**Executive Summary**

**Adolescent Safeguarding in London**

**Themes, Challenges and Opportunities: a thematic review based on self-evaluation by 16 London authorities**

This report draws together the themes from the adolescent safeguarding self-evaluations undertaken by sixteen authorities as part of the ALDCS London Innovation and Improvement Alliance programme. The report identifies the challenges most commonly identified by authorities, it looks at how these can be addressed through collaborative activity and it considers how the process of self-evaluation can be further enhanced. The annex of the report identifies emerging and innovative practice in respect of the challenges which are identified in the body of the report.

**Challenges**

**Developing a coherent adolescent safeguarding practice approach**

* Fulfilling statutory responsibilities and guidance while going with the grain of adolescence
* A model of practice for those who are the most vulnerable which is effective in managing and de-escalating risk and responding to trauma
* Practice which has an impact on SYV and CCE
* Blending whole family and adolescent specific approaches to see both the young person and family as assets
* Building trust amongst children, families and communities who have been victimised and are often fearful of sharing with professionals
* Supporting the well-being of a workforce who choose to work on a day-to-day basis in the midst of trauma.

**Structural and systems challenges**

* The disproportionate involvement of BAME young people at the apex of child protection and criminal justice systems and limited evidence of coherent responses which are likely to impact upon the problem.
* The importance of a shared strategic vision for adolescent safeguarding within a local authority and between partners.
* A statutory and regulatory context pulls young people and practitioners in many directions and is not young person-centred.
* Cuts to the universal and preventative offer not compensated by short-term / poorly coordinated funding from multiple govt departments and public bodies.
* Public policy can promote binary responses to the same young people
* Tension between public health and law and order responses

**Information sharing and risk management**

* Identifying the most effective panel structures for joint decision-making
* Generating a single view of adolescent risk in LA and between partners.
* Balancing collective responsibility and individual agency accountability.
* Multi-borough police BCUs
* Inter-authority communication regarding the movement of families and placement of children
* Rapid development / embedding of new service structures to safeguard adolescents
* Data and quality of information within an authority varied as did the availability of adolescent safeguarding data at a London level.

**Educational settings, provision and need**

* Increased exclusions met by various responses by LAs with differing impact
* Differential rates of safeguarding referrals from schools and a range of approaches to better supporting schools.
* High levels of additional learning and special educational needs in the cohort of vulnerable adolescents, often in non-mainstream settings and frequently out of the home borough.
* Provision of sufficient, quality alternative education provision / PRU, which meet needs without stigmatising or impacting upon safety.

**Less attention was given to**

* Health contribution and the poor health outcomes for vulnerable adolescents
* Transitional safeguarding arrangements
* A number of self-evaluations paid limited attention to the work of the youth offending service (YOS) and the interface between YOS and CSC
* The well-being / resilience of the workforce
* Availability / suitability of residential placements for adolescents
* Work in relation to CSE got attention but most felt this was increasingly mature / confident particularly compared to CCE

**Areas for Collaborative Working and Ways Forward**

* Cross borough protocols for info sharing re children/families placed out of area or coming to attention (beyond statutory requirements)
* A shared data-set for benchmarking adolescent safeguarding activity
* A repository of effective and innovative practice: particularly edge of care, missing, CCE and transitional safeguarding
* BAME disproportionality: identifying approaches that are having an impact
* Educational risk factors: work with SEND / Strategic Education Leads for London
* Children going missing: identifying and sharing best practice
* Supporting the workforce: sharing to enhance resilience / well-being and develop the skills of the young people’s workforce

The ALDCS adolescent safeguarding group will now lead on the collaborative work identified from analysis of the self-evaluations. A work programme of learning events, peer challenge and review, and work with partner organisations at sub-regional and pan-London level will be developed to enhance practice in London.

**Adolescent Safeguarding in London**

Themes, Challenges and Opportunities: a thematic review based on self-evaluation by 16 London authorities

**Background**

This review was undertaken as part of the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA) programme of sector-led improvement. The Association of London Directors of Children’s Services (ALDCS) has identified three practice priorities of which adolescent safeguarding is one (alongside SEND and Workforce). Each London local authority chose a priority to self-evaluate against and this report collates themes from the sixteen adolescent safeguarding self-evaluations undertaken.

For the purposes of self-evaluation and related LIIA work, we have defined ‘adolescent safeguarding’ as relating to the transitional developmental phase between childhood and adulthood. There are no hard age definitions to adolescence and it is recognised that this phase of growing up continues well beyond the age of 18 when many children’s services statutory responsibilities cease. For practical purposes the self-evaluation framework was primarily focused upon safeguarding responses for children and young people aged 11-18 but authorities were asked to give consideration to those statutory children’s services responsibilities for young people which go beyond this age threshold and to consider the quality of their transitional safeguarding arrangements.

The self-evaluations were not expected to cover all aspects of an authority / partnership’s services to young people but to focus on:

* the key challenges,
* strengths of existing practice
* areas where the authority would want to focus its energies to improve practice and impact for vulnerable adolescents.

