

# Child Poverty Forum West Cumbria

## EVENT REPORT

Dr Katherine Jewell & Dr Suzanne Wilson, University of Lancashire



## Vulnerabilities to Crime

**'We don't know what we don't know...'**

12-28 November 2025

This hybrid event series provided an opportunity for WCCPF members to both share and improve their understanding of the realities of crime for young people living in West Cumbria. Drawing from the experience and knowledge of key local leaders and practitioners, attendees were invited to exercise curiosity in exploring both experiences of crime and young people's potential vulnerabilities to crime within two broad areas: domestic abuse and exploitation. Specifically, the event set out to encourage collaborative consideration of the following:

- What are the challenges locally?
- What do we know?
- What are the outcomes?
- What can WCCPF respond to?
- What can partners respond to?

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## Executive Summary

At our New Horizons report launch in October 2024, attendees expressed a wish that WCCPF consider organising a series of smaller events to make it easier for colleagues to fit into busy diaries, and to ensure these events include valuable time for networking. The Steering Group developed a response to your feedback, resulting in our innovative hybrid event series on Vulnerabilities to Crime. This proved to be an exciting experiment with a different format from what we have used previously, and we hope this will be the first of several similar events on different topics in response to the preferences expressed at the New Horizons launch.

A series of two informational webinars on the subjects of domestic abuse and exploitation was held on 12 November 2025 and 20 November 2025, respectively. These were designed to provide attendees with a basic understanding of how these issues affect children in West Cumbria and were open to anyone who wished to deepen their local knowledge of these topics. These were well attended by a variety of colleagues from across different sectors and included case studies from West Cumbria to help illustrate the on-the-ground experiences and risks our young people can face. Recordings will be made available online in due course, but in the meantime, access can be requested via email from Katherine Jewell, Vice Chair WCCPF at [kjewell1@lancashire.ac.uk](mailto:kjewell1@lancashire.ac.uk).

Following the webinars, a half day in-person event took place at the University of Lancashire Westlakes campus on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025. The session aimed at front-line practitioners provided colleagues with an opportunity for networking as well as round-table discussions involving critical reflection on representative case study examples from the local area relating to the same topics of exploitation and domestic abuse. Communication network analyses were conducted to identify key areas for improving and developing local information-sharing systems. The elements of this series of events were designed to be largely stand-alone, allowing attendees to choose which are most relevant to their interests and desired outcomes from participation.



For both issues, particular challenges were highlighted in relation to the initial identification and reporting of the potential criminal event(s), whether this came from victims, professionals or other individuals such as family, friends or acquaintances. Once a victim and/or potential crime was brought to the attention of professionals, attendees considered systems, information-sharing, and support sources generally effective and fit for purpose. Therefore, the main opportunity for improvement was identified as raising awareness among practitioners and the public, and improving communication processes and networks for the initial identification and reporting of issues or concerns.

After reviewing an initial draft of this report, a further discussion between representatives of Cumbria Constabulary and WCCPF took place to agree and commit to the following practical actions based on the discussions that took place over the Vulnerabilities to Crime event series. We are delighted that most of the actions are now either completed or well underway.

## Agreed Actions

### Domestic Abuse

- ➔ *Key partners will strengthen and promote the message that there is no 'wrong door' in terms of reporting domestic abuse and commit to continuing to offer a consistent level of learning and development.*
- ➔ *The police will fund a new campaign, collaborating with council officers to promote the importance of reporting domestic abuse and signpost to sources of information and support.*
- ➔ *Key partners will continue the conversation around ways to sensitively support and encourage victims to engage with police processes with a view to increasing the conviction rate for domestic abuse.*
- ➔ *Recognising that some people may lack trust in statutory services, the council will expand work with third sector partners to build capacity for handling disclosures, widening the range of avenues for reporting domestic abuse.*
- ➔ *The police will investigate the possibility of adapting an internal domestic abuse awareness-raising video for release to the general public.*

### Child Exploitation

- ➔ *The Youth Justice and Youth Connect teams will continue reviewing and updating their documentation, including ensuring accessible and child-centred language is used.*
- ➔ *The police will work with key partners to develop avenues for reporting concerns about exploitation that do not immediately trigger police and/or children's services involvement.*
- ➔ *The police will work with key partners to develop and publicise user-friendly guidance for how and where to report potential concerns that would benefit from professional curiosity or contact from an appropriate trusted adult.*
- ➔ *The police will continue to roll out the PoEd programme both with schools and other relevant partners.*

### General

- ➔ *WCCPF will utilise its network to publicise campaigns and resources, both pre-existing and those developed through these actions.*
- ➔ *WCCPF will be available to support building relationships between the police, council and third sector organisations.*
- ➔ *The police and the council will investigate the possibility of a joint press release celebrating their collaboration through this series of events.*

## 1 Background and Introduction

At our New Horizons report launch in October 2024, attendees expressed a wish that WCCPF consider organising a series of smaller events to make it easier for colleagues to fit into busy diaries, and to ensure these events include valuable time for networking. The Steering Group developed a response to your feedback, resulting in our innovative hybrid event series on Vulnerabilities to Crime. This proved to be an exciting experiment with a different format than we have used previously, and it is hoped that this will be the first of several similar events on different topics in response to the preferences expressed at the New Horizons launch.

A series of two informational webinars on the subjects of domestic abuse and exploitation was held on 12th November 2025 and 20th November 2025, respectively. These were designed to provide attendees with a basic understanding of how these issues affect children in West Cumbria and were open to anyone who wished to deepen their local knowledge of these topics.

Following these, a half day in-person event took place at the University of Lancashire Westlakes campus on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025. The session aimed at front-line practitioners provided colleagues with an opportunity for networking as well as round-table discussions involving critical reflection on representative case study examples from the local area relating to the same topics of exploitation and domestic abuse. The elements of this series of events were designed to be largely stand-alone, allowing attendees to choose which are most relevant to their interests and desired outcomes from participation.

This report will provide summaries of the content, questions and discussion from each webinar and a presentation of the discussions and themes from the in-person event, along with participant feedback and next steps.

## 2 Webinar: Domestic Abuse, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2025, 1-2pm

The webinar on domestic abuse was presented by Mary-Claire Telford, Strategic Lead for Domestic Abuse (Cumberland Council), and facilitated by Dr Suzanne Wilson, Research Fellow in Social Inclusion and Community Engagement (University of Lancashire). In all, 15 people attended the webinar, including representatives from the local councils, housing association and other organisations. Although it was intended to be open to anyone, it was primarily professionals who attended.

Mary-Claire offered general definitions of abuse, highlighting that children and young people are considered victims if they have witnessed abuse, regardless of whether they are the target or not. Local case study examples of coercive control were shared, as well as summary information on notable local Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDRs) from Cumberland and Cumbria, both completed and ongoing. Mary-Claire shared that a local analysis of recent DARDRs has highlighted opportunities for improvement in a number of areas:

- Improvement in professional curiosity/routine enquiry
- Multi-agency involvement and information sharing
- Risk assessment and management of risk
- Handover and step-down
- DARVO<sup>1</sup>
- Typologies
- The impact of children becoming cared for
- Suicide prevention
- Links between domestic abuse & substance misuse
- Working in line with the victim's code 2021<sup>2</sup>
- Learning and development

These are intended to inform the local authority's priorities and domestic abuse strategy going forward. A particularly informative and illuminating short animation on the effects of trauma on the brain was also shared and can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-tcKYx24aA>. In addition to initiatives for members of the public, Mary-Claire shared the legacy of a local council worker's experience of domestic abuse that directly led to the development of an internal domestic abuse policy to help protect and support council employees.

In the time remaining, participants had a number of insightful questions that highlighted further factors impacting on children and families experiencing domestic violence:

- The intersectionality of poverty and domestic abuse can have particular implications for families, especially if there are joint Universal Credit claims which impact on the financial practicality of victims to leave abusive situations.
- Specifically relating to young people, experiencing domestic violence in the family can often be identified as a factor in criminal behaviour or child on parent violence, resulting in involvement with the justice system.

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<sup>1</sup> DARVO stands for 'deny, attack, reverse victim and offender' - a tactic used by abusers to avoid responsibility. Perpetrators deny any wrongdoing and attack their victims' credibility, casting their victims as the real aggressor and themselves as the real victims when faced with accountability or confronted about their actions or behaviour.

<sup>2</sup> Full document accessible from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime>.

- The family court system can sometimes be a complicating consideration for victims in their decision whether to flee an abusive relationship, as the limited facility to take into account allegations of domestic abuse can result in suspects being granted access to children.
- Families and victims can sometimes feel overwhelmed with the number of potential agencies that get involved with cases, and streamlining the system in terms of simplifying communication networks from the perspective of victims has been highlighted as one of the main opportunities for improvement.
- There could be more empathetic recognition of the longer-term emotional impact of domestic abuse, and the enduring impact of trauma on victims' ability to recover from their experiences.

See Appendix A for the presentation slides and the full set of discussion questions and answers.

### 3 Webinar: Exploitation, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2025, 4-5pm

The webinar on exploitation was presented by Detective Inspector Fiona Gray, Cyber and Digital Crime Unit (Cumbria Constabulary), facilitated by Simon Newling-Ward, Service Manager Youth Justice and Youth Connect (Cumberland Council). In total, 17 people attended, including representatives from local housing associations, local councils and other organisations. As with the previous webinar, although attendance was open attendees were primarily local practitioners.

