

# Cornwall Exploitation Strategy 2020–2023

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## Tackling the exploitation of children & young adults



**SAFER  
CORNWALL**  
Kernow Salwa




# Report

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## WORRIED ABOUT A CHILD?

If you have concerns about actual or likely risk of harm to a child please contact the Multi Agency Referral Unit (MARU) without delay on:

 **0300 1231 116**

You can also ring Childline for help and advice on **0800 11 11**

## WORRIED ABOUT AN ADULT?

If you are an adult experiencing abuse or neglect, or if you are concerned about an adult possibly experiencing abuse or neglect, contact us on:

 **0300 1234 131**

(out of hours number **01208 251300**)


 **accessteam.referral@cornwall.gov.uk**

 **cornwall.gov.uk/safeguardingadults**

## CRIME & ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR


To report crime or anti-social behaviour please contact the police on 101:

 **101@dc.police.uk**

 or 999 in an emergency

## YOUNG PEOPLE AND WEAPONS

Young people aged 10–17 identified as carrying weapons can be referred to the prevention element of the Youth Offending Service where a bespoke package can be provided:

 **01872 326782**

 **yos@cornwall.gov.uk**

## POLICE INTELLIGENCE PORTAL

The Partner Agency Information Sharing (PAIS) form allows intelligence / information submissions on a variety of subjects including Modern Day Slavery, County Lines and Child Exploitation:

 **devon-cornwall.police.uk/pais**

# Overview

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Tackling exploitation is a high priority for partners in Cornwall. Exploitation can happen to a person of any age, but this strategy focuses on children and young adults up to the age of 25.

Exploitation is where someone takes unfair advantage of others to gain something for themselves. It occurs when a person is persuaded to do things in exchange for something that they need or want (coercion), or threatened or forced to do things by people with more power than them – this can be someone of a similar age to the child or young adult being exploited, as well as an adult. It can include being made to provide sexual acts (sexual exploitation) and/or to commit crimes such as theft, benefit fraud, or dealing, carrying or growing drugs (known as criminal exploitation).

Commonly children and young adults think that they have a free choice in their involvement, but when the people exploiting them have more power than they do, we do not believe that this is a free choice. The methods that the exploiters use include 'grooming' where someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a person so that they can exploit them; coercion; control; manipulation and threats. Children and young adults can also be experiencing exploitation and taking part in abusive behaviours towards others at the same time – exploitation is never the victim's fault.

# Experiences of exploitation in Cornwall

- Exploitation is under-reported – people who are being exploited are often too afraid to tell anyone and sometimes do not recognise that they are being exploited
- There are concerns about the prevalence of peer-on-peer sexual violence and exploitation
- Some children and young adults are exploited themselves whilst also exploiting others and need a different approach to tackling their behaviour
- Boys and young adult men can also be victims of exploitation but are less likely to seek help
- There is an increase in organised drug activity in Cornwall
- There are indications that a growing number of children and young adults are being recruited and exploited for involvement in criminal activity
- There is a rise in serious violence but the number of these crimes currently remains low
- Children and young adults are at greater risk of being exploited if they: go missing, are excluded from school, on a reduced timetable, electively home educated; are in care, care leavers; identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and intersex (LGBTQI); have a disability
- Trauma and negative experience in childhood can mean that some children and young adults are more susceptible to being exploited
- Exploitation can happen to any child or young adult on-line and people using on-line methods to groom children are often harder to detect
- We need to develop our understanding of exploitation, how it happens and what we can do to stop it
- Adolescence and young adulthood is a particular time in a person's life and a young-adult focussed approach is very important
- Children and young adults are worried about knife crime and this is a national priority for youth parliaments across England

Building on our previous experience in delivering our first strategy, this strategy prioritises what we need to focus on over the next three years – you can learn more by reading our 'supporting evidence' document ([safercornwall.co.uk/crime-in-your-area/documents-and-publications/](https://safercornwall.co.uk/crime-in-your-area/documents-and-publications/))