The self-evaluations were framed to consider both the work which supports adolescents in the context of their families and the wider contextual risks experienced by young people such as sexual and/or criminal exploitation, going missing, involvement in violence and offending, substance misuse and risks related to educational environments or missing education. A key challenge in this area of work is blending concepts and practice frameworks that focus on family resilience / safety with those relating to an understanding and effective response to risks outside of the family home, This needs to be acvhieved while also being sensitive to the specific requirements to meet the needs of service users in the adolescent developmental phase.

This report is structured to enable a focus upon:

* Recurring themes and shared challenges
* Emerging and innovative practice
* Areas of focus for inter-authority working
* Learning from the self-evaluation process for the future

Specific examples of emerging and innovative practice identified through the self-evaluation are captured as an annex to the report.

It is important to note that this is the first time this approach to sharing thematic self-evaluations has taken place in London and therefore the expectations of respondents varied and there is learning for future exercises which is reflected at the end of the report. It is also relevant to note that these self-evaluations are the local authority’s views. This is a critical perspective to be able to capture (particularly for ALDCS) but it should also be seen as an important caveat as these are single agency evaluations of partnership responses.

**Recurring Themes and Shared Challenges**

The ALDCS adolescent safeguarding group had identified a set of emerging priorities prior to undertaking the formal self-evaluation process. These are largely echoed in the self-evaluations but some were given more frequent attention across the 16 authorities’ submissions and this is reflected in the analysis that follows and are therefore likely to be given greater prominence in the sector-led improvement work that will flow from the self-evaluations.

The initial themes previously identified by the ALDCS group were:

* **Leadership and governance**: ensuring a pan London shared strategic vision, strategic decision making and implementation within LAs and between partners, considering the interface between established working groups and boards
* **Sharing Information, developing data and intelligence** (locally, pan-London and with partners) including approaches to sharing information for young people and families moving between boroughs
* **Developing practice in safeguarding adolescents -**  including approaches for reducing the numbers of adolescent entrants to care
* **Developing practice in child criminal exploitation** (CCE) – particularly where serious youth violence and exploitation meet and addressing very young children becoming involved in CSE and criminal exploitation
* **Identifying and sharing what works to improve outcomes across complex safeguarding, contextual safeguarding and transitional safeguarding** - particularly for the most vulnerable and diverse cohorts (including best practice with adolescent girls)
* **BAME disproportionality** – specifically what are we going to do differently to improve outcomes for the young, black male cohort?
* **Educational contributing factors** - inclusion / exclusion, managed moves, off-rolling, including quality of alternative provision and SEND interface
* **Children going missing**: making responses to missing a safeguarding asset
* **Developing models and structures** that enhance integration around vulnerable adolescents
* **Supporting the workforce** - enhanciong skills, capability and resilience

Unsurprisingly all of the themes identified in the early work of the pan-London group re-appear in the self-evaluations. What follows is a qualitative assessment, based on the reviews of the self-evaluations by the three lead DCS’s for this priority as collated by the author (LIIA Programme Lead), which provides more detail of the challenges which are being experienced by the participating London authorities. As many of these challenges are over-lapping, over-arching thematic headings have been used where it makes sense to group inter-locking challenges together.

**Developing a coherent adolescent safeguarding practice approach**

The contemporary understanding of adolescent safeguarding is significantly informed by the development of contextual analysis and approaches most closely associated with the University of Bedfordshire and in particular Carlene Firmin’s work. This understanding builds upon the 2014 Research in Practice / ADCS evidence scope ‘That Difficult Age’, which drew together research findings and emerging effective practice for working with adolescent risk. Taken together these approaches closely align and provide a strong evidence base to inform practice. The challenge repeatedly articulated throughout the self-evaluations relate to the application of the evidence within the current children’s service operating environment. This is manifested in a variety of ways:

* Developing child in need and child protection approaches which reflect statutory responsibilities and guidance while putting young people themselves at the centre of efforts to protect them by ‘going with the grain’ of adolescence and recognising their agency.
* Articulating and applying a practice model which builds upon the established evidence base, particularly in relation to maintaining effective relationships, when the young person is likely to be within and between multiple systems with the potential for multiple interventions. All London authorities who self-evaluated are struggling, to various degrees, to apply a model of practice for those who are the most vulnerable which is effective in managing and de-escalating risk.
* Systematically utilising multi-disciplinary and multi-agency skills and resources to add value to interventions with vulnerable adolescents and recognising the impact of trauma. A range of approaches involving clinical / therapeutic input and case formulation were being developed but practice has not as yet cohered around a shared model for responding to trauma.
* All self-evaluations highlighted a sense of the escalating challenge around serious youth violence and associated criminal exploitation. Many submissions gave evidence of developing practice but few were able to demonstrate impact and all recognised this is an area where practitioners and partnerships need support to make a difference to vulnerable adolescents.
* Understanding the rights, responsibilities and role of parents towards their adolescent children within service responses which are increasingly attuned to risks outside of the home. At its simplest this was expressed as maintaining a focus on empowering parents rather than either, on the one hand, holding them responsible for contextual risks they cannot control or, on the other, distancing them from involvement with and for the protection of their children.
* Building trust amongst children, families and communities who have been victimised and are often fearful of sharing with professionals.
* Skilling the workforce to understand the ‘constrained choice’ associated with child criminal exploitation and ensuring the same care is taken with language, attitudes and service provision to those who are criminally exploited as is now common practice with children who are at risk of sexual exploitation.
* Supporting the well-being of a workforce who choose to work on a day-to-day basis in the midst of trauma.