DI Gray presented an overview of the work undertaken by the Cyber and Digital Crime unit, alongside key statistics including:

- 32% CSE (child sexual exploitation) offending is identified as taking place online
- Victim average age 14, suspect average age 23
- Most common relationship type between victim and suspect is 'acquaintance'
- Victim breakdown: 66% female 34% male

A local case study was shared that involved indecent images being shared via Snapchat; the referral for the incident was received via law enforcement rather than originating from a victim report. A total of 22 victims were involved, who had to be individually identified, sometimes by online information, sometimes by clues in the photos (e.g. school uniform), and other times by canvassing school welfare staff with edited photos. DI Gray advised us that this was a relatively small investigation comparatively, as cases can often involve hundreds of victims both in the UK and internationally.

As professionals, the best we can do for young people is to educate them about the risks, explore changes in behaviour, and report concerns to the police and social care as early as possible. Parents and carers are advised to work as a TEAM: Talk, Explore, Agree, and Manage boundaries and online activity.

DI Gray allowed a generous amount of time for questions from attendees that highlighted key take-aways in terms of what we can do to help protect young people from online exploitation, both as practitioners and parents/carers:

- Remember that there is no stereotypical age for perpetrators and also don't make assumptions that the people children are corresponding with online are necessarily always people they have met in person.
- Charging standards for creating/viewing indecent images using AI are the same as for 'real' images.
- The Prevent agenda includes provision for supporting young people who have committed cybercrimes, which focus on helping them use their skills to develop careers rather than criminality. Police have observed a frequent link between cybercrime and young people with neurodiversity and /or social isolation. There is a possibility of referral to the Prevent programme even without specific prior cyber-criminality, which would be considered on a case-by-case basis based on the evidence and the reason for concern.
- It is encouraged to use professional curiosity in cases where there has been a change in a young person's behaviour, attendance, attainment, etc., especially if an identifiable cause is not immediately obvious. Conversations should be initiated by trusted adults to explore circumstances further, as this is frequently identified in hindsight as a symptom of online exploitation.

- Increased online activity during COVID and the continuing increase in normalisation of technology use have likely impacted the increase in online exploitation.
- Particular circumstances that could make young people more vulnerable to online exploitation include: a lack of real-world friendships, a lack of parental supervision of online activity, excessive online activity, and deprivation that could make young people more susceptible to financial incentives or gifts in exchange for interaction or images.
- There is sometimes a link between online exploitation and patterns of young people going missing, although there are support systems in place to help young people in these circumstances. Youth Connect is well positioned to collaborate with other agencies to identify broader networks of perpetrators and support proactive safeguarding.
- The best thing parents and carers can do is engage in regular conversations with young people and monitor online activity. Further resources on what to look out for can be found here: <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publicationfiles/765-com-groups-early-threat-identification-notice/file>.

See Appendix B for presentation slides and the full set of discussion questions and answers.

## 4 In-Person Networking and Discussion, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025, 12-3.30pm

### 4.1 Agenda

| Time        | Session                                                          | Speaker                           |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 12-1pm      | Lunch and networking                                             |                                   |
| 1-1.10pm    | Event opening                                                    | Willie Slavin, Chair WCCPF        |
| 1.10-1.15pm | Introduction to Case Study Discussions                           | Katherine Jewell                  |
| 1.15-2pm    | Round Table reflexive discussions on Exploitation Case Studies   | Emma Thompson, table facilitators |
| 2-2.45pm    | Round Table reflexive discussions on Domestic Abuse Case Studies | Emma Thompson, table facilitators |
| 2.45-3.30pm | Group Feedback and Discussion                                    | Suzanne Wilson                    |
| 3.30pm      | Event closure                                                    |                                   |
| 3.30-5pm    | Optional Additional Networking                                   |                                   |

### 4.2 Attendance at in person event

The in-person discussion and networking event was hosted by University of Lancashire's Westlakes campus near Whitehaven, and was targeted at professionals and practitioners. Over 35 people registered for the event, although a number gave apologies at short notice relating to either their or colleagues' sickness. Despite this, there were 24 people in attendance, representing police, youth justice & Youth Connect, primary and secondary schools, family support (local authority and third sector), housing associations, and other third sector organisations as well as University of Lancashire and University of Cumbria. At least eight attendees indicated on feedback forms that they had not previously been to a WCCPF event; however, this may be largely due to the number of representatives from the police who were present and the fact that WCCPF has not historically worked closely with Cumbria Constabulary.

### 4.3 Case study group discussion/feedback

Following the informal networking lunch, participants were asked to divide themselves across five groups, ensuring a diverse representation of organisations, alongside at least one member of Cumbria Constabulary to offer their particular experience and expertise to the discussions on each table. Two distinct case studies on domestic abuse and three on exploitation were distributed, with each table discussing a different combination of case study scenarios. The case studies were semi-hypothetical, based on anonymised circumstances from recent cases and experience sourced from front-line practitioners whose work covered West Cumbria.

See Appendix C for the discussion guide questions and each case study example.

Following small group discussion on the case studies, general feedback and discussion was led by Dr Suzanne Wilson.

#### 4.3.1 Domestic Abuse

Participants noted that many agencies could be involved, echoing Mary-Claire's webinar presentation. This can result in 'agency overload', which needs to be managed. It was suggested that it could help to ensure that the right person acts as the main point of contact. Victims can get 'muddled' among so many agencies, although the overall communication network is in place and largely works well when a manageable number of agencies are involved.

Interagency information sharing is well developed and effective; the gap appears in the initial discovery and referral to support pathways. Trusted relationships are very important in this: a lot might be known about an individual or family, but this still might not result in disclosure about domestic abuse. General citizen knowledge and trust in systems and support services are also important. Participants discussed the potential reasons why people do not share concerns with agencies. From the collective professional experience of attendees, potential reasons included: concern over personal boundaries, protecting the privacy of victims/families, and not wanting to act without permission from the person experiencing the abuse.

The role of poverty was raised, and it was observed that poverty can imply a lack of agency. There is a lot of support available, but often the barriers involve knowing how to access the support. There was a general consensus that domestic abuse is not always related to poverty, but poverty and disadvantage could form an important part of the context, e.g. through making it difficult for a victim to leave an abusive relationship. Additionally, poverty can 'incubate' domestic abuse situations and represent an additional site of potential conflict and stress. An example of domestic abuse on an ex-council estate (potentially signifying poverty and/or disadvantage) was examined, and it was suggested that this could result in increased scrutiny with professionals more likely to ask questions in this context as compared to more affluent areas. This may mean easier or better access to support services for families in disadvantaged areas, but it could also lead to disproportionate representation in case profiles.

Relevant programmes, processes and services identified by attendees:

| <u>Programme/Service</u> | <u>Further Information</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Birchall Trust           | Support for survivors of rape, sexual abuse or sexualised violence:<br><a href="https://www.birchalltrust.org.uk/">https://www.birchalltrust.org.uk/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| CADAS                    | Cumbria Addictions, Advice and Solutions: <a href="https://www.cadas.co.uk/">https://www.cadas.co.uk/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| CAMHS                    | Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service:<br><a href="https://www.cntw.nhs.uk/services/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-service-west/">https://www.cntw.nhs.uk/services/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-service-west/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Crimestoppers            | The best way for anyone to report concerns anonymously:<br><a href="https://crimestoppers-uk.org/">https://crimestoppers-uk.org/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Crisis and Prevention    | A dedicated Cumberland Council team to support with emergency housing advice for those experiencing domestic abuse or other vulnerabilities:<br><a href="https://www.cumberland.gov.uk/housing/homelessness/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-allerdale/help-if-youre-risk-becoming-homeless-allerdale/housing-advice-people-experiencing-domestic-abuse">https://www.cumberland.gov.uk/housing/homelessness/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-allerdale/help-if-youre-risk-becoming-homeless-allerdale/housing-advice-people-experiencing-domestic-abuse</a> |
| CYA                      | Cumbria Youth Alliance: <a href="https://www.cya.org.uk/">https://www.cya.org.uk/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Local Focus Hubs         | Multi-agency teams that are part of the Cumberland Community Safety Partnership. There is one hub for each former district council area, and more information can be found at <a href="https://cumberlandcsp.org.uk/">https://cumberlandcsp.org.uk/</a> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| MAPPA                    | Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements:<br><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-public-protection-arrangements-mappa-guidance">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-public-protection-arrangements-mappa-guidance</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| MARAC                    | Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference:<br><a href="https://safelives.org.uk/about-domestic-abuse/domestic-abuse-response-in-the-uk/what-is-a-marac/">https://safelives.org.uk/about-domestic-abuse/domestic-abuse-response-in-the-uk/what-is-a-marac/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| MASH                     | Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub – a multi-agency service to manage safeguarding risks that operates under Cumberland Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| MATAC                    | Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination – a coordinated process involving multi-agency meetings to inform individual action plans aimed at reducing offending and preventing harm to victims                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Recovery Steps           | Alcohol and drug service for adults in Cumbria:<br><a href="https://recoverystepscumbria.org.uk/get-help/">https://recoverystepscumbria.org.uk/get-help/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Safety Net               | Safety Net is a free service supporting the recovery of those affected by rape, exploitation, sexual and domestic abuse in Cumbria:<br><a href="https://safetynetuk.org/">https://safetynetuk.org/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Victim Support           | A service from the police to support victims of crime:<br><a href="https://www.cumbria.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/victim-support/victim-witness-support/">https://www.cumbria.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/victim-support/victim-witness-support/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

#### 4.3.2 Exploitation

Emphasis on the prevention of online child sexual exploitation (CSE) is vital in terms of mitigating potential harm, and existing strategies are continually being evaluated and refined. However, sometimes prevention is not possible. Similar to domestic abuse, communication gaps regarding CSE seem to mainly be in the identification/discovery stage. The role of education, PoEd and parental engagement and awareness is both useful and essential, but sometimes there is a problem in getting into the service network. Young people are getting 'sucked' online, especially post-covid. Furthermore, sharing sexualised photographs is becoming normalised – even if it is not linked to extortion or exploitation, it often goes on between friendship groups. This culture has the potential to complicate the assessment and recognition of risk and the identification of abuse, particularly from the perspective of young people.

