



## **East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee**

### **Inter-agency Vulnerable Young Person's Protocol**

**For people under the age of 21 years who are at risk of causing significant  
harm to themselves or others  
(under age of 26 if subject to Aftercare / Continuing Care)**

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## 1) Introduction and scope

- 1.1) It is recognised that within East Lothian and Midlothian there is a small number of vulnerable young people (VYP) at risk of causing significant harm to themselves or others. This risk may be as a consequence of their own behaviour or a consequence of others behaviour towards them. This protocol is intended to give guidance and a structured framework around the multi-agency assessment, planning and decision making for this group of young people.
- 1.2) Work with young people involved in high risk activity / behaviours should be co-ordinated as part of a multi-agency protection system. The protocol is necessary to ensure:
  - Key agencies are alerted to vulnerable and dangerous situations for young people, or for others.
  - Agencies work together to address and reduce risks to the young person or others as far as possible.
  - Agencies have a framework in which to risk assess and risk manage.
- 1.3) This protocol will assist agencies and professionals to plan and work together to help reduce risk to the young person or others affected by their behaviour.
- 1.4) Concerns about confidentiality must not obstruct the exchange of information between agencies / organisations which may be essential to the protection of young people at risk of significant harm to themselves or others.
- 1.5) This protocol is intended to complement the existing child protection, adult support and protection, Risk Management Case Conferences (RMCC) and MAPPA procedures. If there is any debate whether a case falls within this protocol or another, child protection, adult support and protection, RMCC and MAPPA procedures will always take precedence.
- 1.6) The examples given are not an exhaustive list of what can be considered under this protocol, professional judgement is required to decide whether this protocol will assist the young person and also about which service is best placed to manage this process in the presenting circumstances.

## 2) Aims and objectives

- 2.1) To identify young people who are placing themselves or others at risk of significant harm.
- 2.2) To reduce the risk of harm to young person's and others.

- 2.3) To undertake a multi-agency integrated risk assessment.
- 2.4) To produce and review an outcome based Vulnerable Young Person Plan.
- 2.5) To identify young people who present a risk of serious sexual or physical harm and require Care and Risk Management (CARM) planning as part of the Vulnerable Young Person Process.

### 3) Scope of protocol

- 3.1) This inter-agency protocol is for all staff (including voluntary workers) working with young people under the age of 21 years in the East Lothian and Midlothian areas. If the young person is receiving Aftercare Services or Continued Care this protocol can be applied until they reach the age of 26.
- 3.2) This protocol should be implemented when agencies consider a young person's behaviour to be of a level of concern which could lead to serious physical, sexual and / or emotional difficulties to themselves or others. In some instances the level of risk may be life threatening.

### 4) Criteria for referral

While it is best practice to gain consent from an individual before sharing concerns, if you have information to suggest a person is at risk of harm – you have a duty to share this information regardless of whether you are able to gain their consent. (Please also see **Practitioner Guide to Information Sharing, Confidentiality and Consent to Support Children and Young People's Wellbeing** which can be accessed at [www.emppc.org](http://www.emppc.org))

- 4.1) Two conditions need to be met when someone is considering making a vulnerable young person referral:
  - There is no existing multi-agency plan and support in place for the vulnerable young person or the referrer considers that the current multi-agency support and plan is insufficient to manage the risk that the vulnerable young person poses to themselves or others. If current multi agency plans are sufficiently managing the presenting risk, there may be no requirement to use this protocol.

**and**

  - The situation meets one or more of the following criteria:
    - a) He / she regularly goes missing from home or their care placement and where concern has been expressed about their safety and wellbeing (*consider regularity of absconding, pattern, possible destinations, absconding with others or alone, level of risk – see Inter-agency Protocol on Missing Children / Young People.*)