**Structural and systems challenges**

The self-evaluations paint a picture of an incredibly busy landscape which is fast evolving as a result of newly identified threats, a plethora of policy initiatives and funding streams, and the significant profile which safeguarding adolescents currently commands. Particular themes which recur in the self-evaluations were:

* The disproportionate involvement of BAME young people at the apex of child protection and criminal justice systems and limited evidence of coherent responses which are likely to impact upon the problem.
* The importance of a shared strategic vision for adolescent safeguarding within a local authority and between partners (particularly in view of the risk of policy and initiative overload referenced above).
* Balancing the tensions that arise between multiple regulatory regimes and guidance in relation to particular children, presenting in particular ways, at particular times (eg missing, offending, at risk of a particular form of harm or exploitation). This is further complicated by the move within and between statutory frameworks and thresholds eg early help, child in need, child protection, looked after, youth justice, tiers of physical and mental health responses, and various educational pathways with their own statutory requirements. Maintaining a coherent practice model which is faithful to the evidence base in relation to working with adolescent risk is extremely challenging within this statutory and regulatory context.
* Funding pressures have impacted upon the universal and preventative offer for young people, meaning services that remain are often reactive in their responses and come too late, often when parents have given up asking for help. Funding opportunities are increasingly short-term and from a range of government departments and other public bodies (such as MOPAC, YJB) with a lack central coordination.
* Government / public policy initiatives can promote binary responses to the same young people seeing them as either victim or offender, requiring welfare or punishment, criminal justice or child protection. sympathy or blame. At a systems level this is mirrored by a tension between approaches that promote public health responses and those which rely more heavily on law and order. The use of stop and search and related public order powers is cited as an example of where partnerships are struggling to balance their responsibilities and where we are yet to have a shared view of our collective understanding and response to our most vulnerable adolescents.

**Service responses and approaches to information sharing and risk management**

The risks faced by the children who make-up our adolescent safeguarding cohort (often being both ‘at risk’ and ‘a risk’) mean they now attract significant multi-agency interest and involvement. Organising this multi-agency oversight in a way which adds value in managing these risks, is efficient and fulfils statutory requirements is a complex challenge. All authorities had either recently reviewed their over-sight and risk management structures or were in the process of doing so. In addition the challenges are inherently inter-authority as a result of missing and offending outside of borough and placements of looked after children or managed moves for vulnerable families. Against this back-drop changing partnership structures such as CCGs and police BCUs could provide some cross-authority solutions but in practice often appear to make joined up responses more difficult. Specific challenges were:

* Identifying the most effective panel structures for responding to vulnerable adolescence, which were responsive to the range of risks they faced and met the requirements of all partners without becoming unwieldy or losing the specific focus on particular risks as required.
* The structures to support risk management were also closely related to the ability of authorities and their partners to have a single view of adolescent risk and who were their most vulnerable young people.
* Developing an effective interface between joint decision making / risk management panels and the statutory frameworks of child protection, YOS, police and health. Within this is the further challenge of balancing collective responsibility and individual agency accountability.
* The roll-out of new police BCUs which are multi-borough has been experienced differently across London with examples of where this has added value to inter-borough working but also where the new structures have been disruptive to established relationships between partners.
* Inter-authority communication regarding the movement of families and placement of children is under-developed and as a result can undermine attempts to safeguard adolescents. Requirements in relation to looked after children and those on child protection plans are clear, although not always faithfully observed, but there was greater concern about children who were in need or otherwise vulnerable who are often transient between London authorities. Many self-evaluations commented on the need for better systems and processes to share information about these children and families.
* Service structures are evolving fairly rapidly to better safeguard adolescents but this is inevitably being done with limited understanding of what has been tried elsewhere, what is proving to be effective, and what opportunities exist to learn from formal evaluation or to be evaluated. There are a number of projects under evaluation in London but these are not always widely known or their experience and outcomes systematically disseminated. Many authorities have developed dedicated adolescent services but these vary greatly in scope as does their involvement with formal case management responsibilities and statutory processes.
* Data and quality of information within an authority varied as did the availability of adolescent safeguarding data at a London level. It was recognised that the absence of a shared adolescent safeguarding data set makes understanding and managing performance more challenging and, allied to this point, it is difficult to identify specific indicators that demonstrate impact in improving the safeguarding response to adolescents.