It was observed that awareness of the risks of online CSE in the third sector is generally good, but practitioners experience pressure 'to be everything'. Many individuals are doing good work in their communities, but lack the capacity to be an expert in all the different areas that they are increasingly being asked to be aware of in terms of safeguarding and support services. Parents are often working or busy, and may be unaware of signs of concern regarding participation in extracurricular activities. Children may also lie about attendance at activities as attendance reporting is potentially less formalised than in a school. It was suggested that a phone call might be sufficient to ensure a parent/carer is aware of an absence or behaviour. It was suggested that practitioners in the third sector do not have to have detailed knowledge, just know relevant points of contact – 'who is my next point of contact [on this issue]?'.

There was a discussion regarding the role of youth services and the impact of the rollback on these over the years. Youth workers are increasingly absent from helping identify issues and signpost, putting pressure on other actors (e.g. third sector).

It was suggested that there could be more options in terms of ongoing support for victims of sexual crime (e.g. photos); unless the impact is severe, support can be difficult to access. Constabulary colleagues indicated that plans to address this may be underway. Again, participants highlighted the importance of human relationships, noting that many systems are problem-focused, with an emphasis on KPIs.

Relevant programmes, processes and services identified by attendees:

| <u>Programme/Service</u> | <u>Further Information</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Always Another Way       | Preventative, low-level mental health support for young people and adults in West Cumbria: <a href="https://alwaysanotherway.co.uk/">https://alwaysanotherway.co.uk/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Birchall Trust           | Support for survivors of rape, sexual abuse or sexualised violence: <a href="https://www.birchalltrust.org.uk/">https://www.birchalltrust.org.uk/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| CPOMS reporting tool     | Child Protection Online Monitoring System: an online system used by schools and other frontline practitioners to record and facilitate the reporting of safeguarding and other welfare concerns                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| CSCP MET                 | Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership's Missing, Exploited and Trafficked subgroup                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Local Focus Hubs         | Multi-agency teams that are part of the Cumberland Community Safety Partnership. There is one hub for each former district council area, and more information can be found at <a href="https://cumberlandcsp.org.uk/">https://cumberlandcsp.org.uk/</a> .                                                                                                                                                           |
| MACE                     | Multi-Agency Child Exploitation process – coordinates efforts to identify and respond to child exploitation, including assessing and managing risk                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Operation Makesafe       | A national initiative focused on increasing awareness of child exploitation within the business sector: <a href="https://www.cumbria.police.uk/police-forces/cumbria-constabulary/areas/campaigns/campaigns/operation-makesafe/">https://www.cumbria.police.uk/police-forces/cumbria-constabulary/areas/campaigns/campaigns/operation-makesafe/</a>                                                                 |
| PolEd                    | An educational programme delivered in schools with the support of Cumbria Constabulary, covering topics such as consent, bullying, grooming and balancing freedom and the law: <a href="https://www.news.cumbria.police.uk/news/police-education-programme-rolls-out-across-schools-in-cumbria">https://www.news.cumbria.police.uk/news/police-education-programme-rolls-out-across-schools-in-cumbria</a>          |
| Safety Net               | Safety Net is a free service supporting the recovery of those affected by rape, exploitation, sexual and domestic abuse in Cumbria: <a href="https://safetynetuk.org/">https://safetynetuk.org/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| NWROCU                   | Northwest Regional Organised Crime Unit: <a href="https://www.roc.police.uk/our-national-network/north-west-nwrocu">https://www.roc.police.uk/our-national-network/north-west-nwrocu</a> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Youth Connect            | A team based within Cumberland Council that supports young people by building and encouraging positive connections within their network, local community and services whilst breaking negative connections to keep children safe: <a href="https://cumberlandfamilyhubs.org.uk/support-young-people/cumberland-youth-connect">https://cumberlandfamilyhubs.org.uk/support-young-people/cumberland-youth-connect</a> |

## 4.4 Emerging Themes

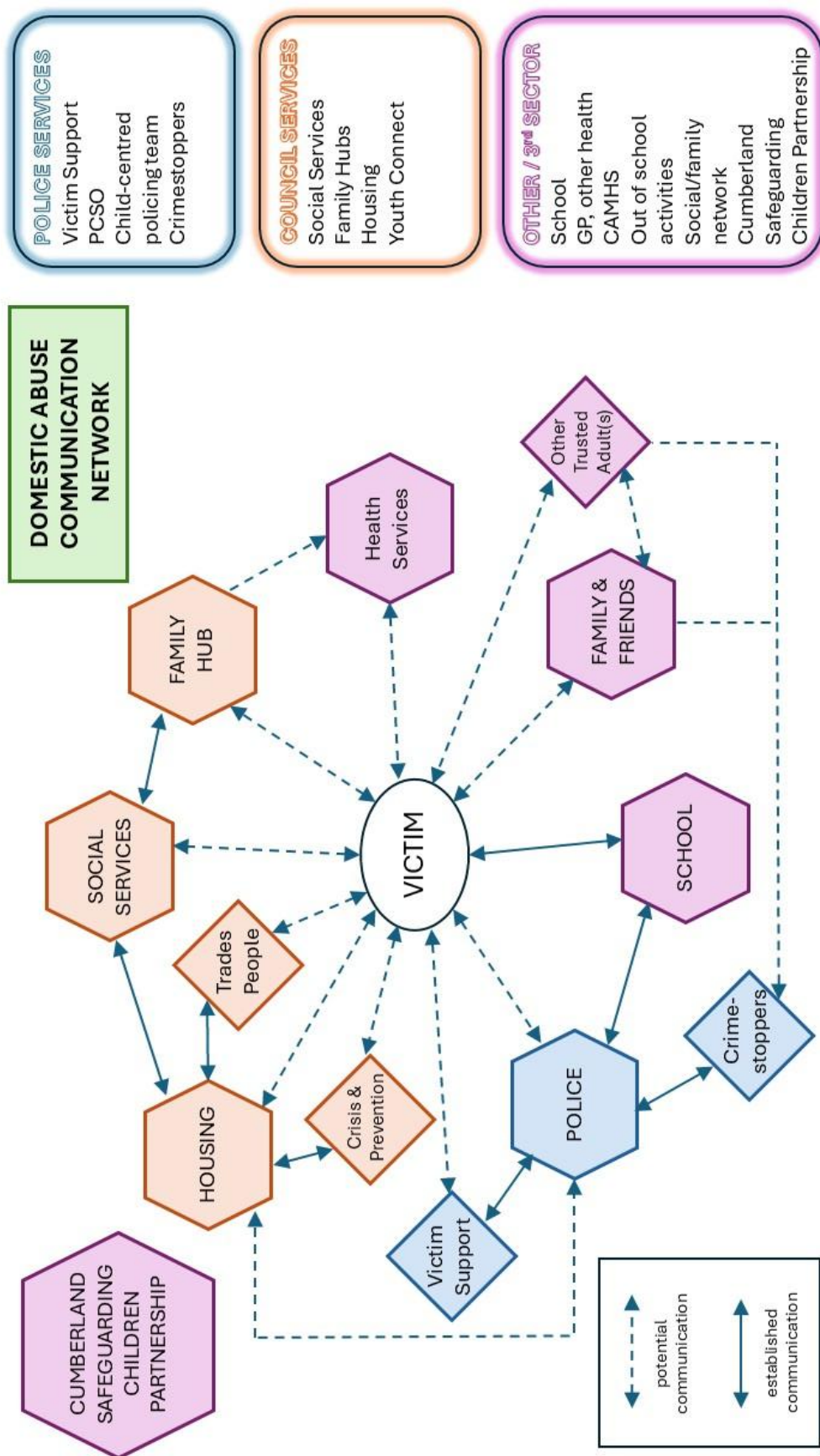


Instances of both DA and online CSE are often less visible than other crimes, making identification and reporting of these concerns less straightforward and potentially more problematic for a variety of reasons. Networks of communication and support are available and generally work well once the processes are in place; however, triggering these networks in the first place is where the work needs to be done. A lot of work is being done around prevention in these areas, but when a crime does occur, there is a potential opportunity for improvement around identifying and reporting concerns so that appropriate support processes are activated as soon as possible.

Having trusted relationships is particularly important for individuals involved in cases of DA and online CSE, for both victims and others who may be in a position to alert appropriate parties to potential crimes. Furthermore, solution-focused approaches to managing both criminal and support processes contribute to establishing trusted relationships between victims/families and services.

Poverty does play a part in both forms of crime investigated during this series, but it has not been identified as either a direct cause or contributing factor to the crime occurring. Rather, poverty can exacerbate experiences or contexts, feed into financial risk factors for victimisation, or even act as a protective factor by making individuals more visible to support services and thus facilitating quicker identification of the crime. Further investigation of the role of poverty in experiences of crime would benefit from input from individuals with lived experience to extend on observations from practitioners.

