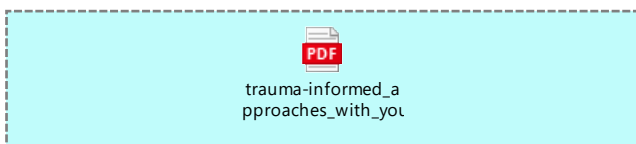


See Firmin's work:  
[www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk](http://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk)

### Key Principles of Transitional Safeguarding (Holmes, 2018; 2022)

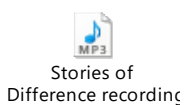
The Complex Safeguarding strategy will provide a best practice guidance for the North West to locally to develop and deliver effective local analysis capacity and mechanisms for gathering and responding to expertise from those with lived experience to provide an evidence base strategy and framework.

To be evidence-informed in our approach. This means drawing on knowledge from a variety of sources – research and data, practice wisdom and the expertise of people with lived experience. It means adapting approaches in light of new knowledge and being curious and committed to continuous learning



## Listening and Learning

### Stories of Difference



## Lived Experience

NW ADASS strategic priorities for young people and adult complex safeguarding reflect the lived experiences of young people and adults in the North West region and feedback from front line practitioners.

First-hand insight will continue to be gathered through personal interviews, pen portraits and cases studies produced through Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs). This insight will be used to identify and share best practice and address gaps or barriers to whole system working.

It is recommended that annual reviews will take place to include evaluations of the outcome of embedding or implementing the strategy to maintain currency and value of the strategy.



Central to the work with young people and adults at risk is the application of Making Safeguarding Personal. This term is used to describe the way services work with individuals who may have experience of harm and focuses on the outcome they want to achieve.

Making Safeguarding Personal works by identifying individual strengths and circles of support, providing a counterbalance to the complex risks. Making Safeguarding Personal is central to the North West management process.



making  
safeguarding perso

## Special Thanks

Dez Homes – Research in Practice  
NW ADASS Programme Support  
NW ADASS Complex Safeguarding project Group  
Hayley Eccles – Oldham Council

## Strategic Objectives

PRIORITIES		WHAT WILL WE DO?
01	Shared Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a shared understanding of adult complex safeguarding in the north west.</li> <li>• Consult with practitioners on their understanding/needs</li> <li>• Develop a strong evidence base to inform our understanding based on multi agency data collection/insight</li> <li>• Two-way flow of insight/development with NW ADASS</li> </ul>
02	Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the early identification of cases involving young people and adult complex safeguarding</li> <li>• Raise awareness of issue through targeted comms for professionals, community groups and members of the public</li> <li>• Training and WFD package on local reporting arrangements and risk management processes that include recent case studies</li> </ul>
03	Multi-agency Risk management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review risk management response to victims of adult complex safeguarding</li> <li>• Review impact of governance arrangements</li> </ul>
04	Target those who cause harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the sharing of information in order to disrupt criminal activity and prosecute offenders</li> <li>• Improve the current cross boundary information sharing arrangements</li> </ul>
05	Lived Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capture the voice of people with lived experience to explore prevention and person-centred solutions</li> <li>• Capture the voice of practitioners working cases to explore best practice, evaluate current arrangements and develop practical resources</li> </ul>



## Glossary of Terms

<b>Coercive behaviour</b>	An act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. This definition is an umbrella term that includes so-called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.
<b>Controlling behaviour</b>	A range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
<b>County Lines</b>	Organised criminal activity in which illegal drug dealers in major cities establish networks for the supply and sale of drugs to users in towns and rural areas. Typically involves using other people (those who are young or otherwise vulnerable) to carry, store, and sell the drugs.
<b>Cuckooing</b>	Term used when an individual or a criminal gang target the home of a vulnerable person so they can use the property for criminal purposes such as drug-dealing, hiding weapons and other criminal activities. Criminals often befriend a vulnerable person in order to exploit them and use their property.
<b>Domestic abuse</b>	Any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality.
<b>Financial exploitation</b>	When someone is deceived or coerced into handing over monetary funds, assets or property. Financial exploitation often involves the targeting of a vulnerable person and can happen through fraud, including wills or inheritance, blackmail, accumulating debts, or having money or property stolen – this includes situations where someone feels pressured into handing over money or property.
<b>Honour based violence</b>	So-called 'honour-based violence' can take many forms; it is used to control behaviour within families to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Examples may include murder, fear of or actual forced marriage, domestic violence, sexual abuse, false imprisonment, threats to kill, assault, harassment and forced abortion. Women are predominantly (but not exclusively) the alleged victims and the violence can include collusion from wider family members and/or the community.
<b>Modern day slavery</b>	Umbrella term for all forms of slavery, human trafficking and exploitation. It is defined as the recruitment, movement, harbouring or receiving of children, women or men through the use of force, coercion, abuse of vulnerability, deception or other means for the purpose of exploitation. It includes holding a person in a position of slavery, servitude forced or compulsory labour, or facilitating their travel with the intention of exploiting them soon after. Recent cases have seen the targeting of people with a learning disability, homeless people and family members brought to the UK as refugees.
<b>Sexual abuse</b>	Indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, actual or threatened rape, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts or sexual acts to which the person has not consented. Also includes being pressured into consenting under unequal or coercive conditions.

<b>Sexual exploitation</b>	Actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. It can include taking sexual advantage of another person without effective consent; causing the prostitution of another person; recording, photographing or transmitting identifiable images of private sexual activity of another person.
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## Useful Resources

<https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/all/publications/2021/june/bridging-the-gap-transitional-safeguarding-and-the-role-of-social-work-with-adults-knowledge-briefing/>

<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Making%20Safeguarding%20Personal%20-%20Guide%202014.pdf>

<https://tce.researchinpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Developing-and-leading-trauma-informed-practice.pdf>

[https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/200253/resources\\_for\\_practitioners/971/working\\_in\\_adult\\_safeguarding](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/200253/resources_for_practitioners/971/working_in_adult_safeguarding)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/778134/ste-ngths-based-approach-practice-framework-and-handbook.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/778134/ste-ngths-based-approach-practice-framework-and-handbook.pdf)

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