**Educational settings, provision and needs**

The significance of appropriate educational provision is well-established as a key protective factor. The challenges which local authorities were experiencing in stemming an increasing number of exclusions was perhaps the single most commonly identified challenge in relation to education and participation. Increased exclusions meant greater demand on alternative provision, which a number of authorities appear to be struggling to provide in sufficient quantity and of the required quality. The prevalence of special educational needs, often under-identified or belatedly recognised, in the cohort of most vulnerable adolescents added a further layer of complexity to the work of keeping these young people safe. Key challenges identified relating to education were:

* Zero tolerance policies in relation to certain behaviour in schools leading to increased exclusions. In response local authorities described a variety of approaches to increase inclusion and to promote restorative approaches and trauma-informed educational environments, which were being adopted with different degrees of success across the capital.
* Differential rates of safeguarding referrals from schools which could sometimes be explained by demographics but were also related to schools’ confidence in dealing with new and dynamic adolescent safeguarding challenges. A range of approaches to better supporting schools to hold on to children and to more confidently manage safeguarding concerns were being deployed by local authorities.
* High levels of additional learning and special educational needs in the cohort of vulnerable adolescents meant that practice needed to be well-attuned to these needs to make interventions accessible. The educational provision for these young people was often in non-mainstream settings and frequently out of the home borough. This adds significant complexity to education safeguarding activity and its interface with other home and host authority’s children’s social care services.
* Many authorities reported challenges in providing sufficient, quality alternative education provision and pupil referral units, which met the needs of vulnerable adolescents and did so without stigmatising or impacting upon safety through clustering at risk young people together.

**Other Areas of Interest from the Self-Evaluations**

This section captures issues which were either surprisingly infrequently captured in the self-evaluations or because they appear to be significant challenges but only for a small number of authorities. It is recognised that the explanation for what appear to be omissions or under-representation of ‘big ticket’ issues is likely to be a result of the self-evaluations being a single agency activity and sometimes being informed solely by a social care perspective. Some areas to note:

* Health provision received surprisingly little attention in the self-evaluations, although some authorities commented upon the paucity of CAMHS services for young people who had experienced trauma and the inflexibility of the services that were available (with some examples of more progressive practice). Across the self-evaluations the health contribution and the poor health outcomes for vulnerable adolescents attracted limited attention.
* Transitional safeguarding arrangements did not feature significantly in the self-evaluations. This may be because this is an area which has until now received insufficient attention more generally and is only latterly coming to the fore as local authorities focus upon the continuity of their services across the age range. This is also an area where the self-evaluations would have been strengthened by contributions from adult services.
* Perpetrators of harm featured in a limited number of self-evaluations but where work had been identified this was seen as a fruitful area for attention in re-balancing the safeguarding perspective to enhance the focus upon disruption and reducing the impact of those who exploit / abuse adolescents. Where attention was given to safeguarding young adults this also highlighted that these are often the vulnerable children who continue to be vulnerable into adulthood but may also be a group who are at particular risk of being perpetrators of harm.
* A number of self-evaluations paid scant attention to the work of the youth offending service (YOS) and the interface between YOS and children’s social care. While this was by no means the norm it was telling that this area of practice was not scrutinised in some evaluations given that YOS responsibilities almost exclusively involve work with vulnerable adolescents.
* Child sexual exploitation is referenced in all the self-evaluations but it is notable that all areas reflect increasing confidence in relation to their practice and many say that with this the incidence of identification of CSE as a primary risk is reducing. This is likely to be an outcome of the increasing recognition of wider issues of child exploitation, particularly a more recent focus upon criminal exploitation.
* While upskilling the adolescent workforce was a feature of a number of self-evaluations there was not the same attention to the well-being / resilience of the workforce.
* Availability / suitability of residential placements for adolescents, which is recognised as an acute problem within children’s services, received little attention within the self-evaluations. This is likely to be a reflection of the guidance provided to those undertaking the evaluations.

**Areas for Inter-Authority Collaboration**

There are several strong drivers towards greater collaborative work between local authorities in order to improve adolescent safeguarding responses as:

* A response to children who move between boroughs because of formal or informal placements or come to notice as a result of missing episodes, offending or other out of area safeguarding incidents.
* Many of the partners who are integral to safeguarding responses have a footprint which is larger than any one authority.
* Challenges which are being experienced at a borough level could be better addressed through learning with and from others.
* The threats to young people often come from out-of-borough or pan-borough sources such as from organised crime groups.

For these reasons there is evidently a benefit in effective cross authority work. While examples exist of developing relationships and structures which support shared safeguarding action (see the report annex) there is an opportunity and an appetite to do more.

