



Safer Options Meeting Terms of Reference – September 2020

Aim

Safer Options is Bristol's whole-city response to reducing the extra-familial harm ie exploitation, county lines, violence and knife crime in the city. Agencies who sign up to be part of the Safer Options system commit to developing excellent practice in safeguarding adolescents at risk through ensuring excellent individual identification, assessment and support planning. Safer Options meetings are designed to enable locality intelligence to dynamically respond to emerging risk and concern bring strategic intelligence closer to operational delivery.

Predominantly Safer Options meetings will focus on children who are not already open to Children and Families Services with a risk management plan in place. The exceptions to this will be: children who are newly identified as being exploited or subject to violence in that week; children who are part of a peer group which is being discussed; children who spend time in a place which is being discussed; children who are open to Children and Families Services due to different concerns and are in the emerging risk cohort where a targeted intervention can be offered; children where the area social work or FIF team have identified the need for a creative solution outside their individual assessment and planning; reference to issues for an individual child or incident they have been involved in where it affects a wider group of children.

Bristol's Practice Framework has a number of core components which inform the approach we take to Safer Options meetings:

- **Signs of Safety.** We aim to be clear and specific about risk, harm strengths and safety whether this is about an individual child, place or peer group. We identify where there are gaps in our knowledge. We agree clear safety goals that we are all working towards. Wherever possible safety goals are co-developed with the people affected by the harm we are discussing.
- **Systemic Practice.** We work together to use our resources to make real, lasting change. We consider issues of extra-familial harm in their social and relational contexts to avoid stigmatising individuals, groups and communities. We consider the history of interventions tried previously and what the barriers to change may be. We support each other to consider how our own Social GRACES may be informing how we assess and analysis risk, and the interventions we provide, to ensure inclusive effective services. We focus on relationships – relationships with communities, with other agencies, with and between young people, peers, parents and guardians in our communities. We use systemic approaches to keep our meetings solution orientated and timely.

- **Contextual Safeguarding.** To create sustainable change we use our resources to affect change in places and peer groups. We work to build local guardianship and lasting safety. We work in a place-based way ensuring that solutions are not the dislocation of children from their communities and friendships. We are piloting this approach to enhance high quality individual assessment and planning for the children who are experiencing significant harm in our communities.
- **Public Health Response.** Bristol's services are committed to intervening early and turning the curve to reduce the number of children harmed by violence and exploitation in our communities in the long-term. We work together to coordinate our resource, support the VCSE and community sector to grow and develop their response and reach, and aim to reach the widest group of young people at increased risk of harm to create meaningful change. We also identify through data analytics individuals, places and peer groups disproportionately accounting for and affected by exploitation and violence. We target our resources on them to have the greatest possible impact. This includes working with Operation Topaz, Licencing and Community Safety to disrupt or prosecute perpetrators and premises of concern.

Objectives

- To gather intelligence and information from key partnership leads in the locality in relation to child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, and peer-on-peer abuse (also known as serious youth violence) particularly in relation to peers and places at increased risk.
- To use gathered information to dynamically assess the emerging and current risk in the locality in relation to child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, and peer-on-peer abuse (also known as serious youth violence)
- To analyse intelligence and information from an incident or an individual referral to understand what this means for other young people in the peer group or place and make a plan to reduce any associated concerns
- To ensure that children who are newly identified as being likely to be experiencing sexual, physical and/or emotional harm as a result of exploitation and/or violence in their communities receive the services they need in a timely way
- To build capacity and resilience in communities to enable communities to have a central role in preventing and safeguarding children from exploitation and violence. To build and strengthen community guardianship and enhance the local offer to those groups.
- To target preventative approaches and interventions to have the greatest impact using the collective resources of the Safer Options system and partnership informed by intelligence and data including children not allocated to Bristol City Council Children and Families Services
- To manage harm or emerging harm in peers groups and places not managed as a complex child protection strategy (ie where the threshold for significant harm is not met)
- To identify people at increased risk of being targeted through retaliation and violence using data and intelligence which is outside identification pathways for individual safeguarding
- To identify people or persons of concern who may be involved in exploitation of children/organised abuse to enable escalation to Operation Topaz and multi-agency disruption strategies

- To consider and agree resource for creative solutions for children and young people where we are struggling to affect positive change through their individual assessment and planning
- To identify, name, challenge and resolve unconscious and structural bias which can prevent children who are disproportionately impacted by exploitation and violence receiving the support they need to be safe from harm
- To improve outcomes and quality of services for children affected by exploitation and violence in their communities