- b) He / she is involved in chaotic and / or dependent drug or alcohol misuse (*is there a clear deterioration in the overall situation characterised by an increase in substance misuse, evidence of dependency, evidence of beginning to inject, being injected by others, mixing different drugs and alcohol, poor level of self-awareness, loss of control, health related problems*).
- c) He / she is sexually exploitative or exploited. **Please see Appendix 2 for full list of Child Sexual Exploitation risk indicators from the Inter-Agency Guidance on Child Sexual Exploitation.**
- d) He / she is involved in serious incidents of self-harm (*consideration needs to be given to the nature of the incident, pattern of behaviours / seriousness of incident / level of self-awareness / likelihood of repeated action*).
- e) His / her offending behaviour places themselves or others at risk of significant harm (*any young person who is likely to meet the grounds for being placed in prison / secure accommodation / intensive support and monitoring may have their needs considered by this protocol*).
- f) His / her violent or abusive behaviour places themselves or others at risk of significant harm (*consideration to be given to level of verbal, emotional, physical and sexual aggression, their risk to themselves and others in their homes or in the community*).
- g) He / she has a mental health, additional support needs or learning disability which places themselves or others at significant risk.
- h) He / she is involved in an abusive relationship which places themselves or others in danger (*consideration to be given to level of verbal, emotional, physical and sexual aggression*).
- i) He / she has alleged involvement in the commission of an offence of a serious nature; where there are significant concerns about the escalation in the frequency and or seriousness of offending behaviour that includes serious violence or sexually harmful behaviour. (Care and Risk Management (CARM) Guidance: Scottish Government, please see appendix 3)

## 5) Referral process

5.1) Any worker from an agency or organisation who is concerned about the high risk behaviours of a young person should contact the relevant Duty Social Worker. If it is not clear whether the young person should be discussed with Children, Adult or Criminal Justice services – please make contact with one agency and discuss it further with a Duty Worker or Senior Practitioner / Team Leader.

Usually, referrals will go to:

- Children's Services Duty Social Worker – for young people aged under 16 years or if child is aged 16 but still in education.
- Adult Services Duty Social Worker – for young people aged 16 years and over.
- Criminal Justice Social Worker – for young people who are involved with Criminal Justice Services.
- If the young person is over 16 but is looked after and accommodated or involved with Aftercare / continued care – discussions should take place between Senior Practitioners / Team Leaders about who is best placed to progress the vulnerable young person process. It may be that it should remain with Children's Services.

N.B: In some circumstances a young person aged 16 or thereabout, may not have been known to Children's Services but presents with needs/ risks more appropriately dealt with by Children's Services. In such cases a discussion between Children and Adult services should take place to determine the most appropriate service to progress IRD and or VYP referral.

5.2) It is good practice to inform the young person unless it is impossible to do so or would increase the risk to the young person or others.

5.3) Decisions regarding involvement of parents / carers should take account of the views of the young person.

5.4) If, following discussion, the referrer and the duty social worker agree the criteria for a vulnerable young person has not been met the matter will be managed through existing processes (e.g. a multi-agency meeting for children or case management for adults).

5.5) If either the referrer or the duty social worker (or both) believe that the young person meets the criteria then a vulnerable young person referral will be made to:

- The relevant Children's Services Team Leader – for young people aged under 16 years (An Initial Child Protection Case Conference should always be considered – this protocol is only for those who do not meet the threshold or criteria of an alternative framework).
- The Adult Services Senior Practitioner / Team Leader for young people aged 16 years and over or the Criminal Justice Team Leader if the young person is involved with Criminal Justice Services.
- Service Manager or Team Leader with responsibility for Youth Justice (East Lothian) or over 12s Team Leader (Midlothian) for children aged between 12- 18 years old who display serious sexually harmful behaviours and or behaviour involving serious

violence. **The referral discussion in these specific should take place within 72 hours as per the Care and Risk Management (CARM) Guidance, Scottish Government;**

- If the young person is over 16 but looked after and accommodated or involved with Aftercare / Continued Care – discussions should take place between Senior Practitioners / Team Leaders about who is best placed to progress the vulnerable young person process.

5.6) On receipt of a referral, the Children’s Services, Adult Services or Criminal Justice Senior Practitioner / Team Leader will instigate an Inter-agency Referral Discussion (IRD), following the usual IRD process as for child or adult support and protection. If Criminal Justice involvement is short term, they may choose to liaise with Community Care in order that the protocol is led by an agency that can offer continuity.

