

## Missing, Child Exploitation and Vulnerability Research & Development Round-up

October 2023

### Focus on violence affecting children and young people



image: Gerd Altmann at Pixabay

Violent crime among teenagers is of increasing concern and appears to be on the rise again compared with recent years, with mainly 15 to 17 year-olds being both the perpetrators and victims. In response, Childline has published a [web page](#) for young people focusing on gun and knife crime.

ITV News [item](#) about a team of hospital youth workers, or navigators, trying to support injured young people to think twice about the violence they're affected by.

BBC [documentary series](#) 'Street Gangs' is presented by ex-gang member Graeme Armstrong, who explores life in a modern gang in Scotland today.

Evening Standard [article](#) asks if London is failing its youth as 'gang warfare spreads across the capital'

Million Youth Media (MYM) has a range of new productions including '[PTSD](#)', a 45-minute graphic depiction of a stabbing incident; '[A Letter to Black Men](#)', a 20-minute drama about the lives of young Black men in a UK city; and '[Bando](#)', a 25-minute drama about group of teenage boys who find an abandoned flat where they can hang out, only for older to come along and take over. All the films contain very strong language and graphic images of violence. Minimum viewing age is 15. Very careful initial viewing and judgement should be exercised by professionals before deciding whether and where to show these films.

Free Youth Endowment Fund [webinars](#) on keeping children in education safe from violence.

## Child Exploitation

New Brook Spotting the Signs [Tool](#) for Child Exploitation includes the tool itself, designed to guide professionals to ask children and young people the key questions that can help identify abuse and/or exploitation. There is also guidance for professionals on its use.

## Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) and Exploitation (CSE)

New [research](#) from the University of Bedfordshire for the NSPCC looks at barriers for children in disclosing CSA, motivators and facilitators of disclosure and their experiences following disclosure. Findings are analysed in relation to proposed mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse.

The CSA Centre has so far published two briefings about [key messages](#) from research into child sexual abuse in online contexts. The first concerns [CSA by adults](#) in online contexts and the second concerns children's [harmful sexual behaviour](#) in online contexts.

We Protect has produced its 2023 Global Threat [assessment](#) of the scale and scope of child sexual abuse online.

The Safeguarding Board of Northern Ireland has produced [3 short videos](#) to keep the issue of CSE and boys on the agenda.

## Children's Social Care

New [report](#) from Pause 'Never More Than Once' sets out how the government can better support birth families, so that the removal of a child into care never happens more than once.

NYAS has launched a series of reports about children growing up in different care settings, entitled: '[This is my Home.](#)' The first report looks at children living in kinship care

[Results](#) from the Government's Children's Social Care questionnaires 2023 have been published, detailing views about children's homes, secure children's homes, adoption services, fostering services, residential family centres, boarding schools, residential special schools and further education colleges.

## Cost of Living

A Guardian [article](#), based on a new [report](#) from Barnardo's, highlights the fact that over 1 million UK children are sleeping on the floor or sharing a bed. Children are also being forced to use mouldy, soiled cots and bedding because parents cannot afford heating or new items. Parents say children without their own bed are 'tired all the time' which is affecting their wellbeing.

## County Lines

The Government have updated their [guidance](#) for professionals on County Lines. The guidance is a supplement to an organisation's existing safeguarding policies and outlines what county lines (and associated criminal exploitation) is, signs to look for in potential victims, and what to do about it.

BBC News [story](#) about the 2022 murder of teenager Joe Dix, who was exploited by a County Lines drugs gang.

[Academic](#) article 'Won the Battle but Lost the War? 'County Lines' and the Quest for Victim Status: Reflections and Challenges' explores some of the complexities and tensions surrounding the assignment of victim status (or not) to children who are criminally exploited through County Lines.

### **Domestic abuse**

Women's Aid has published their 'Influencers and Attitudes' [research](#) looking at what influences children and young people's understanding of domestic abuse, which 'proves a direct link between the viewing of harmful misogynist content online and the normalisation of unhealthy behaviours in relationships'.

### **LGBTQ+**

[Thread](#) on X from the Children & Young People's Mental Health Coalition detailing sources of support for children identifying as trans.

### **Mental Health**

['Making Space for Healing'](#) is a youth-led mental health resource for Muslim girls, created as part of the Muslim Girls Fence project, a collaboration between Maslaha and British Fencing. The booklet recognises the different struggles Muslim girls face and provides them with a space to explore their emotions, offering practical tools on how to manage difficult moments.

Downloadable [slides](#) from Pooky Knightsmith about self-harm look at why people self-harm; warning signs; what to say; breaking the cycle.

Social prescribing is a way of connecting people to activities, groups, and services that help improve their health and wellbeing ([NHS, 2023](#)) This new Barnardo's [report](#) on Social Prescribing demonstrates that social prescribing improves children and young people's mental health and wellbeing and is cost effective.

The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition has produced a [list of resources](#) to support children and young people's mental health during times of distressing world news and to support the adults around them to talk to them about it.

### **Modern Slavery**

The Government has updated [statutory guidance](#) on the identification and support of victims of modern slavery. The guidance describes the signs that someone may be a victim of modern slavery, the support available to victims, and the process for determining whether someone is a victim, and reflects recent changes in legislation.

