



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Date

REPORT TITLE:	SAFER ADOLESCENCE STRATEGY
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an introduction to the Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) Safer Adolescence Strategy 2021-23.

The report and strategy are aligned to priorities of Wirral Council's Plan 2025:

- Brighter Futures: For our children, young people and their families.
- Safe and Pleasant Communities: Protecting our most vulnerable residents.

This matter affects residents across the borough.

This report does not relate to a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is requested to:

1. Support the WSCP's Safer Adolescence Strategy.
2. Note the approach and ongoing development work within the WSCP.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) is a statutory agency established by the Children and Social Work Act (2017).
- 1.2 WSCP is a multi-agency partnership of organisations who agree how to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The WSCP is led by the three statutory safeguarding partners of the Local Authority, Merseyside Police and Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group.
- 1.3 As a statutory safeguarding partner, Wirral Local Authority has key role to play in the WSCP Safer Adolescence Strategy. The endorsement of the Children, Young People and Education Committee will support the delivery of this strategy and therefore the linked aspects of the 2025 Wirral Council Plan.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Not supporting the WSCP Safer Adolescence Strategy may result in less clearly aligned and coordinated partnership activity to help vulnerable young people.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The aims of the WSCP Safer Adolescence Strategy are set out in Section 1, Page 4. Namely.
 - Promote a more strategic preventative approach to adolescent safety by raising awareness of associated vulnerabilities.
 - Enhance our collective understanding of what is meant 'extra-familial harm', or 'risk outside the home'.
 - Embed a shared set of partnership principles and values for working with adolescents.
 - Develop a Wirral contextual safeguarding framework.
- 3.2 Adolescence can be a challenging time for many young people. Due to experiences or circumstances beyond their control some young people may be more vulnerable than others.
- 3.3 There can be several factors that can contribute to young people's vulnerability; and so increase the risk to them. Recognising and managing vulnerability will help us to prevent harm.
- 3.4 A proactive and collective safeguarding approach adolescent safety will help our young people stay as safe as possible as they develop into adulthood. This means understanding those factors that may increase vulnerability and risk; and working across partnerships to support our young people.

- 3.5 Traditionally, safeguarding services were developed and structured to address familial risk. Young people's needs and experiences are very different as they get older. Risks outside the home or family (Extra familial risks) become more relevant. These are sometimes referred to as 'contextual' risks.
- 3.6 Understanding contexts relevant to the daily lived experience of our children and young people is key to reducing risk and improving outcomes. As such, Wirral will adopt a contextual safeguarding framework approach to adolescent safety.
- 3.7 It is important to recognise from the outset that we cannot tackle adolescent vulnerability, risk, and harm with child-based work only. The disruption and pursuit of those thought to be a risk to our children; and the mechanisms by which we identify risk and coordinate are critical.
- 3.8 Section 8 of the strategy sets out the Four P's approach – Prepare, Prevent, Protect and Pursue. Our collective effort must span these areas to ensure we secure the best outcomes for our children and young people.
- 3.9 Themes impacting on children and young people have changed over time, as we identify different types of harm our collective responses as partners develop and evolve. This strategy seeks to develop our framework through which we can identify such themes and respond in partnership.
- 3.10 Section 1, pages 4-6 set out the harm specific harm themes associated with older children and adolescence, identified through the relevant inspectorates and national guidance.
- 3.11 In view of the broad range of issues contributing to vulnerability and the changing nature of harm impacting on young people in different contexts it is beyond the scope of the strategy to set out each approach in detail. This strategy seeks to ensure partners are aware of the potential relationships between vulnerability and harm, understand the importance of reducing vulnerability in the context of preventing harm; and develop the framework by which Wirral partners can collectively tackle harm that impacts on our young people.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The strategy does not propose structural or resources changes such as to have financial implications in the context of this committee report. The aims of the strategy are primarily to raise awareness of the types of harm relevant in adolescence; and highlight the opportunity to reduce the likelihood of significant harm by galvanising and coordinating partnership effort around associated vulnerabilities and priority themes.
- 4.2 The current financial pressures are noted as a relevant risk within section 7 of this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There is a statutory duty under the Children Act 2004 and Children and Social Work Act 2017 for safeguarding partners to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 5.2 There are commissioned services linked to missing children and exploitation, which will be reviewed as part of the existing commissioning cycle. This will take place within the existing timeframes for contract renewal and use the existing Council Procurement processes.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The WSCP Safer Adolescence Strategy references a broad range of vulnerabilities and areas of partnership activity. The categories of harm, associated vulnerabilities; and linked strategy and activity is wide and varied. As part of the Wirral multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, the WSCP Contextual Safeguarding Committee will retain an overview of any changes to partnership structures, assets and activities that may impact on service delivery around those categories of harm highlighted within the strategy.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Failing to deliver the strategy will be mitigated through management oversight and scrutiny arrangements. Oversight of the strategy and delivery will be provided by the partnership's Contextual Safeguarding Committee, reporting to the WSCP Executive.
- 7.2 The current financial pressures facing the Council and its partners represents a risk. Considerations on future funding will include cost-benefit analysis, including invest to save considerations.
- 7.4 For most professionals and the community, the physical and psychological impact caused by being subjected to any type of abuse or neglect is impossible to comprehend. It is clear there is significant emotional impact for victims, which will have a deep personal cost to them in terms of their own health and wellbeing. Preventing such harm happening in the first instance is of primary importance for safeguarding professionals.
- 7.5 The prevalence of such harm will also impact upon those organisations and services designed to tackle it. In encouraging a more strategic preventative approach to protecting vulnerable adolescents it is important to understand and note the cost to services when significant harm does occur. This can help inform future service design decisions.
- 7.6 The exploitation of children is one of the categories of harm set out in the strategy. The Home Office's economic and social costs of modern slavery report (July 2018) set out to estimate the wider cost of modern slavery in the UK.
- 7.7 The July 2018 report was intended to inform the policy and operational response; and better understand the value of preventative work. This report identified that the cost per victim of sexual exploitation in the United Kingdom was just short of £320,000. This total considers the costs linked to treating or responding to physical