The following are suggested from the themes identified in this report as areas which would particularly benefit from collaborative action. This activity could take place between neighbouring boroughs, at a sub-regional level or pan-London through the work programme of the LIIA adolescent safeguarding group. It will be for the group to determine if this is the right list and which of these activities to prioritise:

* **Cross borough protocols** in relation to information sharing regarding children and families placed out of area or coming to attention (beyond the existing statutory requirements)
* **A shared data-set** for benchmarking adolescent safeguarding activity
* **A repository** of effective and innovative adolescent safeguarding practice
* **Edge of care practice:** identifying where this is working to appropriately reduce (or curtail the rise) in adolescent entrants into care
* **Developing practice in relation to child criminal exploitation**
* **Transitional safeguarding:** identifying and sharing effective approaches
* **Impact upon BAME disproportionality:**  identifying approaches that are having an impact and sharing these
* **Addressing educational risk factors** that impact upon adolescent safeguarding. As these are closely related to themes being addressed in the LIIA SEND group and work of the Strategic Education Leads for London (SELL) it may be that these groups are best placed to lead on this work.
* **Children going missing**: identifying and sharing best practice
* **Supporting the workforce**: sharing approaches to enhancing resilience / well-being and providing joint activity to develop the skills of the young people’s workforce.

A number of these areas are already being taken forward as part of the LIIA programme. Work on the shared adolescent data-set is underway and the self-evaluation work has provided a platform for the effective/emerging practice repository. Other areas are clearly appropriate for attention as part of the LIIA adolescent safeguarding work programme, which will be developed as a result of the analysis of the self-evaluation. This programme will include: peer reviews (starting in Harrow in November) and opportunities for peer challenge (this may be undertaken in sub-regional clusters), and a range of learning events as agreed with the pan-London group.

There are also opportunities within the LIIA programme to work with external partners to develop the tools and apply research informed responses that address the challenges identified. Examples include strategic use of the Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme, engagement with the What Works Centre, and systematic / collaborative approaches to existing partner support such as that provided by Research in Practice. Using the LIIA website to capture and disseminate the outputs from evaluated programmes in London (and elsewhere) also provides an opportunity for shared learning to address adolescent safeguarding priorities.

**Emerging and Innovative Practice Responses**

The preceding section sought to analyse the challenges which appear to be most pertinent to the contributing local authorities. It is, however, a commitment of the ALDCS LIIA programme that we will do more than ‘admire the problem’ and that through collaborative work, which identifies challenges and, critically, shares innovative and effective practice we will support authorities to better address their practice challenges. The annex to this report provides examples where authorities believe they are either making headway with specific challenges or are at least trying an innovative approach which is worthy of wider attention. Many of the challenges identified above are matched by practice examples which will be of interest to others who are grappling with similar problems. This annex does not provide endorsement of the approaches being undertaken, rather it identifies potential sources of support and learning.

The breadth of innovative approaches, adaptations to new threats and clearer understanding of how services need to be shaped around vulnerable young people is commendable. It is also noteworthy that this imaginative and often brave practice has developed against a headwind of ongoing children’s services financial pressures and cuts to many of the universal services which form part of the children’s partnership.

Please see the ‘Emerging and Innovative Practice Responses’ annex to the report for further details of London local authority responses to their adolescent safeguarding context.

**Learning from the Self-Evaluation Process**

The individual self-evaluations provide a rich picture of the work which is going on in each authority and taken together will help to shape collaborative work to improve adolescent safeguarding in London. As with any first attempt there is much to learn from how we went about the self-evaluation process. The quality of the sixteen submissions varied, some were comprehensive, analytical and outcome focused others were more descriptive and some had not had the same degree of attention as others. While some variation is inevitable having now undertaken the exercise it is anticipated that future iterations will build upon this initial endeavour.

Some of the ways it is suggested that the self-evaluation process can be improved and thereby produce evidence which is of greatest value to individual authorities and to wider learning are:

* Produce the self-evaluation to a standard that it can be used as a platform for service improvement and as a key component of the Ofsted annual engagement
* Ensure all self-evaluations have DCS sign-off
* Produce self-evaluations as a partnership statement which has the contribution of safeguarding partners and reflects the breadth of adolescent safeguarding responsibilities across the local authority (including adult services, YOS, community safety, and education colleagues)
* Review the template and guidance for the self-evaluation to provide greater clarity and direction around the expectations. It was evident that most evaluations would have benefitted from more emphasis on outcomes and impact.

No date has as yet been agreed to repeat the self-evaluation process but it would seem appropriate that this occurs before the two-year’s of focus upon this ALDCS priority is concluded in March 2021. The value of undertaking the exercise in the sixteen contributing authorities may also encourage the other London LAs to undertake an adolescent safeguarding evaluation. Amongst other benefits this would greatly add to the repository of innovative and effective practice which is developing.

**Annex: Emerging and Innovative Practice Responses**

The following are shared by authorities as areas where they have developed their practice to respond to their adolescent safeguarding challenges. The examples are by no means exhaustive and others could also have been drawn from the self-evaluations. It is hoped that this snapshot of developments across London can provide a platform which can be added to in the course of the LIIA programme (including by authorities who have not self-evaluated on adolescent safeguarding) in order to provide a repository for those involved in service development.