## **6) Conducting an Inter-agency Referral Discussion (IRD)**

6.1) As with child protection or adult support and protection the IRD is not a one off event and should adapt to the needs of the situation. It can be used to gather further information to inform the decision making process.

6.2) The IRD should involve appropriate inter-agency staff including a professional who knows the young person (if possible). The IRD should consider if there is a specialist agency whose input would be beneficial.

6.3) If the IRD decides to take time to gather further information an Interim Safety Plan should be agreed during this period.

6.4) If the IRD decides a vulnerable young person meeting is to be held it will agree who is required to attend the meeting and discuss suitable timescales.

6.5) If the meeting is not considered to be more urgent it will be held within 10 working days of the conclusion of the IRD.

6.6) The IRD will agree what format the assessment should take and the paperwork required.

6.7) The IRD will consider what support should be offered to the young person to attend the vulnerable young person meeting.

6.8) The IRD will notify participants invited to the vulnerable young person meeting what report format is required. The minimum will be a report which clearly identifies key information and concerns regarding the young person. It is good practice to share this with the young person prior to the meeting (if possible).

6.9) The IRD should consider multi agency chronologies in considering the current level of risk.

6.10) In cases of significant offending behaviour relating to serious violence and or sexually harmful behaviours, the IRD should consider need for a Vulnerable Young Persons Meeting to take place within 21 days of IRD.

## **7) Vulnerable young person's meeting**

7.1) The meeting will be chaired by a Senior Practitioner / Team Leader from either Children's, Adult or Criminal Justice Services, or another relevant professional identified by the IRD or in conjunction with Service Managers, and all relevant agencies will be expected to attend.

7.2) The young person will be encouraged to attend. If they choose not to attend their views must be sought.

7.3) The initial vulnerable young person's meeting will:

- Share all relevant information.
- Consider and document the presenting risks.
- Agree what further assessment is required (considering available risk assessment tools, any specialist or service who could contribute etc).
- Agree an interim risk management plan with SMART actions.
- Consider the rights and views of the young person.
- For cases where the young person meet the criteria for CARM planning (serious sexually harmful and or violent behaviours) please see appendix 3 for additional information to be considered as part of the VYP meeting.

7.4) The minutes of the meeting will be approved and distributed by the chair within ten working days.

7.5) For young people and / or parents / carers who are difficult to engage, professionals need to assess all available information and consider the implications of taking no further action. Professionals should take steps to ensure that young people and / or parents are able to make informed choices and be flexible in negotiating alternative means of offering support.

7.6) If a young person is considered under the vulnerable young person's protocol and are subject to a risk management plan, the plan will stay in place until the meeting agree it is no longer necessary.

## **8) Vulnerable young person's minute and plan**

- 8.1) The interim vulnerable young person's minute and plan will be circulated within five working days of the initial vulnerable young person's meeting.
- 8.2) A lead professional will be identified and core / review group membership established (please note that the lead professional may be from any agency and is most likely to be the professional / agency which has the majority of input with the young person).
- 8.3) The interim vulnerable young person's plan will identify who is responsible for providing feedback and getting the views of the young person if they did not attend.
- 8.4) The identified lead professional must further develop the interim vulnerable young person's plan to a full outcome based vulnerable young person's plan / vulnerable young person's action plan for the first core / review group meeting;
- 8.5) For cases where the young person meets the criteria for CARM Planning (serious sexually harmful and or violent behaviours) the attached minute and plan template should be used for the VYP meeting. Minutes in such circumstances to be securely filed under restricted access (Appendix 4: Based on Care and Risk Management Guidance, Scottish Government).

