



Harm Outside the Home (HOTH) Guide for Practitioners in North Lincolnshire

April 2026

Chapter 1: National guidance and learning

Working Together to Safeguard Children

The Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance highlights that safeguarding must extend beyond the family setting, recognising that children can be harmed in places like schools, peer groups, public spaces, and online. It calls for multi-agency collaboration to assess and respond to these risks, using contextual information to understand the child's lived experience. Practitioners are expected to share intelligence, coordinate interventions, and disrupt harmful environments, while maintaining a child-centred approach that supports both the child and their family. Strategic leaders are responsible for ensuring local arrangements address harm outside the home effectively.

The definition of Harm Outside the Home as defined by Working Together 2026 states: *Some children experience abuse and exploitation outside the home. This includes children who are looked after and live in residential or foster care. This type of harm is often referred to as "extra-familial harm". Harm can occur in a range of contexts, including school and other educational settings, peer groups, or within community/public spaces, and/or online. Children may experience this type of harm from other children and/or from adults and harm may be perpetrated by individuals or groups. Forms of extra familial harm include child criminal exploitation (such as county lines and financial exploitation), serious violence, modern slavery and human trafficking, online harm, sexual exploitation (including group-based child sexual exploitation, teenage relationship abuse, and the influences of extremism which could lead to radicalisation¹⁰⁴. Children of all ages can experience extra-familial harm.*

In North Lincolnshire, our Harm Outside the Home Approach includes:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Child 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 behavior
- Children vulnerable to Radicalisation

As part of the scope of the strategy, we will take account those who have additional needs and/or vulnerabilities in order to reduce inequalities and to improve outcomes for all children and young people, for example children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, children who go missing.

North Lincolnshire has a Harm Outside the Home strategy; this is available to view on the CMARS website.

The Contextual Safeguarding Framework

Developed by Dr. Carlene Firmin and her team at Durham University, this approach recognises that young people can be harmed in contexts beyond their families, such as peer groups, schools, neighbourhoods, and online environments.

This identified a Risk Outside of the Home (ROTH) child protection pathway, which was piloted to adapt traditional safeguarding responses to these contexts. It includes:

- Multi-agency child protection conferences focused on extra-familial harm.
- Plans targeting unsafe environments rather than parental behaviour.
- Recognition that criminal exploitation, peer-on-peer abuse, and serious youth violence are child protection issues when they pose significant harm. Please see the link below for the full report: [Contextual Safeguarding Durham University](#)

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill (2025)

This bill strengthens multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, especially for children missing from education, who are disproportionately vulnerable to exploitation and harm outside the home.

It introduces:

- A unique identifying number for every child.
- Stronger powers for councils to track and support children.
- Legal entitlement to breakfast clubs and uniform cost caps to reduce barriers to education. Please see the link below for the full report: [Children's Bill to keep children safe from exploitation](#)

In practice:

- Multi-agency collaboration is essential, with police, education, health, and social care working together.
- Assessment frameworks must consider environmental risks, not just family dynamics.
- Safeguarding responses need to be flexible, context-aware, and informed by young people's experiences.

The Jay Review

The Jay Review, formally titled *Shattered Lives, Stolen Futures*, was published in March 2024 by Action for Children and led by Professor Alexis Jay. It focused on the experiences of criminally exploited children, particularly those affected by group-based child sexual exploitation (CSE) and county lines.

