



# North Lincolnshire Risk Outside the Home Approach

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## Background

In recent years the policy and practice frameworks for safeguarding children have faced a range of challenges in how to respond effectively to 'new' types of risks and harm that do not fall neatly within more established notions of abuse and neglect. As research continues to aid our understanding of issues such as child sexual exploitation, knife crime, and county lines, the size and extent of the systemic change that is required becomes more apparent.

The phrase 'risk outside the home' (ROTH) has now been incorporated into the December 2020 update of statutory guidance Working Together 2018, which tells us that 'alongside risks to children from within their family, children may also be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from outside their families. This may include adults, groups of adults or locations that pose a risk to children. This may include schools and other educational establishments, peer groups, or more widely from within the wider community and/or online'.

These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple risks including:

- Criminal exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Human trafficking and Modern Day Slavery
- Online abuse
- Peer/ teenage relationship abuse
- Bullying
- Serious Youth Violence
- Radicalisation by extremist groups.

The guidance goes on to cover the assessment of risks outside the home but stops short in setting out recommendations for how extra-familial risks should be managed, leaving local areas to develop their own approaches within the parameters of the existing framework. Doing so, however, poses a number of practice and procedural challenges - as Yvette Stanley, Ofsted's National Director for Social Care, pointed out in her March 2020 blog, 'Working Together was originally written with a focus on keeping children safe within families'.

## Local context

In North Lincolnshire we take a One Family Approach to how we commission, plan, develop, deliver and review our services for children and families. Developed under the auspices of the Integrated Children's Trust, our One Family Approach seeks to create **a system that works for all children, young people and families** where we work together to provide and commission integrated services for children and young people.

Our ambition is for children to be **in their family, in their school and in their community**, where services help early and at the lowest level, to enable children, young people and

families to participate, find help online and in their networks and communities, to be resilient and stay independent.

The One Family Approach provides the framework for how we respond to the needs of all children and families in North Lincolnshire, with a focus on tackling inequalities for the most vulnerable and levelling up outcomes – safe, well, prosperous and connected. It is founded upon our North Lincolnshire culture, values and beliefs, providing a vision for a system that sees children, young people, and families as experts within their own lives. It provides a model for innovative, integrated working which builds upon strengths, find solutions in families and communities, builds resilience and confidence, and enables independence. We have developed our response to risks outside the home within this context, and by building upon the robust multi-agency arrangements already in place for tackling sexual and criminal exploitation, and other forms of risk that children may experience in the community such as when missing, or from radicalisation, or being drawn into modern day slavery. One example of these arrangements in practice is the North Lincolnshire Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meeting, which reflects a long-standing partnership commitment to disrupting and prosecuting perpetrators, and working together to support and protect children and young people in their families, schools and communities.

The North Lincolnshire approach to risks outside the home not only draws upon years of local learning and experience about ‘what works’, it has also been shaped heavily by the views of children, young people and families.

## **Risk Outside the Home (ROTH) – The North Lincolnshire approach**

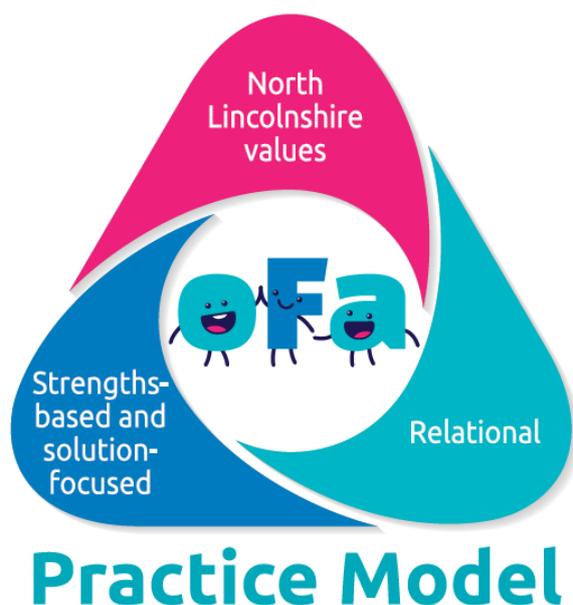
The North Lincolnshire ROTH model is comprised of 3 elements:

1. Practice Principles – Empowering families, taking a One Family Approach
2. Providing Help – Using skills and resources to identify, assess, and intervene
3. Managing Risk – Working together to reduce risk and improve outcomes

### **1. Practice Principles – Empowering families, taking a One Family Approach**

The One Family Approach not only provides the strategic framework for our North Lincolnshire response to ROTH, it also sets out the values and principles underpinning our work, practice, behaviours, and mindset. These values and principles align closely with best practice messages from national ROTH research and guidance, and from what children, young people, and parents/carers tell us about working with adolescents who are experiencing ROTH and with their families.

The overarching OFA practice principles are set out in the OFA practice model below:



The One Family Approach practice model provides the framework for how every professional in North Lincolnshire should work with children, young people, and families.

It is based upon our North Lincolnshire culture, values and beliefs, aiming to help us achieve our ambition – to keep children **in their families, their schools and their communities**.