The communication networks created by each of the five groups for both domestic abuse and exploitation have been combined into conglomerate diagrams, as seen below.





## 5 Next Steps and Practical Actions

After sharing an initial draft of this report with key stakeholders, WCCPF facilitated a follow-up discussion between representatives of Cumbria Constabulary, Cumberland Council and third sector partners to agree and commit to the following practical actions. We are delighted to report that most of the actions are now either complete or well underway.

### Agreed Actions

#### Domestic Abuse

- ➔ *Key partners will strengthen and promote the message that there is no 'wrong door' in terms of reporting domestic abuse and commit to continuing to offer a consistent level of learning and development.*
- ➔ *The police will fund a new poster campaign, collaborating with council officers to promote the importance of reporting domestic abuse and signpost to sources of information and support.*
- ➔ *Key partners will continue the conversation around ways to sensitively support and encourage victims to engage with police processes with a view to increasing the conviction rate for domestic abuse.*
- ➔ *Recognising that some people may lack trust in statutory services, the council will expand work with third sector partners to build capacity for handling disclosures, widening the range of avenues for reporting domestic abuse.*
- ➔ *The police will investigate the possibility of adapting an internal domestic abuse awareness-raising video for release to the general public.*

#### Child Exploitation

- ➔ *The Youth Justice and Youth Connect teams will continue reviewing and updating their documentation, including ensuring accessible and child-centred language is used.*
- ➔ *The police will work with key partners to develop avenues for reporting concerns about exploitation that do not immediately trigger police and/or children's services involvement.*
- ➔ *The police will work with key partners to develop and publicise user-friendly guidance for how and where to report potential concerns that would benefit from professional curiosity or contact from an appropriate trusted adult.*
- ➔ *The police will continue to roll out the PoEd programme both with schools and other relevant partners.*

#### General

- ➔ *WCCPF will utilise its network to publicise campaigns and resources, both pre-existing and those developed through these actions.*
- ➔ *WCCPF will be available to support building relationships between the police, council and third sector organisations.*
- ➔ *The police and the council will investigate the possibility of a joint press release celebrating their collaboration through this series of events.*

## 6 Participant Feedback

### 6.1 Event Feedback

General feedback on the new structure and hybrid nature of the event series was very positive, although the enduring value of in-person time was emphasised by some. The healthy attendance at the webinar events, and at the in-person event despite sickness-related apologies, supports this. Several respondents were not currently part of the WCCPF email distribution network and asked to be added, representing a notable expansion to the network because of the event.

Although at the in-person event it was agreed due to time constraints to hold a separate ‘what next’ meeting with key constabulary personnel to agree specific actions (see Section 5), feedback comments indicate that other participants may have appreciated the opportunity to contribute directly to this further action-oriented conversation. Different potential alternatives to accommodating this can be considered when planning the next event, for example lengthening the in-person event or holding two in-person events to consider the main challenges and possible practical solutions separately.

Specific feedback comments include:

*‘The conversations were insightful but we could have done with more focus on solutions/next steps.’*

*‘Good opportunity to discuss and improve network relationships. Following this it’s the “what next” and the “so what” aspects of this to escalate and improve on the learning and findings of the event.’*

*‘really informative. Lovely to meet people and expand network.’*

*‘good to discuss in such diverse groups.’*

*‘really useful and informative networking event. Some really useful and meaningful inputs from agencies which can be and will be considered and used going forward.’*

*‘Great networking event. Good to meet people in person. Could have had longer for feedback and discussion.’*

*‘invites to housing, ASC [adult social care], CSD [children’s services department], health to be included to attend or have an input’*

### 6.2 Learning Points

A key consideration when planning this series was the expressed preference for a shorter event that could be more easily accommodated within busy diaries, particularly highlighted as a concern for charity organisations. However, based on the attendees’ comments it appears that longer events could have been appreciated by many, and it is notable that the number of representatives from charities was lower at all parts of this event series compared to the New Horizon’s Report Launch in 2024. There may be many different reasons for this, but some consideration of the best compromise between different preferences should take place when planning the next event.

Other practical learning points include:

#### *Webinars*

- Provide a more specific brief for prospective presenters to facilitate more direct relevance both to the event theme and the issue of poverty.

- Include additional time for discussion questions and answers.
- Have a feedback form and link ready to distribute at webinar event(s).

#### *In-Person*

- Building in comfort break(s), possibly through additional networking time in the middle of the event rather than at the end.
- Avoid the time of year for sickness as this was the main contributor to the lack of representation from key teams.
- Consider building in additional time for group discussion.
- Consider whether to shuffle groups for each topic.

### 6.3 Future Event Topics

Attendees suggested the following potential topics for future events:

- third sector role in poverty response
- more around DA and CE
- supporting care-leavers, involvement of young people
- voice of the child
- drug/alcohol misuse
- child neglect

## Acknowledgements

The cooperation and support of colleagues at Cumbria Constabulary are greatly appreciated, particularly Detective Superintendent Matt Scott and Serious and Organised Crime Prevention Officer Paul Cavagin. The theme of this event series meant their input was especially valuable and the success of the event would not have been realised without their vital contribution. Furthermore, their proactive engagement with the event has resulted in practical further actions that would not have been possible otherwise, and which promise the possibility of tangible and positive change for local young people and families. Thank you to the webinar presenters, Mary-Claire Telford and Detective Inspector Fiona Gray, for their informative and illuminating contributions, and also to Westlakes Research Limited for their sponsorship of the event series and practical arrangements and provision for the in-person discussion and networking event. Finally, thank you to Emma Thompson, Simon Newling-Ward and Ian Hinde, Cumberland Council officers and WCCPF Steering Group members, as well as Dr Suzanne Wilson and the rest of the Steering Group for their assistance in planning the format, content and delivery of the events.

## Appendix A: Domestic Violence Webinar Slides and Discussion Q&A Presentation Slides

### Domestic Abuse Informational Webinar 12<sup>th</sup> November 2025

West Cumbria Child Poverty Forum (WCCPF) Vulnerabilities to Crime

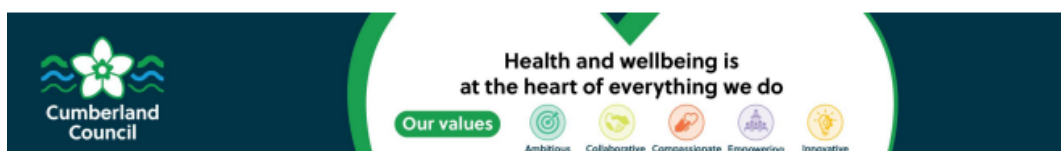
**\*\*PLEASE DO NOT SHARE OUTSIDE YOUR ORGANISATION\*\***



### Health warning

Do not underestimate the powerful nature of this training. You may be affected during the day, later this evening, tomorrow or in the future. If the effects are severe or continuous please seek help

You are human doing a relentless job and deserve credit for this. Nevertheless, you are human and may have human reactions to this difficult subject area. Domestic abuse is an emotive subject



### What is a 'Domestic'?

It is rarely a one off incident; more usually it is a **PATTERN** of abusive and controlling behaviour through which the abuser seeks **POWER and CONTROL** over family members and partners



## Statutory Definition of Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse consists of the following between two people aged 16 or older who are 'personally connected'. 'Personally connected' includes those in an intimate personal relationship or those who are related.

Physical or sexual abuse

Controlling or coercive behaviour

Economic abuse

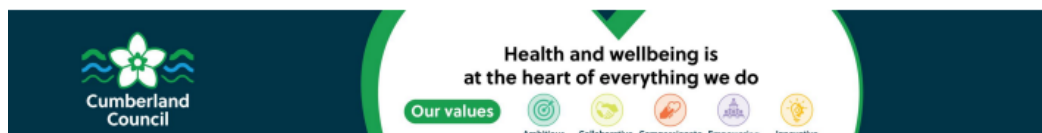
Psychological, emotional or other abuse

**\* Remember- all violence is abuse, but not all abuse is violent**



## Children as Victims

Babies, Children and Young People are defined as victims if they see, hear or are otherwise affected by DA and are related to either the victim or perpetrator



## National Data

- The Crime Survey for England and Wales estimated that 2.3 million people aged 16 years and over (1.6 million women and 712,000 men) experienced domestic abuse in year ending (YE) March 2024.
- An estimated 4.8% of people aged 16 years and over (6.6% of women and 3.0% of men) experienced domestic abuse in the last year. This equates to an estimated 2.3 million adults (1.6 million women and 712,000 men).
- Approximately one in five (20.5%) people aged 16 years and over (9.9 million) had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 years.
- There was no statistically significant change in the prevalence of domestic abuse experienced in the last year, compared with the previous year.
- The police recorded 851,062 domestic abuse-related crimes in England and Wales in YE March 2024; a decrease compared with the previous year (911,248), which, in part, reflects recent changes in police recording practices
- There were 51,183 domestic abuse-related prosecutions in England and Wales in YE March 2024, compared with 51,288 in YE March 2023.
- A higher percentage of people aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse by a partner or ex-partner (3.2%) than by a family member (1.9%) in the last year.