## **9) Core Group**

- 9.1) The initial core / review group will be held within 21 days of the initial vulnerable young person's meeting and will be chaired by the relevant Children's, Adult or Criminal Justice Services Senior Practitioner / Team Leader.
- 9.2) Core / review groups thereafter will be held 4-6 weekly and will be chaired by the Lead Professional.
- 9.3) All core / review groups must review the current level of risk to the young person or to other people.
- 9.4) The core / review group will oversee the implementation of the vulnerable young person's plan. They can make amendments to the vulnerable young person's plan as agreed. Any significant change must be discussed with Children's, Adult or Criminal Justice Services Senior Practitioner / Team Leader/ Service Manager.
- 9.5) The core / review group can at any time request a review vulnerable young person's meeting.
- 9.6) All core / review group meetings must be minuted and the minute distributed within ten working days.

## 10) Review

10.1) The first vulnerable young person's review meeting will take place within three months and subsequent reviews will be held at six monthly intervals thereafter.

10.2) It will be chaired by the same person as the initial meeting, wherever possible.

10.3) If required, a comprehensive risk assessment will be completed for the first review vulnerable young person's meeting.

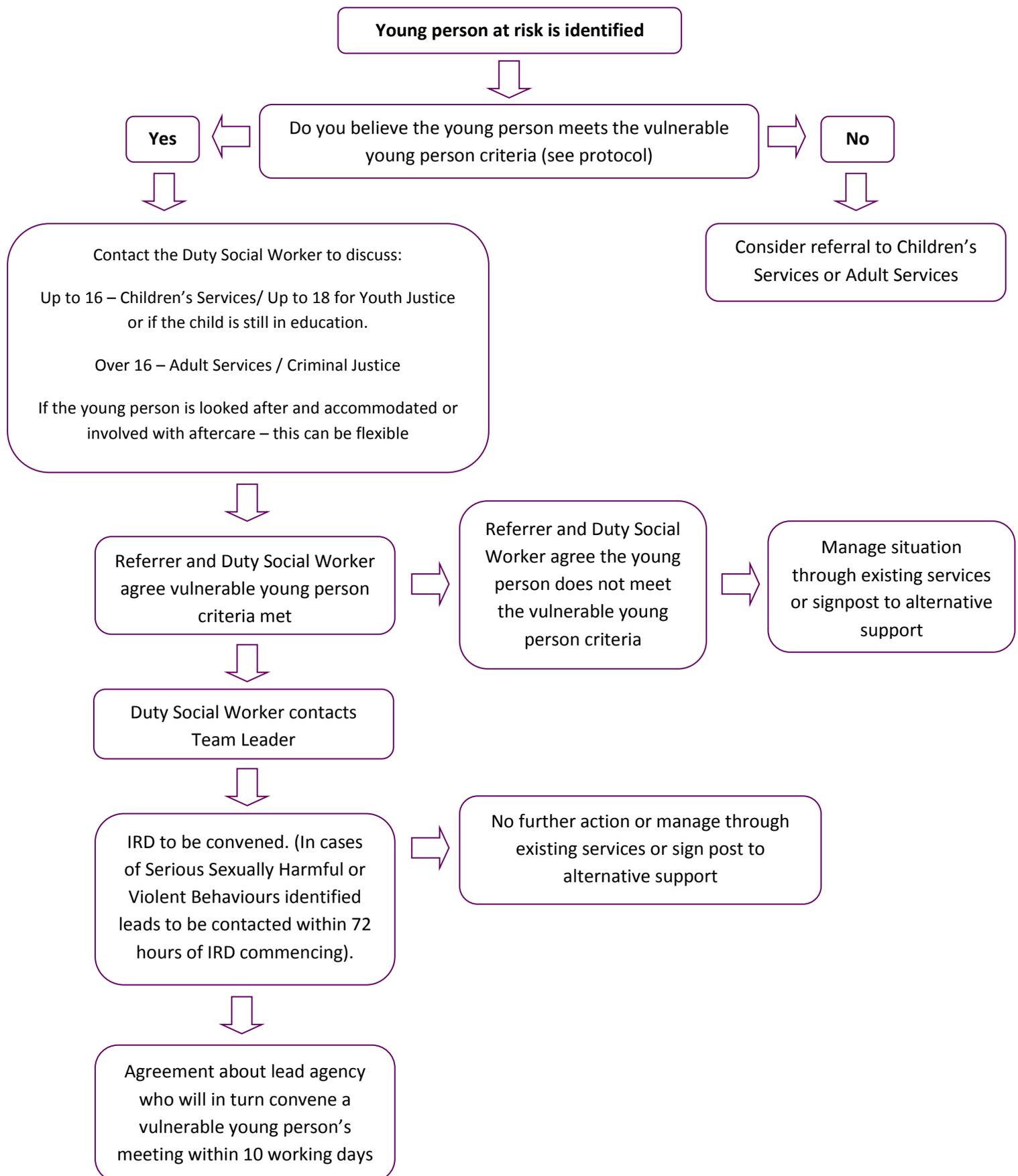
10.4) If all are in agreement that the risks have significantly reduced and the young person is no longer considered to meet the risk criteria a decision should be made that the young person should no longer be subject to a vulnerable young person's plan. If this is the decision a minimum of one final core / review group must take place following the review vulnerable young person's meeting. No agency will end their involvement prior to this core group without full discussion with the other agencies involved.