## Online Safety & Online Harms

The [Online Safety Act](#) has received Royal Assent and passed into law in the UK.

The [Home Office has launched an end-to-end encryption campaign](#), calling directly on Meta not to roll out end-to-end encryption on its platforms without robust safety measures that ensure children are protected from sexual abuse and exploitation. There are two key campaign resources: [Campaign film](#) which addresses Meta directly ([click here to download](#) 16:9 and 4:5 versions of the film); [Parent guide](#) providing information about E2EE and advice for parents/carers.

Voicebox has released new [research](#) on how AI chatbots affect young people's mental health, connections and expectations for relationships. The report identified numerous concerns, including references to self-harm, extreme erotic roleplay, harmful stereotyping, and tips on committing crimes.

## Safeguarding

The DfE has updated its [Safeguarding guidance](#) for providers of after-school clubs, community activities, and tuition. There is also an accompanying [summary leaflet](#) for providers. The new guidance strengthens a number of areas, including governance; working with children who have SEND; staff recruitment and management; record-keeping of training; steps to take when a child goes missing from the activity.

Manchester Metropolitan University has conducted a [review](#) of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews from Wales over the past decade. The report highlights key areas requiring urgent action across the broad themes of: Risk factors; Response (organisational and multi-agency responses); Review (the quality of the report itself, the process and associated guidance)

Maslaha has produced a Radical Safeguarding Social Justice [Workbook](#) for safeguarding practitioners 'who might be wondering how to start doing things differently when it comes to safeguarding.' It focuses on the root causes of harm to children and looks at some of the cultures and structures that underpin them.

New [Transitional Safeguarding Knowledge Briefing](#) for Health Professionals from Research in Practice explains what Transitional Safeguarding is; why it's needed; how its adoption across health is key to developing a truly person-centred approach to safeguarding young people into adulthood.

The Information Commissioner's Office has produced a new [ten-step guide](#) to information-sharing in order to safeguard children.

UK Parliament have produced a [briefing](#) on the current situation regarding reporting child abuse in England, including Government plans to introduce a mandatory reporting duty.

## Schools & Education

Public First has produced a [report](#) about the school attendance crisis entitled: 'Listening to, and learning from, Parents in the Attendance Crisis' which finds there has been a "profound breakdown" in parental attitudes to the idea of full-time school attendance in the years since the pandemic.

## **SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)**

The ADHD Foundation has produced a [guide](#) for teachers (although useful for any practitioner) about working with children and young people with dyspraxia/ Developmental Coordination Disorder.

## **Substance Misuse**

BBC news [article](#) about nitrous oxide (NOS) becoming illegal on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

This United Nations [article](#) about banning vaping and smoking in schools is accompanied by two WHO resources: "[Freedom from tobacco and nicotine: guide for schools](#)," and the "[Nicotine and Tobacco-Free Schools Toolkit](#)".

## **Trauma**

Youth Justice Board [webinar](#) 'Trauma-Informed Practice: Turning Rhetoric into Reality' presents emerging good practice in the area of trauma-informed support for young people.

## **VAWG**

The [Teachers Toolkit](#) on violence against women and girls was created for MOPAC in collaboration with the arts and education charity, Tender. The activities and resources are co-designed to effectively engage young people on the issues of gender-based abuse, including relationship abuse and sexual violence.

## **Youth Justice**

New free to access [good practice guide](#) to developing creative approaches in Youth Justice for YJ professionals.

Guardian [article](#) about new CPS data showing that most people prosecuted under joint enterprise are from minoritised ethnic backgrounds. Black people are 16 times more likely than white people to be prosecuted under this doctrine.

New report from Barnardo's has highlighted the discrimination faced by many young Black people who have been in the care system. The '[Double Discrimination](#)' report highlights examples of racism, wider forms of discrimination, exclusion, and isolation experienced by young Black people in residential settings, foster care placements, education, mental health provision and prison.

## **OTHER**

[Prevent duty Guidance](#) has been updated. It relates to those in leadership roles in relevant agencies and those in a frontline role who are likely to engage with people who may be susceptible to radicalisation.

The Government have published updated Statutory Duty [Guidance](#) for councils in England with regard to providing youth services for young people. The National Youth Agency has published a [toolkit](#), including a roadmap and tools to review the needs of young people and develop a strong local ecosystem of youth work provision.

The Law Society has produced a really useful [guide](#) to race and ethnicity terminology and language, which can be used in any context.

The Guardian asked children's mental health experts for their top [conversation-starter questions](#) for parents to use with their teens.

Guardian [article](#) which reports new research showing that shouting at your children and putting them down can be as damaging as other forms of abuse and is associated with increased risk of self-harm, drug use, becoming a victim of crime or going to jail.

The Children's Commissioner for England has launched the [Big Ambition survey](#), seeking views of children aged 6 – 18 about what they think matters.

A [new Research in Practice publication](#) provides guidance about how practitioners can explore and write about identity with children and young people.

The National Policing Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) has launched [two reports](#) that explore how policing understands the 'voice of the victim', based on research with victims and witnesses and making a serie