Source: ONS 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024



## Local Data

Cumbria's Crime and Community Safety Assessment was refreshed and published in January 2024, outlining that Domestic Abuse has high prevalence in Cumbria, although compared to 43 police force areas across England and Wales, Cumbria is ranked as having the 16th lowest rate of domestic abuse related crimes and incidents in 2022-23 placing the county within the second lowest quintile overall.

The full report is here:

<https://cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/536/671/4674/17217/17222/4531313142.pdf>



We estimate there are **21,500** adult victims in Cumbria who have experienced domestic abuse at **some point in the last year**



We estimate that around **8%** of those adult victims will have experienced **both partner and family abuse**



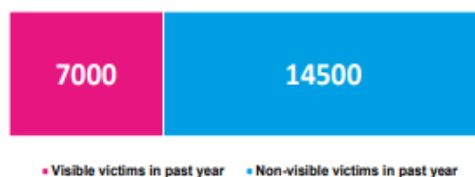
Of the total estimated adult victims in the past year, **14,500 (68%)** are estimated to be **female**



Of the total estimated adult victims in the past year, **6,500 (32%)** are estimated to be **male**



### • Hidden Victims



This shows the estimated number of **visible** adult victims in the local area in the past year. We estimate that a **third (34%) of female victims** and a **quarter (24%) of male victims** in the past year were visible. This calculation uses a combination of Marac data to show visible high-risk victims and data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for visible non-high risk victims as they reported in the CSEW that they had "told other support professional or organisation."



The revised Victims' Code came into effect on 1 April 2021. These are MINIMUM standards

Victims of ANY crime have the right:

1. To be able to understand and to be understood
2. To have the details of the crime recorded without unjustified delay
3. To be provided with information when reporting the crime
4. To be referred to services that support victims and have services and support tailored to your needs
5. To be provided with information about compensation
6. To be provided with information about the investigation and prosecution
7. To make a victim personal statement
8. To be given information about the trial, trial process and your role as a witness
9. To be given information about the outcome of the case and any appeals
10. To be paid expenses and have property returned
11. To be given information about the offender following a conviction
12. To make a complaint about your rights not being met



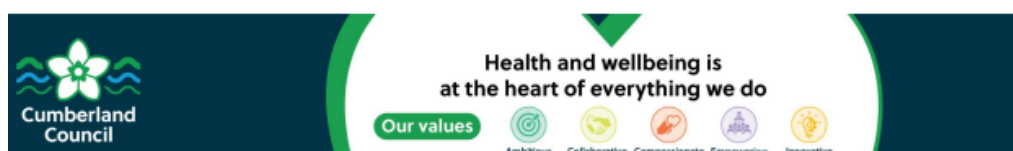
## Controlling and Coercive Behaviour is a moveable goalpost

**“He used to hide either 5,6 or 7 marked coins around the house – only he knew how many – and if I hadn’t got the right amount in my hand when he came home then he knew I had not done enough cleaning...and I would suffer”**



Billy & Mary

“Twisty Pasta”



| Situational Couple Violence                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | CCB/Intimate Terrorism                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Violent Resistance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Situation Based</li> <li>• No underlying dynamic of control and domination</li> <li>• Perpetrated by both men and women</li> <li>• Violence can be severe</li> <li>• Can be frequent or infrequent</li> <li>• Partners do not live in fear of each other</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A pattern of coercive control</li> <li>• Induces Fear</li> <li>• Continues after separation</li> <li>• Typically perpetrated by men</li> <li>• Linked to homicides</li> <li>• Escalates over time</li> <li>• Produces a negative impact on victims ability to act independently and in own interest</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victim might fight in self-defence (physically or verbally)</li> <li>• Might act in revenge/retaliation</li> <li>• Might fight in self-preservation (i.e. when victim kills their abuser)</li> <li>• Victim does not seek power and control</li> <li>• Typically perpetrated by women responding to CCB</li> </ul> |



## The stages of Domestic Abuse

| STAGE                             | REALITY                                       |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Ending the abuse                  | Recovery can begin                            |
| Ending the relationship           | Victim makes attempt to leave; risk increases |
| Re-evaluation of relationship     | Victim sees support as realistic              |
| Defining the abuse                | Victim recognises the abuse                   |
| Distortion of perspective/reality | Victim blames self for abuse                  |
| Manage the situation              | Victim adapts own behaviour                   |
| Grooming                          | Victim being charmed but isolated             |

## Why don't they just leave?



Stigma  
Finances  
Children  
Work/ school  
Pets  
I still love him/ he's sick etc  
Everyone will disown him or me  
Nobody will believe me  
He'll kill me, I can manage him better by staying



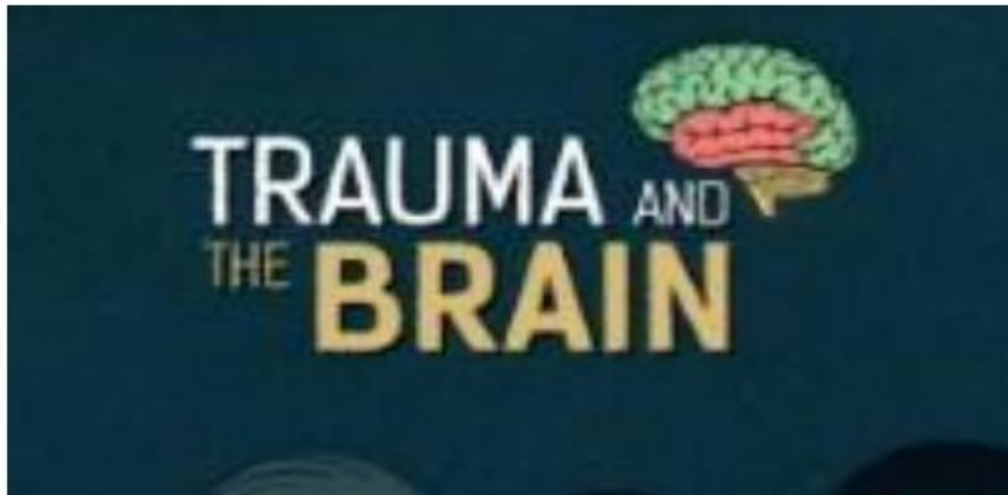
# Gains and Losses



## Professor Liz Kelly tells us:

"The impact of living in an abusive household gender regime is that women (and children) adapt their behaviour to cope. Their thinking and actions are narrowed, as they attempt to live and be his version of who they should be. If interventions are not appropriate the web tightens. It becomes harder and harder to imagine life outside of this control, what it is to have freedom of thought and action. We call this limiting space for action"





**Billy & Mary**

## Trauma and Decision Making



## Trauma and our duties

**“Evian water”**



## Partnership Duties

We chair and co-ordinate the partnership. DA Strategy published here:

<https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=3d52df8aeaa267d37bad5999c13ef1bb1c5b64e70627501a82aa6cc3abf67780JmltdHM9MTc1ODE1MzYwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=1cae9d64-e7cf-6c51-2e90-8c69e6976d77&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly9jdW1iZXJsYW5kY3NwLm9yZy51ay9zaXRlcy9kZWZhdWx0L2ZpbGVzLzE2MjUyNzc0LzlwMjU0MDYvQ3VtYmVybGFuZCUyMERvbWVzdGJjJTlwQWJ1c2UIMjBtdHJhdGVneSUyMDIwMjUIMjAtJTlwMjAzMCUyMC5wZGY&ntb=1>

Strategy based on the Government Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan: Pursuing Those That Cause Harm, Prioritising Prevention, Supporting Victims



## Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews- DARRs

Published DARRs here: <https://cumberlandcsp.org.uk/domestic-abuse-related-death-reviews>



## DARR Position

There are currently 21 active DARRs in Cumberland. 5 in Westmorland and Furness



## The Rt. Hon. Jess Phillips, MP

<https://youtu.be/-owKQafeK98>



## Tiffany Render



## Ruth Baker



## Chloe Holland



### Immediate Learning Identified

- Improvement in Professional Curiosity/Routine Enquiry
- Multi-Agency Involvement and Information Sharing
- Risk Assessment and Management of Risk
- Handover and Step-Down
- DARVO
- Typologies
- The impact of Children becoming Cared For
- Suicide Prevention
- Links between DA & Substance Misuse
- Working in line with the Victim's Code 2021
- Learning and Development



**No one should suffer domestic abuse.**  
**If you are at risk or experiencing abuse help and support is available.**

**To report: Cumbria police non-emergency call 101 or online [www.cumbria.police.uk/report-it](http://www.cumbria.police.uk/report-it) in an emergency always call 999**

Domestic Abuse Emergency accommodation- in an emergency, please contact your local area below. There is a Statutory Duty to accommodate victims of DA

**Copeland:** e: [Homelessness3@cumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Homelessness3@cumberland.gov.uk) t: 0300 373 37 30 24 hours

**Allerdale:** e: [Homelessness1@cumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Homelessness1@cumberland.gov.uk) t: 0300 373 3730 24 hours

**Carlisle:** e: [Homelessness2@cumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Homelessness2@cumberland.gov.uk) t: 0300 373 3730 24 hours

**Barrow:** e: [dutyrefor1@westmerlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:dutyrefor1@westmerlandandfurness.gov.uk) t: 01229 876599 office hours, 01229 833311 out of hours

**Eden:** e: [housingoptions@edenha.org.uk](mailto:housingoptions@edenha.org.uk) e: [dutyrefor2@westmerlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:dutyrefor2@westmerlandandfurness.gov.uk) t: 01768 861499 24 hours