Roles & Responsibilities

Deputy Service Manager will

- Agree the agenda and priorities for the meeting with the Area Families in Focus Manager and Safer Options Manager in advance of the weekly meeting. The Deputy Service Manager will be responsible for reviewing the weekly intelligence briefing from the Intelligence Investigator to determine the agenda.
- Chair the weekly Safer Options Meeting in collaboration with the Area Families in Focus Manager.
- Contribute relevant information from their area's social work assessments and interventions.
- Ensure the meeting stays child and young person focused and on safeguarding children or preventing the need for safeguarding.
- If a child is identified as requiring a Children and Families intervention through the triangulation of multi-agency intelligence and information at the meeting the Deputy Service Manager will be responsible for that threshold decision and rationale as to whether a statutory service is required and this will be emailed to First Response by the FIF Business Support Officer.
- Identify resources from their social work team where required to support work identified by the Safer Options meeting. This may include resource to support contextual interventions.
- Ensure that agencies in the Safer Options meetings who may be working with children not open to the service have a clear understanding of their role and capacity to escalate if risks increase through an agreed pathway.
- Enable an inclusive and reflective meeting where bias and discrimination are effectively challenged.
- Ensure there is compliance with information sharing processes and there is clarity over what information can be shared externally to the meeting.
- When on leave the Deputy Service Manager can be represented by an appropriately skilled and briefed Consultant Social Worker, the Area Service Manager or another Deputy Service Manager – they are responsible for agreeing their own cover arrangements.

Area Families in Focus Manager

- Agree the agenda and priorities for the meeting with the Deputy Service Manager and Safer Options Manager in advance of the weekly meeting.
- Support the weekly Safer Options Meeting in collaboration with the Deputy Service Manager.
- Present the information for threshold discussion for individual children referred from First Response (pathway to be confirmed in pilot)
- Contribute relevant information from their area's FIF assessments and interventions.
- Support decision making about when and how a child, children or family will be offered a proactively offer of support from FIF.
- Identify resources from their service area where required to support work identified by the Safer Options meeting. This may include resource to support contextual interventions.
- Ensure that agencies in the Safer Options meetings who may be working with children not open to the service have a clear understanding of their role and capacity to escalate if risks increase through an agreed pathway.
- Enable an inclusive and reflective meeting where bias and discrimination are effectively challenged.
- When on leave the Area FIF Manager can be represented by the Deputy Area Service Manager, the Head of Service for Targeted Intervention or another Area FIF Manager – they are responsible for agreeing their own cover arrangements.

Safer Options Manager

- Agree the agenda and priorities for the meeting with the Deputy Service Manager and Safer Options Manager in advance of the weekly meeting.
- Review and present the key information from the Safer Options Hub intelligence each week where there is not already sufficient plans in place.
- Provide expert advice and guidance on best practice approaches with individuals, peer groups and place assessments and intervention.
- Support the analysis of information to provide an information assessment of the current risk to children in the locality
- Ensure that all agencies are represented at the appropriate level and contributing effectively. If not work to engage them in the process or escalate to senior management if not successful.
- Identify and agree resource from the Safer Options Hub to support assessments and interventions.
- Provide support to VCSE organisations to develop capacity, interventions and approaches to working with young people in the locality. Support VCSE organisations and community group to work safely and deliver evidence based interventions.
- Broker support for young people from VCSE providers.
- Develop new pathways and processes to respond to themes and concerns that emerge in the work.
- Act as a critical friend for the integrated locality team to ensure there is effective assessment and response to children's needs.
- Promote approaches which avoid criminalisation of children and take a restorative approach.

- Provide a fortnightly summary of activities to senior managers and designated professionals to enable clear join up and understanding of contextual interventions.
- When on leave the Safer Options Manager can be represented by one of the Safer Options Hub Advanced Social Workers/Practitioners, the Principal Social Worker or the Strategic Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager – they are responsible for agreeing their own cover arrangements.

Safer Options Intelligence Investigator

- Provides an intelligence pack about the locality a minimum 1 working day prior to the Safer Options meeting focused on: new and emerging concerns; current assessment of risk; places with increasing or decreasing risk; peer groups increasing or decreasing risk. Where possible this will be RAG rated.
- Ensure new intelligence raised by partners at the Safer Options meeting is appropriately recorded on the police intelligence system.
- Identify and follow up routes for intelligence and information gathering in the community
- Create ecomaps and chronologies to information analysis of issues in places and peer groups
- Develop routes for guardians in communities to share concerns.

Standing Members responsibilities:

- YOT Team Manager
 - VRU PCSO/DS
 - Barnardo's Team Manager
 - CYN Team Manager
 - Education Inclusion Manager
 - Senior Youth Practitioner
 - NPS/CRC
 - Through Care Practice Lead
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- Share information which contributes to the meeting's analysis and assessment of need in the locality in accordance with current guidance and is accurately recorded on each agencies system.
 - Contribute actively to achieve the purpose of the meeting.
 - Work collaboratively and openly with other partners to fulfil the objectives of the Safer Options meeting.
 - Be courageous in speaking out about practice or language which is not safe or is discriminatory (including victim blaming language).
 - Keep to the agenda and time set for discussions to ensure a focused meeting.
 - Be creative in thinking about how to problem solve and create new solutions for children and young adults in the city.
 - Attend meetings regularly or send a deputy from their own area of expertise who has sufficient authority to agree resources and fulfil the requirements of the meeting.
 - Identify and agree resources respond to an identified issue or contribute to the strategic response in the prevention of exploitation and violence in the locality.
 - Contribute to the actions agreed during the meetings and provide timely reports on progress and outcomes.
 - Communicate relevant information back to their respective agencies and practitioners in line with principles of good information sharing.