We do so by building upon strengths, finding solutions in families and communities, building resilience and confidence, and enabling independence.

### Children, young people and families at the centre

Taking a One Family Approach means truly placing families at the heart of what we do:

- We seek to **enable and empower** by working restoratively with people, not 'to' or 'for'. This means facilitating family-led planning and decision-making, and recognising parents and carers as partners, not recipients of services.
- Through our help and support we aim to **build resilience**, by building confidence and positive networks, and enabling families to identify the tools to help themselves.
- When we intervene, agencies in North Lincolnshire help the **whole-family**, acting as lead professional when appropriate to coordinate help to address underlying issues.

### North Lincolnshire values

Our One Family Approach is underpinned by four values which drive and unite our practice, behaviour, and decisions:

- **Equality of opportunity** - where all children, young people and families, regardless of need, community, or diversity, have equal access to the same opportunities to achieve their potential and positive outcomes. To achieve this involves working anti-oppressively to challenge disadvantage and adversity.
- **Excellence** - where we have high aspirations for children, young people and families and high expectations of each other across the workforce, and support and challenge together as we strive for best practice and best outcomes.
- **Integrity** - where we are respectful, honest and accountable in our actions, where behaviours build trust and effective relationships, and we uphold the highest standards including the creative use of resources across the partnership to achieve shared outcomes for children, young people and families

- **Self responsibility** – where confident and autonomous professionals enable and empower others to have choice and control over their lives, to make decisions, have a voice, and to live independently from services in their families and communities

When working with families where there are ROTH, practitioners with these values often demonstrate:

- Tenacity
- Resilience
- Commitment and a willingness to go ‘above and beyond’

### **Strengths-based and solution-focused**

Being strengths-based and solution-focused is how we seek to achieve enabling sustainable change that improves the wellbeing of children and young people.

A strengths-based and solution-focused approach encourages positive worker-family relationships, and positive restorative conversations that helps people build confidence for the future based upon ‘what is working well’.

Taking a solution-focused mind-set into our work with children, young people and families reflects our beliefs in North Lincolnshire that the answers to challenges and problems are found within families and communities. Effective help and protection is founded upon people being inspired and enabled to resolve and overcome their difficulties, and be more resilient into the future.

Being strengths-based and solution-focused does not mean discounting or minimising risk, it calls for risk to be assessed and responded to in a proportionate and sensible way, so that action aims to increase safety rather than reduce professional anxiety.

### **Relational**

Being relational reflects the value we give to family and to community, to identity and to attachment, to teamwork and to love. Building, maintaining, and strengthening relationships improves the wellbeing of children and young people.

A relational approach to our work means we take the time to listen, take the time to build rapport, and provide help through trusted relationships. We seek to understand children’s and adult’s experiences in the context of their system – their relationships with family, friends, and their community.

Working relationally means that we recognise help is often best delivered through the trusted professional. We try to reduce unnecessary referrals to other agencies, and when other skill-sets are needed, these agencies may take a more consultative role, supporting the lead professional and network. We use formulation to help get our analysis right and make sure that help improves outcomes.

Being relational and restorative sees a high priority given to partnership and co-production, allowing families to lead their own plans. When needed, the professional response must be swift and effective, with families supported to change in the child's timescales.

Supplementary information and connected tools can be located on the [Children's MARS website](#) under policies, procedures and guidance and the resource page.

## **2. Providing help – Using skills and resources to identify, assess, and intervene**

Identifying, assessing and responding to concerns about ROTH should be undertaken within the context of our existing frameworks and processes, as set out in the [Children's MARS policy and procedure for assessing need and providing help](#) and the [One Family Approach - Helping Children and Families in North Lincolnshire document 2020/24](#).

Although the term 'risk outside the home' may be relatively new, and its inclusion in Working Together statutory guidance only recent, ROTH should not provoke undue anxiety for professionals. The responsibility to provide early help as part of our broader safeguarding duties continues to apply, with an expectation locally that agencies work holistically to support the whole family and offer enabling help early when problems start to emerge.

### **Tools and resources**

There are a range of practice tools available to support practitioners assessing, planning and intervening to reduce risk when there are concerns about ROTH. These tools can be used at any point in the child's journey, including when early help is being provided, to support the practitioner and family in understanding what is going on, what needs, risks and strengths may be present, and what will make things better.

In North Lincolnshire, we continue to develop our ROTH toolkit to help practitioners learn, assess, plan and intervene. Intervening does not have to mean a technical piece of work, it can also refer to the very important task of how to start a conversation with a young person or develop a relationship with a family member.

Examples of some of these tools are:

- a) Child exploitation vulnerability toolkit (to become ROTH Vulnerability Toolkit)
- b) Ecomap
- c) ROTH assessment tool for child / young person
- d) ROTH assessment tool for parent / carer
- e) Enhanced peer assessment and mapping

The ROTH Toolkit (forthcoming) along with other useful resources can be found on the [Children's MARS website resources page](#).

## Skills and training

A range of training courses and learning opportunities are available for practitioners across the multi-agency partnership to learn more about ROTH, and how to develop and use the skills and resources that help improve outcomes and reduce risk.