## 11) Case Transfers

When a child or young person who is being actively managed through VYP processes moves from one local authority to another local authority within Scotland, Lead Professional / Team Leader / Children's Services Manager will make contact with their counterpart in the receiving local authority to inform them of this. **The originating local authority will retain responsibility for the Vulnerable Young Person Process while the child or young person is in an out of authority placement.**

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## Appendix 1 – Flowchart



## Appendix 2

### Know the signs – Risk Indicators of Child Sexual Exploitation

There are a number of indicators to which practitioners should be alert as signs of child sexual exploitation. These indicators should trigger concerns and a proportionate response.

Risk indicators can include, but are not restricted to:

- **Staying out late and going missing:** does the young person regularly return home late? Is the young person missing overnight or for longer with no known home base?
- **Multiple callers:** does the young person regularly receive calls or messages from unknown adults or young people who may be slightly older than them? Perpetrators of child sexual exploitation routinely use mobile phones as a means of controlling their victims.
- **Excessive use of a mobile phone or multiple mobile phones:** does the young person use their mobile phone more than would otherwise be expected of them? Are they secretive about who they are contacting and why? Young people are often given more than one mobile phone so that perpetrators can contact them.
- **Expressions of despair:** is the young person displaying signs of self-harm, overdosing, eating disorders, challenging behaviour or aggression?
- **Disclosure of abuse followed by withdrawal of allegation:** has the young person disclosed being abused and then retracted the allegation? This can indicate fear and intimidation.
- **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies:** has the young person contracted an STI or disclosed an unwanted pregnancy? These are often signs of unsafe sex and could indicate sex with multiple people.
- **Peers involved in sexual exploitation:** has the young person disclosed peers being sexually exploited? It is very common for peers to be the gateway into child sexual exploitation.
- **Drug and alcohol misuse:** has the young person started experimenting with drugs or alcohol? Drink and drugs are a central part of the grooming process. Young people may start to normalise the sexual behaviour that follows, even if they don't like it at first, because it leads to the good feelings of drugs and alcohol.
- **Use of mobile devices that cause concern:** does the young person spend more time than usual online? Are they secretive? Are they accessing inappropriate websites? The internet is a very effective means for perpetrators to connect with, groom and exploit

young people. They can have almost unlimited access to young people via social networking and gaming sites, whilst grooming them for face to face exploitation.

- **Lack of positive relationship with a protective or nurturing adult:** does the young person have a strong adult figure in their life to whom they can turn? If they do not have a nurturing adult in their lives, they may look elsewhere.
- **Truancy or exclusion:** has the young person been excluded from school or been truanting persistently? Young people who are not in school during the day may be more at risk of sexual exploitation. Living independently and failing to respond to attempts by a worker to keep in touch: has the young person started withdrawing from their social and formal networks? Perpetrators will try and separate young people from their networks of support. They may try and convince the young person that their family and friends do not care about them.
- **High number of sexual partners:** is the young person displaying signs of sexual behaviour with multiple partners? This may be a sign of exploitation; the young person may be being coerced or forced into having sex with others.
- **Unexplained amounts of money or other material items:** does the young person turn up with expensive clothing or other items? Children who appear to have new clothes, jewellery, mobile phones or money that cannot plausibly be accounted for may be being groomed.