and emotional harm, health services, victim services; and law enforcement (excluding the criminal justice system).

- 7.8 Of note is the cost incurred 'In anticipation' (expenditure on protective and preventative measures). This was just £210 per victim in 2016/17. The cost of preventative expenditure was therefore found to be 0.065% of the total economic cost.
- 7.9 Whilst criminal exploitation is not drawn out as a specific category in the report, the cost of 'Labour Exploitation' was similarly just under £320,000.
- 7.10 The WSCP Contextual Safeguarding Committee recognises that there will be links between the Safer Adolescence Strategy and the developing Prevention Strategy. Coordination will be established between the two areas to compliment and support mutual development.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Consultation has taken place with over 2000 young people in Wirral, to help shape the contextual safeguarding committee work. In developing the strategy, cognisance has been taken of consultation and feedback gathered as part of the youth offer consultation.
- 8.2 Feedback on the approach has been gathered through the partnership's participation and engagement network. This comprised.
- Involve – Health Economy Engagement Network
 - Youth Voice Group
 - SEND Youth Voice Group,
 - Children Looked After Juniors,
 - Junior and Youth Arts Groups,
 - Care Leavers Council
 - Children in Care Council
- 8.3 Members of the Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) and wider governance stakeholders have engaged and supported the development of the workplan, contextual safeguarding framework and safer adolescence strategy. This includes feedback from The Children's Society regional prevention officer and the Community and Education lead for the National Working Group for Child Exploitation (NWG).

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the strategy and delivery plan and can be found via the following link:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no environmental and climate implications arising from this report. It is anticipated that the WSCP Safer Adolescence Strategy will have no impact on the emission of greenhouse gases.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – WSCP Safer Adolescence Strategy

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Consultation feedback from young people.
Contextual Safeguarding Survey.
Youth Offer: Consultation and Care More About Us report.
Working Together 2018. Department for Education (DfE) Guidance.
Ofsted. Inspection and Joint Targeted Area Inspections guidance.
Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership Committee Reports/Minutes.
Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report/Business Plan and Website.
Children's Services: Performance and improvement collated data sets.
Research in Practice/ADCS report. 'That Difficult Age: Developing a more effective response to risks in adolescence (2014)' by Dr Elly Hanson and Dez Holmes.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date