Anna\* (not her real name) is a survivor of child sexual and criminal exploitation by men (referred to by her as 'boys' below) and was trafficked on numerous occasions across England from Cornwall – often children are not aware they are being exploited and can minimise the impact such activities had on them due to the grooming process:

*"If I could have done things differently then I would have as it causes so much s\*\*t... I used to go to London to meet boys as my town is boring... I understand why my parents were worried because I never used to tell them where I was... if I had to talk to someone younger then I would say to tell your parents where you are... I wish there was no social involved because you can't do anything without them knowing but they're ok because you can talk to them. If I could do things different I would... I'm having a baby now and I need to change things and I'm gonna try my best and do everything I can so I can keep my baby."*

Anna aged 15

Support for children is paramount in helping them fulfil their potential. Anna recognised her social worker as "someone who believed in me and never stopped". Her social worker felt that it was "going that extra bit further for her so she felt important, I listened to her, never judging her because I always tried to understand. I empowered her, supporting her, always discussed things with her and sometimes I would say things she didn't like but she always knew it was said for her protection. I tried to be a positive role model for her."

Will\* (not his real name) age 15 was referred to Young People Cornwall youth centre by his social worker. They reported that Will was at breaking point – causing criminal damage, using drugs, continuously going missing, excluded from school and given an Anti-social Behaviour Order. He was not engaging with any services and his behaviour was so out of control services refused on numerous occasions to see him. After engaging with the youth worker, he identified his mental health had deteriorated and that using cannabis to self-medicate was no longer working. He used other drugs, getting 'high' to block out the dark thoughts of wanting to kill himself or someone else. He told the youth worker he was being criminally exploited by adults for drug dealing and felt at high risk of harm from them.