**South Lakeland:** e: [homelessness@southlakeland.gov.uk](mailto:homelessness@southlakeland.gov.uk) t: 01539 793 199 office hours, 01229 833311 out of hours

## Ending domestic abuse

### LOCAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Gateway 4 Women (Carlisle)

t: 01228 212090

e: [admin@cumbriagateway.co.uk](mailto:admin@cumbriagateway.co.uk)

Gateway 4 men (Carlisle)

t: 01228 212091

e: [info@cumbriagateway.co.uk](mailto:info@cumbriagateway.co.uk)

Gateway 4 Women (Workington)

t: 01900 403220

e: [contactus@cumbriagateway.co.uk](mailto:contactus@cumbriagateway.co.uk)

Women Community Matters (Barrow) (men and children support also available)

t: 01229 811102

e: [reception@womenscommunitymatters.org](mailto:reception@womenscommunitymatters.org)

Springfield (South Lakeland)

Women's refuge and Men's safe house- takes referrals Nation Wide. Community based support available for men, women & children

t: 01539 726171 or 0800 175 7670

e: [refuge@springfieldsupport.org](mailto:refuge@springfieldsupport.org)

Men, women & Children [help@springfieldsupport.org](mailto:help@springfieldsupport.org)

### CUMBRIA WIDE SERVICES

Cumbria Victim Support

t: 0800 3030 157 (local) Monday - Friday 9.00am - 6.00pm and 24/7 Support Line 0800 1689 111

e: [cumbria.admin@victimsupport.org.uk](mailto:cumbria.admin@victimsupport.org.uk)

Safety Net for women, men and children affected by Domestic Abuse - County Wide Service

t: 01228 515859 <https://www.safetynetuk.org/make-a-referral>

The Birchall Trust for women, men and Children affected by Domestic Abuse - County Wide Service

<https://www.birchalltrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Referral-Form-Adult-21-22.docx>

Freedom Project Cumbria for women, men and children affected by Domestic Abuse

t: 01900 87187/ 07712 117986

e: [admin@freedom-project-westcumbria.org.uk](mailto:admin@freedom-project-westcumbria.org.uk)

Cumbria Domestic Abuse Lived Experience Network- Support network- Cumbria Wide. To get involved contact

[info@believeyou.co.uk](mailto:info@believeyou.co.uk)

### NATIONAL SERVICES

National LGBT Domestic Abuse Victims- GALOP

t: 0800 999 5428

Mankind Initiative

t: 01823 334244 and Men's Advice Line 0800 8010327

24 Hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline

Freephone helpline t: 0800 2000 247

National Child Line t: 0800 1111

The Domestic Abuse Alliance brings together organisations working on the frontline of domestic abuse across the UK with the legal sector to deliver joined-up instant legal assistance and protection. They run the We Protect app. Via this app, victims of DA can get, legal advice. Referrals can be made online via a one page form or via telephone T: 0800 101 7110 <https://domestic-abuse.co.uk>

# Internal Domestic Abuse Policy- Annie's legacy



## Next steps

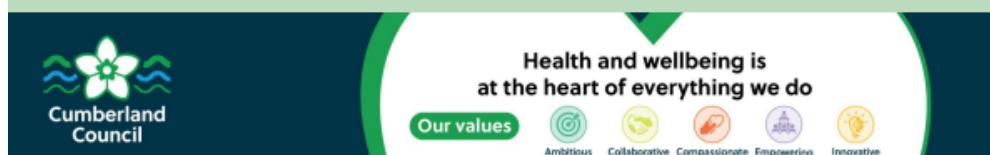
You will receive:

- A copy of the slides
- Operation Encompass Offer- all DA Services for Children in Cumbria as well as links to direct work
- DA Poster for display
- Links to further learning



For any questions or queries, please contact:

[Mary-Claire.Telford@cumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Mary-Claire.Telford@cumberland.gov.uk)



## Discussion Questions and Answers

Q1 – In reference to the influence of poverty on people's ability to leave abusive relationships, can you tell us anything more about the intersectionality between poverty and domestic abuse, particularly within families with children?

A1 – If you have to deal with more than one issue then it becomes more complicated to restart and rebuild your life. Joint Universal Credit claims are an absolute nightmare. Many of the people who come to us fleeing domestic abuse and move into temporary accommodation, will often have a joint UC claim going into a perpetrator's bank account, so they don't have access to initial funding. We can support them to get ID and help to make a claim on their own. Quite often we see that people don't have that choice, that freedom [that financial independence or security could give them]. Another national recommendation that is being discussed is around the suitability of carers, where currently the DWP will assess the application if they apply to be a carer, but there is no assessment of suitability unless that goes to the Court of Protection. We can see situations where two people are acting as carers for each other because they both have different needs, but in reality they aren't capable, or willing, or able to care for that other person. We have a number of DARDs which are unfortunately neglect cases because that caring responsibility hasn't been undertaken. So there is a huge link to finances, and also physical 'stuff'. We do have some ways to support people with white goods and other things, but it's not an overnight quick process.

Q2 – These sessions are leading up to looking at young people's vulnerabilities to crime, whilst here we seem to be looking more at perpetrators and victims being adults. So what happens to children in these circumstances, where one or both parents leaves the home due to their role in a domestic abuse situation? And what is the effect on them, and who looks after them, and what considerations are given to their experiences relating to DA if they are caught up in negative interactions?

A2 – Based on my 20 years' experience in Youth Justice before my current role, I have seen that quite often offending is a result of something else, so it's very rare you get a young person who hasn't had, for example, undiagnosed ADHD, autism, poverty, familial offending, etc. Substance misuse is usually as a crutch to deal with life circumstances and a reaction to something else. When I went into Youth Justice, there was often an offense or drug use focus, but if your life is really rubbish, looking at these things is not going to address the underlying reasons for the criminal behaviour, e.g. Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs. We do see a lot of cases involving 'child or adolescent on parent violence' (CAPV), and police are called because young people, teenagers in particular boys, will start displaying violence and aggression usually towards the mother. This can lead to criminal justice intervention, when there are other things that might be causing that violence – it's very rare that the violence is just a result of... nothing. It needs to be a whole societal approach.

Q3 – I was wondering if it might be cited by people in domestic abuse cases that reasons for staying might be linked to the family court system, because that's been highlighted recently in the news with cases of children being killed by abusers when they had been granted unsupervised access. Where women have cited concerns in family court about abuse, but the court has still granted part custody or visitation rights, to dads predominantly. I just wondered how aware women are of these sorts of potential problems and whether that is a reason cited for staying because it is better to have the children in their sights than to take the risk?

A3 – Yes, absolutely. And one of our lived experience network members has shared their story to be used in our training, where she was a professional and worked for an organisation along with her husband and they had a couple of kids and she ended up drinking because of the abuse she was

suffering at home. She ended up getting sacked from her position and when it went to court he was awarded with custody of the children. Now she would say at the time, she wasn't in a position to look after the kids due to her drinking, but she did a lot of work and with support prepared an application for overnight access. However, once she arrived in court and saw her husband, she was unable to articulate answers to questions due to feeling intimidated, so that was her trauma response to the way that he had treated her. The court was unsympathetic to her difficulty speaking to her achievements. With support, she ended up getting access and he was eventually given a custodial sentence, but navigating family court was an extremely difficult experience, when you're expecting vulnerably victims to have been almost conditioned to think 'no one is going to believe you anyway'. We do have Jade's law which has come where if a parent murders another parent, they automatically lose those parental rights. But that's only for murder – it's not for manslaughter, it's not for suicide relating to coercive control or other abuse. Quite often with the suicide cases, the fathers still end up with the children. This is worrying because children are defined as victims in their own right, having been exposed to that. The physical court buildings are also problematic, with sharing waiting rooms, having to walk past perpetrators, etc. There has been some work done, but there's a lot left to do and the court system as well as legal aid remain difficult.

Q4 – Bringing it back to children in households experiencing poverty, if we had one question or issue really focusing on child poverty in West Cumbria that we should focus on relating to domestic abuse, what should it be? Is it access to goods? Is it mental health support? Is it having a greater understanding of the potential for multiple traumas that come with domestic abuse and poverty?

A4 – What I would like to see, if I could improve one thing overnight it would be multi-agency working and partnership. Everybody has a part to play and what we don't want is people working in silos, or overwhelming with too many services. We have one DARD where there were 40 agencies involved with this young lass and three professionals had the same first name, so she must have been totally overwhelmed.

Q5 – Sometimes it feels like DA services, and it might be to do with finances, but the threshold for accessing different services and the amount that people can work with you is quite limited. But there seems to be something about women being frightened whilst going through DA and afterwards, and the recognition and understanding about how that can impact their ability to function... it's quite a pervasive thing and for community-based organisation to be more aware of how that can manifest. I remember seeing a woman with her child in a push-chair, maybe six years old, but she said it was so she could run if she sees him, just that fear and how it stays with you. I'm just not always sure that services are trauma-informed in that way?

A5 – No, and we've got to be realistic about our expectations as well. We do have people who have suffered abuse with depression and mental impact, but then we say things like, 'well, you need to get the house tidied up because the house is a tip' but we don't signpost people to that practical support. You know, if you were experiencing real, awful abuse and you've experienced it for a long time and you're massively depressed, how are you even going to begin to start cleaning that house? And then you've got to get the kids to school, and you've got to do the homework and you've got to make tea... I honestly think we need to go back to the years of Sure Start and House Proud, because some people all they need is that practical help with day to day things whilst they recover from the trauma.