The Children's MARS Education and Training Programme, e-workbooks and upcoming courses, including those related to ROTH can be found on the [training page of the Children's MARS website](#).

In addition, to help share and develop best practice across teams and services, a ROTH Practitioner's Network has been established, bringing together frontline staff and managers with a passion for working with adolescents, developing family-led decision making, and improving outcomes. The group meets regularly to share practice and tips about 'what works'. Anyone interested in joining the ROTH Practitioners Network can contact [mars@northlincs.gov.uk](mailto:mars@northlincs.gov.uk).

### 3. Managing risk – Working together to reduce risk and improve outcomes

Most children and young people who are vulnerable to or experiencing ROTH do not require social work services. In many circumstances, the provision of informal early help or more formal targeted / coordinated support is sufficient to enable families to improve outcomes for themselves and their children. For some however, the level of risk and the combination or complexity of needs may mean the child is assessed to be 'in need' and requiring specialist services.

In most of these cases, practitioners taking a One Family Approach and drawing on ROTH resources, knowledge, and skills will enable effective multi-agency practice that helps reduce risks and build resilience. Existing forums and processes such as child in need and family solutions meetings already provide flexibility for empowering families and engaging creatively with a range of agencies. For such cases, risks to children are further reduced through the focused and strategic work of groups such as the MACE meeting, Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) panel, and Multi-Agency Missing Children meetings. Particularly in MACE, data and intelligence is used to target perpetrators and identify hotspots, with increasingly location-based interventions involving a wide range of partners. The application of the Child Exploitation Vulnerability Toolkit in the Partnership Integrated Triage (PITSTOP) supports the earlier identification of emerging risk, enabling analysis of themes and trends, leading to targeted partnership actions to disrupt.

However, for some children and young people, the levels of risk or challenges building effective engagement that improves outcomes may require a radically different multi-agency approach. For these cases, a new ROTH meeting format has been developed, drawing upon research such as Carlene Firmin's work on 'contextual safeguarding', and shaped by local learning and consultation with practitioners, children, and families.

The North Lincolnshire ROTH meeting process aims to:

- empower families as safeguarding partners

- embed peer mapping
- place the lived experience of the child at the centre
- strengthen information sharing around place, context, and vulnerability
- harness the potential of alternative partners such as community groups and businesses
- be applied within existing child protection and child in need frameworks

In summary:

1. The ROTH meeting format will only be offered in the following circumstances:
  - When there are concerns about possible significant harm related to ROTH, discussed in a strategy meeting
  - When there are no concerns about abuse or neglect within the family
  - When the parents or carers are willing and have the capacity to work as safeguarding partners.
2. The model is to be used within existing frameworks, therefore may be applied within a child protection conference process, or in a child in need meeting process, depending upon the outcome of the strategy meeting and resulting assessment.
3. The model is only to be used when the child and family are fully informed about what it entails and agree with using it. The final decision lies with the practice supervisor of the social worker and/or conference chair and must be recorded on the child's file.
4. The child and family will lead decision making about arrangements for the meeting. This includes the venue, invitees, family and friends, and practical issues such as refreshments.
5. Preparation and planning are crucial in ensuring effective information sharing, so that decision-making and planning are intelligence informed and to enable mapping to take place. Police data sharing for ROTH meetings will draw from the vulnerability hub and have a contextual focus.
6. Invitees to the ROTH meeting may include representatives from services who have not been involved with providing support to the family but who may be able to contribute to improving the safety of children experiencing risk and harm in the community or in specific places, such as housing teams, leisure services, and community groups.
7. The meeting will begin with, and focus on, the lived experience of the child and their family, and their views and understanding of the current circumstances, strengths and concerns. This will primarily be by hearing directly from the child and family, and/or the trusted professional or other person advocating on their behalf, drawing on the ROTH Assessment Tools.
8. The meeting will be facilitated by an independent chair who will oversee strengths-based profiling of the child and family, seeking to 'bring the child to life' if they are not

in attendance. This will involve the family and professionals exploring the child's history, attachments, significant events, their personal character, aspirations, fears, personality, strengths and traits etc.

9. 3<sup>rd</sup> party information will be shared confidentially in a specific section of the meeting, in accordance with policies and procedures.
10. The family and professionals will then be encouraged to map the young person's networks, friends, family, family friends, and how the young person sees and uses those relationships and networks. Professionals will also be part of the network map.
11. The profiling presented within this meeting structure will be set out in order to demonstrate the resilience and risk factors within the young person's daily lived experience via a narrative, and not a list of risk, protective, and resilience factors.
12. If convened as a child protection conference, the meeting will be asked to consider whether a child protection plan is required to safeguard the child, and which category of abuse is most appropriate. Given the limitations within the existing categories in describing extra-familial risks, a best-fit approach will need to be taken.
13. The chair will then outline the plan (either child in need or child protection plan), setting actions against outcomes, including future visiting arrangements, and the members of the core group. The core group will be expected to work in line with the broader ROTH approach as outlined in this document.
14. Date and time of future meetings will be arranged on an individual case basis dependent of the needs of each case