**Understanding and Using Data to Support Improved Outcomes**

**Croydon *CSCB’s Vulnerable Adolescents Thematic Review***reflected qualitative analysis of the lives (from birth) of 60 young people who had been identified by practitioners as being particularly vulnerable. The findings of multiple childhood adversities and multiple (often poorly coordinated interventions) has informed the development of the work to enhance integrated responsive services through the *Vulnerable Adolescents Priority Group.*

The CSCB report is available here*:* https://croydonlcsb.org.uk/2019/02/croydon-vulnerable-adolescent-review-report-2019/#the-executive-summary-report-can-be-read-here

**Camden** was able to demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the needs and experience of its adolescent population, which shaped service provision and drove performance improvement. Prominent within the data-set was information drawn directly from young people reflecting a strong emphasis upon participatory approaches and co-production.

**Harrow’s** analysis and application of data in relation to adolescent safeguarding led to partnership commitment to the **Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation (VVE) Strategy** and the development of the VVE team (see below).

**Wandsworth** has used data analysis of risks and needs of its vulnerable adolescents to provide renewed focus upon both responses to missing and school exclusion with evidence of improved outcomes in each area as a result.

**Hillingdon** points to the value of its ***Axis software*** in collating data sources and soft intelligence to better support risk management in the borough.

**Developing a Coherent Adolescent Safeguarding Practice Approach**

**Hackney** has the most developed approach to embedding ***contextual safeguarding*** as a result of longstanding interest and DfE Innovation Programme funding, which, in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire, has sought to embed a contextual approach as core to adolescent safeguarding practice. A range of tools and adaptations to the assessment, planning and intervention model have been introduced to reflect the contextual risks faced by adolescents. This work with the University of Bedfordshire to embed contextual safeguarding has been extended to a number of other sites in London including supporting **Hounslow’s *PEACE project*** (see below)

**Camden** has developed its ***integrated adolescent approach*** which through its Partner in Practice work supports other authorities to improve their service provision to vulnerable young people. Camden is in the process of expanding its integrated adolescent approach to one which is underpinned by a single multi-agency adolescent framework.

**Lambeth** has developed ***Young People’s Safety Plans*** which are led and held by the young person who is subject to child protection or child in need processes. Lambeth cites greater levels of engagement by young people and planning which is more responsive to their needs.Lambeth also points to the impact of the application of its ***Heart of Practice*** model in promoting a young person-centred and relational approach which amongst other benefits has led to a significant reduction in missing episodes for its most vulnerable adolescents.

**Hillingdon** describes a ‘paradigm shift’ from CIN/CP plans to ***Young People’s Plans****.* This supports a move away from process driven approaches to interventions centred around empowerment and active involvement of young people and their parents.

**Camden** has an innovative approach to provision of its ***missing children services*** which carefully risk assesses and targets return home interviews and subsequent services. Camden describes its missing response as well integrated with its wider safeguarding responses and aligned to its relational practice model. The impact has seen reducing missing episodes as a result of interventions.

**Bromley** puts ***relational practice*** at the heart of its missing responses and in doing so it believes the value of its return home interviews has been enhanced.

**Risk management and decision-making panels**

**Merton** undertook a full review of all of its panels and decision-making fora in 2018 resulting in the development of the ***Multi-agency Risk Vulnerability and Exploitation (MARVE)*** Protocol and Panel. MARVE provides an ‘umbrella’ process that covers the previous protocols and panel processes in regard to CSE and persons of concern, serious youth violence and criminal exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour. The MARVE has been reviewed with participants with positive feedback on the changes as a result of its implementation.

**Hackney** has developed an ***Extra Familial Risk Panel (EFRP)*** following the work of the Contextual Safeguarding Project, which brings together analysis and develops multi-agency plans for young people at risk of CSE, criminal exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour, affected by gangs, serious youth violence and modern slavery.

**Ealing** describes a recent review of its joint decision-making and risk management fora which has successfully brought multi-agency attention to the most vulnerable adolescents, while also proving more efficient and effective in safeguarding adolescents.

**Croydon** has developed a ***Complex Adolescents Panel*** (incorporates MACE) that is for adolescents who are being exploited, going missing or offending ie risk outside of the home. Attendance is from CSC, police, CAMHS, YOS, gangs team, housing, health, NSPCC, Barnardos.

**Hillingdon** describes a journey to streamline its risk management architecture which it believes is supporting more effective safeguarding responses.

**Redbridge** has developed a ***daily risk management meetings*** in the MASH which reviews actions and developments in relation to priority children in order to manage risk through a dynamic multi-agency approach. The range of agencies contributing to the daily meeting is seen as an important strength in supporting risk management decision-making.