## Appendix B: Exploitation Webinar Slides and Discussion Q&A

### Presentation Slides



# Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

Detective Inspector Fiona Gray  
Cyber and Digital Crime Unit  
Cumbria Constabulary

## Contents

Introduction to Online CSAE  
Overview of the Cyber and Digital Crime Unit  
Key statistics  
Ongoing challenges for policing  
Case study  
Emerging threats  
How can we tackle Online CSAE?

## Online CSAE- Common Offences

- Financially Motivated Sexual Extortion
- Blackmail for Further Images
- Taking/ Distributing IIOC
- Meeting a Child following Sexual Grooming
- Sexual Communication with a Child
- Cyber Flashing
- Catfishing
- Upskirting

## Online CSAE- Statistics

- 32% CSE offending identified as taking place online
- Victim average age 14, suspect average age 23
- Most common relationship type between V and S - acquaintance
- Victim breakdown: 66% female 34% male

## Cyber and Digital Crime Unit Overview



OCAIT



Digital Investigation  
Team



Victim ID



Cyber Team

## IIOC Investigations National Picture

- Police forces across England and Wales record more than 100 indecent image crimes every day. 908% increase since 2013.
- Where law enforcement recorded the platform used by perpetrators, exactly half (50%) took place on Snapchat.
- A further quarter took place on Meta products (11% on Instagram, 7% on Facebook and 6% on WhatsApp).
- Between 2019-2023 CSERB saw an increase of 181% (25,645 to 72,161) in referrals
- In 2025, CSERB plan to disseminate 800 referrals per week to UK forces, representing a 100% increase in referrals compared to 2024

## Ongoing Challenges for Policing

- Scale and Lack of Boundaries
- Size of Devices
- Cloud storage
- Capacity of Digital Forensic Units
- End to End Encryption

## Case Study: Snapchat

- Law enforcement referral - not reported by victims
- Warrant executed and devices triaged
- Mobile phone review identified significant number of "first generation" IIOC
- Suspect engaging in "Catfishing" behaviour
- Victim identification issues
- Victims as young as 8 years old being victim of a range of offences

## Case Study: Snapchat

Can I send u a dare?

Send vid of u gettin naked  
don't hide off camera tho

Do u hav any brothers or  
sisters

Send me what I ask for or  
I swear Ill send them all to  
ur family

Theres my bra, don't  
mind my face

Was that good enough?

Pls I can't do that pls pls  
don't share

Why are u doin this to  
me?

## Case Study: Snapchat

- Total of 22 victims identified and safeguarded
- Evidential accounts obtained and Victim Impact Statements to support criminal case
- Suspect plead guilty to 26 child sex offences and due to be sentenced later this year

## Emerging Threats in Online CSAE

- AI
- The Metaverse
- Incel and Manosphere communities
- Extreme Violence Fixation
- “Com” Networks



## How Can We Tackle Online CSAE?

### As professionals:

- Educate young people to consider the risks of sharing images online
- Explore changes in behaviour
- Report concerns to police and social care

### As parents and carers:

- Work as a TEAM:
  - Talk
  - Explore
  - Agree
  - Manage

## How Can Cumbria Police Assist You?

- Investigation of online CSAE
- Online safety inputs to children, parents or staff:
  - Youth Produced Sexual Images ("Sexting")
  - Financially Motivated Sexual Extortion
  - Emerging threats e.g. Com Networks
- Cyber Prevent inputs - identifying students at risk of cyber criminality
- Bespoke 1:1 work with Cyber Prevent candidates
- Bespoke, tailored inputs

Questions?



cyber@cumbria.police.uk

## Discussion Questions and Answers

Q1 – It was mentioned that we might be surprised at the ages of the perpetrators, and I was surprised as an average age of 23 did seem a lot younger than I probably would have guessed. Can you tell us a little more what is behind this average? It seems quite close to the age of the average victim – is that related to older people and technology use or is it something else?

A1 – To be honest, there just isn't that stereotypical age for online sexual exploitation, or a sort of typical demographic that people might perhaps think. After three years in the role, it continues to shock me in terms of the age range or different professions, so I suppose the key take away is to be careful not to discount somebody because they don't fit into a pre-established archetype. We might see a slightly larger number of young perpetrators using apps like Snapchat, but many older people are perfectly capable of using them as well. It's about having that curiosity about everyone your child is talking to that you don't know, and not making assumptions that online acquaintances they frequently talk to are people that the child has actually met in real life. The best advice is that you should only be speaking to the people you know in real life.

Q2 – My question is about where you said AI is involved. I was trying to work out where the offence was there, because if you are using AI to manipulate someone's image, that isn't the same thing as actually creating the image, is it? Or is it?

A2 – Well, ultimately, yes it is the same. But that is an interesting point that came out of a recent landmark case, where it was the first time we had this serious use of AI. It raised an issue for the court to consider whether an AI image is still an indecent image, and in fact they found, yes absolutely it was. So there is no difference there in terms of the legislation, it is still an indecent image of a child. We haven't really gone into detail in this presentation, but there are potential views about whether if it is an AI image, is that somehow 'better' than them looking at a 'real' image, where an actual child has been abused. Our answer would be no, because of the potential scale of AI images that can be created and the inherent lack of boundaries and the most horrendous images that can be created in almost no time at all, it's equally worrying in that respect. So, that's reflected in the legislation that there are the same charging standards.

Q3 – Could you elaborate on the cyber prevent candidates that you mentioned before?

A3 – Of course, so this is where young people are involved in cyber criminality, Computer Misuse Act offending. That might be hacking into a school network, hacking into some kind of gaming platform, etc. These might seem minor, but could be a gateway into more serious computer offenses in the future. We make a link around neurodiversity, and those who are socially isolated, so it's one of the four prevent strands we work under, trying to identify children at risk of future offending at the earliest opportunity and look at ways to potentially channel that activity and skills more positively to move them away from criminal activity to potential career pathways.

Q4 – Also relating to cyber prevent, I've a child in mind that could be perfect for that sort of intervention. Do they have to be reported to the police or having committed an actual crime to be referred into the programme? It would be great if someone from that team could come talk to our team about the programme as it is something that we could do with knowing more about – when we talk about online exploitation, there seems to sometimes be a gap between talking about victims and potential perpetrators.

A4 – Not necessarily, no, it's on a case-by-case basis ultimately. We would want to understand better where the concerns have come from if there hasn't been actual offending, but that wouldn't preclude involvement in the programme. The best thing to do would be to get in contact with the team and have a conversation about the young person you are working with and go from there.

Q5 – When you talk about professional curiosity, can you tell us more about what that means and how can people be professional curious?

A5 – Yeah, that was around the issue of noticing changes in behaviour wasn't it. As professionals if we are involved in a young person's life, you can get a feeling that something just isn't quite right, whether their performance or attainment has slipped, attendance, unusual anger – just taking the time to try where possible to have those open and honest conversations with the child to identify what might be the root cause of that. But if not, trying to include other professionals if they might be in a better position to have a conversation. Again, it's just something that we often note when we identify victims, that there is a realisation of, oh, that explains why they have been behaving this way recently. With hindsight, there was definitely a change in their behaviour around this time and we just didn't know why. So just taking the time to explore that a little but more.

Q6 - Why is there such an increase in online exploitation? Is it just because of the technology and platforms, or is it becoming normalised?

A6 – Everyone going online during covid had a lot to do with an initial increase, but as to why it has never levelled off... I think there are a lot of factors involved. Some people started out spending time online during lockdown, and found they liked it and stayed. There is more reporting now and more reporting, better AI tools to pick these things up. Ultimately, the fact we all spend so much time online, contributes to all types of online crime increasing.

Q7 – I was so interested to hear about the case study, and the absolutely huge amount of work investigating and identifying victims – it just sounds insurmountable I don't know how you do it! Is there anything that we as practitioners, members of the public, or family members can do to make these investigation processes easier?

A7 – Ultimately that was also a relatively small-scale investigation, so it can be overwhelming. I could say ban social media, but that is not always practical. Ultimately, just try to help with prevention and responsible use of social media and teaching children how to make those spaces as safe as possible. Use the resources available that have done the groundwork for you around different apps and safety features, etc. and they are on top of all the new apps coming through. It is a time investment, but if this is where our children are going to be spending their time, it is worth it – we would have the same curiosity around the friends they see every day, so this is very similar. We the wishes of the child and their family in terms of how involved they wanted to be in the investigation, but in the impact case study many were massively helpful in terms of providing a victim impact statements, but at minimum all we need is the crime and evidence of the victim's age to progress. Impact statements can be really powerful during sentencing to bring to life for a judge how it has been for children and families. Making reports at the earliest possible stage, when evidence can be preserved – not panicking and doing a massive mass block or deletion because sometimes that can prevent us from getting the information we need to progress the investigation further. It is worth saying that if we need to access a victim's phone we would try to do that straight away, it wouldn't be sat in a queue waiting to be downloaded – that would be done either within 24 hours or at an appointment that suited them. So nobody would need to be without their device for a significant period of time.

Q8 – In these sorts of cases, can you talk any more about whether there are any particular vulnerabilities for young people to be either drawn into becoming victims or perpetrators of these crimes? I'm going to guess that anybody could be either, but I'm wondering if there are certain pointers for people to look out for? Or also, for instance, what young people who might end up being victims, what they can watch out for to avoid being drawn in?