Other **significant** risk indicators to look out for include:

- presence of an older boyfriend or relationship with a controlling adult.
- abuse by boyfriend or controlling adult.
- entering and leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults.
- frequenting areas known for street prostitution.
- physical injury or symptoms of abuse.
- children under 13 years asking for sexual health advice.
- being taken to flats, houses or hotels and engaging in sexual activity.

**Please also see East Lothian and Midlothian Inter-Agency Guidance on Child Sexual Exploitation which can be found at [www.emppc.org.uk](http://www.emppc.org.uk)**

## Appendix 3

### Care and Risk Management Considerations (CARM)

Care and Risk Management (CARM) was designed to promote a consistent approach throughout Scotland in considering the young people who pose a sexual or violent threat to others. It provides a common language and risk management framework that should be applied within a Vulnerable Young Person's Meeting if the young person has been referred under section i) of the criteria above.

For VYP meetings requiring a CARM framework the following needs to be considered:

#### Living Circumstances

- The nature and level of risk to others (particularly other children and young people) in the home environment.
- The impact of family dynamics in either sustaining or preventing further behaviour of a harmful nature.
- The nature and level of risk to others in the community.
- The relationship between the referred child or young person and the victim(s).
- The views of the referred child or young person.
- The views of parents/carers.
- The potential negative impact of a sudden change to a child or young person's living arrangements.

#### Educational/Employment Arrangements

- The safety of the child or young person's victim(s) if attending the same school or in the same work environment.
- The safety of other students / colleagues both in the referred child or young person's classes / workplace and in the wider educational, training or employment setting.
- The safety of other service users/attendees and staff members at the school / workplace.
- The potential risk to the referred child or young person of retribution in relation to the harmful behaviour.
- The safety of the referred child or young person when travelling to and from the school / workplace.
- The nature of supervision and monitoring required to manage safely any identified risks.
- The internal disciplinary response of the school / workplace to the harmful behaviour (e.g. exclusion).

## **Community Integration**

- What further action (if any) needs to be taken to keep the referred child or young person safe?
- What further action (if any) needs to be taken to keep the referred child or young person's family member(s) / carer(s) safe?
- What further action (if any) needs to be taken to keep other members of the community safe (e.g. peers, teaching staff, victim(s), residential care staff, etc.)?

## **Risk Management Strategies**

The Chair of the Initial VYP meeting must consider each of the following risk management strategies:

- Monitoring.
- Supervision.
- Intervention.
- Community disclosure.
- Victim safety planning.
- Contingency Planning.

Where a referred child or young person already has a single Child's Plan in place, this will be updated to reflect the risk management strategies agreed at the VYP meeting. When a Child's Plan has not yet been drafted or is in the process of being drafted, it will be the responsibility of the meeting to incorporate and implement the risk management strategies agreed at the VYP meeting.

## **Risk Management Classification**

The Chair should seek to establish attendees' views on which one of three risk management classifications applies to the young person and attempt to reach an agreement

- Aware.
- Attentive.
- Active and Alert.

The Chair may ask attendees to specify evidence for their choice of classification particularly if there are differences of opinion. Provision should be made for any dissenting views to be recorded when agreement cannot be reached. In such cases it will be the responsibility of the Chair to take a final decision about the most appropriate risk classification and risk management arrangements.

### Aware

A further scheduled VYP meeting will not be required. In such cases, universal services will be required to address any further issues in relation to the referred child or young person's behaviour and activities can be reviewed via appropriate multi-agency processes.

### Attentive

The Chair will recommend the establishment of a risk management core group. It is assumed for cases which reach the attentiveness level that a Lead Professional will already be in place or will have been identified. A date for the core group should be agreed at the initial VYP meeting and a review VYP Meeting should be arranged to take place within six months.

### Active and Alert

The Chair will make arrangements for further VYP meetings to review the referred child or young person's case at least three monthly. In tandem with this arrangement, risk management core group meetings should also be held regularly in the intervening period between CARM meetings. Classification as active and alert is likely to occur in only the "critical few" cases.