- Identify opportunities and routes for referral into health services such as CAMHS, YPSMTS and Be Safe and substance misuse services such as BDP, DYPP and New Leaf.

Reporting

Notes about any individual child discussed in a Safer Options meeting are recorded on Bristol City Council's secure child record's system under 'General Notes' in the Early Help Module by the FIF Business Support Officer or on the open EHM contact record. Relevant intelligence will be records on the Avon and Somerset Constabulary's record system Niche.

Discussions about places, adults and general groups of concern (with no identifiable names) will be written up as brief minutes and action log by the FIF Business Support Officer and circulated to the group. These must be held securely and not shared outside the meeting without the permission of the Deputy Service Manager, Area Service Manager or Safer Options Manager.

Retention of records will depend on the legal status of the child and the policies of the individual agency.

Information Sharing Protocol

Partners attending Safer Options meetings will share information with one another to understand risk and vulnerabilities facing young people identified by the Safer Options system and identify opportunities to prevent children and young people being harmed. As this is a preventative approach this will include children who are not at immediate or significant risk of harm, but where there is intelligence, risk modelling or information to suggest they are at increased risk of harm and could benefit from an offer of a targeted intervention. This is in line with the statutory guidance Working Together 2018 which sets out the requirement for safeguarding partners to take a contextual safeguarding approach.

Attendees will complete a confidentiality sign in sheet when attending meetings. Information will be used solely for the purpose of understanding risk and vulnerability, in order to implement interventions to mitigate this risk. The information shared within the meetings may need to be shared to other partner organisations, including educational settings and the council's commissioned providers. The agency sharing the information must make their own assessment as to whether information sharing is proportionate and whether they have a legal gateway to do so. They should be clear when sharing the information with others how it may be used.

There are a number of legal gateways that provide a legal basis to share information between agencies, including:

- The Children Act 2004
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Criminal Justice Act 2003
- Education Act 2002
- Localism Act 2011

More details on these legal gateways can be found [here](#).

Practitioners must follow best practice principles of information sharing and ensure it is necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure: ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those individuals who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely ([HM Government, 2018](#)).

Practitioners must distinguish between fact and opinion and record their own decisions on sharing information and the reasons for doing so or not in line with their organisations' procedures.

Safer Options meetings will utilise risk models designed by the Insight Bristol team that identify young people thought to be at risk of criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation or being involved in serious violence. These models generate a score which professionals at the Safer Options meetings will discuss to understand what risk factors in data contribute to this score. No decisions are made by the models – they generate flags for lead professionals to discuss and understand risk. Information on these risk models can be found [here](#).

In working to prevent exploitation and violence in the community practitioners must be particularly mindful of stigma and bias that can be an unintended consequence of improper or unclear information sharing and must take every step possible to mitigate against this.

Involving children and families

Wherever possible we should work openly and transparently with children and families. When approaching them to offer an intervention we should provide as much information as is safe to do so without revealing another's sensitive or confidential information or placing the child at risk so they are able to make an informed decision about engaging with the support. The meeting should be explicit about what children and families will be told about being discussed at the Safer Options meeting and by whom. Where it is not necessary to speak about individuals (for example when discussing a place) professionals should avoid using names. Professionals should be mindful of the risks of jigsaw identification and ensure there is common understanding across the meeting about what can be shared with whom.

Wherever possible we should work from a principle that communities are best able to safeguard their children when they are equipped with the information to do so in a form they can use. We should also see our interventions as collaborative with children and families.

Information about Safer Options will be available to sign post children and families too on their website. This will be developed as a priority over the next few months.

Retaining and storing Information

Information must not be retained for longer than necessary for the purpose for which it was obtained. Signatory services should ensure that they have physical and electronic security in place for the stored data and that there is awareness, training and management of the systems where the information is stored.

Information shared will be stored securely within the relevant partner's case management systems and retained in line with that organisation's data retention policy. This information can be attained by service users via User Access Requests.

The privacy statement for Safer Options can be found on the Bristol City Council website [here](#).

Accountability and Governance

The Safer Options meeting is accountable to the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership's Serious Youth Violence Board.

The management and leadership responsibility of the group rests with Bristol City Council Children and Families Services, however the other agencies are required to support the work of the Safer Options as part of their safeguarding duties.

If disputes arise, resolution will be sought in line with the KBSP Escalation Policy however the chair of the panel may also escalate any concerns outside of the meeting given their strategic roles.

Each member of Safer Options is accountable to its own organisation and will report back to their managers as determined by their agency. The Safer Options Manager will report to the KBSP Serious Youth Violence Board on behalf of the meeting as required by the Board.

Declaration

I have read the above Terms of Reference and understand my role as a member of the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership Safer Options Meeting

Name: _____

Role: _____

Agency: _____

Date: _____