Here are the eight key recommendations from the Jay Review:

1. **Statutory Definition of Criminal Exploitation**
 - Introduce a clear legal definition of criminal exploitation to ensure consistent recognition and response across agencies.
2. **National Strategy on Exploitation**
 - Develop a cross-government strategy to tackle all forms of child exploitation, including sexual, criminal, and online abuse.
3. **Legislative and Policy Reform**
 - Overhaul existing laws and policies to:
 - Prioritise child protection over criminal justice responses.
 - Ensure exploited children are treated as victims, not offenders.
4. **Long-Term Funding for Early Intervention**
 - Move away from short-term funding cycles.
 - Invest in sustainable early help services to prevent exploitation before it escalates.
5. **Improved Multi-Agency Working**
 - Strengthen information sharing, joint assessments, and coordinated responses across police, social care, education, and health.
6. **Data Collection and Analysis**
 - Enhance local and national systems for data collection on exploitation to better identify patterns and risks.
7. **Training and Workforce Development**
 - Provide specialist training for professionals to recognise and respond to exploitation.
 - Embed trauma-informed practice across services.
8. **Child-Centred Practice**
 - Ensure all responses are guided by the voice and experience of the child.
 - Promote advocacy and support for children navigating complex systems.

Baroness Casey report on group-based child sexual exploitation by ‘grooming gangs’

Published in June 2025, the report investigates systemic failures in responding to group-based child sexual exploitation across England. It highlights how some children, particularly girls, were repeatedly failed by services meant to protect them.

Key Findings:

- Victims were often disbelieved or blamed, especially when exploitation occurred outside the home.
- Perpetrators operated in networks, often in plain sight, with insufficient disruption or prosecution.
- Local authorities and police lacked coordination, and responses were inconsistent.
- Cultural and institutional biases sometimes influence decision-making, leading to missed opportunities to protect children.
- Data gaps and poor intelligence sharing hindered effective safeguarding.

Recommendations for local areas

1. Establish a Local Strategy for Group-Based CSE

- Develop a multi-agency strategy specifically targeting group-based exploitation.
- Include clear leadership, accountability, and measurable outcomes.

2. Improve Victim Support and Advocacy

- Ensure access to long-term therapeutic support.
- Embed trauma-informed practice across services.
- Provide independent advocates for children navigating complex systems.

3. Strengthening Multi-Agency Working

- Formalise information-sharing protocols between police, social care, education, and health.
- Use joint risk assessments and coordinated disruption plans.

4. Enhance Data and Intelligence

- Collect and analyse local data on group-based exploitation.
- Use mapping tools to identify hotspots, patterns, and networks.

5. Community Engagement and Prevention

- Work with communities to raise awareness, challenge harmful norms, and build trust.
- Train frontline staff and community leaders to recognise signs of exploitation.

6. Accountability and Oversight

- Conduct independent audits of local safeguarding responses.
- Ensure elected members and safeguarding boards have oversight of CSE strategies.

The Government and local response to the Casey Review

The government issued a specific response to the Casey Review in relation to the focus on the Metropolitan Police. Following its publication, Humberside Police acknowledged the findings and committed to tackling misogyny and maintaining high standards.

Deputy Chief Constable Paul Anderson stated that misogynistic behaviour “will not be tolerated” and outlined internal measures such as the Knowing the Line campaign and strengthened professional standards processes to address misconduct and restore public trust.

North Lincolnshire Council then further responded:

Officers from the Council met with Humberside Police, who are committed to providing support to victims as and when they are identified and shared with them. Humberside Police will ensure that victims are made aware of their rights, including the expanded right to review, and are supported throughout any renewed investigations.

North Lincolnshire Council has an established strategic response to child sexual exploitation and related harms through our multi-agency partnership group. This group is closely aligned with our work on tackling Organised Crime and addressing Harm Outside the Home. It provides a coordinated platform for intelligence sharing, safeguarding, and targeted interventions.

COM Groups

COM groups are online networks of individuals who carry out serious, high harm offences including child sexual abuse, serious violence, cybercrime (referred to as Cyber Com), and extremism. Com groups are dynamic and often overlap with these threats, although not every case will involve all. Within these groups, offenders may compete against one another to cause the highest harm to gain status and notoriety. Offenders may also do so by creating and sharing harmful and extreme content, for example child sexual abuse material or by coercing victims (often under the age of 18) to commit harmful acts towards themselves, or others, such as inflicting injuries.