A8 - Some circumstances might be perhaps social isolation, being attracted to online relationship due to a lack of friendships in the real world. We do see a correlation between a lack of parental supervision of what children are doing online, I would say that would be the biggest thing. For example, we've seen 5-6 year-olds with TikTok accounts and parents just not having a clue that they are doing this. So there is certainly something around setting boundaries, but even when they are in place in the home, there could still be getting involved out of the home, at friends' addresses perhaps. The biggest thing is a lack of parental or professional knowledge of young people's online behaviour.

Q9 – As housing inspectors, is there anything we can be mindful of in terms of what we might see in the home? We rarely see children unless they are below school age.

A9 – That’s a bit of a difficult one... some of the signs might be the same as with other sorts of prevent concerns, such as the presence of insignia, or other evidence of comm networks. I’ll circulate a link for a document for professionals about what to look for in terms of comms networks.

<https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publicationfiles/765-com-groups-early-threat-identification-notice/file>

Without seeing the child, it would probably be comments from the parent or carer about how they are constantly on the computer or their phone, or on all night last night, a concerning amount of online time is probably the most important thing you could look out for.

Q10 – WCCPF, the organisation behind this event, is primarily concerned with children who are living with the effects of poverty. Is there any evidence of poverty or low socioeconomic status being a feature or contributing/complicating factor for being a victim of exploitation, particularly in Cumbria and West Cumbria? Particularly in light of the recent publicity and spotlight on the grooming gangs and potential targeting of young people who are deprived.

A10 – I don’t have evidence per se, but I would agree that it is a complicating factor. I would reiterate though, that there are no clear stereotypes, we see victims and perpetrators of all socioeconomic backgrounds. Where there is deprivation, it could potentially be linked to a lack of boundaries or a lack of parental supervision, perhaps parents having to work more. I would think there would be a link there, but I don’t necessarily have the evidence to back it up. I should say that in some cases we do see financial incentives to share images, maybe perpetrators will gift Snapchat premium to the victims if they send them images or maybe even just engage in conversation with them, that could be the starter. Where grooming moves from online to meeting in person, it could be a promise of vapes or alcohol, or driving them around, that sort of things. So, we do see financial motivations in there as well sometimes that potentially could influence young people from deprived backgrounds. We do look to work at publicity around these issues amongst groups that might be more vulnerable, but our particular work is often more reactive – we do what we can in terms of prevention but we often don’t get involved with investigations until the point at which it has occurred.

Simon – I think that might be more the role of Youth Connect in terms of working with young people who have been exploited either online or in the real both, or a combination. We have children who are regularly going missing and potentially staying with people we would rather they weren’t staying with, and there are several Youth Connect workers here today who work with those children. Two sides of the same coin in that regard. Youth Connect can spend more time mapping out potential broader networks of perpetrators and work with other agencies to police, social care, education and others to help with proactive planning and safeguarding of those children.

## Appendix C: In-Person Discussion Prompts and Case Study Scenarios

### Discussion Prompts

1. What agencies or organisations have direct contact with the child/family in the case study? Which agencies or organisations have services that the child or family could benefit from?
2. Using your flipchart paper, pens and post-it notes, create a network map of these agencies.
3. Consider how they work together currently.
  - a. What lines of communication are there? At what stage does the communication take place (e.g. initial discovery or later)?
  - b. Are these covered by policies, protocols or information-sharing arrangements?
  - c. Is the communication one-way or two-way? Is the communication reliable? (i.e. is important information always shared, and if not, why not?)
  - d. What kind of information is shared? What level of professional commitment or involvement is expected from the individual?
  - e. Does experiencing poverty exacerbate the vulnerability to this form of crime? Is there anything services can do to act in a more poverty-aware way?
4. Who might have contact with the family who were not identified in question 1? How can they be integrated into the communication network? What challenges or considerations might there be in doing this? What support or awareness training might be available?

### Domestic Abuse Case Study A

Read through case study, which is an anonymised, semi-hypothetical situation reflecting elements from real cases in the local area. Remember that even if they are not the target of abuse, children are considered victims if they witness that abuse take place.

*Theo and his mum Abby lived in an ex-council estate that was well known for having problems with anti-social behaviour. Another young person had begun targeting Theo and Abby, and the situation escalated to the point where Abby rang the police over an alleged assault on Theo and she was afraid to allow him to leave the house in case the violence continued. A response officer attended and categorised the situation as medium risk, but they knew the family and also identified other factors unrelated to the reported assault associated with the family including a history of alcohol abuse, prior claims of antisocial behaviour claims relating to Abby's interactions with others in the neighbourhood, and Theo's poor attendance at school. They referred Theo and Abby on to victim support. Although, both Abby and Theo have general distrust for services and professionals, for some reason the local PCSO was a trusted point of contact for the family. Because of trusted relationship, they were able to speak with the family further and successfully signpost Theo and Abby to other services. This meant they were eventually able to access much-needed support such as the local foodbank, family support and health and well-being coaching. During the course of these interventions, Theo disclosed to the well-being coach details that suggested his mother's long-term boyfriend was treating her in a controlling and coercive way and that he often supported his mum which impacted on his school attendance.*

### Domestic Abuse Case Study B

Read through case study, which is an anonymised, semi-hypothetical situation reflecting elements from real cases in the local area. Remember that even if they are not the target of abuse, children are considered victims if they witness that abuse take place.

*Stacy had been suffering mental and physical abuse from her husband for many years, and most of her family, friends and neighbours were aware of the situation. At several points the police were contacted by different people and even Stacy herself, but she was reluctant to press charges or give a statement – she had never lived without her husband and was terrified of reprisal or other consequences, for example because she lived in a housing association property on a joint tenancy with her husband. Although her children were now grown, she regularly cared for her grandchildren and often collected them from school and looked after them on evenings and weekends. Stacy is a devoted grandmother and sometimes volunteers at the children's school, especially for special events. One day, Stacy's sister was chatting with her regular hairdresser when the subject of domestic abuse came up and she told the hairdresser about Stacy. The hairdresser shared information about the Crisis and Prevention Service at the council. Stacy was able to make an excuse that she was going out for a coffee with her sister, and they went together to the council. She was offered services and support that eventually led to alternative accommodation. The council and police were able to contact her through her sister when needed.*

## Exploitation Case Study A

Read through case study, which is an anonymised, semi-hypothetical situation reflecting elements from real cases in the local area.

*Scarlett is 14 and attends a large local secondary school. Over the course of a few months, she has become increasingly withdrawn and quiet to the point where teachers, family and friends have all noticed a significant change in her behaviour and general demeanour. She stopped attending many of her regular out-of-school activities, even the Saturday dance class that she had previously loved, and was spending increasing amounts of time on her phone in her room. However, because no one could identify an obvious cause for this it was not pursued further by anyone at the time; her parents put it down to teenage moods. One day, the police visited the school and, through the welfare officer identified Scarlett as a victim of online exploitation. An adult male had created a Snapchat account using a fictitious persona posing as a teenage girl, and through a combination of coercion and threats forced Scarlett and other victims to create and share indecent images and videos over the course of the last 4 months. Once she was identified, appropriate services and support were put in place for Scarlett, and she and her parents were supported to write a victim impact statement that contributed to a successful prosecution. With hindsight her change in behaviour corresponded to the period of time during which the online abuse took place.*

## Exploitation Case Study B

Read through case study, which is an anonymised, semi-hypothetical situation reflecting elements from real cases in the local area.

*Jack is a 17-year-old care-experienced young person who lives in a local authority-funded supported accommodation placement, which is reluctantly moved into from a foster placement. He had a close relationship with his former foster dad who helped him enrol at a college in the next town. The accommodation started out ok, but Jack has started coming home late from college, sometimes in the early hours of the morning. He is developing an increasingly fractious relationship with one of the people who provide support. Jack hates how they ring the police reporting him missing when even though they know he has to take two buses to college which takes ages and everyone knows how unreliable they are, and besides he always makes it home ok eventually even if it is really late. This has been going for 2-3 months, but lately he has started acting increasingly fearful and anxious and returns to the house looking unkempt and dirty. One day, one of his housemates overheard him on*

*the phone talking about arrangements to get a lift somewhere in the Lakes. She tells the support workers who communicate to the relevant council services. It transpires that Jack's attendance at college is actually really poor, and days he misses class coincides with days that he has arrived home very late. Inquiries by the police and other professionals suggest that Jack might be involved in organised begging, but he refuses to cooperate further with investigations.*

## Exploitation Case Study C

Read through case study, which is an anonymised, semi-hypothetical situation reflecting elements from real cases in the local area.

*Jess is a 16-year-old care-experienced young person who is now back living with her mother, step-father and younger brother. She has had a difficult relationship with her mother and a lot of work has taken place to support her moving back into the home. On top of this, Jess's mother has a terminal illness, and this is causing a lot of worry and emotional upset. Jess has started a new school again and is struggling to settle there; the school is majority male students and she is having difficulty making female friends. She has reported being verbally and physically assaulted by peers from school when she was walking home one day. This was recorded and sent around her peers which has been very upsetting for Jess. There have been concerns that Jess has sent indecent images of herself to male peers and also to other males that she does not know via Snapchat. Jess has also had frequent missing from home episodes, which is worrying because in the past when she was in a foster placement she has travelled to meet unknown males. Jess struggles with her mental health and describes having low self-esteem, and as a result she will often seek validation from males that she is speaking to online. Lately, she has been engaging with a Youth Connect Worker and has so far been responding well to these interventions.*