**Harrow** has similarly committed to multi-agency ***Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation daily briefings***in the MASH which aid real time information sharing and tasking.

**Bromley** has developed the ***MEGA (Missing, Exploitation, Gang Affiliation) Panel***: MEGA is a weekly operational multi-agency panel that maintains oversight for safeguarding children / young people at risk of significant harm through exploitation (CSE & Criminality), missing from home and care, trafficking and gang affiliation / serious youth violence.

**Lambeth** also utilises a daily multi-agency intelligence and tasking approach in the MASH through its ***Daily Intelligence Briefing.*** Alongside thisLambeth has increased the attention given in safeguarding to the identification and disruption of ***perpetrator*** activity and has extended the scope of its MASE to encompass intelligence and action against perpetrators.

**Engaging and Supporting Schools**

**Hackney** has adopted reducing school exclusions as a key priority for the Council, and developed a **No Need to Exclude Strategy** which sets out the Council’s aims. A multi-agency **Reducing Exclusions Board** has been established to oversee and implement the strategyand is currently reviewing the strategy which will be reframed to provide greater focus oninclusion.

**Bexley** has designated lead social workers assigned to every school. This helps in identifying young people who may be at risk of exploitation, and provides advice regarding those young people who are already known or open to social care. Schools have benefited from master class training on contextual risk delivered by the University of Bedfordshire. In addition **Bexley’s *No Need to Exclude protocol*** commits the borough’s schools to work towards no exclusions.

**Bromley** also describes the benefits from ***head of service link*** in children’s social care for head teachers in every school within the borough. This, allied to enhanced education welfare officer links to schools, has had an impact on exclusions and supporting the safeguarding within schools.

**Lambeth’s** ***Social Workers in Schools*** project (funded by the What Works Centre) which has been operational since February 2019 in 5 Lambeth secondary and 3 primary schools. The authority reports it is beginning to demonstrate positive outcomes for young people and there is evidence of reduced referrals from schools into CSC, as a result of more onsite intervention and support for young people. Lambeth’s schools social worker project is embedded in its **hyper-local approach** to early intervention and neighbourhood problem-solving.

**Kensington & Chelsea / Westminster** in partnership with the Contextual Safeguarding Network and 8 primary and secondary schools are participating in a project named ***‘Beyond Referrals’***. Contextual Safeguarding Network tools are used in schools to have conversations with children and young people about their worries, vulnerabilities and what can assist them to keep safe. The aim is to increase effective safeguarding planning for children, embed stronger relationships between schools and children’s services and to inform strategic developments.

**Blending Adolescent Responses with Whole Family Approaches**

**Camden’s *Family Circles*** seeks to restoratively engage families and their adolescent children empowering family members through use of trained volunteers.

**Havering** is developing an ***Adolescent Safeguarding Hub*** which reflects the borough’s commitment to systemic practice and retains significant input from family therapists within an integrated response to adolescent risk.

**Hackney’s *Clinical Service (Hub)*** is an in-house provision for children and families in their homes, schools, Youth Hubs or other community settings. The service offers individual, family and group work and offers a wide range of support to families, depending on needs and goals. Clinicians draw on a range of evidence-based approaches including CBT, Systemic Psychotherapy, Psychodynamic Psychotherapy, Social Learning Theory and Attachment Theory-based approaches. The service offers specific assessments and interventions in relation to harmful sexual behaviour such as AIM assessments, the Good Lives Model and group work with parents of young people experiencing extra-familial harm.

**Disproportionality**

**Bexley** has developed an ***Equity Panel*** which reviews and supports action to ensure vulnerable groups and those with protected characteristics receive equitable treatment within the borough.

**Lambeth’s *‘Raising the Game’*** programme focuses on promoting the achievement and aspiration of Black Caribbean Pupils in Lambeth to tackle the 7-10% academic attainment gap and disproportionately high exclusion rates that Black Caribbean pupils in the borough face. Through the Lambeth Schools Partnership, a range of events have been held giving pupils of all ages the chance to meet inspirational, highly-successful black individuals from a range of professional and academic backgrounds. Lambeth is also reviewing processes and practices to reduce the number of school exclusions, specifically for young boys who are knife carriers in partnership with the Mental Health Foundation

**Hackney** describes a particularly well-developed ***youth police advisory panel*** which is involved with a range of engagement and quality assurance activity including supporting better use of stop and search.

**Inter-Borough Information Exchange**

**City of London** has a protocol providing for the systematic exchange of information both for City of London children out of authority and other LA’s children coming to attention in the City. This extends to information exchange to support the range of responsibilities to children educated outside of the City**.**

**Ealing** is seeking to improving knowledge of young people placed in the borough by other authorities and aims to ensure that risk assessments are completed and that these are reviewed at the MAVES panel (see above).

**Wandsworth’s** self-evaluation highlights work done with neighbours in Lambeth, Merton, Lewisham, and Croydon to scrutinise links and share information about specific vulnerable young people, review trends in relation to Missing/RHI and to work on broader cross borough issues trends and themes.