Radicalisation (Prevent)

Prevent is about stopping people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It sits alongside long-established safeguarding duties on professionals to protect people from a range of other harms, such as substance abuse, involvement in gangs, and physical and sexual exploitation. Prevent seeks to intervene early and ensure that people who are susceptible to radicalisation to terrorism are supported as they would be under safeguarding processes. The Key Principles of Prevent have been developed to set out and clarify existing Prevent policy and help people to understand Prevent's core purpose. These FAQs should be read alongside the Key Principles.

As an early intervention programme, Prevent supports people susceptible to radicalisation. The Prevent duty guidance highlights that, although ideology can be an important part of the radicalisation process, there may be times when the precise ideological driver is not clear. There is no single pathway to radicalisation. Some individuals seek to support or enact terrorist offences without a clear understanding of the ideology or cause they are supporting. Therefore, individuals whose ideology is unclear, but who demonstrate a susceptibility to radicalisation, should be given the same consideration for support as those with clear and concerning ideological motivations.

Further advice and guidance on the signs of radicalisation are available on ACT Early and GOV.UK.

Child trafficking

Please also refer to CMARS guidance in relation to safeguarding children who may have been trafficked.

National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the UK framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive appropriate support. In England and Wales, a first responder organisation is an authority authorised to make referrals into the NRM. Within North Lincolnshire, social workers and the police are the primary first responders. A full list of first responder organisations is available on the GOV.UK website. Referrals must be submitted through the online NRM referral system, and only staff from designated first responder organisations can make these referrals.

North Lincolnshire is a pilot site for child referrals. When a referral for a child is submitted, please notify NRM Coordinators Mandy Nicholson or Tanya Warrington for further advice and guidance.

Training on the NRM process, including how to make a referral and related guidance, is available through the CMARS training calendar and is open to all professionals working with children.

Chapter 2: The local approach to both identifying, supporting and protecting young people from harm outside the home.

North Lincolnshire HOTH Strategy

This strategy sets out our shared ambition to safeguard children and young people from harm occurring outside the home, enabling them to thrive within their families, succeed in their education, and flourish in their communities. It details our strategic priorities, the four P's: **Prepare, Prevent, Protect, and Pursue**, alongside the governance and assurance structures that support delivery. The strategy also outlines how we will embed voice and co-production, and how we will monitor and evaluate progress. In addition, the HOTH Delivery Plan complements the strategy by setting out the practical steps for implementation, the "how".

HOTH Toolkit

A range of practice tools are available to support practitioners in assessing, planning, and intervening when there are concerns about Harm Outside the Home (HOTH). These tools can be used at any stage of a child's journey, including during early help, to support practitioners and families in understanding the child's lived experience, identifying needs, risks and strengths, and determining what will help improve outcomes.

The CMARS HOTH Toolkit is a multi-agency resource developed to support practitioners working with children, young people, and families who may be at risk of extra-familial harm, abuse or exploitation occurring outside the home environment. It aligns with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and includes guidance on a wide range of risks such as child criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, online abuse, serious youth violence, bullying, teenage relationship abuse, and radicalisation. Follow the link: [HOTH Toolkit](#)

The toolkit provides:

- Definitions and indicators of various forms of harm
- Vulnerability and risk guides for both CSE and CCE
- The Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) to support assessments and referrals
- Access to local and national resources, including campaigns like Not In Our Community, Anywhere Kids, and Trapped
- Links to support services from organisations such as the NSPCC, The Children's Society, Fearless, and Ivison Trust
- It is designed to be used across the child's journey, from early help to statutory intervention, and is refreshed annually to ensure relevance and effectiveness

North Lincolnshire Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker

The Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) was originally created by the Police and utilised as a county lines tracker. This tool is considered to be beneficial when used to enhance referrals/assessments and statutory plans for children who are identified to be vulnerable to/facing risks of/experiencing child exploitation. The tracker encompasses both child sexual and child criminal exploitation. To strengthen practice further, it is considered to be a useful tool across the child's journey including at an early help level. Therefore, services and partner agencies who provide early help are encouraged to utilise the tool for example, services who support children and families including across health, education and wider agencies.