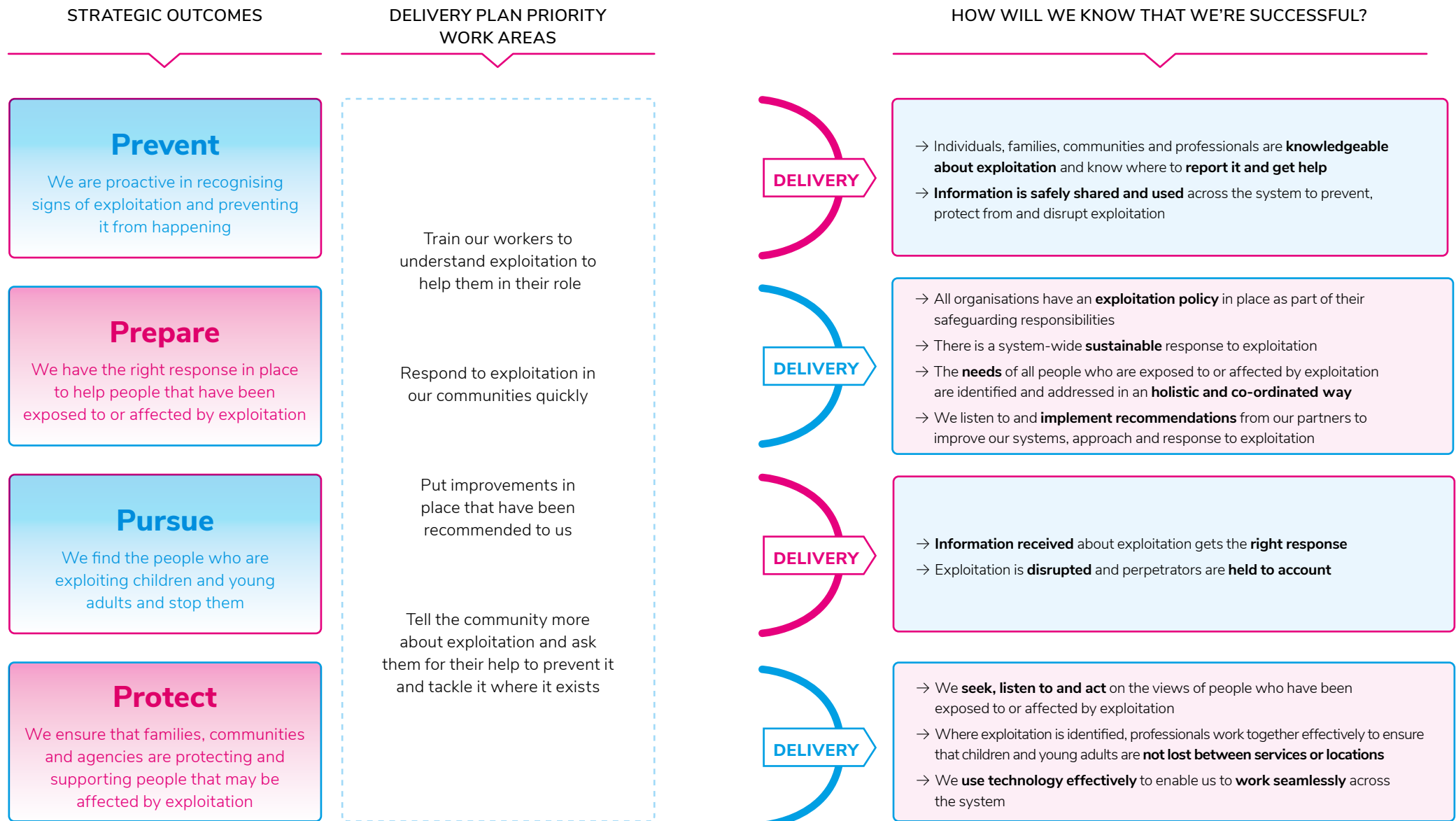
After engaging, building trust and feeling safe to explore his mental health issues, the youth centre made referrals for Will around drug issues, and then to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Will said "it really helped to have all the workers come to one building." Will has started back in education, lets his family know where he is, is not involved in anti-social behaviour and has stopped taking Class A drugs. He wants to be a peer mentor; planning a project for early intervention around mental health awareness and reducing anti-social behaviour and gang crime. The social worker closed Will's case.

*"My most significant change since coming to Young People Cornwall is that my thoughts are clearer, which enables me to assess the risk involved in certain situations. I am also able to listen to other people, and take on board what they say."*

Will aged 15

# Cornwall Exploitation Strategy 2020–2023

## Tackling the exploitation of children and young adults up to the age of 25



# Support

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We Are With You support adults, children, young adults and older people to make positive behavioural changes. Whether that's with alcohol, drugs, or mental health and wellbeing, we're here to help people improve their lives in ways they never thought possible.



**0333 2000 325**



**[wearewithyou.org.uk](https://wearewithyou.org.uk)**



Safer Futures provides support, safety planning, advice, therapy and recovery in domestic abuse and sexual violence.

We can help if you have experienced any form of domestic abuse, sexual assault, abuse or rape and need support in your recovery. Services are provided to women, men, young people and children.



**0300 777 4777**



**[saferfutures.org.uk](https://saferfutures.org.uk)**



**[saferfutures@firstlight.org.uk](mailto:saferfutures@firstlight.org.uk)**



The Devon and Cornwall Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) provides safety, support, forensic medical facilities and assessments, sexual health advice and counselling to women, men, young people and children.



**[sarchelp.co.uk](https://sarchelp.co.uk)** (secure online referral).



**0300 303 4626**



Young people cornwall engages, inspires and supports young people across the county, with youth work that makes a difference.



**[youngpeoplecornwall.org](https://youngpeoplecornwall.org)**



For further details on how to access advice or support or to report an issue please go to:



**[safercornwall.co.uk/support-report/](https://safercornwall.co.uk/support-report/)**