**Service Models**

**Redbridge** points to the effectiveness of its ***Family Intervention Team*** in making an important contribution to its low level of adolescent entrants into care. This whole-family approach which engages through pro-active relational work in a well-established service fully aligned to the borough’s wider practice model.

**Bexley’s** ***Staying Together Team*** also describes impact in maintaining a stable adolescent care population (against a backdrop of a rising adolescent entrants to care in London). Again this team benefits from being a fully integrated part of the wider borough practice model (Signs of Safety) deployed in the borough.

**Hounslow’s** ***Adolescent Support Team*** has been developed to offer bespoke services to the borough’s vulnerable adolescent cohort Adolescent Team in Children’s Social Care and is supported by a single Targeted Early Help Adolescent Support Team (AST).

**Croydon** has undertaken a significant realignment of its services to develop ***Adolescent Support Teams.*** These teams case manage adolescents and families open as Child in Need, on Child Protection Plans or Looked After with the criteria for teams being ‘risk outside of the home’ ie going missing, involved in offending, being exploited, in gangs. Teams include a mix of social workers and other qualified adolescent workers.

**Wandsworth’s** ***Evolve*** adolescent exploitation team has been developed to specifically focus on supporting young people to form trusted relationships and challenge violence, abuse and exploitation. The team is an expression of a strategic commitment to adolescent safeguarding articulated in the borough’s ***Start Well Charter.***

**Hillingdon** has developed an integrated ***Adolescent Service*** and as a result can point to improved outcomes and experience for young people through this bespoke service.

**Harrow’s** ***Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Team*** employ a dedicated CSE coordinator and specialist workers for missing children and children at risk of gangs, youth violence, and extremism. Being located in the Children’s Access Team in close proximity to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), ensures that “real time” intelligence and information is shared through these systems.

**Gangs, Criminal Exploitation and Serious Youth Violence**

**Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, and Hammersmith and Fulham** have a tri-borough ***Integrated Gangs and Exploitation Unit*** which provides access to police intelligence, mappings, experienced gangs workers and regular multi agency attendance at strategy and professional meetings. The boroughs point to more effective planning for young people, which is more responsive, providing a better understanding of risk, wider options for safety plans, and access to London Gang Exit Scheme. The gangs unit sits within a wider public health approach to violence which shapes delivery across the bi-borough children’s partnerships.

**Hackney** describes its ***Integrated Gangs Unit (IGU)*** as having “contributed massively to the understanding of the gang problem in Hackney and empowered other Council units in the process”. The effectiveness of the work relies upon the Outreach Team’s trust and knowledge of the community gained over the past four years. Hackney is delivering the ***Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP)***. This bystander-based programme challenges inappropriate language and behaviours. It has been successfully introduced into schools in Scotland by the Violence Reduction Unit.

**Lambeth** has a well-developed partnership-wide strategy for reducing youth violence through a public health approach. The multi-agency partnership leading the development of the serious youth violence strategy is committed to understanding the lived experience of young people and that of communities, making community engagement an overarching priority. The strategy has five key workstreams: Disrupt and deter; Safe environments and public spaces; Response and support; Families and early help; Education and training.

**Croydon** (as described above) has re-shaped its adolescent services in response to the acute adolescent safeguarding threats particularly those associated with gangs and vulnerability to serious youth violence.

**Camden’s** use of partnership data provides a strong platform to understand the local CCE profile to support those at risk and disrupt perpetrators.

**Innovative Interventions**

**Ealing** has a number of externally funded projects which are being evaluated. It has developed a ***Trusted Spaces Team*** providing youth outreach work across the borough, one to one sessions, and work in 5 schools. There is also a 24hr phone number that young people can ring for advice and support. In addition Ealing is also pursuing the ***Mentors in Violence Programme.***

**Lambeth** has used investment from the Supporting Families Against Youth Crime Fund to develop a multi-agency early help offer with St Giles, Chance UK and Lambeth MPS to provide diversionary activities and targeted support for young people who are arrested, as well children at risk of exclusion and young people living in families where offending and anti-social behaviour has been identified.

**City of London** identified specific un-addressed needs in its unaccompanied asylum seeking children population and as a result provides ***virtual school support for UASC*** involving City of London School - including in-house tuition and a 9 week enrichment programme. Staff and students from CoL volunteer to support the UASC work.

**Camden’s** social work service is delivering an Innovation funded project ***Right Balance***which is designed to test a preventative approach to work with 10 to 13 year old children in need to prevent problems escalating in the teenage years.

**Hounslow** successfully bid to the Home Office Trusted Relationships Fund to create an innovative service known as the ***PEACE (Protecting and Empowering Against Child Exploitation)***. The project is working with adolescents to tackle exploitation based on contextual safeguarding and systemic family therapy models and is supported by the Contextual Safeguarding Network at Bedfordshire University which includes the presence of a dedicated practice advisor in the team.