Values and visions in North Lincolnshire

North Lincolnshire Council's values around HOTH are deeply rooted in their One Family Approach which emphasises:

- Early help and prevention to support children and families at the earliest opportunity and lowest level of need.
- Delivering integrated services that wrap around the whole family to build resilience and independence.
- Enabling children to thrive in their families, schools, and communities by offering community-based support.
- Working across police, health, education, and social care to safeguard children from extra-familial harm such as exploitation, violence, and abuse.
- Using feedback from children and families to shape services and improve

Our vision is to create a safe, resilient community where children and young people are protected from harm beyond their home, empowered through trusted relationships, and supported by a united multi-agency response.

Strategic priorities and delivery

Early identification and contextual safeguarding

We will strengthen early identification through tools such as the Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) and intelligence from MACE and Triage meetings.

Our contextual safeguarding approach targets unsafe environments, such as hotspots for violence, using multi-agency intelligence, ensuring responses consider the child's wider context, not solely parental behaviour.

Serious youth violence and the Child First Principle

Serious youth violence remains both a safeguarding and public health concern, requiring a coordinated response aligned with Youth Justice Board priorities:

- Child First
- Reducing Serious Youth Violence
- Improving Outcomes for Children in the Justice System

Our approach in North Lincolnshire is guided by the Child First principle, which is underpinned by four priorities:

1. See children as children first – recognising developmental needs and vulnerabilities.
2. Prioritise their best interests – ensuring welfare, rights, and potential are central to decision-making.
3. Promote strengths and positive outcomes – focusing on resilience and pro-social identity.
4. Encourage participation and engagement – giving children a voice in shaping their interventions.

This means we do not define children by their offending behaviour; instead, we deliver trauma-informed, strengths-based interventions that safeguard, support rehabilitation, and reduce harm. Embedding these principles contributes to national objectives of reducing reoffending, improving life chances, and creating safer communities.

Family and community engagement

Families are central to our work. We will involve them in planning and use feedback from children and parents to shape services, ensuring interventions are culturally competent and inclusive. Community-based activities, such as those at Oasis and West Street, create safe spaces for positive peer relationships and pro-social identity development. Structured initiatives like 'Girl I Want To Be' and 'Made Of More', alongside informal groups like 'Little Mix', is offered as part of our One Family Approach, integrating family support with YJP services.

Multi-agency collaboration

Police, education, health, youth justice, and community partners will share intelligence and coordinate disruption plans through forums such as MACE, the Violence Prevention Partnership (Humber-wide), and Safer North Lincolnshire.

Preventative and diversionary approaches

We will embed preventative work through innovative interventions. For example, the YJP

has co-produced three Virtual Reality (VR) films with North East Lincolnshire Council, covering motorbike theft, drug misuse, and the daily life of a teenage girl. These immersive, interactive experiences allow young people to make decisions within realistic scenarios, moving beyond traditional worksheets and fostering reflection and engagement. Previous use of VR resources generated positive feedback from both case managers and young people.

We will also adopt Outcome 22 for driving offences, providing education and diversion rather than unnecessary criminalisation. This supports proportionality and early intervention, reinforcing positive behaviour while maintaining public confidence.

Training

Child Exploitation Masterclass

The Children's Multi-Agency and Resilience Safeguarding (cMARS) Child Exploitation Masterclass is a specialist training session offered through the Children's Multi-Agency Resilience and Safeguarding (MARS) Partnership in North Lincolnshire. It is designed to deepen practitioners' understanding of child exploitation, particularly in the context of Harm outside the Home.