### MAPPA

Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) is the framework which joins up the agencies who manage offenders. The fundamental purpose of MAPPA is public safety and the reduction of serious harm. Where a child or young person under the age of 18 is convicted of a relevant Sexual Offence or other offending with a notable sexual element, the Court may require that they comply with the Sex Offender Notification Requirements (SONR) set out in Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act (2003). Such persons are commonly referred to as Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs) or as being on the Sex Offender Register. In this situation the client will be subject of MAPPA.

## Appendix 4

### Minute and Plan Template

CHILD OR VULNERABLE YOUNG PERSON'S PLAN		
BE AWARE / BE PREPARED		
Date of meeting:	Venue:	
Attendees:	Apologies:	
DANGER STATEMENT/ RISKS:		
<b>What are we worried about?</b>  <u>Harm</u>   <u>Complicating factors</u>	<b>What's working well?</b>  <u>Existing strengths</u>   <u>Existing safety</u>	<b>What needs to happen?</b>  <u>M</u>  <u>S</u>  <u>V</u>  <u>VS</u>
SAFETY GOALS/ OUTCOMES:		

## MONITORING ACTIVITY AND CONTINGENCY PLAN

Provide brief summary of the nature and seriousness of sexual and/or violent offending, and the offence analysis: the 'what', 'to whom', 'when', 'why' and 'how'

Immediacy / Degree of Alert	Behaviours / Events to monitor; Early Warning Signs	Agreed Actions	Responsible Person
Be Aware			
Be Prepared			
Take immediate action			
Key Contacts: Name	Role:	Organisation:	Telephone Number (inc out of hours):

*Consider the weakness of the preventative strategies, what will be put into place if the early warning signs appear. Who is first to call; what requires immediate action; what should be discussed at the next meeting.*

## **COMMUNICATION OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Has the plan been communicated to all who need to know?  
Is the young person's/their family's involvement considered inappropriate?

## **DISCLOSURE ISSUES**

Details of disclosure:

## **REVIEW**

Review of Plan-Routine and Responding to Change

*The dynamic nature of risk of serious harm, and its effective management necessitate vigilance and continual review. You must be prepared to respond to positive or negative change appropriately.*

*What event would let the team know that the plan is working or that it requires further review?*

## **ANY REQUIREMENTS TO REFER** (provide further explanation)

- CHILD PROTECTION
- ADULTS AT RISK OF HARM
- ANY OTHER AGENCY

## **ANY REQUIREMENTS TO ATTEND**

(NB: note any required alterations to invitation list: additions/removals)

## **MANAGEMENT LEVEL** Should the management level increase or decrease?

## Appendix 5

### Contact details

#### Adult Wellbeing – Social Care and Health

East Lothian Council Contact Centre  
01875 824 309  
[communityaccess@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:communityaccess@eastlothian.gov.uk)

#### Adult Services – Social Care and Health Midlothian

Midlothian Contact Centre  
0131 271 3900  
[accdutyteamadmin@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:accdutyteamadmin@midlothian.gov.uk)

#### Children’s Wellbeing – East Lothian

Children’s Wellbeing Assessment Team  
01875 824 309  
[childrenandfamilies@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:childrenandfamilies@eastlothian.gov.uk)

#### Children’s Services – Midlothian

Children’s Services Duty Team  
0131 271 6674  
[cereferrals@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:cereferrals@midlothian.gov.uk)

#### Criminal Justice – East Lothian

01620 827827  
[cjsupport@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:cjsupport@eastlothian.gov.uk)

#### Criminal Justice – Midlothian

0131 271 3860  
[swcjenquiries@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:swcjenquiries@midlothian.gov.uk)

#### Emergency Social Care Service (adults and children)

0800 731 6969 (freephone)

#### East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Office

0131 653 5150  
[emppo@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:emppo@eastlothian.gov.uk)

#### East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee website

[www.emppc.gov.uk](http://www.emppc.gov.uk)

The child and adult support and protection procedures are available via the above website.