



North Lincolnshire Risk Outside the Home Approach

April 2022



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 harm from multiple risks including:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Criminal exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines
- Serious Youth Violence
- Child Trafficking
- Modern Day Slavery
- Online abuse
- Teenage relationship abuse
- Bullying
- Child on child sexual violence and harassment and harmful sexual behaviour
- Children vulnerable to radicalisation

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, finds 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.

Risks Outside the Home (ROTH) – The North Lincolnshire approach

The North Lincolnshire ROTH approach is comprised of 3 elements:

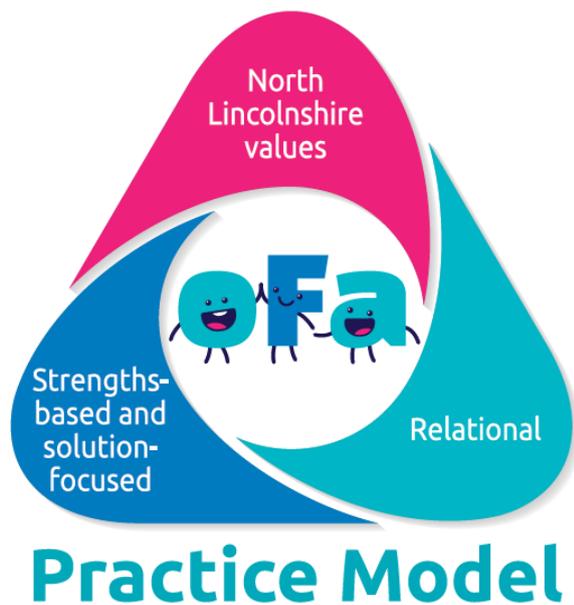
1. Practice Principles – Empowering families, taking a One Family Approach
2. Identifying and Helping – Using skills and resources to identify, assess, and intervene
3. Managing Risk – Working together to reduce risk and improve outcomes

These are set out in more detail below.

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 how they would like to be helped and supported.

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.
- **Fewest best interventions** describes our commitment to making sure that help is purposeful and effective, via the trusted professional where possible.

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 equity of access to the community offer, in order to achieve good health and wellbeing. This involves working anti-oppressively to challenge disadvantage and adversity, to enable inclusion.
- **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, take part, 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, to have better relationships, 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 listen and seek to understand the causes behind presenting issues, aiming to get our analysis right so that actions are purposeful and help improve 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 via www.northlincscmars.co.uk under policies, procedures, and guidance.

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 Assessing Need and Providing Help policy and procedures and the OFA Helping Children and Families in North Lincolnshire 2020/24 document. There are also specific supplementary policies and procedures, guidance or protocols relating to the different forms of ROTH, e.g., child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, missing children, radicalisation and child trafficking. These can be accessed at:

[CMARS | Policies, procedures and guidance \(northlincscmars.co.uk\)](https://northlincscmars.co.uk).

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. Schools, colleges, and youth workers are particularly well-placed to pick up on concerns that could indicate vulnerability to exploitation and ROTH, and should not shy away from asking questions, having conversations, and sharing information. Although it may not be easy to think of ways to help, sometimes the curiosity and care of a trusted adult is the factor that makes the difference for a child at risk.

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

The ROTH Toolkit can be found on the Children's MARS website in the 'Risk outside the home' section, with other useful resources found in the 'Resources' and 'Hidden Harm – tools and resources info-sheet' sections. The link for the ROTH tools is here:

[Children's MARS website and ROTH tools, resources and links](#)

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 Training Programme, E-workbooks and upcoming courses, including those related to ROTH can be found here [CMARS | Training \(northlincscmars.co.uk\)](https://www.northlincs.gov.uk/mars-training)
In addition, to help share and develop best practice across teams and services, a ROTH Practitioners 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.

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

Many children and young people who are vulnerable to ROTH do not require specialist 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 and family is in need of specialist services, and for a minority may require a formal safeguarding response. We know from national research that risks outside the home, and in particular sexual exploitation, is often hidden from services and the police, and that local partnerships must continue to develop ways of identifying those at risk, creating environments and contexts that encourage safety, acting early to prevent harm, and taking strong action to disrupt and prosecute offenders.

For most children who are vulnerable to or experiencing risks outside the home, 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, early help, and family solutions meetings already provide flexibility for empowering families and engaging creatively with a range of agencies. In some situations, ROTH can be present within families where there are also risks within the home environment and family context.

Risks outside the home are further reduced through the focused and strategic work of partnership groups such as the Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meeting, Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) panel, and the Multi-Agency Missing Children meeting. Particularly in MACE, data and intelligence is used to target perpetrators and identify hotspots, with increasingly location-based interventions being employed involving a wide range of partners. The Exploitation of Children Lead Officer meeting strengthens oversight of all children assessed as vulnerable or experiencing exploitation, developing a collective understanding of the needs of children experiencing exploitation and to direct resource more effectively in response to specific challenges or themes. 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.

The North Lincolnshire approach to reducing risks outside the home is not prescriptive. Drawing from national research, local learning about what works, and the views of children and families, our model is integrated within existing early help and statutory frameworks being based upon 4 key features:

1. Understanding the lived experience of the child

The lived experience of the child and their family, and their views and understanding of the current circumstances, must underpin all intervention and planning when dealing with ROTH.

Child and family views should take centre stage, with practitioners using the ROTH assessment tools to elicit the views and realities of the child's experience.

2. Families as safeguarding partners

Family members should be seen as crucial and equal partners, who are included and empowered, and supported to be resilient.

Plans to reduce risk are based around the strengths and protective actions of families and include support for them to build or maintain resilience.

3. Friendships and contexts

Understanding the social networks, friendships, spaces and places (including online) connections for each child helps to understand exposure to risks and also to identify sources of support and protection.

Information sharing, assessment, planning and interventions should reflect 'outside the home' friendships and contexts that are significant for the child.

4. Trusted professional

Children, young people, and families tell us they prefer to work with fewer agencies and to receive help from those they know well and trust.

Our local approach seeks for support to be coordinated through the child's trusted relationships.