Key focus areas of the masterclass:

- Understanding Child Exploitation: definitions, indicators, and how it links to broader safeguarding concerns such as Modern-Day Slavery.
- Types of Exploitation: including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), trafficking, and online harm.
- National Referral Mechanism (NRM): how children and vulnerable adults may benefit from being referred into the NRM, which is the UK's framework for identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery.
- Multi-agency roles and responsibilities: how different agencies collaborate to identify, assess, and respond to exploitation.
- Practical tools and resources: including screening tools, vulnerability trackers, and guidance on making referrals.

The masterclass supports practitioners in applying the CMARS HOTH Toolkit and strengthens confidence in identifying and responding to exploitation across various contexts. To book please email: MARS@northlincs.gov.uk

The Children's Multi-Agency and Resilience Safeguarding (cMARS) website

The [Child Exploitation for Professionals page on the North Lincolnshire MARS website](#) provides comprehensive guidance for practitioners, leaders, and decision-makers on identifying, assessing, and responding to child exploitation.

The website offers a wide range of resources to support practitioners. The page links to external resources such as Not In Our Community, NSPCC, The Children's Society, Fearless, and Ivison Trust, which provide videos, lesson plans, toolkits, and real-life stories to raise awareness and support intervention. It also features national guidance, contextual safeguarding tools, and materials from organisations like Barnardo's, ECPAT UK, and the National County Lines Coordination Centre, covering topics such as grooming, trafficking, modern slavery, and missing children.

Chapter 3: The Harm Outside the Home

meeting structure within North Lincolnshire

North Lincolnshire's HOTH meeting structure supports a coordinated, multi-agency response to safeguarding children from extra-familial harm. It operates at strategic and operational levels to ensure both oversight and effective frontline practice.

Strategic oversight

The HOTH Strategic Group brings together senior leads responsible for protecting children from abuse and exploitation beyond the family setting. This group reports into the overarching Children's Multi-Agency Resilience and Safeguarding (MARS) Board, ensuring alignment with wider safeguarding priorities.

Operational and thematic groups

A range of operational and thematic groups contribute intelligence, case insights, and practice developments to inform strategic planning. These include:

