

Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership Adolescents Strategy 2024-2025



The purpose of this strategy and linked practice guidance and toolkit is to support adolescents within the city of Plymouth. This strategy, in conjunction with our practice guidance and toolkit, will provide a local understanding of how to work with adolescents, support our practitioners and improve our response to adolescents across all agencies working together in Plymouth.

Our Adolescent Strategy

Our children face a number of challenges to their safety and wellbeing today.

Adolescence is a transitional period of physical and psychological development between childhood and adulthood, the cultural purpose of which involves preparation to assume adult roles.

The scope of this Strategy is to support the improvement of outcomes for children transitioning through adolescence.

Driving the strategic focus on 'context' across all partners, the safeguarding partnership's developed position for the last five years has been that those children and young people being abused, or at risk of abuse, should be seen, heard, and helped.

As a result, we have created an Adolescent Practice Handbook and Toolkit to develop practice in the city.

Child's Voice

In Plymouth we recognise that in order to understand a child's world, all practitioners will need to maintain professional curiosity in their approach/challenge to parents on the experiences of the child and seek to understand and record the wishes and feelings of children and young people.

In Working Together 2023 children said they need professionals' priorities to be their protection, support in their own right and advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views. They also need respect, vigilance and stability through the development of ongoing stable relationships of trust with those helping them and through recognition of their individual identities and lived experiences.

Our strategy respects these wishes.

Learning from research

- That Difficult Age: Developing a more effective response to risks in adolescence (Hanson and Holmes, 2014)
- The OCC's report into CSE in groups and gangs (2012)
- Neurobiological Consequences of Childhood Abuse And Neglect Martin Teicher's (2007)
- Plymouth Young Safeguarders 10 wishes - plymouthscb.co.uk/children-young-people/10-wishes/

Our Key Principles

- Work with adolescent development – particularly perception, autonomy, aspiration, and skills.
- Work with adolescents as assets and resources e.g. draw on strengths to build confidence and resilience.
- Promote supportive relationships between adolescents and their family and peers.
- Prioritise supportive relationships between adolescents and key practitioner(s) through service design.
- Take a holistic approach both to adolescents and the risks they face to avoid labelling adolescents according to risks they face.
- Ensure services are accessible and advertised – respond to adolescent autonomy, advertise the benefits and provide outreach.
- Equip and support the workforce with tools and skills.

Our Priorities

- Adolescent development is multifaceted, and we will respond to these issues in a comprehensive way.
- Respond to risks identified by peer networks, pull factors, and the influence of individuals outside of their families which increase these risks.
- Act to reduce harmful sexual behaviour, child sexual exploitation, contextual safeguarding and county lines.
- Respond to the needs of adolescents with SEND who may be at a higher risk.
- Respond to risk factors such as substance use, social media use, homelessness and mental health issues.
- Provide a consistent and flexible practice framework to ensure we deliver appropriate services for adolescents.
- Support practitioners across thresholds to manage risk, eliminate language and responses that blame and stigmatise adolescents.

How will we measure and communicate positive change for our children and families?

- Young people and their parents / carers will report they can access support at the time that they need it.
- We will see fewer children needing statutory support, risk support or entering care in adolescents.
- Audits, feedback and questionnaires demonstrate an increase in parental knowledge and understanding of their child's development and children and young people feel safe, nurtured and supported.
- The voice of children to be demonstrably represented in all professional interactions with vulnerable families.
- Professionals will feel confident to support the young people they work with.
- Children are attending school regularly achieving the expected standards.