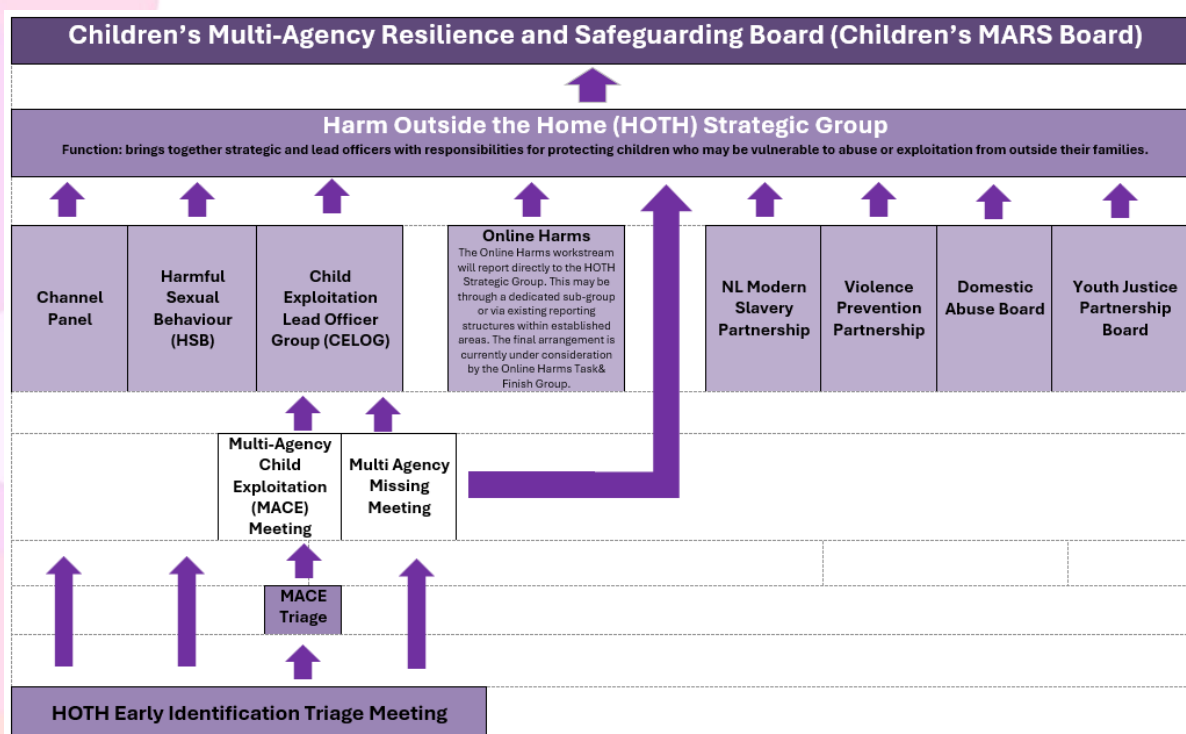
- Channel Panel – Chair Tom Hewis, Assistant Director Children's Standards & Regulation - focuses on risks related to extremism and radicalisation.
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour Panel – Chair Darren Brierley, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Children's Care Group (RDASH) - addresses peer-on-peer sexual abuse and other harmful behaviours.
- MACE & MACE Triage – Chair Louise Stretton, Lead Officer Family Help - respond to criminal and sexual exploitation, supporting case coordination and escalation.
- Child Exploitation Lead Officer Group (CELOG) - Chair Kirsty Ireland, Head of Safeguarding Children - examines extra-familial harm in contexts such as schools, peer groups, public spaces, and online environments.
- Multi-Agency Missing Meeting - Chair Rebecca Hollis, Lead Officer Children and Families Quality and Participation - shares intelligence on missing children, including names, locations, and emerging themes.
- Violence Prevention Partnership (Humber-wide) & Safer NL - Chair Stuart Minto, Head of Community Resilience – contribute to serious violence reduction efforts.
- NL Modern Slavery Partnership – Chair John Cram, Senior Safer Neighbourhoods Officer - focuses on modern slavery and trafficking concerns.
- Online Harm - chaired by Nancy Malkin, Lead Officer School Improvement. The group is currently under development; work is ongoing via a task and finish group.

- Domestic Abuse Board – Chari, Victoria Lawrence, Director Adults and Health - collective accountability for providing victims of domestic abuse with adequate and appropriate support within safe accommodation services.
- Young Youth Justice Partnership Board – Chair Paul French, T/Chief Superintendent, South Bank Local Policing Command, Humberside Police - ensures effective youth justice services through strategic oversight, partnership coordination, and safeguarding responsibilities.

Early intervention and case coordination


Sub-groups such as MACE Triage and the Safe Outside the Home (SOTH Early Identification) Meeting play a key role in identifying emerging concerns early and ensuring timely, coordinated responses. This structure enables a joined-up safeguarding system that integrates strategic oversight with operational delivery, ensuring children at risk of harm outside the home receive timely and effective support.

Please see a visual representation of the HOTH meeting structure below:



Referrals into the various meetings within the HOTH structure follow distinct pathways depending on the nature of the concern and the level of risk.

For operational groups such as Prevent, HSB, MACE/ MACE Triage, Multi Agency Missing Meeting and the SOTH Meeting referrals are typically made by practitioners via established multi-agency referral forms. These meetings focus on identifying and coordinating responses for children and young people at risk of exploitation.



Strategic groups, including the HOTH Strategic Group and the Children's MARS Board, Domestic Abuse Board, Modern Slavery Partnership, Youth Justice Partnership Board, do not accept direct case referrals but instead receive escalated issues, trends, and learning from the operational and thematic groups to inform strategic planning and system-level responses.

The first point of contact for yourselves as workers is to have a discussion with your line manager to consider the appropriate next steps and they can advise accordingly as to referral processes.